



Catholic Social Services  
**Australia**

**SPEECH**

**2010 AWARDS**

**PERKINS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE INDIVIDUAL**

**CANBERRA**

**MONDAY 8 FEBRUARY**

**Presented by**

**PROFESSOR JOHN WARHURST**

**DEPUTY BOARD CHAIR, CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES AUSTRALIA**

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**PERKINS AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE – INDIVIDUAL**

I am delighted tonight to announce the winners of the Perkins Award for Excellence in Service.

This award is presented to an individual who has shown outstanding commitment to service. The award is open to people from our agencies and also to people in the wider community.

The award is presented in honour of Bishop Eric Perkins, who spent his life committed to the Church's outreach to the poor and was the first Victorian priest to qualify as a social worker.

He was ordained a priest in 1940 and in partnership with Monsignor JF McCosker he had a major impact on national Catholic social policy, through peak bodies such as the National Catholic Welfare Committee and its successor the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission.

**Our winner tonight is:**

**DAVID HELMERS, EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE AUSTRALIAN MEN'S SHED ASSOCIATION (AMSA)**

Centacare Hunter Manning has auspiced the Lake Macquarie Shed Project and more recently the Hunter Valley Shed Cluster Group and the Australian Men's Shed Association.

David Helmers has project managed all three programs.

David's commitment, creativity and passion have taken the project from the locally-based Lake Macquarie Shed Project to a regional and a national body.

The Lake Macquarie Shed Project is a unique effort involving Federal, State and local government; businesses, employment service and training providers; not for profit organisations and the community.

It serves the Windale community exposed by Professor Tony Vinson in 1999 as the most disadvantaged postcode in NSW.

The Shed helps unemployed youth, mature aged unemployed people, retirees, young offenders and early school leavers by using skills of older people, providing mentoring opportunities, creating positive, dynamic community partnerships and helping participants to prepare for further education, training and employment.

The success of the Lake Macquarie Shed Project generated significant interest in the region and in 2008 CatholicCare facilitated the inaugural meeting for the network of 16 Hunter Shed projects – the Hunter Valley Shed Cluster Group.

CatholicCare also developed a newsletter which originally aimed to inform the volunteers and their community about shed activities and men's health. This popular newsletter now reaches over two thousand people locally, nationally and internationally, including Member sheds, community agencies and government.

As a result of the phenomenal response nationally, CatholicCare Hunter Manning now auspices the National Men's Shed Association, with over 380 shed project members representing more than 30,000 men.

It has become the largest men's group in Australia.

The newsletter has become the primary communication tool for AMSA.

David's extraordinary capacity for community engagement is central to the success of all three projects.

His relationship with shed volunteers, the business community, prospective partners, government agencies, members of parliament and the shed community throughout Australia is unique.

His dedication to raising the profile of the shed movement makes him very worthy of this award. I give me great pleasure to present this award tonight.

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CONTACT Judith Tokley 0408 824 306 / 02 6285 1366