

MEDIA RELEASE

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Rural health trailblazer urges Western Australians to celebrate our health heroes

In 2009, Dr Christine Jeffries-Stokes AM took home one of the first accolades at Rural Health West's excellence awards.

The Kalgoorlie paediatrician was the recipient for Outstanding Service to Rural and Remote Health at the WA Country Doctors Awards, now known as the WA Rural Health Excellence Awards.

"The award was a lovely recognition. At that time, I was working very hard without a lot of support and with a growing family," the mum of five said.

"Life was pretty rich and full. It really helped to raise the profile of working and living rurally."

The nearly two decades that followed were equally full and rich. Christine was co-lead investigator of the Western Desert Kidney Health Project beside her sister-in-law, Wongutha, Mulba-Ngadu and Anagu woman, Annette Stokes AM. They found nitrate-contaminated drinking water was a contributing factor to higher-than-expected rates of kidney disease and type 2 diabetes in the Goldfields.

She later earned a PhD and was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2024.

Christine credits the 2009 recognition and ongoing support from Rural Health West for helping further her career.

"Rural Health West has been fantastic and supports the remote clinics I run, which are the basis of the community involvement in the research that I've done," she said, explaining she takes medical students out into remote communities.

With nominations now open for the 2027 WA Rural Health Excellence Awards, which is co-hosted by the WA Country Health Service, Christine is encouraging Western Australians to nominate rural health professionals.

"It doesn't cost you anything. It's a really lovely thing that you can do," she said.

“Even being nominated is a great thing. It’s a great recognition for people and encourages them in what they're doing in rural areas, where you don't always get a whole lot of recognition, but you're working really hard.”

Even though the award Christine received in 2009 is no longer up for grabs, there are plenty of categories to choose from.

Members of the public are invited to nominate a health professional in their community for the Health Service Contributor of the Year Award.

If you work in the industry, nominate a colleague, peer or health team and help us say thank you to those who care for our rural communities.

You can register using this link - <https://www.waruralhealthexcellenceawards.com.au/>

2027 Categories:

- Aboriginal Health Professional of the Year
- Allied Health Professional of the Year
- Clinical Leader of the Year
- Early Career Health Professional of the Year
- General Practitioner (GP) of the Year
- Health Service Contributor of the Year
- Health Team of the Year
- Nurse or Midwife of the Year
- Specialist (Non-GP) of the Year

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Media Notes:

***Rural Health West** aims to improve access to quality healthcare for rural communities through the provision of a highly skilled, motivated, and sustainable medical and allied health workforce. We are a not-for-profit organisation primarily funded through the WA Country Health Service and the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.*

***The WA Rural Health Excellence Awards** celebrate the passion, dedication and achievements of health professionals working across country WA. Since 2008, Rural Health West has proudly hosted these annual awards, formerly known as the WA Country Doctors Awards. In 2017, we partnered with the WA Country Health Service.*