

26 September 2017

Social justice heroes recognised in national community sector awards

Australia's most outstanding community sector organisations and individuals have been recognised, with 15 finalists announced in the 2017 HESTA Community Sector Awards.

The Awards shine a spotlight on exceptional service provision, advocacy, innovation and leadership in social justice and community services in Australia, across the categories of Unsung Hero, Outstanding Organisation, and Social Impact.

HESTA CEO, Debby Blakey said this year's finalists have shown leadership in developing community programs and initiatives that address social inequality and disadvantage.

"It's an honour to be able to highlight the amazing work of these organisations and individuals, whose services significantly improve the lives of others," Ms Blakey said.

"They have addressed some of the nation's most important social issues, and have given a voice to people who otherwise might not be heard. Their vital work contributes to a more compassionate, prosperous, and fairer nation. We are proud to be able to recognise them."

The 2017 finalists are:

Unsung Hero Award

Simone Nicole Baird Rowville, VIC

For her commitment and contribution to the DEBRA Australia, a not-for-profit organisation that supports people living with the rare skin disease Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB).

Jenny Glare South Melbourne, VIC

For helping people raised in orphanages and children's homes access historical records and information from their time spent in child institutions across Victoria.

Margaret Jorgensen Watsonia, VIC

For developing programs and activities to encourage social participation and improved wellbeing for elderly members of the Watsonia Returned Services League of Australia (RSL).

Elizabeth Serpell Melbourne, VIC

For establishing The Aussie Hands Foundation Incorporated (Aussie Hands) which supports children and adults who have been born with a hand difference or have an acquired hand injury.

Edward Thomson Ringwood East, VIC

For his contribution working as a volunteer for community and social justice organisations around Australia for over 50 years.

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Outstanding Organisation Award

Good Shepherd Microfinance Melbourne, VIC

For their role in facilitating and implementing the FIAP Program which engages with businesses, government, academics and the community sector, to increase financial inclusion and resilience for vulnerable Australians.

Little Dreamers Australia Southbank, VIC

For supporting people under the age of 25 who care for or have family members with a chronic disease, disability, mental illness, addiction or serious injury.

Orange Sky Australia Brisbane, QLD

For developing the world's first mobile laundry service for people experiencing homelessness.

Puuya Foundation Lockhart River, QLD

For developing community-led projects that equip Indigenous people living in the Lockhart River community with the skills and knowledge necessary to overcome disadvantage and build better futures.

WEstjustice Footscray and Werribee, VIC

For establishing the 'Employment Law Project' which helps migrants and refugees living in the western suburbs of Melbourne improve employment outcomes.

Social Impact Award

Blind Citizens Australia Melbourne, VIC

For advocating for changes in policy that empowers and promotes equality for people who are blind or vision impaired.

Community Legal Centres Queensland Stones Corner, QLD

For successfully campaigning for increased Government funding for their services, which provide support and advocacy to 33 independent, community-led legal centres across Queensland.

Good Pitch Australia Moore Park, NSW

For bringing documentary film makers together with foundations, not-for-profit organisations, philanthropists, entrepreneurs and policy makers to create films that influence public discussion and policy on social justice issues impacting Australians.

Jesuit Social Services Richmond, VIC

For advocating for improved social outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable young people who are involved in the Australian criminal justice system.

WIRE Women's Information West Melbourne, VIC

For their programs and advocacy initiatives that support and educate women who are experiencing financial hardship or abuse.

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

Winners are announced at the 2017 HESTA Community Sector Awards on 24 October 2017.

Find out more about the HESTA Awards program at hestaawards.com.au

Ends.

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