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Open invitation for shared learning wins national teaching award

A teacher who advocates for students to become facilitators of their own learning by asking the right questions will receive a national award at the ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards (NEITA) today at a ceremony in Melbourne.

Casey Hawkins who taught at Alyangula Area School in the Northern Territory will join 11 other outstanding educators from across Australia in receiving the top awards. Selected from more than 1100 nominations in 2015, the 12 national award recipients will be honoured for their inspiring and innovative contribution to teaching.

Ms Hawkins taught at the school for 18 months and was nominated by a parent for a Community Engagement Award. She is passionate about supporting as many people on their learning journey and with a mix of local Indigenous Anindilyakwan students and others who have lived in every state and territory, Ms Hawkins proactively determined each of their learning preferences and educational needs.

The grade three/four teacher is also a strong advocate for sharing ideas, stories, tradition and space and providing students with real life experiences.

Ms Hawkins says these learning activities hold purpose within students' lives.

"During my time at Alyangula Area School, I organised a number of excursions which allowed students to learn 'on country,' therefore enabling them to make meaningful connections to their home lives, often resulting in increased participation. I eagerly welcomed the presence and support of local community members to familiarise the students with the culture of the Anindilyakwan people. I ensured cultural differences were respected and I explicitly taught students how to positively interact with presenters and identify what sorts of questions were going to provide them with answers that satisfy their interests."

ASG NEITA Chairman Allen Blewitt says Ms Hawkins is a wonderful ambassador for the teaching profession who made a positive and valuable contribution in a short period of time.

"In Ms Hawkins' video application she also attracted the attention of the Federal Education Minister, Simon Birmingham who posted the video link on his Facebook Page. Ms Hawkins has been described as 'energetic, artistic, warm and encouraging' and established strong connections with the community including business links to mining and developing a working relationship with a traditional owner. With the challenges of working in a remote setting I congratulate Ms Hawkins on her commitment and establishing a positive rapport in the community. Ms Hawkins chose the road less travelled to start her teaching career, and rose to the obvious challenges in an admirable way."

Ms Hawkins says her experience was invaluable.

"With such challenges comes great personal growth as a teacher which is why I strongly advocate that all pre-service and/or graduate teachers gain experience in teaching in a remote setting. I contacted Monash University in Melbourne to recommend and offer teaching placements for fourth year student teachers. Three student teachers participated in a four week placement and I arranged for them to observe lessons and mentored them to plan and teach numerous lessons



Media Release

within my classroom.”

Parents, grandparents, secondary student councils, school boards, councils, parent associations, committees of management and community organisations throughout Australia nominated these inspirational recipients.

Chief Executive Officer of ASG NEiTA, John Velegrinis says the ASG NEiTA recipients make supporting children’s education possible and they understand the huge responsibility of educating tomorrow’s leaders.

“I congratulate Ms Hawkins along with the other NEiTA recipients. It is an absolute pleasure to have them as our ASG NEiTA ambassadors and they represent the true epitome of dedicated teachers who genuinely care about the educational success and wellbeing of their students. They are education heroes in their own right and I am deeply touched when the parents tell us their faith has been restored in the education system when they had started to lose hope.

“Instilling a passion for education and a desire to learn is truly one of the greatest gifts that a young person can receive, while education is one of the most important investments that parents, families and communities can make. This is why ASG NEiTA has thrived for the last 22 years thanks to the contribution of passionate teachers.”

The national awards are divided into three categories: leadership and development, innovation and community engagement. For more information on the 12 national awardees, including profiles go to: <http://www.asg.com.au/neita>

Eleven national award recipients will receive \$5000 professional development grants with one teacher getting the incredible opportunity to go to Space Camp in the U.S. One teacher is also awarded a \$2000 Disability Inclusion Grant.

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Editors notes:

The Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) is a member owned organisation, helping to create educational opportunities for children. ASG has been helping families and their children for more than 40 years. During this time, more than 520,000 children have been enrolled with ASG and more than \$2.3 billion in education benefits and scholarship payments returned to members.

The ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards (NEiTA) started in 1994 in Australia and 1996 in New Zealand. Since inception, more than 30,000 teachers have been nominated by the community in the two countries, with more than 1000 teachers receiving about \$182,000 in professional development grants, prizes and endowments.

For more information visit: www.asg.com.au

