



Media Release

for immediate release



News item from MacDonnell Regional Council released on 4 September 2014 page 1

For further information please contact MacDonnell Regional Council, Communications Officer Darren Pfitzner by phone 08 8958 9608 or email media@macdonnell.nt.gov.au



Local Children's Services Manager a finalist in National Early Childhood Awards



MacDonnell Regional Council's Margaret Harrison is one of five national finalists in the 2014 HESTA* Australian Early Childhood Education and Care Awards.



Nominated in the Excellence in Building Inclusion category of the Awards, by her Director, MacDonnell Regional Council Children's Services Manager, Margaret Harrison said with humility "It's wonderful to see our children so well supported across all the generations in our communities who are embracing our early childhood centres and learnings".



MacDonnell Regional Council delivers local government and social service programs to 13 remote Aboriginal communities across Central Australian. Early Childhood learning is delivered in 10 of the MacDonnell Council communities with over 250 Aboriginal children and their families currently accessing these centres.



Being a national finalist means Margaret is acknowledged in high regard across the country by her industry for her achievements on the ground in MacDonnell Regional Council communities.



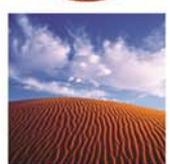
Margaret Harrison is recognised for her work in overhauling MacDonnell Council's early childhood learning centres. Margaret's leadership provided a strong community engagement process that enhanced MacDonnell Regional Council's commitment to the voice of its people.



A number of community meetings were held that informed and transformed MacDonnell Council's Early Childhood model. By empowering local people to have a voice in the design and delivery of their community based Early Childhood learning programs, Margaret responded to their key concerns around family engagement, employment and training.



By understanding the aspirations of community families, Margaret enabled a stronger focus on the qualifications and experience of local people. Today 83 local Indigenous Educators are employed in MacDonnell Council's Early Childhood learning programs. The Indigenous Educators began their Certificate 3 in Children Services training in July 2013 with the first graduates expected later this year.



MacDonnell Regional Council

many voices, one dream, building a quality desert lifestyle



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Margaret also enabled a strong focus on including families and in working with parents and carers through the Early Childhood learning programs. The changes also include a focus on parenting skills and learning so that children continue to learn and develop in their home environment.



Under Margaret's leadership, generations are embracing MacDonnell Council's Early Childhood centres and learnings – children and families accessing centres have significantly increased and staff retention is stable.



In July Margaret Harrison was also invited by the Australian Government Department of Education to join their National Stakeholder Reference Group for Childcare and Early Learning. The reference group meets three times a year and informs the Ministerial Advisory Council for Childcare and Early Learning.



“Council is extremely proud of Margaret's achievements. To be recognised as an Award finalist on the national stage is a reflection of Margaret's outstanding efforts, commitment and dedication in developing an inclusive child-focussed approach that is imperative in providing our children the best possible start in life. She recognises that investing in the family's commitment to early childhood education provides the best opportunity for future success in the education system” Jeff MacLeod, MacDonnell Regional Council CEO said.



Winners of the 2014 HESTA* Australian Early Childhood Education and Care Awards will be announced at the Early Childhood Australian National Conference Award Dinner in Melbourne on Saturday 6 September 2014.



*HESTA is the industry super fund for health and community services.



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