



MEDIA RELEASE

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Love of rural health is a family affair

In a first for the National Rural Health Alliance support body, "Friends of the NRHA", a family rather than an individual has received the prestigious Unsung Hero Award at the 14th National Rural Health Conference in Cairns.

The Chair of Friends, Robyn Williams, presented Mandy Pusmucans, her husband John Lawrence, and their daughter, Pantjiti Lawrence, from Maffra in Victoria with the Award for their long-term dedication and commitment to the promotion of better health and wellbeing in rural and remote communities.

"The Award is a small way in which Friends can recognise a tiny proportion of those who make a major contribution to people's quality of life in Australia's rural and remote communities," said Ms Williams.

"The Award at this year's Conference has gone to a family in recognition of both their efforts and the importance of the family unit when it comes to health, safety and general wellbeing."

No ordinary family in the world of rural and remote health, both Mandy and John have spent their entire working lives as clinicians and service managers in the sector. Both served with the *Nganampa Health Council* at Umuwa in the APY Lands of South Australia, in Alice Springs, and for extensive and continuing periods in East and Central Gippsland, Victoria.

"In addition, Mandy and John have worked tirelessly for social justice and equity of access for rural and remote communities, particularly for Aboriginal Australians," commented Ms Williams.

"They have also contributed to their respective professional bodies - CRANAPlus, and the National Rural Special Interest Group of the Australasian College of Health Service Management, and have made major contributions to the NRHA, as members of its Council and its Board."

"Surely though, the best and greatest contribution they have jointly made has been to raise and nurture their fabulous daughter, Pantjiti and instill in her a similar commitment to rural health."

Pantjiti is the youngest person to have attended every National Rural Health Conference, the first in Canberra in 2001 while still a baby. Since then she has been a regular contributor to the biennial Conference.

"It's so pleasing that this year it is our Unsung Heroes, plural, a family who have shown how much good can be done in the community by people willing to give, to care and to share - and to adhere to principles of fairness, inclusion and compassion," said Ms Williams.

"The world is a better place for the existence of all such families, to whom we offer our praise and thanks. "

Contacts: Jenny Freeman, Communications Manager, 0408 633 309
Nichole Overall, Media Consultant, 0413 671 123

14TH NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

www.ruralhealth.org.au/conference

Phone: 02 6285 4660 Email: conference@ruralhealth.org.au Web: ruralhealth.org.au #ruralhealthconf