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Case Study

2005 NATIONAL AUSTRALIA BANK VOLUNTEER AWARDS

State Winner Northern Territory – Health and Wellbeing Category
Scarlet Alliance - NT, Darwin

NT volunteers help put sex workers first

Without a dedicated and passionate group of volunteers, the Scarlet Alliance would never have got its start in life – an important fact when you consider the significance of what they do, working to improve the wellbeing of sex workers throughout Australia.

That makes their announcement as state winner in the Health and Wellbeing Category of the 2005 National Australia Bank Volunteer Awards all the more important.

With representatives in every Australian state, the Scarlet Alliance is made up of sex worker organisations, groups and projects. In the Northern Territory, those representatives perform a variety of roles, including writing submissions and representing sex workers at a policy level.

And because there are only a few paid staff members nationally, all of the Scarlet Alliance positions in the NT are filled by volunteers. This means the team of five is responsible for everything from communicating with the media, to organising the financial concerns of the organisation and making strategic decisions.

Alina Thomas, Secretary of the Scarlet Alliance, said she is constantly amazed by the dedication of the NT team of volunteers. "They're such an amazing group of people and are dealing with some incredibly important issues – issues that if we weren't tackling them, no one would."

According to Ms Thomas, winning the Award is valuable recognition of the work that the volunteers do and the results they've achieved to date. "I think it means that finally, we've received some external acknowledgement that our role in society is both valued and important," she said.

Ms Thomas added that an Awards program like this gave credit to the thousands of volunteers all over Australia. "I think volunteer work sometimes carries a stigma – that it's something you do if you can't find other work. But that's so far from the truth. A huge amount of legitimate work is being done by volunteers."

The \$7,000 prize money will be put towards establishing a partially-paid volunteer coordinator position for the Scarlet Alliance.

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