



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN DRUG TREATMENT PRESENTED**

Awards for Excellence in Drug Treatment were presented last night at a special dinner in Canberra. The Awards Dinner was part of a conference organised by the Australasian Therapeutic Communities Association (ATCA), which has brought together drug treatment experts from across Australia and New Zealand.

Therapeutic Communities provide a wholistic approach to treatment and rehabilitation, working to address the underlying causes of alcohol and other drug abuse, all of which impact on the person's ability to recover. The ATCA is the peak body representing Therapeutic Communities in Australasia.

Two awards presented at last night's dinner recognise the significant contribution made to drug treatment by a program or intervention in Australasia. Winners in this category were the Program for Adolescent Life Management (PALM) run by the Ted Noffs Foundation; and the Alcohol and Drug Foundation ACT's Early Birds Project.

PALM includes counselling, group therapy sessions, journaling, culture and education groups, physical exercise and creative engagement as part of an evidence-based treatment approach. PALM operates from a number of locations in New South Wales and the ACT.

The Early Birds Project utilises family-focused interventions to enhance social functioning and improve the lives of vulnerable children who have been exposed to parental substance use. The focus of this program is on pre- and post-treatment and the development of interventions for children and parents that build on the networks available in the community.

Individuals receiving awards for Significant Contribution to the Therapeutic Community Movement in Australasia have each worked within the drug treatment sector for many years.

Kim Fleming is the Manager of the Karralika Program and has worked with therapeutic communities for more than 20 years. She has worked as Assessment Officer, Clinical Worker, Program Coordinator and Manager of the Karralika Adult and Family Programs since 1988.

The second award winner, Gerard Byrne, worked as a Case Worker and Program Director before moving into a management role with responsibilities for programs in Queensland, NSW and the ACT. He has dedicated his life to the recovery of people in substance abuse, developing treatment materials and instigating research to guide the best-practice development of the Salvation Army's Bridge Programme as therapeutic communities. The Canberra Recovery Service in the ACT is one of the Salvation Army's Bridge Programmes.

Lynne Magor-Blatch, Acting Executive Officer of the ATCA stated, "These awards acknowledge and publicly recognise the exceptional work done by people who have worked tirelessly over a number of years to promote and develop the therapeutic community approach to treatment within the sector, as well as the programs which are making a difference in people's lives".

Therapeutic Communities (TCs) are unique in their treatment method, in that the community itself is the main method of treatment. While staff play a vital role in guiding treatment, there is an important emphasis on self-help and mutual help.

"TCs work with a wide range of people, including young people, parents and children. Last night's awards particularly recognise some of the special populations with whom we work, and we congratulate the programs and individuals who have been recognised in this way", Ms Magor-Blatch said.

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