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Resthaven shines in National Awards for Excellence

On Monday 14 September, seven organisations and individuals from across Australia were honoured in the aged care National Awards for Excellence in Perth at the National Conference – Get Up, Stand Up – of the peak body, Aged and Community Services Australia (ACSA). ACSA's National Awards for Excellence recognise outstanding contributions in the field of aged care.

The **Individual Award** went to **Richard Hearn**, Chief Executive Officer of Resthaven, South Australia. Richard was honoured for being a "A true champion for aged care". Richard is passionate about ensuring that older people are recognised for their inherent worth to society and believes that they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. He encourages a focus on positive images of ageing and actively advocates on their behalf for positive change at local, state and national levels.

The inaugural **Media Award** also went to **Resthaven Incorporated**, recognising the proactive Positive Images Campaign to influence how older people are portrayed, perceived and treated in the media and the community - challenging the negative stereotypes of ageing.

Richard said, 'This individual award was completely unexpected. I was not aware that I had been nominated by the state association, Aged and Community Services SA/NT.

'I am humbled by the honour, but appreciate the award. It reflects the opportunities I have been given by Resthaven and the various industry bodies that I have been involved with.

'Most importantly, it reflects the important and great work of Resthaven's staff and volunteers, who make a difference every day through their work with those older people and their family carers receiving our services.

'The combined efforts of so many genuinely caring staff and volunteers remains a key attribute of Resthaven's culture, reflecting our mission to serve older people and respond to their needs.'

'Ageing is not a "one size fits all" experience. There is a rich diversity. Whilst it is true that some people are more physically capable and actively involved until old, old age, others may be less active, yet nonetheless continue to have a critical role in personal and family relationships and in their community. They deserve respect and support when and where it is needed, just as they have supported their communities throughout their long lives.

'I believe that every individual, whether very fit or very frail, has intrinsic worth. To age should be viewed as a "measure of success"; as a time to reflect on significant past and continuing contributions to our community. Old age is a time in which we continue to develop and influence others. It is not a time to focus only on loss and death, which are narrow and rather negative, simplistic aspects of an ageing process. There is much life and sharing left until the final moment.

'I understand that some family members struggle to cope with the changing dynamics and nature of their relationships with older loved ones as their abilities decline. However, in their vital roles as family carers, it is important to maintain strong links with their relatives, even when most frail, or with limited ability to communicate. Connect with their spirit and personality - this unique person - for as long as they are on this earth.

'Governments, advocates, service providers and older people themselves do - and need to - work very hard, to develop and provide the level of resources and support that older people require in their lives at different times.

"Unfortunately, too often I feel that older people are not heard. They deserve an appropriately funded, high quality aged care industry that is able to support them appropriately, when and where they need it.

'Right now, the needs of older people are not being given the prominence they truly deserve. This needs to change and change quickly. All elected members need to hear what all the experts have said – that the funding system is inadequate and services not sustainable. We need to 'Get up and stand up' for older people.

'This is why I have and will continue to actively advocate on their behalf and for the very dedicated and caring people who work in aged care.'

Richard has been with Resthaven since 1986, when he commenced as Regional Director. He was appointed Chief Executive Officer in 1994.

He has been involved with industry bodies for more than 20 years and is currently Deputy Chair and an Executive Member of the state aged care peak body, Aged & Community Services (SA/NT) Inc, an occasional representative on behalf of the sector; lobbying politicians, attending National Peak Body Meetings, Local Industry Representation Meetings, and is involved in National UnitingCare Aged Care networks, responding to Uniting Care Policy Position papers and related lobbying processes. Richard is also on the Board of RDNS.

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