



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Three Senses' support workers nominated for inaugural awards**

Three of Senses Foundation's dedicated support workers have been nominated for the inaugural and highly prestigious Western Australian Disability Support Worker Awards.

Shauneen Flemming, of St James, has been nominated in the category of Individual Accommodation Support.

Shauneen is a direct support worker who, despite having a hearing impairment herself, has made a tangible difference to the life of a young man who is deafblind and has a range of disorders that cause both physical and intellectual disability.

Accommodation Services Assistant Manager Jodi Perkin says Shauneen is the first support worker who has been able to establish communication with this client, using a combination of lip reading and other forms of technology. She also carries out a range of activities which help stimulate his general development.

"Shauneen has developed a kind and professional relationship with this young man and is able to meet all of his crucial needs and more, despite her own disability," says Jodi. "She is a very unique person and her commitment to this young man is highly valued."

Erin Atkins, of Bertram, is Senses Foundation's nominee in the category of Accommodation Support.

Accommodation Services Manager Garry Parker says despite being in her early 20s, Erin displays initiative way beyond her years.

Just recently she helped a blind client negotiate the purchase of his first property and she also played a key role in helping a significant number of group home residents relocate into independent accommodation.

"This took an enormous personal effort and sensitive handling," says Garry. "Erin is a quiet achiever and approaches her interaction with the people she supports with empathy and compassion."

Senses Foundation's final nominee is Leah Windsor, of Landsdale, in the category of Community Support.

Leah provides in-home intensive family support to a young girl who was born with lissencephaly and has total cerebral palsy, seizures and a complete absence of vision.

“Leah has developed a beautiful, caring and empowering relationship with Lydia,” says Senses’ Respite Co-ordinator Clare Long.

“Lydia has no way of communicating through speech or sound, but Leah is extremely observant and very connected to Lydia and can read her subtle body language and outward signs.

“Leah’s top priority is Lydia and her right to a life that is respected, dignified, diverse and full. It is a privilege to know Leah and witness her sensitivity, deep commitment and connection to this little girl and her family.”

Senses’ Chief Executive Officer Debbie Karasinski says the Foundation is extremely proud of its three nominees who have displayed outstanding commitment and compassion to their clients.

“Support workers like Shauneen, Erin and Leah are worth their weight in gold,” says Ms Karasinski. “We wish them every success with their nominations.”

The winners of the inaugural Disability Support Worker Awards will be announced by Disability Services Minister Simon O’Brien at a gala dinner on February 20. The winners in each category will receive a cash prize of \$2000.

The WA Disability Service Awards are hosted by the Disability Services Commission in partnership with National Disability Services WA and sponsored by St John of God Health Care and Ansvar Insurance.

### **Background information: Senses Foundation**

Senses Foundation was formed when the Royal WA Institute for the Blind - one of WA’s oldest charities - amalgamated with the WA Deafblind Association.

It is now WA’s primary advocate and service provider for people who are deafblind or blind with additional disabilities, providing highly specialised programs and services to improve communication, socialisation, mobility and quality of life for both adults and children.

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