

Nigel Dick AM wins the Prime Minister's award

A tireless worker, who has made a 30 year contribution to reducing the impact and negative effects of drug and alcohol use in Australia, wins the Prime Minister's award for excellence and outstanding contribution in drug and alcohol endeavours. 

Nigel Dick AM was instrumental in establishing Odyssey House in Victoria where he has been a board member for 29 years and chairman for 22 years. In that time Odyssey House has saved thousands and thousands of lives. His younger son's addiction issues were part of the reason Nigel decided to help and Odyssey House in Victoria was established because of Nigel's dedication.

A founder of Odyssey House in Victoria — Nigel Dick AM — has won the 2007 Prime Minister's Award for Excellence and Outstanding Contribution in Drug and Alcohol Endeavours at the National Drug and Alcohol Awards.

Nigel has worked tirelessly for 30 years to help people with drug and alcohol issues and his life long dedication to the field has earned him the top honour.

Chairman of the Australian National Council on Drugs, Dr John Herron said "Nigel Dick is an incredible man. Over 10,000 family members and 8,000 clients have been helped during his time at Odyssey House. His dedication is inspiring. He cares deeply about making life better for people and is an extremely worthy recipient of this award. Not only has Nigel made a 30 year contribution to reducing the impact and negative effects of drug and alcohol use in Australia, he was instrumental in founding Odyssey House in Victoria in 1979 and has served on its board for 29 years with 22 years as Chairman."

"During Nigel's time with Odyssey House, more than 5,000 clients have significantly reduced their drug use and crime and over 3,000 long-term unemployed people now work full time. What a remarkable result. We need to remember these are not just numbers and statistics. These are individuals ... people whose lives have changed significantly for the better."

"Nigel has gone above and beyond the call of duty and contributed much more to society than is generally expected of individuals. He has had a significant and positive impact on numerous people's lives, all in a voluntary capacity."

Nigel Dick is a former chairman of HSV 7, Southern Cross Communications and the RACV as well as Chief Executive of GTV 9, TCN 9 and the Broadcasting Corporation of New Zealand.

Dr Herron said "Nigel's younger son faced addiction problems and this was one of the reasons why Nigel became interested in helping out. He read an article in a newspaper about Odyssey House in New South Wales in early 1978 — just after the centre had opened. On the strength of that, Nigel went to Sydney and met with chairman Walter McGrath and executive director Milton Luger. He also met the staff and residents and inspected the facilities. As a result he was instrumental in bringing together a small team of caring citizens to meet with Walter McGrath, and Milton Luger, in Melbourne to start a foundation."

"Without Nigel's involvement, Odyssey House Victoria would not exist as it does today. While he accepts his leadership role he emphasises he shares Odyssey's success with all those who have served as board and

staff members over the years.. Back in 1978, Nigel and others found a property — an ex-monastery in Lower Plenty — and despite having no funding negotiated its purchase (with the help of the ANZ Bank) and approached the then Premier (Rupert Hamer) with a submission and secured 3 years' worth of funding. Nigel organised major promotional campaigns and thanks to the efforts of the board, the debt on the monastery (\$934,000) was repaid in a few years. In the early days, Odyssey House Victoria was the only treatment program in Melbourne of its kind. Odyssey had as many as 165 residents at one time in its Lower Plenty site. Nigel, the board and the staff never turned anyone away.”

“Along with other board members he sat in on groups and generally took part in Odyssey activities. He became a “role model” counsellor for senior residents. He spent considerable time talking about Odyssey to various groups such as Rotary and Lions. He has undertaken countless speaking engagements over the years talking about the Odyssey methodology. He has travelled overseas to study drug and alcohol programmes.”

“In the mid 1980s following interest in an Odyssey programme from a group in New Zealand he supported Milton Luger in the setting up of Odyssey House across the Tasman. He is totally ‘hands on’. Nigel has helped secure \$59 million to operate Odyssey. This \$59 million has returned over \$200 million benefits to Australians in reduced health costs and crime impact.”

“His work in bringing residential drug treatment to the bush in regional Victoria has been amazing. Under his chairmanship Odyssey fought to get a permit for Odyssey to use a property near Benalla for drug treatment, taking Odyssey’s appeal to VCAT. He sat through every session and was involved in the long and drawn out legal process. An amazing commitment from a man with absolute dedication.”

Dr Herron added, “Nigel is pro-active and ‘hands on’. His philosophy is simple, “A Hand Up, Not A Hand Out.” He remains incredibly humble and full of praise for the input and involvement of his colleagues in what he has achieved. He has made an outstanding contribution to drug treatment in Australia, helping to transform the lives of thousands. He is truly a very worthy recipient of the Prime Minister’s Award For Excellence And Outstanding Contribution In Drug And Alcohol Endeavours”

You can contact Nigel Dick direct by calling 03 9830 1611 or 0418 369 631

Media enquiries to Ross Woodward on 0409 420 112