



Media Statement

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Community & childcare centres win Consumer Protection Awards

The value of the support that community legal centres provide the WA community has been recognised in the 2017 Western Australian Consumer Protection Awards.

Karen Merrin, who has managed the Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre in Mirrabooka for the past 20 years, has been honoured with the **Rona Okely Award** for an individual who has given their time, energy and experience for the betterment of others. Karen's clients, who include migrants and refugees from culturally diverse backgrounds, receive information and education regarding consumer law and their rights as tenants. The centre also assists the victims of domestic violence and enforces the rights of older people particularly in the area of elder abuse.

Karen was the original Manager of the Mirrabooka centre when it was set up in 1996 with three staff. The centre now also operates from offices in Joondalup and Wanneroo, employing a total of 20 staff, including lawyers, advocates, tenancy workers and client service officers.

Kate Davis from Tenancy WA was a finalist in this category.

The Midland Information Debt and Legal Advocacy Service, better known as Midlas, was awarded the **Richard (Dick) Fletcher Award** for a local government, non-government organisation or group of individuals for their services, initiative or project. The centre has been operating for 25 years supporting vulnerable, disabled and disadvantaged people by providing financial counselling and tenancy advocacy as well as other services.

Cancer Council of WA and the Cocos Keeling Islands Community Resource Centre were finalists in this category.



Good Start Early Learning has taken out the **Kidsafe WA Award** which focuses on the promotion of product safety and injury prevention for children. The national provider of early education and care services operates 52 centres throughout Western Australia. Apart from providing safe play spaces, the organisation utilises its database of more than 5,000 WA families to promote safety information to the community on a range of issues including water safety and the dangers of button batteries. Good Start Early Learning recently partnered with KidSafe to produce an animated video educating children about the prevention of burns.

In the media category, the ABC's national consumer affairs reporter Amy Bainbridge won the **Ruby Hutchison Award** which acknowledges a journalist or media outlet for raising awareness and improving understanding of consumer issues. In the past year, Amy has produced a number of stories for the network's TV, radio and digital platforms on issues which were of particular interest to WA consumers. She has reported on the national campaign, spearheaded by Consumer Protection in WA, warning of property spruikers promoting rent to buy schemes. Other stories related to a WA consumer's complaint about poor internet services in regional areas, the pitfalls of extended warranties as well as highlighting the plight of victims of financial fraud and seniors who live in residential parks.

Chenee Marrapodi (Today Tonight), Laura Gartry (ABC Perth), Nick Sas (The West Australian) and Christine Layton (ABC Albany) were finalists in this category.

The winners were announced during a presentation breakfast at the University Club of WA, the awards ceremony being held on World Consumer Rights Day.

Acting Commissioner for Consumer Protection David Hillyard said it's the 13th year that the hard work and dedication of various groups and individuals in the community have been recognised through the awards.

"A lot of effort goes into educating and supporting people with regard to consumer and tenancy issues and I pay tribute to our partners in the community who do a fantastic job in helping those in need," Mr Hillyard said.

"Four judges carefully considered submissions from 24 nominees to decide on a shortlist of 7 finalists in this year's awards. I would like to sincerely thank all those who nominated and particularly congratulate the winners and finalists."

Further information on the awards can be found on the Consumer Protection website www.commerce.wa.gov.au/cpawards.

END OF RELEASE (Note: pics of the winners are available upon request)

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