

## Media Release

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# Austin Health nurse wins Graduate Nurse of the Year

An Austin Health nurse, who excelled in emotionally charged environments including emergency, palliative care and oncology, has been named Graduate Nurse of the Year in the 2011 HESTA Australian Nursing Awards.

Zena Coffey was one of the first on the scene when a man in cardiac arrest fell out of his car in front of the hospital. She reassured the patient and called in the triage team.

In palliative care, Ms Coffey worked closely with patients and their families to understand their emotional, physical and social needs so she could provide a higher quality of care.

"Working in palliative care is confronting, difficult and rewarding at the same time," Ms Coffey said.

"I talk to patients and families about their spiritual needs. Facilitating important spiritual rituals for patients gives great satisfaction."

Dedicated to good communication, Ms Coffey has developed innovative ways to communicate effectively with patients from non-English speaking backgrounds and neurology patients struggling with speech. Body language, cue cards and alphabet charts are part of her approach.

When she realised a patient had misunderstood the implications of his surgery, she took time to explain the situation and ensure his consent was genuinely informed.

Ms Coffey always knew she wanted to nurse, spending her teenage years working in a local aged care facility.

Passionate about the evolution and development of nursing practice, she is completing a Bachelor of Nursing (Honours) at La Trobe University and will undertake a research project exploring cardiac rehabilitation in rural settings.

"I am fascinated by the way in which nursing has evolved and want to be a part of taking nursing to the next level," she said.

The HESTA Australian Nursing Award winners were announced at a gala ceremony at Melbourne's Crown Entertainment Complex. Ms Coffey won \$5,000 in travel and education grants.

Sydney nurse Paul Esplin, from St Vincent's Hospital Homeless Health Service and Mission Australian, won the \$10,000 HESTA Nurse of the Year Award. The Geriatric Flying Squad, from War Memorial Hospital in NSW, took out the \$10,000 Innovation in Nursing Award to develop their service. ME Bank funded the \$25,000 prize pool.

Congratulating the winners, HESTA CEO Anne-Marie Corboy said more than 480 nominations had been received this year and the calibre of the entries was exceptional.

"The HESTA Australian Nursing Awards highlight three extraordinary nurses but they are also a tribute to the many thousands of nurses engaged in lifesaving work every day," Ms Corboy said.

For information visit [hestanursingawards.com](http://hestanursingawards.com)

**Media enquiries:** Michelle Edmunds (03) 9654 4799, 0413 120 342