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Best of the best in aged care awarded national honours

A NSW team who designed a referral system reducing the unnecessary hospitalisation of older patients, a VIC not-for-profit service who support older Australians experiencing homelessness and a WA manager who transformed the business performance of an underperforming aged care home have received top honours at the 2018 HESTA Aged Care Awards held in Canberra last night.

HESTA CEO Debby Blakey, said the three winners showcase the exceptional work undertaken in the sector to improve services and standards of care for ageing Australians.

"This year's winners have shown outstanding leadership and have worked collaboratively to design and implement improvements in their workplaces, delivering the highest quality care to ageing Australians," Ms Blakey said.

"Through their work, they are supporting the continuous improvement of the sector and we're proud to acknowledge their efforts through the HESTA Aged Care Awards."

The winners were selected from 13 national finalists and were recognised for their remarkable contribution to improving the quality of life for older Australians across three Award categories —Team Innovation, Outstanding Organisation and Individual Distinction.

The winner of each category won a share in a \$30,000 prize pool, courtesy of proud Awards sponsor ME – the bank for you.

The 2018 winners are:

Team Innovation Award

Geriatric Flying Squad Uniting War Memorial Hospital Waverly, NSW

The Geriatric Flying Squad (GFS) was awarded for designing a referral system for NSW emergency services reducing unnecessary hospitalisations of older patients.

Implemented and designed in partnership with the Ambulance Service of NSW and NSW Police, the referral pathway provides paramedics with an alternative option to hospital admission.

Diane Gellatly, Clinical Nurse Consultant and Geriatric Flying Squad (GFS) team member said the system better utilises existing emergency services, resulting in more suitable patient care.

"Older people are too frequently forgotten or disadvantaged by an increasingly complex health care system," said Diane.

"The collaboration with NSW Ambulance Service and NSW Police has proven to be an efficient use of community resources that better meet the needs of older people in the community, also ensuring more appropriate use of emergency service resources."

"We saw that we could better use existing services to meet the needs of the frail and vulnerable in our community".

As a result of GFS' referral system, patients meeting select criteria are referred by paramedics and police to the GFS who then treat and assess patients in their homes.

"Our team prides itself on being innovative and resourceful. We are passionate, highly experienced and skilled clinicians who love working with older people and are supported by an organisation that fosters excellence," said Diane.

Diane said they plan to use the prize money to fund education sessions and develop a suite of resources to educate local police and ambulance services about their referral pathway.

Individual Distinction Award

Yulunda Matau
Amana Living James Brown Care Centre
Osborne Park, WA

Yulunda was awarded for her outstanding work in driving the cultural and business transformation of Amana Living's residential aged care home the James Brown Care Centre, which has a high proportion of residents who come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Stepping into the role of Service Manager, Yulunda identified gaps in performance and service delivery implementing programs focused on improving resident care outcomes and employee engagement.

Yulunda's initiatives include the introduction of a system that rosters staff members so they are consistently caring for the same residents and employing palliative care specialists to help care for patients in their final stages of life.

"Introducing a dedicated staffing model and seeing the difference it makes to both the residents and staff at the facility has been a truly enjoyable experience. The residents have a name now, not just a room number or a diagnosis," said Yulunda.

Yulunda said she feels lucky to work in aged care and enjoys seeing the impact her work has on the lives of the people she cares for.

"Turning someone's life around to give them meaning and purpose and seeing them become the best they can be, brings a smile to my face every day," said Yulunda.

Yulunda said she plans to use the prize money to attend an international conference and participate in educational sessions focused on innovations in mental health and palliative care for aged care residents.

"I am excited to have the opportunity to bring back innovations and ideas and deliver them to not only the James Brown Care Centre and Amana Living, but wider aged care networks in Australia," said Yulunda.

Outstanding Organisation Award

Wintringham Flemington, VIC

Awarded for their outstanding contribution to the social justice of ageing Australians experiencing homelessness in Victoria through community outreach, housing support, aged care and referral services.

For 30 years Wintringham has made eliminating homelessness amongst ageing Australians its mission, growing to become the country's largest specialist not-for-profit aged care service, supporting over 2,000 vulnerable people every night.

Wintringham Chief Executive and Founder Bryan Lipmann AM said the award is recognition of the organisation's hard work and of the inspirational staff efforts over the years to help older Australians in need.

"Winning this award is recognition of all that Wintringham has achieved in supporting the elderly disadvantaged over the last 30 years," said Bryan.

"It's greatly rewarding to provide a permanent pathway out of homelessness for elderly disadvantaged men and women. By providing safe, secure and supported accommodation options, we deliver a 'home until stumps' approach allowing our residents and clients to enjoy an independent and dignified life."

Bryan said the prize money will be used to provide training opportunities for staff, giving them the opportunity to further develop their skills and expertise.

Find out more about the HESTA Awards Program hestaawards.com.au.

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