Frances Diver championing the region's health services

Having been welcomed to her role as chief executive of Barwon Health in April, 2019, Frances Diver had a myriad of challenges awaiting her leadership experience.

An exceptional show of resilience, determination and expert management has led Frances to being named the 2021 Business Leader of the Year at the Geelong Business Excellence Awards.

Following a major cyber security incident in October, 2019, which saw hospital ICT systems cut off for an extended period, Frances continued to display a levelheaded approach to forming and executing strategies to overcome challenges and lead Barwon Health to deliver on its vision for the future.

Prior to the virtual awards night being held on Tuesday, October 19, Frances was contacted by the Geelong Chamber of Commerce and notified that she had been nominated by her team for the 2021 Business Leader of the Year Award, sponsored by Bay 93.9FM.

"Considering the fact that I'm still fairly new to the Geelong region, I was delighted and thrilled to be acknowledged as an award nominee, even as a new arrival," Frances explains.

Of the application and entry process, Frances says it was a great experience to step back and review all the success she has achieved as head of Barwon Health.

"It was a really good opportunity for me to reflect on my own leadership, on what I had achieved and what drives me as a leader," she says.

"I was interviewed by the judging panel and we had a really enjoyable chat over Zoom, it was really good to be forced to articulate what I'm on about from people external to our organisation."

Having initially started her career in the health industry as a nurse and midwife, Frances impressed the judging panel through her years of experience in the health care industry – both in a clinical and leadership capacity.

Frances Diver has successfully led Barwon Health through a cyber attack and global pandemic. **Right:** Andy Mathers, general manager of Bay 93.9 FM, presents Frances with the 2021 Business Leader of the Year Award. (Pictures: Supplied)

"Being named as the winner of this award reflects the leadership of the Barwon Health and healthcare workers as a whole and across the community – we can all share the award and the acknowledgement in how we, as an organisation, have responded to the pandemic and other challenges," Frances says.

With recent achievements including the large-scale roll-out of COVID testing, contact tracing and the Barwon South West region's vaccine program, Frances has displayed a natural ability to deal with strategic business operations, governmental politics and positive staff engagement.

Frances' team will be taking her out to dinner in the coming weeks to celebrate her win in a COVID-safe manner. As for what's next, Frances isn't quite satisfied just yet.

"We've had lots of positive feedback from staff and the community, we've been getting some really great comments," she says.

"There's still plenty of work to be done!"

Elle Cecil

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