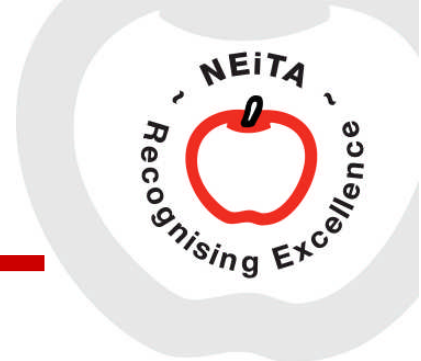


NEiTA MEDIA RELEASE



EMBARGOED UNTIL Friday, 29 May 2009 at 8am

Australia's top teachers receive NEiTA national award

Today NEiTA (the National Excellence in Teaching Awards) with support from the Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) honoured ten of Australia's top teaching professionals at the NEiTA 2008 ASG National Teaching Awards ceremony held in Melbourne.

NEiTA's Chairman, Mr Terry O'Connell, said the 2008 award recipients highlight the diversity within Australia's education spectrum.

"This year's national award recipients all possess passion, skill, and commitment in each of their fields of expertise," he said.

"The teachers come from early childhood to secondary education, across the varying school sectors and encompass the subject areas of special education, literacy, visual arts, information technology, environment, sciences, and even the 'space frontier'.

"What they all demonstrate is an ability to effectively engage their students, school parents and the community with the learning process and this positive impact shows how great teachers change the future today.

"They also represent a fleet of professionals working in some of the most traditionally challenging and under-resourced education environments—they provide learning solutions for those students who face learning difficulties, are educationally disengaged, challenged, and at educational risk," Mr O'Connell said.

NEiTA recognises 'all-sorts' of teaching professionals and the theme of diversity also connects the 2008 national award recipients systemically, physically and geographically:

- Two are from early childhood centres, four from primary schools and four from secondary schools.
- There is a mix of teachers from independent and state school systems.
- There is gender equality—with four male and six female recipients.
- They come from all over Australia—one in Queensland, three in New South Wales, one in the Australian Capital Territory, one in Victoria, one in Western Australia and two from the Northern Territory.

NEiTA 2008 ASG National Teaching Awards will be presented to the teachers listed below. (An in-depth list of National Award recipients, including their profiles, is available from www.neita.com.au):

Early Childhood:

- **Emma Cullen from Abbotsford Long day Care Centre in New South Wales.** Emma uses an Emergent Curriculum style of programming in her classes, which allows children to guide the direction of investigations. By exploring the community with her students, Emma helps children learn about their place within that community.
- **Tonya Wood from Sawyers Valley Primary School in Western Australia.** Tonya works to facilitate the early detection of speech and literacy difficulties among her students. Through her inspirational work in speech therapy, Tonya has achieved a positive increase in phonemic awareness and literacy learning in her classes.

Primary:

- **Helen Armstrong from Bakewell Primary School in the Northern Territory.** Helen works to create an inspiring library environment, where her students participate in programs that are designed to create a lifelong love of reading and learning. Helen has also played a key leadership role in the school's *First Steps Reading and Writing* program—which addresses professional development for teachers, program writing, and community involvement.
- **Phillip Hall from Yarralumla Primary School in the Australian Capital Territory.** Phillip recognises the special needs of students with autism and has developed systems to ensure that his students can achieve their very best. Using techniques such as Individualised Sensory Diets for each student, Phillip helps to reduce the anxiety and sensory issues faced by children with autism.
- **Brian McCallum from Central Coast Grammar School, Erina Heights in New South Wales (now teaching at Holy Cross Primary School, Kincumber in New South Wales).** Brian works hard to continually engage his students and their parents in the learning process by implementing learning partnerships within his school. His involvement with student productions has helped students win the Gosford Mayoral Award for Excellence in Performing Arts, and the National Wakakirri Storytelling Competition.
- **Petrina Prain from Miles State School in Queensland.** Encouragement to strive and succeed plays a large role in Petrina's classroom, with many of her students inspired to take part in public speaking and writing competitions. Petrina also initiated the Miles School Curriculum Framework Renewal process and the school's GOTCHA program, which encourages girls to utilise Information and Communication Technology.

Secondary:

- **Jackie Bell-Warren from Sacred Heart College, Geelong in Victoria.** Jackie has a passion for developing learning programs that empower all students to succeed. She provides lessons with assessment tasks to suit the learning styles and capabilities of all students. Her thoroughly developed units ensure that all pupils are given a course that stimulates, challenges and offers opportunities for students' success.
- **Yvonne McDonnell from Palmerston High School, Darwin in the Northern Territory.** Yvonne has created and implemented several successful programs at Palmerston. The Flexible Pathways program promotes informed decision-making about education and training and has led to a positive impact on student retention rates in years 11 and 12. Yvonne also initiated the school's Work Ready program, which is regarded as one of the best models available in the Northern Territory.
- **Dennis Nguyen from Sarah Redfern High School, Minto in New South Wales (now teaching at: Picton High School, Picton in New South Wales).** In his visual arts classes, Dennis uses positive engagement techniques to help empower his students, and instill in them a sense of self-belief and confidence. Dennis is also a strong believer in the sense of school community and pastoral care—he is a Year Advisor, and takes an active role in extra-curricular activities.
- **Brendon Nutt from Ballajura Community College, Ballajura in Western Australia.** Brendon strives to build robust, confident and successful learners. The mentorship that Brendon provides to his students (at educational risk) is life changing in many instances—it continues to ensure his students complete year 12.

In presenting the national awards, Mr O'Connell commended the positive impact inspirational teachers have on the future of Australian children.

"The NEiTA national awards highlight and celebrate the often-unsung contribution these outstanding teachers make to their schooling communities, and the fundamental role they play in educating our children," Mr O'Connell explained.

ASG established NEiTA in 1994 to help recognise the teaching profession and the important role it plays in the development of young minds. Now in its 16th year, NEiTA has received over 19,000 nominations and provided more than \$600,000 in prizes and grants.

NEiTA's 2009 ASG Inspirational Teaching Awards are now open for nominations for 'all-sorts' of teachers from 'all-sorts' of early childhood centres and schooling communities. More information on the 2009 program is available from the NEiTA website: www.neita.com.au or contact NEiTA on free call 1800 624 487.

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Please note:

- The awards will be officially presented at The Hotel Windsor, Spring St, Melbourne from 12:30pm to 2:00pm, **Friday, 29 May 2009**.
- The ceremony will include a keynote address from the Chair of Early Childhood Education and Care at Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Professor Collette Tayler.
- All media representatives are invited to attend the presentation ceremony. If attending, media representatives are asked to contact PR to advise of their attendance before the event commences.

Interviews, Profiles & Images:

- Award recipients, Professor Tayler, representatives from NEiTA and ASG, are available for interview and photographs at the official awards ceremony on Friday, 29 May 2009.
- Profiles, images and contact details for all national award recipients will be available on the NEiTA website: www.neita.com from Friday, 29 May 2009.

For more information, please contact:

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