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Winners announced for national early childhood education and care awards

A program helping to get more Aboriginal children into preschool and an educator dedicated to providing tailored learning to babies claimed top honours at the 2012 HESTA Early Childhood Education & Care Awards, on Friday 5 October.

Drawn from more than 600 nominations, the two winners were recognised for providing outstanding levels of care and education to children from birth to eight years of age in the categories of Outstanding Educator and Advancing Practice.

HESTA CEO, Anne-Marie Corboy, said the judges were looking for ongoing commitment to childhood educational development, innovative practices within state and national frameworks and family engagement, which all finalists and winners demonstrated.

“Our winners were handpicked from hundreds of nominations for their commendable work in the early childhood sector. We are proud to give these professionals the acknowledgment they deserve,” Ms Corboy said.

The winners are:

Outstanding Educator: Amy Douglas of Margaret Ives Community Children’s Centre in Norwood, South Australia for her commitment to developing a greater understanding of young children and challenging their emerging skills.

As primary carer for eight children in the baby room, and a secondary carer for an additional 22, Amy is raising the standard of care provided by early childhood carers. Meticulously observing, documenting and reporting on the behaviours of each individual child, Amy develops tailored plans for future learning.

Amy was nominated for taking a lateral approach to caring for children in the zero-to-three age range, while continuing to follow the Early Years Framework.

Advancing Practice: Buninyong Preschool — an initiative of Dubbo & District Preschool — in Dubbo, New South Wales, led by Director Louise Simpson, for providing low-income and indigenous families with non-fee paying early childhood education services.

When Louise instigated the initiative in 2010, there were some very real barriers, largely cost-related, preventing early childhood education for local Aboriginal children. Since then, Buninyong Preschool has worked tirelessly to break down these barriers.

Over the past two-years, the preschool has seen a doubling of enrolments and increased its opening days. This has resulted in increased enrolments of “school-ready” children at the local kindergarten, Buninyong Public School.

The Outstanding Educator Award winner received a \$5,000 ME Bank online *EveryDay* Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant. The Advancing Practice Award winner received a \$10,000 development grant. All prize money is provided by ME Bank.

HESTA is one of Australia’s largest super funds, with more than 750,000 members and \$20 billion in assets. It is chosen by more people in health and community services than any other fund.

Visit hestaawards.com.au to learn more about the awards.

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