

Media Release

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Unsung Heroes recognised for devotion to rural health

Three people who have devoted much of their time to the service of others will be officially recognised as Unsung Heroes at the 10th biennial National Rural Health Conference in Cairns next week.

On the final day of the four-day event, which starts on Sunday, Peter Sergeant from North Paramatta in NSW will personally accept the 2009 Unsung Hero Award. Joint winners Lynette Clyde, from Port Pirie in South Australia and Uncle Col Walker from Barmah in country Victoria, will be presented with their awards in front of their own communities in June. Garry Orvad from Cooper Pedy and Marj Fraser, from Thorpdale, were highly commended.

“We all know those hard working people who often make up the heart and soul of any community. These amazing people help glue together the social fabric of a small rural or remote community as they work tirelessly for its common good,” said Janie Smith, chair of *friends* of the National Rural Health Alliance, which is hosting the conference in Cairns.

“They make our lives easier and better, often without us knowing it. We cannot survive without them. Now it is time to acknowledge the wonderful work they do through this new award that recognises their selfless efforts and contribution to the health and wellbeing of remote, Indigenous and rural communities.”

Peter Sergeant has been recognised for contributing to men’s health by developing sustainable models of ‘men’s sheds’ for use in country and rural communities including Far North Queensland and in the Torres Strait. Men’s sheds are recognised as a means of delivering medical help and assistance to men suffering isolation, loneliness, mental health issues and providing respite to carers.

Lynette Clyde was recognised for her services to the remote community of Lock, on the Eyre Peninsula, where she went 40 years ago as the wife of the local policeman after completing her nursing training. With the help of the Country Women’s Association a medical centre was built which attracted two GPs. Lynette served there for 30 years until moving to Port Pirie six years ago following the death of her husband. Today she continues to serve the community by baking bread for the disadvantaged, practising pet therapy by taking her dog to nursing homes and reading to elderly and infirm.

‘Uncle’ Col Walker’s contribution has been recognised for work among Koori people, where he is an elder for the Yorta Yorta Nations People. He works on the Koorie Courts at Shepparton District Courts where he assists both the victims and perpetrators of crime, promotes accountability and encourages Aboriginal people to find alternative pathways by reconnecting to their local communities and cultures.

He also worked to form the Batja Men’s Group and helps run its cultural program that assists Indigenous men reconnect to their culture and community.

Contact

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