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Mental health nurse's compassion earns CHA national award

As Australia continues to try to find ways to help those living with mental illness, the work of St John of God Health Care mental health nurse, Ailsa Tate, over more than four decades has earned her the Catholic Health Australia (CHA) Nurse of the Year award.

Mrs Tate has worked as a triage nurse for eight years at St John of God Pinelodge Clinic, a 56 bed acute mental health hospital that also provides drug and alcohol services in Dandenong Victoria.

CHA Chief Executive Officer Martin Laverty presented the Award to Mrs Tate and recognised her skilful and caring mannerisms that enabled her to quickly connect with her patients.

He said this helped to reduce patient anxiety and fear about going into a psychiatric hospital, and a positive experience on arrival at hospital could underpin a successful engagement and better outcome for the patient.

"Her understanding of people and their illnesses, as well as her very close relationships with the clinic's doctors, means she is able to allocate a patient to the most appropriate doctor to meet the patient's treatment needs and develop a patient-doctor relationship," Mr Laverty said.



“Mrs Tate is able to quickly interpret the level of a patient’s distress during a crisis and make sure that the appropriate services relieve the crisis and, in many cases, save the patient’s life.”

One of Mrs Tate’s advocates is a patient whose sentiments reflect why she was the worthy recipient of the nursing Award.

“Ailsa’s interest in my problems and me as a person helped me to accept that I have needed help and to continue with rebuilding my life. Ailsa seems to have an understanding of what patients need,” he said.

St John of God Health Care Group Chief Executive Officer, Dr Michael Stanford, said Mrs Tate had a long and distinguished track record with the organisation, having worked closely with the Sisters of St John of God at the former Brighton Hospital and now at its Pinelodge Clinic.

“We are extremely proud of Ailsa who has dedicated her nursing career to helping people with a mental illness.

“She has made a difference to countless lives due to her demeanour and empathy, qualities which stand out in feedback from her patients and fellow caregivers,” Dr Stanford said.

The CHA Nurse of the Year award honours an outstanding nurse working in Catholic health and aged care services. It recognises the commitment of a nurse to serving patients with respect and dignity whilst acknowledging their

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individuality. The Award includes a \$5,000 grant from Catholic Super to be used for professional development.

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