



Foster carer an unsung hero finalist

A foster carer who has helped thousands of children in Shepparton and Mooroopna has been named as one of five finalists in the unsung hero category of a prestigious national award.

Anita Pell has spent three decades as a carer, foster care worker and program manager.

Ms Pell has set up a foster care camp to ensure children and their carers can have a well-deserved annual holiday.

The 2013 HESTA

Community Sector Awards Unsung Hero Award recognises individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to enhancing the wellbeing of individuals or communities in need.

Ms Pell began providing emergency care for young children in 1978, before becoming a long-term foster carer for two children, while raising her own three children and pursuing a career in the community sector.

"In the early days, I knew every child and foster carer by name, celebrated their

birthdays and achievements, and was an advocate for their needs. I still go to a lot of birthday parties, debutante balls and weddings, and stay in contact with many of the young people who are now in their 20s," Ms Pell said.

She presently works nationally in developing a new professional model of foster care.

The judges commended Ms Pell as a passionate foster carer, who took up a leadership role in government while continuing to

support families, advocate for improvements to the system, and use her skills and knowledge to implement positive change.

Ms Pell and the other finalists will be flown to Adelaide to attend an awards dinner, where the winners will be announced during the Australian Council of Social Service National Conference on Monday next week.

A \$30 000 prize pool will be shared among the winners.

● **For more information, visit hestaawards.com**