

MEDIA RELEASE



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Director of Nursing recognised for being a ‘tower of strength’

Director of Nursing at Churches of Christ Care’s Warrawee Aged Care Services has been recognised for her quick thinking and calm actions in the face of turmoil.

Rebecca Burgess has been named as a finalist in the HESTA Australian Nurse of the Year award, one of six out of 480, in the running for the prestigious award.

When the township of St George was flooded in March 2010, Ms Burgess had two days to coordinate the evacuation of 35 residents to Churches of Christ Care’s Moonah Park Aged Care Services in Brisbane, including organising medications, food and belongings, and informing families of the situation.

Only being in her role for seven weeks prior to the flooding, Ms Burgess was tested as she faced the daunting task of an emergency evacuation in an unfamiliar environment.

Ms Burgess was again tested when St George was once more inundated with flood waters in January, and residents had to be evacuated for the second time in 10 months.

“I was quite taken aback to hear of my nomination, and quite shocked, it was definitely unexpected,” Ms Burgess said.

“I now know what people mean when they say they are happy just to be nominated for awards like this; it’s a privilege to be a finalist.”

Ms Burgess said during the first evacuation they spent hours on the tarmac waiting for the plane and were worried the airstrip would be cut off.

“During the second evacuation we were loading residents onto lear jets every three hours from 10pm at night,” she said.

“The last group flew out to Brisbane around 8am in the morning and I was left to watch the facility, lift up the furniture and feed the animals.”

Ms Burgess said the biggest challenge was to remain calm, keep a level head, and stay positive.

“The importance of staying calm and the effect this had on everyone around me was clearly visible,” she continued.

“Holding it together while others may have been falling apart was essential, as the staff and residents looked to me to give direction and take control of the situation.

“I was an outsider, previously from Scarborough (north-east of Brisbane), when I took the job and I think people were hesitant about how I would go. I feel like I belong now. After coping with two evacuations, I think people know they can trust me.”

MEDIA RELEASE



Churches of Christ Care's Aged Care General Manager Jeanette Evans nominated Ms Burgess for the award.

"Rebecca displayed unparalleled dedication and the utmost professionalism through both of the flooding crises," Mrs Evans said.

"No resident suffered any negative impact because of the evacuations - all were physically, psychologically and spiritually prepared and supported during this time.

"Staff have also indicated that Rebecca was 'a tower of strength' during these trying times, giving them clear and relevant directions, ensuring their safety and comforting them when they experienced loss.

"Churches of Christ Care is extremely proud of Rebecca. Of course we hope she wins, but she is already a winner in our eyes."

The HESTA Nurse of the Year will win \$10,000 in education and travel grants.

The winners will be announced at a gala awards ceremony on 12 May, and Ms Burgess will fly interstate to Melbourne for the event at the Crown Entertainment Complex.

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About Churches of Christ Care

Churches of Christ Care is a division of Churches of Christ in Queensland—a group of churches that is part of the worldwide Christian church.

We strive to create an inclusive, caring, compassionate environment that meets our clients' needs without discrimination or prejudice. Everyone is welcome to call on our help regardless of their religious background.

Churches of Christ Care is one of Queensland's leading providers of early childhood, child protection, affordable housing, retirement living and aged care services. We are a not-for-profit organisation that supports more than 27,000 clients each year in urban, rural and remote areas.

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We operate 137 services throughout Queensland with the support of more than 2,800 staff and over 700 volunteers.

Churches of Christ Care is built on a foundation of Christian values, commitment to quality care, and trust and respect for clients and the community.