



Media Statement

20 November 2023

Inspiring leader takes out dual gongs at 2024 WA Rural Health Excellence Awards

South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS) Chief Executive Officer Ms Lesley Nelson has received top honours at the 2024 WA Rural Health Excellence Awards.

The event, hosted by Rural Health West and WA Country Health Service, celebrates and acknowledges the important contributions made by health professionals in rural Western Australia.

This year's event shone a spotlight on more than 30 health professionals and teams, presenting 12 awards across various categories.

Ms Nelson, who took out the inaugural Aboriginal Health Professional of the Year and the Chairmans' Award, was recognised as a dynamic leader, mentor, and advocate for Aboriginal health.

Currently pursuing a Doctorate at Monash University, Ms Nelson's visionary leadership significantly expanded maternal and child health, mental health, and substance abuse services for Aboriginal communities in the South West.

Rural Health West Chief Executive Officer Tim Shackleton commended Ms Nelson and all the award recipients for their profound impact on the lives of countless people in rural communities.

"These health professionals have worked tirelessly to establish trust and build relationships, not only with their patients but also with their colleagues in the metropolitan area," he said.

"This ensures the delivery of exceptional care in rural and remote locations."

WA Country Health Service Chief Executive Jeff Moffet also extended his congratulations to all the finalists and winners, emphasising the outstanding calibre of health professionals serving in regional WA.

"The inaugural Aboriginal Health Professional of the Year Award allowed us to highlight the outstanding accomplishments of Aboriginal healthcare professionals and Ms Nelson epitomises everything this award stands for," he said.

"I was particularly proud to see the WA Country Health Service TeleChemotherapy team add another accolade to their belt, and for good reason."

“Since its establishment in 2019, the dedicated team of specialist nurses, doctors and pharmacists have improved outcomes and supported around 400 cancer patients to access 25,000 appointments - saving them almost five million kilometres in travel.

“It’s an honour to be able to recognise each and every one of the nominees, finalists and winners who provide outstanding patient-centred care to country communities every day.”

The awards were judged by a panel of clinicians and representatives from rural and health organisations who selected the finalists across twelve award categories.

The WA Rural Health Excellence Awards are proudly sponsored by Aboriginal Health Council of WA, Notre Dame Australia, Curtin University, Edith Cowan University, Royal Flying Doctor Service, WA Primary Health Alliance, St John of God – Bunbury and The Rural Clinical School of WA.

The weekend also played host to the WA Rural GP Summit and WA Rural Health Conference.

2024 WA Rural Health Excellence Award Winners

Award recipient	Award Category
Aboriginal Health Professional of the Year	Ms Lesley Nelson
Allied Health Professional of the Year	Dr Robyn Doney
Clinical Leader of the Year	Mr Paul Ingram
Community Health Professional of the Year	Ms Anne Evans
GP of the Year (Joint winners)	Dr Stephanie Trust and Dr John Rosser Davies
Health Team of the Year	WA Country Health Service - TeleChemotherapy
Nurse or Midwife of the Year	Mrs Michele Harvey
Specialist (Non-GP) of the Year	Dr Sara Armitage
Young Professional of the Year	Miss Tia Brand-Williams
WA Country Health Service Intern of the Year	Dr Mary Plant
WA Country Health Service RMO of the Year	Dr Natasha Bradley
Chairmans’ Award	Ms Lesley Nelson

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Photos and information on individual WA Rural Health Excellence Awards winners is available by request.

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