

The 2007 Award Recipients

'Unsung heroes' celebrated

The inaugural Inspirational Journeys award program unearthed five 'unsung heroes' from among Australia's dedicated diabetes healthcare professionals. The program, a collaboration among Diabetes Australia, the Australian Diabetes Educators Association, Australian Diabetes Society and Eli Lilly Australia, recognises the contribution of multiple disciplines working together to improve diabetes health outcomes.

During 2007, judges selected five award recipients nationally, who were filmed on location to produce a documentary about their work. Gathering with recipients and industry representatives for a screening and award night, judges praised the high calibre of all the nominees.

The Inspirational Journeys documentary will be available on an educational DVD soon. If you would like to order your free copy, please contact Lilly on ph: 02 9325 4594.

Angela Blair – engaging young people

A passion for helping children and teenagers to 'live well' with diabetes has seen Credentialed Diabetes Educator Angela Blair attract hundreds of young fans. Working for Diabetes Australia NSW - Hunter Region, Angela is known for her energy, warmth and humour.

Angela took on co-ordinating the region's camps for children with diabetes in 1981. The successful camps run twice a year, alongside a dedicated camp for teenagers, aiming to combine fun with learning about diabetes management.

"My focus is on helping young people manage diabetes in everyday life," Angela said. "They are my unsung heroes, because they understand intimately what it means to live with diabetes."

Angela was nominated by Annabel Thurlow, Credentialed Diabetes Educator, Hunter Area Diabetes Service, and Naomi Malcolm, Accredited Practising Dietitian, Diabetes Australia New South Wales - Hunter Region.



Thyra Bolton – best foot forward

Thyra Bolton is Nurse Coordinator at the High Risk Diabetes Foot Clinic at Sydney's Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. She played a key role in transforming the clinic into a dynamic, nationally recognised, multidisciplinary facility.

Thyra's knowledge of diabetic foot disease and clinical skills are legendary and her clients love her. Thyra is thrilled when a problem is resolved, but equally, is devastated when interventions fail to prevent complications.

Thyra's holistic approach ranges from following clients up at the weekend to organising meals-on-wheels. Senior physicians and surgeons rely on her clinical judgement, often seeking her opinion.

"I am fascinated by the area of wound care. When we have healed the ulcers, I like to say their feet are almost kissable," Thyra said.

Thyra was nominated by Professor Dennis Yue, Head of the Department of Endocrinology at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.



Joanna Delaney – social challenges addressed



A senior Social Worker at the Department of Diabetes and Endocrinology at Princess Margaret Hospital in Perth, Joanna Delaney helps look after 900 children around the State through the service she helped establish.

“Having worked in this area for 20 years, I really love my work,” said Jo. “For me, the role of the family is critical in managing diabetes.”

Jo has helped many families cope with their child’s diagnosis of diabetes, and the many associated social and personal challenges. Jo is committed to ensuring equal access to support services, no matter where families are located, and has helped to set up regional clinics, special educational services, resources and support groups.

Alison Climie, Acting Diabetes Coordinator and Jillian Loveday, Diabetes Educator, both from Princess Margaret Hospital, nominated Jo.

Bernadette Heenan – remote expertise

Credentialed Diabetes Educator Bernadette Heenan takes a tailored approach to diabetes management and education. For her, diabetes management involves a client-focussed approach which empowers them and their health professionals with skills, knowledge, support and organisation tools.

Bernadette regularly organises and provides educational programs for clients and healthcare professionals, participates in clinics for young people and supports remote indigenous people via telephone and videoconferencing.

“I love my job, because I love helping people. If I can make a difference in people’s lives, then I’m happy,” she said.

Seconded to the FNQ Rural Division of General Practice for 12 months, Bernadette is continuing her much-loved work in Cape York Peninsula communities.

Bernadette was nominated by Sandy Jones, Diabetes Educator at Cooktown Multi-purpose Health Service.



O’Brien – indigenous connection



Aboriginal Health Worker Chris O’Brien is the face of the Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service’s commitment to tackling diabetes in Indigenous communities in the region.

Chris’s dedication to improving Indigenous health is matched by his energy for professional development: “My dream is to become one of Australia’s first Aboriginal Endocrinologists,” Chris said.

Indigenous communities identify with Chris, who embraces the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Checks to help clients manage their condition better, often in spite of other significant life challenges. Chris works closely with GPs on managing chronic care plans and coordinating specialised clinics for clients and healthcare professionals.

Chris was nominated by Dr John Watson, Medical Practitioner, Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Service.