Hocking Fellowship 2014 announced:

Inaugural Hocking Fellow, Sonia Neale, to focus on support for people living with borderline personality disorder

The inaugural Hocking Fellowship has been awarded to Western Australia’s Sonia Neale, who will receive a grant from the national mental health charity, SANE Australia, to promote improved understanding of, and services for, people affected by borderline personality disorder (BPD).

Mrs Neale, a Mental Health Peer Support Worker in Perth with personal experience of BPD, will travel to Europe and the United States to study world-leading treatments for the condition, including dialectical behaviour therapy, mindfulness, and peer support programs.

'It is an honour to be chosen for SANE’s Hocking Fellowship. I feel privileged to receive the award which will enable me to embark on several creative initiatives supporting people with BPD,' Mrs Neale said.

Mrs Neale will visit leading mental health experts at the University of Washington, the University of Massachusetts, the National Education Alliance for Borderline Personality Disorder, and the Peer-to-Peer and Connection services run by the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI).

'My work will focus on establishing new services to support people, destigmatising BPD, as well as debunking age-old myths and stereotypes of what people living with BPD look and behave like,' Mrs Neale explained.

'Australia has some great general and illness-specific mental health services that help many people achieve recovery, but there appears to be a scarcity of support and resources dedicated to people suffering from BPD who make up around 2-6% of the population.'

As well as investigating best-practice initiatives, Mrs Neale will work with SANE Australia to improve understanding and support for those affected by BPD through development of information resources and services in this area, including involvement in SANE’s new online peer-support forums being launched later this year.

With over 70 applications for this inaugural Fellowship, the number received, as well as their quality, was very high. The Board of SANE Australia was unanimous, however, in selecting Ms Neale and her project on this much misunderstood and neglected area.

'I am passionate in promoting the message that with the right treatment, the right therapeutic support, empathy and understanding, recovery from this disorder is possible,' Mrs Neale said.

Read more about borderline personality disorder.
The Hocking Fellowship

The aim of the Hocking Fellowship is to promote better mental health of Australians through advancing the public understanding of mental illness, of how treatment and support can be improved, and how all those affected, including family and friends, can be empowered to help themselves.

The Fellowship celebrates the contribution of Barbara Hocking OAM (Executive Director of SANE Australia 1995-2012) in her work towards a better life for all people affected by mental illness.

Sonia Neale

Sonia Neale is married with three adult children and works as a Peer Support Worker at Uniting Care West in Western Australia. She is the author of two books, *Bad Mother’s Revenge* and *Death by Teenager*, and a former radio spot presenter with 720 ABC Perth.

Sonia is currently studying for a psychology and counselling degree. She enjoys bike riding, bush walking, yoga and photography and recently climbed the Routeburn Track in New Zealand with her husband of thirty years.