Wednesday, 28 October, 2015

**2015 VICTORIAN EARLY YEARS AWARDS WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

A program that helps new mothers facing mental health issues better understand their child’s needs and a service helping Corangamite children make healthier choices were among the winners of this year’s Victorian Early Years Awards.

Held during National Children’s Week, the awards recognise early childhood professionals, programs and partnerships that have made a real difference to Victorian families.

In their tenth year, the awards celebrate leadership, outstanding achievement, exceptional dedication to improving the health, learning, development and wellbeing of young children and their families.

Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos congratulated the winners in each of the five judged categories and said that they demonstrate the innovative ways services are boosting the health and happiness of Victorian kids and supporting our most vulnerable families.

Ms Mikakos awarded her special commendation to a service helping to support and prepare young Aboriginal mothers during pregnancy for the future relationship with their child.

This year’s awards include two new categories – Outstanding Leadership for Health and Wellbeing and Early Childhood Teacher of the Year.

Winners in each of the categories received $15,000 to support the development of their program. The Early Childhood Teacher of the Year received $10,000.

The Andrews Labor Government is making Victoria the Education State - strengthening early childhood services and supporting its valuable workforce are vital to realising this vision.

A list of awards and winners is below.

**Quotes attributable to Minister for Families and Children Jenny Mikakos**

“Congratulations to all of the winners and nominees, whose work has a lasting impact on children’s lives and make a real difference to Victorian families.”

“We are making Victoria the Education State – high quality early childhood services and a talented and skilled workforce are invaluable to recognising this vision.”

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List of awards and winners

Better access to child and family support, health services, schools and early education and care services

Boorais and Beyond
Hume City Council, Hume Early Years Partnership and Broadmeadows Valley Primary School

Improvements in parents’ capacity, confidence and enjoyment of family life

Best Beginnings
Bendigo Health Psychiatric Services and Maternity Services

Communities that are more child and family friendly

Family health in playgroups
City of Greater Dandenong, South East Melbourne Medicare Local, Dandenong and District Aborigines Co-Operative Limited and AMES – Mums and Bubs Group

Outstanding leadership for health and wellbeing

Heart of Corangamite Network
Corangamite Shire Council, South West Primary Care Partnership, Terang and Mortlake Health Service, Timboon District Health Service, South West Health Care, Beaufort and Skipton Health Services and Cobden District Health Services

Early childhood teacher of the year
Clare Day, Audrey Brooks Memorial Preschool, Heidelberg West
HIGHLY COMMENDED: Mel Simpson, Clarendon Children’s Centre, South Melbourne

Minister’s Award
Bumps to Babes and Beyond
Queen Elizabeth Centre and Mallee District Aboriginal Services

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