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Winners announced in HESTA Australian Nursing & Midwifery Awards

A WA nurse who has dedicated her life to improving health care services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, a QLD team who developed a mobile medical clinic to treat people with liver disease and a VIC graduate nurse who enhanced the care experience of patients with difficulty communicating were all winners at the 2018 HESTA Australian Nursing & Midwifery Awards held in Melbourne last night.

In its 12th year, the national Awards are Australia's most prestigious recognising nurses, midwives, nurse educators, researchers and personal care workers who excel in their area of expertise or service provision across the three Award categories — Nurse or Midwife of the Year, Outstanding Graduate and Team Excellence.

HESTA CEO, Debby Blakey said this year's winners demonstrated an outstanding commitment to the nursing profession, continually striving to advance patient health outcomes, whilst also implementing innovative solutions to improve standards of care.

"We are proud to recognise the winners of this year's Awards, they have shown leadership in advocating on behalf of their patients for improved access to health care, whilst also providing meaningful solutions to overcome these challenges," Ms Blakey said.

"These winners stood out from an exceptional group of finalists for their commitment to improving patient health care outcomes, and their work has had a profound impact on the lives of many Australians."

Proud Awards sponsor ME – the bank for you, generously provided the \$30,000 prize pool, divided among the winners in the three award categories. Winners will receive \$10,000 in a ME Everyday Transaction account to use for further education or team development.

The 2018 Award winners are:

Nurse of the Year

Gail Yarran
Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service Aboriginal Corporation
East Perth, WA

Gail was awarded for her work in improving and advocating for better delivery of health care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living across Western Australia.

With a nursing career spanning more than 50 years, Gail has established herself as a prominent Aboriginal health care leader and nurse ambassador. Her extensive breadth of work includes holding multiple advisory roles, as well as developing clinical research projects and pilot programs designed to meet the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

Gail's tireless work has contributed to substantial improvements in the way Aboriginal people are treated when accessing health care and through her work she continues to help Aboriginal people living across Western Australia reach health parity.

Gail said she was inspired and motivated to become a registered nurse and pursue a career helping people whilst she was still only a child.

**media
contact:**

Sam Riley
Media Relations Manager
(03) 8660 1684

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"I've been very passionate about nursing from a young age, I remember when I was in school the teacher asked the class 'what would you like to be when you leave school?', I said I'd like to be a nurse and the whole class laughed and made fun of me. This stuck in my heart and made me more determined, this gave me the passion," said Gail.

Gail said that although she's been a nurse for over 50 years, there's still a lot of work to be done to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"I've been a nurse for 50 years and I know I can't close the gap, but I can do my little part to make a difference," said Gail.

"Currently I work in maternal child health doing screening, child health checks and immunisations, by doing this I would like to see better health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their babies."

With the prize money Gail said she would like to find out more about different cultures, specifically about how to improve antenatal health services and make them more accessible for women. She is also a nurse ambassador with The Heart Foundation in Perth, so she would like to do some research in this area with Aboriginal women.

Team Excellence

The Kombi Clinic Hepatitis Queensland Bowen Hills, QLD

Awarded for designing the 'Kombi Clinic' a mobile medical clinic providing life-saving treatments to people living with hepatitis C across South East Queensland.

The innovative clinic is a one-stop-shop for hepatitis C testing, treatment, and information and is run by a team of health professionals, including Outreach Fibroscan Nurse Mim O'Flynn. Mim and the team treat patients with life-saving medication following an initial consultation which includes blood tests and fibroscan.

Mim said the clinic is unique and different to other services because it brings medical care directly to people who are most vulnerable, enabling them to easily access treatment.

"The Kombi Clinic is a team of passionate people who want to eliminate hepatitis C by 2030. Our patients often haven't spoken to anyone about their hep-C status and we offer them a safe environment and the opportunity to seek treatment free of judgement," said Mim.

"We go to areas in the community helping people that we've identified that are of great need, this could be those who are disenfranchised or homeless, and we work in different locations like around alcohol and drug services as well as on the street."

Mim said they plan on using the prize money towards new technology which does point-of-care testing, enabling on the spot diagnosis.

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Outstanding Graduate

Veronique Murphy
Alfred Health
Melbourne, VIC

Veronique was awarded for improving the care experience of patients who have difficulty communicating by developing a process to facilitate the record keeping of patient likes, dislikes and interests, enabling easy communication of a person's preferences between team members.

Believing that each person has the potential to positively or negatively influence a patient's experience, the 'patient preferences prompt sheet' was designed by Veronique to ensure vital non-clinical information could easily be communicated between staff, aiding them in providing compassionate, quality care.

"The more we know about the patients, the more easily we can guide them through the times when they're struggling to communicate," said Veronique.

"The sheet was designed to help the patients on our ward who can't communicate properly, whether they are experiencing delirium or have dementia. It helps patients with the 'little things', making them feel safer and more comfortable whilst in the medical environment".

Veronique said providing individualised person-centred care was vital to ensuring that nurses have meaningful interactions when caring for patients.

"I believe in holistic but person-centred care, where each interaction is modified by the nurse to meet the unique needs of the patient (and their community), provides the best chance of improving health outcomes," Veronique said.

Veronique plans to use the prize money from her award win to help pay for a Master's degree in nursing, in addition to funding work experience in under-resourced parts of Australia and the world.

For further information and photos from the event please visit: hestaawards.com.au

Ends.

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