

Media Release
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Creative nurse shortlisted for immunisation boost

A program to boost immunisation rates among four-year-olds on the Limestone Coast has been shortlisted in the HESTA Australian Nursing Awards.

When local midwife Angela Cutting saw the need to increase pre-school immunisation rates in rural South Australia, she came up with a strategy that was as simple as child's play.

"We went to the local early learning centre and turned a corner into a mini medical clinic with a bed, doctor and nurse dress ups, immunisation leaflets, plastic syringes, bandaids and bandages," Ms Cutting said.

"We did lots of role play to demystify the work of doctors and nurses. We explained that immunisation hurts a little bit but it stops you from getting sick and that getting sick hurts for a long time.

"You have to be jack of all trades in the country. As a trained teacher, as well as a nurse I was able to build good rapport with the children."

To get the message through to parents, grandparents and other carers, Ms Cutting prepared brochures and fridge magnets for kindergarten enrolment packs. Educating preschool teachers working in high-risk environments, about their immunisation needs, was also part of the program. Ms Cutting, who was a practice nurse overseeing all clinics in the Limestone Coast Division of General Practice before moving to Beachport Medical Services this year, also engaged local GP clinics on the issue.

"I used the Medicare website to find the three clinics with the best immunisation statistics and I gave them a certificate at the Limestone Coast GP education weekend. We recognised the top clinics and encouraged the other clinics to improve their statistics," she said.

"I think being a country nurse makes you innovative because you don't have the resources of your city counterparts. You just have to work out what's best for your community."

After a career including stints at Millicent, Mt Gambier and Penola hospitals, Ms Cutting said there was no better job than nursing: "When you come into people's lives for births, illness and death you have a special place in the community. People respect the role of the nurse and appreciate what you do."

Ms Cutting is one of four national finalists in the Innovation in Nursing category of the HESTA Australian Nursing Awards.

The Innovation in Nursing winner will receive a \$10,000 grant to develop their service or program. Other awards are: Nurse of the Year who will win \$10,000 in education and travel grants, and Graduate Nurse of the Year who will benefit from \$5,000 in education and travel grants. The prize money is provided by ME Bank, a supporter of the awards since 2008.

The winners will be announced at a gala awards ceremony on 12 May, the same day as Florence Nightingale's birthday. Interstate finalists will be flown to Melbourne for the event at Crown Entertainment Complex.

HESTA is one of Australia's largest superannuation funds with more than 700,000 members. It is chosen by more people working in health and community services than any other fund.

Visit hestanursingawards.com to book tickets for the event or learn more about the awards.

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