The Territory’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners were in the spotlight tonight as Health Minister Robyn Lambley presented the profession’s top award at a special ceremony at Parliament House.

“Nominated by their colleagues, communities or patients for their commitment and excellence in their chosen field of practice, the annual awards are a great honour and recognise the important role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners in contributing to greater health outcomes in the NT,” Mr Lambley said.

“Whether in urban, rural or remote regions, these individuals are an integral part of our health system. This is especially true in the remote setting where they develop and maintain strong relationships in their communities.”

The 2013 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner Excellence Awards attracted an impressive field of 33 nominations from across the NT.

Joyce Bohme, of the Maningrida Health Centre, took out the top honour, the ‘Legend’ Award, for being a role model within her community during her 25 years in the position. She also won the Remote Health Award.

“Joyce is highly respected for her dependability and resourcefulness and is treasured for the work she does in the community,” Mrs Lambley said.

The Urban Award, presented to Dorothy Butler of Katherine this year, acknowledges health practitioners who face different challenges to their remote counterparts, servicing larger and more diverse communities with a number of different languages and cultures.

Numbulwar’s Rhonda Simons was the recipient of the Specialised Award which recognises leadership in a specialised field such as research, education or community development. Rhonda has worked in the speciality area of child health for the past four years in her community.

The New Practitioner Award for outstanding service in the early years was presented to Emslie Lankin, of the Central Australia Remote Health in Alice Springs.

“Congratulations to all nominees, finalists and winners, and thank you to all of our Indigenous health Practitioners who continue to perform a vital function in our health system,” Mrs Lambley said.

The awards are an ongoing initiative of the Rotary Club of Darwin Sunrise in partnership with the Department of Health, United Voice NT, Department of Health and Ageing, and AMSANT.
Category winners:

**Remote**
Joyce Bohme (winner), Maningrida Health Centre
Josephine Appo (highly commended), Elliott Health Centre

**Specialised**
Rhonda Simons (winner), Numbulwar Health Clinic
Alicia Ross (highly commended), Don Dale Centre, Berrimah

**Urban**
Dorothy Butler (winner), Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service, Katherine
Dwayne Pearce (highly commended), Alice Springs Hospital

**New Practitioner**
Emslie Lankin (winner), Central Australia Remote Health, Alice Springs

**Media Contact:**
Georgia McCabe 0438 384 506