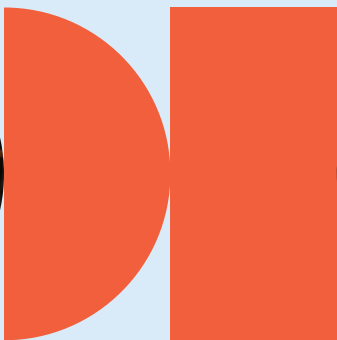




PUBLIC EDUCATION AWARDS 2026

INSPIRING EXCELLENCE





WELCOME



It is an honour and a privilege to welcome you to the 2026 Public Education Awards, held during Public Education Week. This special event is made possible through the support of the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning, the Hon Prue Car, and the Secretary of the NSW Department of Education, Mr Murat Dizdar PSM. We are grateful for their ongoing leadership and commitment to public education.

Public schools are the heart of our nation: places where students from all walks of life come together to learn, grow and imagine new futures. You can gauge the worth of a nation by its education system, and today we celebrate the people shaping that future.

This year's theme is Inspiring Excellence. It is a theme that lives in classrooms and staffrooms and school offices across New South Wales, in the teachers, the principals and the people across the Department of Education who work quietly behind the scenes to make sure every student gets what they need. These are the people who raise the bar every day, not because anyone is watching, but because they believe all children and young people deserve an education Australia can be proud of. Our public schools are part of our community, and the parents and volunteers who support them are a fundamental part of what makes our schools so special.

At the Public Education Foundation, our purpose is to support and celebrate the best of schooling, which is without doubt our public schools. The Public Education Awards are a major highlight in our annual calendar, a moment to honour the extraordinary achievements and stories that define our schools and communities.

We recognise the Ongoing Custodians of the lands and waterways where we work and live. We pay respect to Elders past and present as ongoing teachers of knowledge, songlines and stories. We strive to ensure every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learner achieves their potential through education.

This year's Awards reflect the depth and breadth of excellence across the State.

From initiatives that increase student voice and participation to programs connecting students with Country, immersive education for all, and efforts integrating STEM, design thinking and communications with improving literacy and student engagement, these stories remind us of the powerful role public education plays in creating opportunity and belonging.

Over 15 years, we have granted thousands of scholarships, opening pathways that might have otherwise stayed closed. If you know a student or educator whose potential could be unlocked with support, or if you'd like to invest in public education, **visit publiceducationfoundation.org.au**.

Thank you for joining us in celebrating the people and programs that are inspiring excellence in public education. We hope today reminds you of what is possible when a whole system, teachers, principals, department staff and community, works together for every child.

We hope you enjoy the event.

Dr Manisha Amin
Chief Executive Officer

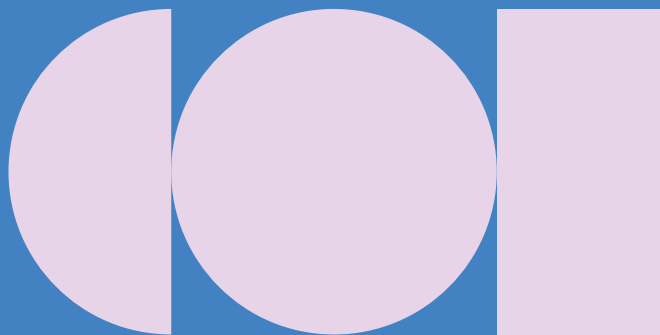
PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY:



CITY OF SYDNEY

The Public Education Foundation would like to thank the City of Sydney for their support and for allowing us to use the Sydney Town Hall.

ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS



Arrival Entertainment

The Millenium Marching Band

Pre-Show Entertainment

NSW Public Schools String Quartet

Welcome to Country

Craig Madden

Performance

NSW Public Schools Aboriginal Dance
Company Events Troupe

Welcome

Ashleigh Raper

Opening Remarks

Dr Manisha Amin
Public Education Foundation CEO

Minister's Address

The Hon. Prue Car, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early
Learning and Minister for Western Sydney

Award Presentations

Minister's Awards for Excellence in Student
Achievement

Minister's Awards for Excellence in Teaching

Student Speech

Clem De Vos
Ballina Coast High School

Performance

Junhyeok Cho

Secretary's Address

Murat Dizdar
Secretary of the NSW Department of Education

Award Presentations

Secretary's Award for Diversity, Inclusion
and Belonging

Secretary's Award for Living Our Values

Inspiring Excellence Content Creator
Competition

Secretary's Award for Excellent Service

Secretary's Outstanding School
Achievement Award

Secretary's Unified Commitment Award

Public School Parent and Volunteer
of the Year Award

Alumni of the Year

Outstanding Advocate for Public Education

Performance

Schools Spectacular Featured Artists
and Dancers

The Public Education Foundation thanks
the students from:

- Sydney Girls High School
 - Fort Street High School
- who have volunteered their time as ushers
at this event.

MC – Ashleigh Raper



Ashleigh Raper is Network 10's Political Editor. She was previously the ABC's NSW State Political Reporter. She's been a Triple J newsreader, the face of ABC NSW Covid coverage and regularly provides political analysis on radio, tv and podcasts. Ashleigh's been in the White House Rose Garden asking a question of President Biden, in the cabinet room when the PM met President Trump, in the UN General Assembly and inside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Ashleigh is the first female to be appointed as a political editor on Australian commercial television and is a proud Manly High girl.

Monday 3 August 2026
Sydney Town Hall

The Arts Unit

The Arts Unit offers high-quality programs and experiences available to all students in NSW public schools. These opportunities highlight the unique strengths of local communities and help create rich and vibrant school cultures. Engaging in the arts and co-curricular activities improves student wellbeing and boosts academic success by fostering self-expression, collaboration, critical thinking, and a sense of belonging.

Students from Kindergarten to Year 12 participate in programs in dance, drama, music, visual arts, debating, public speaking, spelling, literary arts, film, and zoo education. They can take part in performances, festivals, ensembles, exhibitions, workshops, competitions and camps, and access digital resources.

The initiatives are created in collaboration with educators and industry professionals to provide genuine learning experiences and support meaningful post-school pathways. Additionally, The Arts Unit offers professional development to enhance teachers' skills and support high-quality arts education throughout NSW.

To find out more, visit artsunit.nsw.edu.au or scan the QR code.



Performers

Millennium Marching Band

The Millennium Marching Band is a NSW Public Schools student ensemble that performs at major state events including the Schools Spectacular, the Sydney Royal Easter Show, ANZAC Day marches, and other key events. Known for its powerful sound and polished visual style, the band brings together dedicated young musicians from across NSW. Members rehearse intensively to deliver high quality performances that showcase the calibre of NSW public education students. Students are trained by Katrina Andrus with the ensemble promoting teamwork, discipline, and musical excellence. It remains one of NSW's most recognisable youth marching groups.

NSW Public Schools String Quartet

The NSW Public Schools String Quartet is a small chamber ensemble comprising of four highly trained musicians. From classical to contemporary, the quartet's skilled musicianship promises a captivating performance, with its polished professional sound and challenging repertoire.



The Millennium Marching Band.

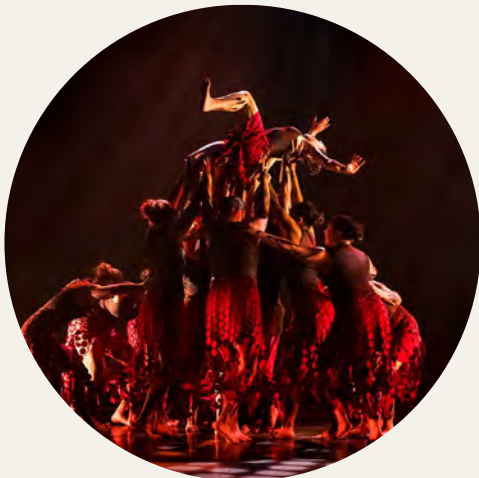
NSW Public Schools Aboriginal Dance Company Events Troupe

The NSW Public Schools Aboriginal Dance Company Events Troupe is an ensemble of five young, high potential and gifted students from various public schools around NSW. The students embody the rich cultural heritage and storytelling traditions of Aboriginal Australians through dance and storytelling. Each member brings unique skills, culture and identity, creating a dynamic and engaging performance experience that is entirely student-led.



Junhyeok Cho
Normanhurst Boys High School

Junhyeok Cho is a Year 10 student at Normanhurst Boys High School with a growing reputation as a vocalist and performer. He has been selected as a featured vocalist for the 2026 Schools Spectacular and has taken on lead acting roles in the Combined Schools' Musicals for two years running. Most recently, he was the featured soloist for the "Libera Me" from Faure's Requiem for



NSW Public Schools Aboriginal Dance Company Events Troupe.

The Arts Unit's Secondary Choral Festival In Concert program at the Sydney Opera House. Taking on some of the most iconic, challenging repertoire, Junhyeok continues to impress as a rising star of the Australian music industry scene.

Schools Spectacular Featured Artist Finale

Representing some of the most gifted artists from NSW public schools, this ensemble of Schools Spectacular featured vocalists and dancers presents an uplifting performance to *Joy* by RAYE.

The performance is choreographed by lead vocalist Micah June, a Year 11 student at Newtown High School of the Performing Arts. Having performed and choreographed from a young age, Micah was thrilled to be selected to lead this collaboration with talented primary and secondary students from across the state.

Drawing on her creativity, experience and passion for performance, Micah has inspired an entirely student-led performance bursting with energy, connection and celebration. The result is a vibrant finale that perfectly captures the spirit of *Joy*.



School Spectacular image by Anna Warr. ©

AWARD RECIPIENTS



Excellence in Student Achievement

Minister's Award for Excellence in Student Achievement

Recognising outstanding high school students who have excelled in their secondary years across academic excellence, sports, cultural, community or leadership.

Yousef Al Masri

Miller Technology High School

Taim Jasim Shimal Al-Dayynei

Merrylands High School

Isaac Jin Anh

Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College – The Entrance Campus

Michaela Cairns

Vincentia High School

Marley Chapman

Wagga Wagga High School

Stephani Chow

Strathfield Girls High School

Mischa Cooray

Northern Beaches Secondary College – Mackellar Girls Campus

Clem De Vos

Ballina Coast High School

Andrew Dharma

North Sydney Boys High School

Ilisapesi (Elizabeth) Foiakau

Canley Vale High School

Elijah Freeman

Penrith High School

Jessica Friend

Wagga Wagga High School

Addison Goldie

Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College – The Entrance Campus

Selina Ha

Canley Vale High School

Shakira Hargrave

Ballina Coast High School

James Yu Huang

North Sydney Boys High School

Reet Kanda

Penrith High School

Harsameep Kaur

Girraween High School

Emily Knight

Koorringal High School

Jacinta Kong

James Ruse Agricultural High School

Mikayla Mantua

Rooty Hill High School

Stefanie Meissel

Canterbury Girls High School

Lachlan Miles

Koorringal High School

Tarini Musuwadi

Merewether High School

Syedda Nazeeya

Macarthur Girls High School

Cindy Nguyen

James Ruse Agricultural High School

Benjamin Oraham

Prairiewood High School

Xenia Palmer

Sydney Girls High School

Rhitika Patel

Girraween High School

Anisha Ranasinghe

Warners Bay High School

Nashariah Reese

Callaghan College – Jesmond Senior Campus

Nathan Rose

Bomaderry High School

Kate Scholtens

Northern Beaches Secondary College – Mackellar Girls Campus

Isobel Sillar

Lambton High School

Dion Stefanis

Canterbury Girls High School

Romaine Trenerry

Denison College of Secondary Education – Bathurst High Campus

Charlotte Wheeler

Elderslie High School

Nicholas Whitney

Northern Beaches Secondary College – Manly Campus

Alisha Woo

Sydney Girls High School

Georgia Young

Lambton High School

Grace Zarb

Fort Street High School

Excellence in Teaching

Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching

Recognising teachers who deliver the highest quality education to their students and contribute to their professional communities.

Selina Ash

Denison College of Secondary Education – Kelso High Campus

Simon Bale

Cambridge Gardens Public School

Jane Bluett

Condell Park Public School

Gabrielle Borrelli

Merewether High School

Melissa Jane Brown

Wagga Wagga High School

Beth Chappell

Narrandera High School

Annette Curmi

Prairiewood High School

Adrian Elphege

Elderslie High School

Rosemary Henzell

Canterbury Girls High School

Ellanor Kanaan

Burwood Public School

Elisa Lao

Lansvale Public School

Rebecca May

Dubbo College Senior Campus

Emily McDonald

Jerrabomberra High School

Alison Pool

Prairiewood High School

Michelle Randall

Mulwaree High School

Joanne Rice

Kearns Public School

Daniel Sharp

Kandeer School

Chloe Smith

Galungara Public School

Roger Thompson

Miller Technology High School

Jady Walker

Mount Annan High School

Cindy Yang

Revesby Public School

Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging



Secretary's Award for Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging – Finalists

This prestigious award recognises and pays tribute to NSW Department of Education employees who proactively advocate for and celebrate diversity, inclusion and belonging.

Inclusion without Limits: Creating a School Where Every Student Belongs – Sarah Redfern Public School.

Kim Barber

Braille and Large Print Service

Abbie Hamilton

Gledswood Hills Public School

David Houghton

Waterfall Public School

Rizwana Khan

Acting Senior Policy Officer

Asha Lambert-Patel

Kingscliff Public School

Jess Moore

Manager – Equity and Inclusion

Living Our Values

Secretary's Award for Living Our Values – Finalists

Recognising the Department's support staff and teams who contribute to the NSW Plan for Public Education in service of success for our learners by demonstrating the Department's values of accountability, equity, excellence, integrity, service, and trust.

Excellence

Aboriginal Education and Communities Directorate
Year 1 Number Screening Check

Equity

Mary Ann Binder
Interpreting and Translations Advisor

Literacy and Numeracy:
Building a trauma-informed workplace team

Pilot sponsorship program to support women with disability and from CALD backgrounds

Accountability

Jenni Pendergast
Manager Right to Access
100 Public Preschools program team

Service

Rachael Tuilaselase
Paralegal Officer, Commercial
Vera Szyjan
Project and Governance Officer
School Website Upgrade Team
School Workforce Recruitment Team

Trust

Katie Cherrington
Anti-Racism Education Advisor
K-6

Breaking Barriers team
Toolkit for new schools and upgrades

Integrity

Renee Camilleri
Manager, Change Impact
On Schools

Professional and Ethical Standards – Support Services

CoS (Community of School) We Care Initiative – Koorringal High School and local public schools.



Content Creator Competition

Inspiring Excellence Content Creator Competition

Part of the Inspiring Excellence campaign, this statewide competition celebrates the creativity and storytelling of NSW public schools, recognising authentic social media content that showcases the achievements and moments that inspire excellence.

Mount Ousley Public School
Overall Award

Coomealla High School
Mind Blown Award

Riverbank Public School
Squad Goals Award

Camden Haven High School
Mic Drop Award

To be announced
Viral Vibes Award

Excellent Service

Secretary's Award for Excellent Service

Recognising NSW Department of Education employees (teaching and school operations) who have shown outstanding effort in improving the quality of teaching, learning outcomes and/or school environments in the NSW public education sector.

Casey Bertucci
Miller Technology High School

Leanne Cattell
Koorngal High School

Danielle Cox
Koorngal High School

Chloe Fitzgerald (nee Nuttall)
Thomas Reddall High School

Liza Hamilton
Maclean High School

Rachel Linsell
Willans Hill School

Vicki Miedler
Fairfield Public School

Arti Naidu
James Meehan High School

Rebecca Phillips
Kearns Public School



Alumni Learning Labs and HSC support – Penrith Selective High School.

Outstanding School Achievement

Secretary's Award for Outstanding School Achievement

This prestigious award recognises NSW public schools that have successfully created a sustainable learning environment through a whole-of-school project or via a specific program. Schools receiving this award must demonstrate significant improvements in learning outcomes, excellence in student learning and community leadership.

Ballina Coast High School

School Transformation Through Student Partnerships

Canley Heights Public School

Canley Vale Public School

Harrington Street Public School

Lansvale Public School

Smithfield Public School

Early Learners Transition Project

Cessnock High School

Explicit Teaching with a Literacy and Numeracy Focus

Coffs Harbour Senior College

Generative AI in HSC Assessment

Elizabeth Macarthur High School

The Current Reality – ‘viewing practice from a distance’

Finley High School

Early Transition Initiative

Goodooga Central School

Indigenous Games Day

Gulgong High School

School's Attendance Improvement Project

Ingleburn High School

Explicit Direct Instruction: Shared language. Shared practice. Shared responsibility.

Jerrabomberra High School

Pathways for Success Initiative

Kirrawee Public School

Makerspace

Koorimal High School

Sturt Public School

Koorimal Public School

Lake Albert Public School

CoS (Community of School)

We Care Initiative

Paddington Public School

(for Leadership Team, Bondi, Port Jackson and Kamay Principal Networks)

Burbangana Instructional Leaders Network

Penrith Selective High School

Alumni Learning Labs and HSC Support

Portland Central School

Unconditional Positive Regard: High Support, High Expectations

Sarah Redfern Public School

Inclusion without Limits: Creating a School Where Every Student Belongs

Windang Public School

A Whole-School Journey Towards Excellence

Yowie Bay Public School

Justum Tene Challenge



Indigenous Games Day – Goodooga Central School.



Early Learners Transitions Project – five public preschools within the Fairfield Network.



Paddington Public School (for Leadership Team, Bondi, Port Jackson and Kamay Principal Networks) – Burbangana Instructional Leaders Network



School Transformation Through Student Partnerships – Ballina Coast High School.

Unified Commitment Award

Secretary's Unified Commitment Award

In recognition of the unified commitment of the staff of Randwick High School in supporting the successful merger of two school communities and fostering a cohesive, inclusive, and student focused learning environment.

Randwick High School

Parent and Volunteer of the Year

Public School Parent and Volunteer of the Year Award

The Public School Parent and Volunteer of the Year Award is a prestigious award presented to parents, guardians, caregivers and volunteers who have worked successfully as a partner with members of the school community to achieve the goals and priorities of their local NSW public school.



Nina Nguyen – Harrington Street Public School.

John Bicknell

Mount Annan High School

Grace Guan

Sydney Boys High School

Sabrina Kelly

Kiama Public School

Ann Morey

Orange High School

Nina Nguyen

Harrington Street Public School

Hannah Wallace

Waverley Public School

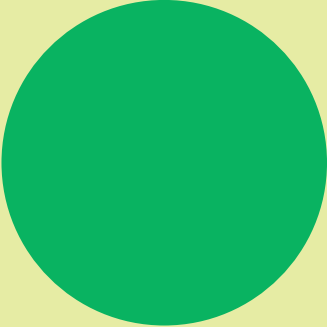
Kathryn Reynolds

Sydney Secondary College
(Balmain, Leichhardt and
Blackwattle Bay Campus)

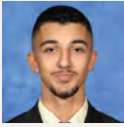
Elizabeth Stubbs

Wyndham College

MINISTER'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



Recipient Citations



Yousef Al Masri
Miller Technology High School

Yousef is a proud product of public education, driven by his philosophy that a student's postcode does not define their potential. As 2025-2026 School Captain, Year 11 Dux, two-time national scholarship recipient and 2026 NSW Training Awards Regional Finalist, he epitomises the transformative power of public education. His leadership across the SRC, Liverpool Youth Council and the Liverpool Youth Action Group demonstrates his commitment to youth advocacy and student voice, earning recognition in the NSW Parliament. As a Youth Ambassador and volunteer for the Community Café Outreach Service, he serves his community with compassion.



Taim Jasim Shimal Al-Daynei
Merrylands High School

Taim has flourished within her school community, consistently demonstrating commitment and dedication through a wide range of opportunities including the Student Representative Council, Leadership Team, Wellbeing Days, Orientation Days, Talent Quests, Harmony Days and an Accelerated Course. Her academic excellence and maturity are reflected in her drive to achieve and her commitment to promoting integrity in all aspects of her life. Her story embodies unwavering courage, dedication and respect, and she continues to inspire those around her through her positivity and care.



Isaac Jin Anh
Tuggerah Lakes Secondary
College – The Entrance Campus

Isaac is an outstanding scholar and school leader who displays academic excellence across all his subjects, with a particular passion for mathematics and science. He consistently ranks first in all courses and has

earned numerous Excellence Awards, including the Year 11 Dux. Recognising that many students had not effectively learnt how to approach studying, Isaac developed a lecture series called The Climb to share insights and proven study methods from high-achieving students, past and present, boosting morale and empowering peers to reach their academic goals.



Michaela Cairns
Vincentia High School

Michaela is a student of extremely high integrity who applies herself conscientiously to both her schoolwork and community activities. An outstanding role model across the communities served by her school, she has demonstrated this through her active participation as a school leader in 2026, giving voice to the views of students across the school community. Michaela's achievements make her a most deserving recipient of this award.



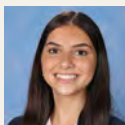
Marley Chapman
Wagga Wagga High School

Marley has consistently demonstrated the values of NSW public education throughout her time at Wagga Wagga High School. She is an outstanding student, well respected by peers and staff alike for her honesty and responsible approach to all aspects of school life. Her strong sense of fairness and social justice reflects a genuine empathy for others, regardless of their background. Marley exhibits outstanding personal qualities of honesty, integrity and determination, making her a highly deserving recipient of the Minister's Award for Excellence in Student Achievement.



Stephani Chow
Strathfield Girls High School

Stephani is an inspiring School Captain and exemplary role model, celebrated for her achievements in academics, culture, creativity and service. Her leadership is reflected in her long-standing involvement with the Australian Girls Choir and her passionate advocacy for women through ZONTA. Stephani has earned prestigious academic awards and demonstrated outstanding leadership on the Strathfield Youth Advisory Board and at the Public Schools Teaching, Learning and Wellbeing Summit. Her dedication to community programs and fundraising has made a significant impact at Strathfield Girls High School and beyond. Stephani's commitment, leadership and service embody true excellence, making her a deserving recipient of the Minister's Award for Excellence in Student Achievement.



Mischa Cooray
Northern Beaches Secondary
College – Mackellar Girls Campus

Mischa is an outstanding student whose exceptional academic achievement, cultural excellence and leadership have made a significant contribution to the Mackellar community. As School Captain and Peer Support Leader, she has demonstrated integrity, compassion and a strong commitment to service. A highly accomplished dancer, Mischa has represented her school at the Sydney North and NSW State Dance Festivals, Schools Spectacular and international ballet events. Academically, she has excelled in the Gifted and Talented Academic Program and received the Macquarie University Emerging Leaders Award. Mischa exemplifies excellence, resilience, participation and respect



Clem De Vos
Ballina Coast High School

Clem is an outstanding student who has grown into a thoughtful and respected senior leader. He is committed to his learning, has clear aspirations to study law at university and uses his voice to make a positive difference. As School Captain, he leads with

humility, care and a strong sense of service, supporting younger students and contributing to the life of his school. His advocacy around domestic and family violence has helped raise awareness of respectful relationships and encouraged others to stand up for what matters. Clem's resilience, compassion and commitment to social impact continue to inspire those around him.



Andrew Dharma
North Sydney Boys High School

Andrew is a mature and highly capable student who has achieved excellent academic results and is an outstanding ambassador for his school. He has served the school community with distinction in arts, culture and academics. Andrew is the quintessential quiet achiever and a highly valued member of the school community, who always has a smile on his face. He exemplifies excellence, respect, integrity and responsibility. His willingness to actively share his exceptional skills, combined with his humility, cooperation and enthusiasm, make Andrew a most deserving candidate for this important award.



Ilisapesi (Elizabeth) Foiakau
Canley Vale High School

Elizabeth is an exceptional student whose academic excellence, integrity and leadership make her an outstanding recipient of the Minister's Award for Excellence in Student Achievement. Excelling across disciplines, she has secured top rankings in English, History, Legal Studies and Drama, earning numerous First in Course Awards. As 2026 School Captain, she leads with maturity, empathy and purpose, inspiring peers through her example. Her impact extends beyond school through active participation in youth advisory committees and as a Youth Ambassador for Every Home Global Concern, championing humanitarian initiatives and resilience across Pacific communities. Elizabeth exemplifies excellence, service and leadership.



Elijah Freeman
Penrith High School

Elijah exemplifies excellence through outstanding leadership, academic achievement and service. As Vice Captain, he leads inclusive initiatives including R U OK? Day discussions, International Women's Day activities and the Blanket and Beanie Appeal, strengthening student connection and wellbeing. A Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award recipient, Elijah demonstrates resilience through adventurous hikes and a residential service project delivering performing arts experiences to rural students in Broken Hill, all while maintaining exceptional academic success. An accomplished percussionist, he represents his school in prestigious state performing arts programs while mentoring younger musicians and leading peer study sessions that enhance student confidence and engagement.



Jessica Friend
Wagga Wagga High School

Jessica is an exemplary student and genuine all-rounder. She has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to her responsibilities, representing her school and peers with integrity and dignity. Consistently achieving at an outstanding level across all areas of school life, Jessica has shown leadership and maturity beyond her years, making a significant contribution to her school community. She exhibits personal qualities of honesty, integrity and determination that make her a most deserving recipient of the Minister's Award for Excellence in Student Achievement.



Addison Goldie
Tuggerah Lakes Secondary
College – The Entrance Campus

Addison has distinguished herself through her commitment to excellence in every aspect of her school life. Academically, she has excelled through her drive to achieve at the highest level in both Years 11 and 12, earning top honours. As School Captain across our Middle and Senior campuses, she has championed authentic student voice by establishing impactful Student Voice Forums that have led to school improvements, and by initiating girls' empowerment

groups that foster inclusivity and confidence among all students. Addison's dedication inspires peers and staff alike, making her a shining example of excellence and positive change in our college community.



Selina Ha
Canley Vale High School

Selina is an outstanding student whose passion for academic excellence, leadership and community engagement exemplifies the highest standards of public education. She excels in the dramatic arts, performing in major state events and fostering confidence in young learners. Selina's extensive volunteer work with St John Ambulance, Kids Giving Back and various community initiatives demonstrates her unwavering commitment to service. Recognised as Fairfield City Young Citizen of the Year 2026, she leads environmental sustainability efforts and champions youth empowerment through public health advocacy. Selina's dedication and impact reflect her exceptional character and inspire those around her to strive for positive change.



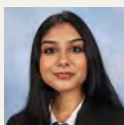
Shakira Hargrave
Ballina Coast High School

Shakira's journey reflects the best of public education. In her junior years, she was not a confident learner. Through the Big Picture Education pathway at Ballina Coast High School, she has demonstrated remarkable resilience, overcoming barriers to learning, engaging deeply with her studies and pursuing a pathway towards Veterinary Science. Her internships with Byron Bay Wildlife Sanctuary and the Seabird Turtle Rescue Centre, alongside study in Animal Studies and a university-level science course, demonstrate purpose, discipline and excellence. A natural leader, Shakira contributes to environmental action and whole-school initiatives with maturity, integrity and impact, and continues to commit to learning and to creating positive change.



James Yu Huang
North Sydney Boys High School

James' diverse initiatives demonstrate his achievements across academic excellence, leadership, community commitment and service to others. Each role he has undertaken reflects clear evidence of impact, responsibility and sustained engagement, affirming his exceptional contribution to his school and wider community. He exemplifies his school's values of camaraderie, commitment, compassion, integrity and respect in all aspects of his life, both within and beyond the school. James puts his beliefs and passion into action, making the world a better and more compassionate place.



Reet Kanda
Penrith High School

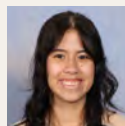
Reet exemplifies academic excellence and visionary leadership through sustained contributions to a whole-school culture of learning. As Academic Prefect, she established student-led seminars that strengthen student assessment readiness, study strategies and confidence in the humanities, enhancing engagement and peer collaboration. She led the inaugural Subject Selection Expo, supporting Year 10 students to make informed and strategic HSC pathway decisions. Through five years of Model United Nations participation, she has expanded student engagement in academic discourse and developed critical thinking across cohorts. Reet also co-hosts The Penrith Perception podcast, fostering meaningful conversations about school life, co-curricular programs and alumni experiences.



Harsameep Kaur
Girraween High School

Harsameep is a remarkable student who excels academically while actively engaging in cultural, sporting and leadership pursuits. Her consistent academic excellence, multiple awards across her school subjects and successful completion of Accelerated Science highlight her academic strength. As Prefect, House Leader and leader within numerous school programs, Harsameep inspires her peers with

dedication, warmth and integrity. Her commitment to Bhangra dance, netball and community service, alongside her respectful and positive attitude, makes her an exemplary role model. Harsameep truly embodies the values of NSW public education through resilience, leadership and outstanding contribution to school life.



Emily Knight
Koorinal High School

Emily Knight is an exceptional young leader whose achievements embody the very best of public education. As School Vice Captain, mentor, scientist, performer and community volunteer, she consistently demonstrates excellence, integrity and service. Emily's academic success is matched by her commitment to supporting others through peer mediation, student leadership and mentoring more than 300 primary students through innovative community projects. Her achievements in STEM are equally impressive, including national recognition for scientific innovation and selection for the National Youth Science Forum. Emily inspires those around her through her compassion, humility and unwavering commitment.



Jacinta Kong
James Ruse Agricultural High School

Jacinta is an exceptional student whose exemplary achievements reflect the highest ideals of public education. At James Ruse Agricultural High School, she has consistently demonstrated academic excellence, earning seven Academic Excellence Awards and distinction-level results in multiple Olympiads, alongside winning the 2022 English ICAS Medal. Her leadership roles, including Senior Prefect and Mullavey House Captain, reflect her commitment to inspiring others with humility and integrity. Her outstanding debating record and civic engagement underscore her deep understanding of global issues. Dedicated to community service as a St John Ambulance Cadet and volunteer, Jacinta embodies integrity, kindness and service.



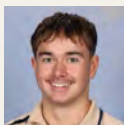
Mikayla Mantua
Rooty Hill High School

Mikayla is an outstanding Year 12 student from western Sydney with exceptional achievement across academic studies, sport, performing arts and citizenship. As School Captain of Rooty Hill High School, she has co-led a significant renewal of senior leadership and student agency. A gifted performer and spokesperson at school, regional and state level, Mikayla has represented her school in volleyball at CHS level, helping her team claim first place in the state. Her academic achievements are equally impressive, and her performances have been recognised by the directorate and schools across the region. Mikayla is a credit to western Sydney and public education.



Stefanie Meissel
Canterbury Girls High School

Stefanie is an exceptional student whose resilience and commitment to Canterbury Girls High School distinguish her as a highly respected role model among staff and students. As School Captain, she leads with maturity, empathy and school pride while balancing strong academic achievement across the humanities and creative arts. Alongside her academic success, Stefanie has contributed extensively to the school community through leadership, sporting representation and involvement in performing arts programs including the Arts Unit, school ensembles, musicals and the Schools Spectacular. Her successful completion of the Kokoda Track in 2025 reflects her courage, perseverance and deep commitment to service and to embracing challenge.



Lachlan Miles
Koorinal High School

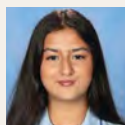
Lachlan is a proud Wiradjuri young man whose leadership, academic achievement and commitment to community have made a lasting impact on Koorinal High School. As 2026 School Captain and the first Clontarf student to hold the position, he has become an inspiring role model for younger students. Lachlan represents his culture with pride through leadership, advocacy and service, while maintaining a strong

commitment to academic excellence and personal growth. His integrity, resilience, respect and dedication to others embody the very best of public education and make him a deserving recipient of this award.



Tarini Musuwadi
Merewether High School

Tarini is an exceptional student whose commitment to academic excellence and leadership exemplifies the very best of public education. Consistently excelling across a demanding pattern of study, she brings the same dedication to her role as School Captain, leading with integrity and purpose and championing student voice and agency, environmental initiatives and community fundraising. She was instrumental in leading the prefects' World's Greatest Shave campaign, which raised more than \$145,000. Through her leadership and commitment to others, Tarini enriches the lives of those around her and is an outstanding representative of public education.



Syedda Nazeeya
Macarthur Girls High School

Syedda exemplifies the qualities of a transformative young leader: visionary, compassionate, driven and inclusive. She is an outstanding student whose commitment to excellence is reflected in her academic studies and community engagement. Her leadership has made a tangible difference in the lives of her peers, the Uyghur diaspora community, environmental advocacy networks and beyond. Her ongoing dedication to education, advocacy and community service makes her a role model for young people across NSW and Australia.



Cindy Nguyen

James Ruse Agricultural
High School

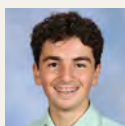
Having joined James Ruse as a new student, Cindy quickly distinguished herself in debating, public speaking and Model United Nations, building community around the linguistic arts at the school. Her exemplary commitment to academic and cultural achievement is reflected in a strong record of accolades, including the 2025 Year 10 English Achievement Award, 2025 Year 10 Science Achievement Award, 2025 Australian Maths Competition Distinction, 2025 World Scholars Cup second place, 2024 Year 9 English Dux, 2024 Year 9 Maths Achievement Award and 2024 Australian Maths Competition Distinction.



Rhitika Patel

Girraween High School

Rhitika exemplifies excellence in both academics and leadership within a competitive selective school environment. Balancing rigorous studies with remarkable sporting achievements, she consistently demonstrates academic excellence across a demanding course load. A dedicated leader, Rhitika has served as Prefect, Vice-Captain, SRC Representative and House Leader, fostering school spirit and broader community involvement. Her commitment extends to multiple clubs, coaching roles and social justice initiatives. Demonstrating resilience, integrity and compassion, Rhitika continuously overcomes challenges to inspire her peers and positively represent her school, embodying the true spirit of student achievement.



Benjamin Oraham

Prairiewood High School

Benjamin consistently demonstrates academic excellence, ranking second in his Year 11 cohort with top results in multiple subjects. As Year 12 Vice Captain, he leads with integrity and dedication, as evident in his active roles within the Student Representative Council and the Fairfield Youth Advisory Council. His contributions to school events and community service, including musical performances for charity, reflect a strong commitment to others. His resilience and communication skills further exemplify his outstanding character. Benjamin truly embodies the values of public education and his school community.



Anisha Ranasinghe

Warners Bay High School

Anisha is an exceptional young person who demonstrates academic excellence, mature leadership and a strong commitment to justice. As School Captain at Warners Bay High School, Anisha strengthens student voice, supports others and contributes meaningfully to her school and community. Whether in the classroom, as a leader, or through service and advocacy, Anisha approaches every opportunity with diligence, integrity and purpose. She is a respected role model who epitomises the values of public education through excellence, responsibility, respect, care, fairness and service.



Xenia Palmer

Sydney Girls High School

Xenia is an exceptional student, a highly accomplished athlete and an extraordinary leader. Any one of these would have been impressive, but she has achieved all 3 with remarkable success. In addition to her commitment to rowing through to Year 12, Xenia has served as School Captain while maintaining an impressive level of academic achievement.



Nashariah Reese

Callaghan College –
Jesmond Senior Campus

Nashariah is a Year 12 student at Callaghan College, Jesmond Senior Campus who exemplifies academic excellence, leadership and community commitment. Excelling in a rigorous curriculum, she ranks first in several subjects and was previously Dux of Year 10. As Chair of the Student Representative Forum and school leader, she leads with maturity and mentors peers. She successfully organised the 2026 Young

Leaders Conference, engaging 75 future leaders across the Callaghan network. Beyond school, Nashariah volunteers regularly to support vulnerable community members, contributes to the Newcastle Youth Council and was a regional finalist in the Lions Youth of the Year competition.



Nathan Rose
Bomaderry High School

Nathan is a committed, engaged and highly valued student within the Waratah Learning Centre at Bomaderry High School. He has demonstrated sustained growth in his learning, strong participation in school life and a deep commitment to inclusion, connection and positive contribution across the school community. As a Senior Prefect on the Student Representative Council, Nathan contributes to student consultation processes that help shape the future direction of his school, providing valuable student voice and demonstrating thoughtful engagement in discussions about school improvement and student experience.



Kate Scholtens
Northern Beaches Secondary
College – Mackellar Girls Campus

Kate is an exceptional student whose leadership, academic achievement and commitment to service have made a significant contribution to her school and the wider community. As School Captain, Peer Support Leader and Peer Mediator, she has demonstrated integrity, responsibility and compassion while supporting others and advocating for student voice. Her achievements include recognition through the ZONTA Young Women in Leadership Award, the Macquarie University Emerging Leaders Award and community service commendations. Academically outstanding and actively involved in sport, environmental initiatives and fundraising, Kate consistently exemplifies the values of participation, integrity, responsibility and care.



Isobel Sillar
Lambton High School

Isobel is an exceptional Year 12 student whose academic distinction, exemplary leadership and remarkable creativity make her an outstanding recipient of this award. Balancing a demanding HSC course load with award-winning STEM achievements, she demonstrates advanced analytical thinking, innovation and collaboration. As SRC Vice President and Senior Prefect, she leads with professionalism, compassion and integrity, fostering belonging and mentoring younger students. Her dedication, responsibility and enthusiasm extend to school events, sports coaching and peer support, inspiring her peers and enriching her school community. Isobel's approach to education and leadership positions her as an exemplary role model at Lambton High School.



Dion Stefanis
Canterbury Girls High School

Dion is an exceptional all-round student whose academic excellence, inclusive leadership and commitment to public education have made a lasting impact on the Canterbury Girls High School community. A five-time Dux of her cohort, she has demonstrated sustained excellence across a broad range of highly demanding subjects. Beyond the classroom, she was a driving force behind the establishment of the school's PRIDE Ambassadors and has been a strong advocate for student voice through leadership initiatives including International Women's Day events. Dion's emotional intelligence, empathy and commitment to inclusion make her an outstanding champion, ally and role model for her peers.



Romaine Trenerry
Denison College of Secondary
Education – Bathurst High
Campus

Romaine exemplifies excellence through outstanding academic achievement, leadership and community commitment. She consistently attains top results and demonstrates exceptional dedication and growth. Her inspiring leadership across school roles and active participation in community service reflect strong values of respect, fairness and cooperation. Her versatility across academic and sporting pursuits further demonstrates her resilience and determination. An exceptional student who is genuinely proud of the public education system, Romaine embodies the core values of public education.



Alisha Woo
Sydney Girls High School

Alisha's extraordinary discipline, consistent application and excellent organisational skills mean that she continually achieves at an exceptionally high level while also finding time to undertake all her prefect duties to perfection. As Enrichment Prefect, she has been committed to making a difference to others by lifting the overall attainment of her cohort, and for this she is warmly and enthusiastically appreciated by her peers and teachers, who admire her academic gifts as well as her warm personality and her willingness to go out of her way to support her peers in their endeavours to attain at the highest level.



Charlotte Wheeler
Elderslie High School

Charlotte has developed her leadership skills across 6 years in the SRC and Senior Leadership Team, and currently serves as Vice Captain at Elderslie High School. She consistently attains strong academic results, achieving her personal best in multiple subjects each year. A highly visible leader, Charlotte volunteers at many school events and leads the Yearbook Committee. She demonstrates exceptional communication skills and successfully promotes student involvement in charitable causes. Charlotte regularly exemplifies the values of integrity, participation, respect, responsibility, care and fairness as a school leader.



Georgia Young
Lambton High School

Georgia is an exceptional and highly motivated student whose achievements span academics, leadership, sport and community service. She excels in all her subjects while taking on significant leadership roles, including Senior Prefect and SRC Vice President, and leading key initiatives for mental health and sustainability. Her dedication, maturity, compassion, integrity, resilience and enthusiasm inspire peers and staff alike. Georgia's sporting, volunteer and academic accomplishments continue to enrich her school and the wider community. With her unwavering commitment and positive impact, Georgia is a remarkable role model who truly exemplifies the values of public education.



Nicholas Whitney
Northern Beaches Secondary
College – Manly Campus

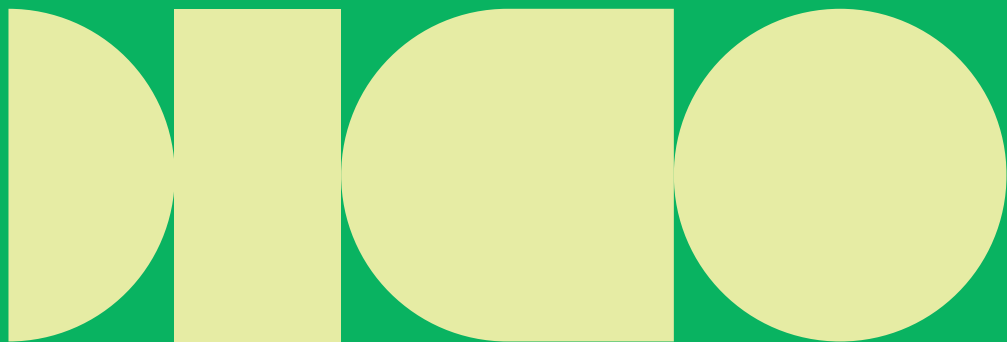
Nicholas is an exceptional student whose achievements reflect the highest values of NSW public education. He has maintained outstanding academic results throughout his schooling, including being named 2024 National Champion in the Australian History Competition and achieving a Band 6 in HSC Mathematics Advanced as an accelerated student. Elected College Vice-Captain by his peers and teachers, Nicholas leads with humility, integrity and service. Through leadership, sport, mentoring, volunteering, the Duke of Edinburgh Award, St John Ambulance and community representation, he has enriched the lives of others and strengthened his school community.



Grace Zarb
Fort Street High School

Grace has consistently been an enthusiastic and generous contributor to the life and culture of Fort Street. As SRC Representative and Vice-President, she organised and hosted several significant school events. A member of the school's Instrumental Music Program throughout her schooling, she has performed across five ensembles, including at the ANZAC Day Memorial Service in Portugal during the IMP European music tour. She has represented her school across several sports, completed her Silver Duke of Edinburgh Award and, outside of school, plays and referees soccer, participates in charity events and works part-time in retail.

MINISTER'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING



Recipient Citations



Selina Ash
Denison College of Secondary
Education – Kelso High Campus

Selina is an expert Visual Arts teacher whose accessible, adaptive programming supports engagement and skill development for all learners. Her nurturing approach extends beyond the classroom, with students often turning to her through significant personal challenges. She has championed equity in regional students' access to creative and performing arts, and her leadership has made CAPA the school's highest-performing faculty. Her mentorship has helped launch alumni into successful arts careers, with many maintaining lasting ties to Denison College of Secondary Education, Kelso High Campus.



Jane Bluett
Condell Park Public School

Jane is a highly effective and collaborative educator who demonstrates strong professional engagement across teams, consistently building positive relationships with colleagues, students and the wider school community. She is committed to delivering high-quality education and contributes meaningfully to professional practice through her willingness to share expertise and support others. Jane's impact is evident in her dedication to student growth, her consistent teamwork and her capacity to foster a supportive and high-performing learning environment. If Our Plan for NSW Public Education was a person, that person would be Jane.



Simon Bale
Cambridge Gardens
Public School

Simon is an outstanding early career teacher who, following a highly successful year in Kindergarten, sought out the role of classroom teacher in the school's newly established support class. His enthusiasm and determination to develop the skills and expertise needed to provide a safe and successful learning environment — one in which he carefully caters to the individual needs of each student — is a credit to his dedication. Simon is an outstanding collaborative team member, working effectively with colleagues within the school and with parents and carers to bring success to the students in his class.



Gabrielle Borrelli
Merewether High School

Gabbi demonstrates outstanding achievement against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers through sustained excellence in teaching and professional engagement. She consistently delivers high-quality student outcomes in Modern History through explicit teaching, rigorous assessment and evidence-informed differentiation that supports growth for high-potential and gifted learners. Gabbi has led curriculum reform and assessment design, strengthening consistency and accountability in faculty practice. She plays a significant leadership role in promoting student advocacy, belonging and positive school culture through her coordination of the SRC and Prefect programs, strengthening student voice and leadership across the school community.





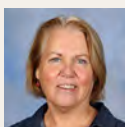
Melissa Jane Brown
Wagga Wagga High School

Melissa is an innovative and well-respected teacher who provides students with a quality education both within the classroom and beyond. Values are the cornerstone of her teaching, and she consistently creates opportunities for students to develop the skills and character needed to make a positive difference in the world around them. Her wellbeing-based approach to teaching has had a lasting impact on the lives of her students, fostering confidence and creativity through dance and the creative arts. Melissa is an outstanding leader within her school and across dance programs throughout the state.



Beth Chappell
Narrandera High School

Beth is an exceptional educator who consistently prioritises the educational and wellbeing needs of all students. Her innovative mindset and collaborative approach are reflected in her work integrating technology and developing effective faculty and whole-school learning programs. Beth empowers colleagues to confidently adapt their practices, promote efficient teaching and cultivate engaging learning environments. She generously shares her expertise, supporting staff across faculties, and is highly regarded for her student-centred teaching. Beth's unwavering commitment to excellence, continuous improvement and holistic student support truly embodies the core values of public education.



Annette Curmi
Prairiewood High School

Annette's dedication to student success is evident through her outstanding leadership of the Public Speaking and Debating Program for over 10 years, empowering students to excel in communication and leadership. Her coordination of the After School Homework Centre has fostered a welcoming environment that significantly boosts student engagement and academic achievement. As First Nations Coordinator, Annette has demonstrated

exceptional initiative by establishing a committee that strengthens partnerships with families and community groups. Her unwavering commitment to enhancing learning outcomes, student wellbeing and community connections continues to benefit her school community.



Adrian Elphege
Elderslie High School

Adrian demonstrates exemplary collaboration and innovation through his leadership of the Elderslie High School podcast, amplifying student voice and community connections. He revitalised the Tech-Elect program, leading students and staff to leverage iPads to enhance creativity, critical thinking and accessibility within flexible learning spaces. Adrian mentors students to lead "Brekkie with a Techie" workshops, sharing digital literacy skills with staff. The program, recognised at EduTech 2025, delivers measurable improvements: 4.4% higher attendance and 63.2% fewer negative behaviours among Tech-Elect students. His leadership exemplifies the department's values and advances Our Plan for NSW Public Education by ensuring equitable, high-quality and student-centred learning.



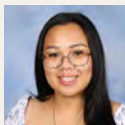
Rosemary Henzell
Canterbury Girls High School

Rosemary is an exceptional instructional leader whose commitment to the NSW public education priorities is reflected in her impactful explicit teaching, her capacity building across learning areas within her school and her sharing of expertise across the Metropolitan South directorate. These contributions have driven excellence in student learning outcomes and above state average results. Rosemary embodies the values of public education through her teaching, leadership and commitment to her school community and the broader profession. By modelling consistency in high-quality pedagogy and delivering high-impact professional learning, she secures equity in excellence every day.



Ellanor Kanaan
Burwood Public School

As an early career teacher, Ellanor demonstrates professionalism, leadership and dedication well beyond her role, using student achievement data to ensure teaching is targeted and focused on improving outcomes. She works collaboratively with colleagues to develop high quality programs responsive to student needs, and she is a highly valued member of the professional learning community who facilitates sessions for stage teams and whole-school staff. Ellanor actively engages in professional learning to stay current with best practice, translating this into classroom practice and generously sharing insights with colleagues. Her passion for teaching and dedication to supporting others' growth make her a respected colleague, emerging leader and positive role model within her school community.



Elisa Lao
Lansvale Public School

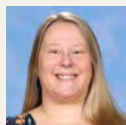
Elisa is an exemplary preschool teacher at Lansvale Public School, known for her commitment to early childhood education and sustained excellence. She provided leadership stability during staffing changes, maintaining high-quality learning in the only department preschool to be rated Excellent twice. Elisa delivers engaging, play-based learning with explicit teaching to build children's language, engagement and confidence. She has strengthened transition programs, embedded consistent expectations from Preschool to Year 6 and contributed to whole-school improvement through collaboration. Elisa supports professional growth by hosting visits as part of the NSW 100 Preschools initiative, sharing practices that enhance outcomes for children, families and educators.



Rebecca May
Dubbo College Senior Campus

Rebecca's distinguished teaching career embodies professionalism, leadership and unwavering dedication to student success. As a proactive leader and role model, she consistently exemplifies the

benchmark for excellence in education. Rebecca demonstrates exceptional initiative in identifying areas for improvement and implementing highly effective practices that significantly enhance student learning outcomes. Her leadership has resulted in outstanding and consistent HSC results, particularly in PDHPE and CAFS, reflecting her commitment to academic excellence and continuous growth. Through her exemplary practice, Rebecca sets a high standard for educators and inspires colleagues and students alike.



Emily McDonald
Jerrabomberra High School

Emily is an exceptional educator whose dedication to personalised learning has transformed outcomes for many young people. As a founding educator of the Big Picture Learning Academy, she has created innovative pathways that reconnect students with learning, build confidence and inspire future aspirations. Through strong relationships, authentic partnerships and a deep belief in every student's potential, Emily empowers young people to achieve success on their own terms. Her leadership, compassion and commitment have made a lasting impact on the students she supports and on Jerrabomberra High School as a whole.



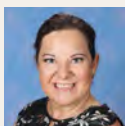
Alison Pool
Prairiewood High School

Alison is a leader whose 35 years of dedicated service have inspired her school community, led sustainable, equity-driven improvements and fostered a culture of high expectations, collaboration and continuous growth. Her progression from classroom teacher to relieving principal has enabled her to build deep, positive relationships with students, staff, families and the wider community, earning widespread trust and respect. Her evidence-informed and inclusive leadership has transformed learning environments and strengthened school culture. Alison's passion and dedication enhance community confidence in public education and exemplify the very best values of the department.



Michelle Randall
Mulwaree High School

Michelle is an outstanding educator and leader whose dedication to student pathways has had a significant impact on the Mulwaree community. As Head Teacher Pathways, she consistently creates opportunities for students through work experience, school-based traineeships, White Card courses, career expos, university partnerships and individual mentoring. She is deeply committed to ensuring every student feels supported to pursue meaningful post-school opportunities, whether through university, employment, apprenticeships or further training. Michelle's strong relationships with students, families, businesses and community organisations have strengthened school and industry connections while showcasing the positive impact of public education.



Joanne Rice
Kearns Public School

Joanne exemplifies excellence in teaching through her unwavering commitment to student growth, wellbeing and achievement. She ensures every student is known, valued and cared for by creating inclusive, engaging learning opportunities that inspire confidence and success. Joanne leads a wide range of enrichment initiatives, including debating, public speaking, STEM, Maths Olympiad and sport, enabling students to excel academically and personally. Her evidence-informed practice and collaborative partnerships with families and colleagues foster a positive, high-expectation school culture. Joanne's dedication to continuous improvement and equitable opportunity empowers students to pursue ambitious goals and thrive within the school community.



Daniel Sharp
Kandeer School

Daniel is an outstanding educator whose leadership and innovation have had a transformative impact on students and staff at Kandeer School. Through his unwavering commitment to trauma-informed practice, he has created safe, supportive learning environments

where every student can thrive. His focus on successful transitions ensures students are equipped for future pathways, while his dedication to equity drives high expectations and excellence for all learners. Daniel has championed project-based learning to increase engagement, independence and real-world skills, and his commitment to staff wellbeing has strengthened school culture, fostering collaboration, resilience and professional growth across the school community.



Chloe Smith
Galungara Public School

Chloe, an Early Career Teacher in her fourth year, has demonstrated exceptional leadership and impact well beyond her career stage in a diverse school community with 87% of students from non-English speaking backgrounds and a high proportion of early career staff. While relieving as Assistant Principal, she has led Stage 3 teams, strengthened curriculum implementation and built teacher capacity through collaborative planning, coaching and evidence-informed practice. Her literacy programs, grounded in quality texts and explicit comprehension strategies, have contributed to 70% of Year 5 students achieving Strong or Exceeding in NAPLAN Reading. Chloe fosters a culture of collaboration, high expectations and continuous improvement.



Roger Thompson
Miller Technology High School

Roger transforms education through future-focused teaching that creates authentic pathways for student success. Working within a highly diverse community, he combines explicit teaching, emerging technologies and inquiry-based learning to strengthen engagement and achievement in STEM. He was pivotal in developing the school's interdisciplinary Stage 5 STEM Elective and has significantly contributed to programs such as Full STEAM Ahead, connecting students with real-world experiences and careers. Roger's expertise in supporting EAL/D learners through accessible technologies was showcased at the Department of Education's Leading Computing Conference. His instructional leadership was recognised with the 2025 ICTENSW Educator of the Year Award.



Jady Walker
Mount Annan High School

Jady is an outstanding educator whose commitment to excellence has significantly enriched Mount Annan High School and the department. Since beginning her career as a Mathematics teacher in 1994, Jady has demonstrated exemplary professionalism and dedication across multiple schools. Her leadership roles as Quality Teaching Advisor and Head Teacher Teaching and Learning reflect her expertise and evidence-based approach to teaching. Jady's deep understanding of student engagement and learning, combined with her collegial spirit, has earned her widespread respect. She consistently delivers high-quality education, positively impacting students and colleagues, making her an invaluable asset to her school community.



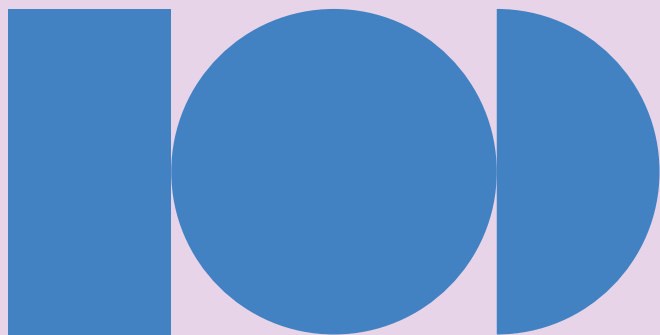
Cindy Yang
Revesby Public School

Cindy demonstrates excellence through her exceptional dedication to students with significant disabilities and her commitment to ensuring every learner reaches their full potential. As a highly skilled and experienced educator, she delivers innovative, individualised programs that support growth in literacy, numeracy, communication, and social and emotional development. Cindy is a passionate advocate for inclusion and high expectations, working collaboratively with families, colleagues and allied health professionals to achieve meaningful outcomes for students. Her willingness to share expertise and her commitment to building the capacity of others have strengthened professional practice across her team and enriched the educational experiences of all students.



Justum Tene Challenge – Yowie Bay Public School.

SECRETARY'S AWARD FOR DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING



Finalist Citations



Abbie Hamilton
Gledswood Hills Public School

Abbie's commitment to inclusive education, student wellbeing and equity is exceptional. As a School Learning Support Officer in a complex multi-categorical setting, she consistently demonstrates the department's values through her compassionate support of students with diverse needs, ensuring access, belonging and meaningful participation in all aspects of school life. A proud Kamilaroi woman, Abbie courageously champions Aboriginal education, disability inclusion and student voice through authentic collaboration with staff, families, Elders and community. Her initiative, cultural leadership and unwavering advocacy foster resilience, connection and success, exemplifying the vision and values of NSW public education.



David Houghton
Waterfall Public School

David creates meaningful opportunities for students, staff and communities to connect with Aboriginal culture, knowledge and Country through his outstanding Learning on Country program. Through authentic partnerships with Aboriginal Elders, community organisations and schools, he champions inclusion, cultural understanding and belonging for all. David amplifies Aboriginal voices, fosters cultural pride and creates learning experiences that challenge perspectives, strengthen relationships and promote respect. His leadership has transformed the way students engage with culture, community and the environment, creating lasting impact, and ensuring Aboriginal perspectives are valued, celebrated and embedded within public education.



Asha Lambert-Patel
Kingscliff Public School

Asha's leadership in non-school-based and school-based positions has not only demonstrated a genuine commitment to the values of NSW Public Education but has also translated into measurable improvements in school communities. Through her relationship-centred and culturally responsive leadership, she has created spaces where all students feel valued, safe, and empowered to thrive. Asha's work exemplifies the Department's vision by championing diversity and inclusion as central to every aspect of school life. I strongly endorse Asha for this prestigious award, recognising her outstanding contribution to advancing diversity, inclusion, and belonging within NSW public schools.



Jess Moore
Manager – Equity and Inclusion

Jess' commitment to diversity, inclusion and belonging is outstanding. The positive impacts of her dedication and work ethic are felt right across the department, through schools and Education support staff teams. Her leadership and development of Breaking Barriers and its communications and education campaign went well beyond the requirements of her role. That groundbreaking work has been the catalyst for a real department-wide discussion and true uplift on an issue the department has struggled to shift the dial on for years. Jess is to be congratulated for her courageous leadership and commitment to diversity, inclusion and belonging.



Explicit Teaching with a Literacy and Numeracy Focus – Cessnock High School.



Kim Barber
Braille and Large Print Services

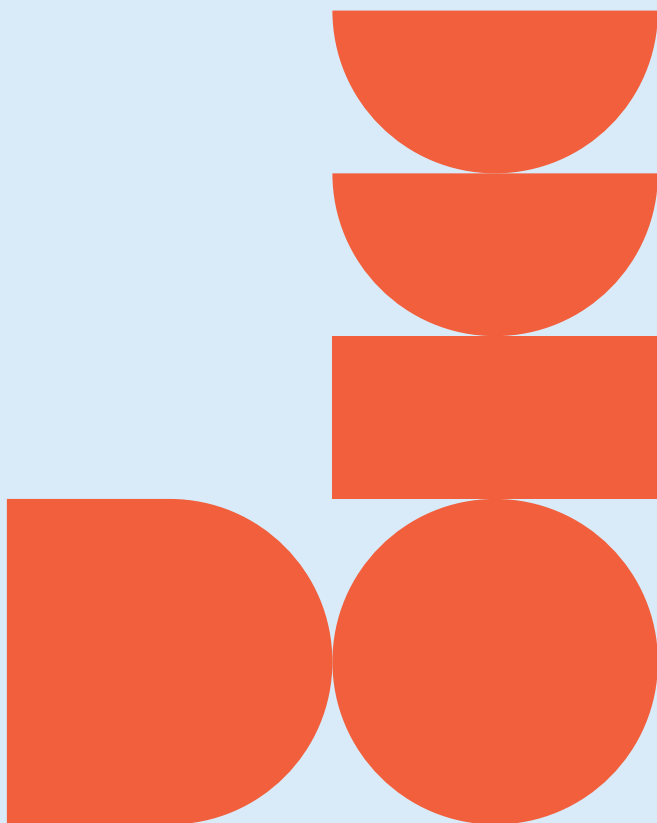
Kim is a transformative leader whose dedicated stewardship of the state-wide Braille and Large Print Services team embodies the true spirit of diversity, inclusion, and belonging. By fostering a highly collaborative, high-performance culture, Kim ensures equitable access to the curriculum for students with vision impairment across New South Wales. Her drive for operational excellence directly dismantles barriers to learning, empowering students to achieve outstanding academic outcomes. Kim’s leadership is a benchmark for equity in action, bringing the department’s commitment to a world-class, inclusive education to life for every student she serves.



Rizwana Khan
Acting Senior Policy Officer

Rizwana’s approach to inclusion is defined by deliberate, cross-network collaboration that amplifies diverse voices in meaningful, practical ways. Recognising that women with disability and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds experience compounded barriers to progression, she partnered with the Women’s Network and CALD Network to co-design a pilot Sponsorship Program—well beyond the scope of her substantive role. Rizwana led the proposal through to executive endorsement and partnered with Deputy Secretary Lisa Harrington to co-facilitate sessions, ensuring senior leaders were visibly accountable for its success. The program now provides structural pathways for under-represented employees to be seen, sponsored and progressed.

SECRETARY'S AWARD FOR LIVING OUR VALUES

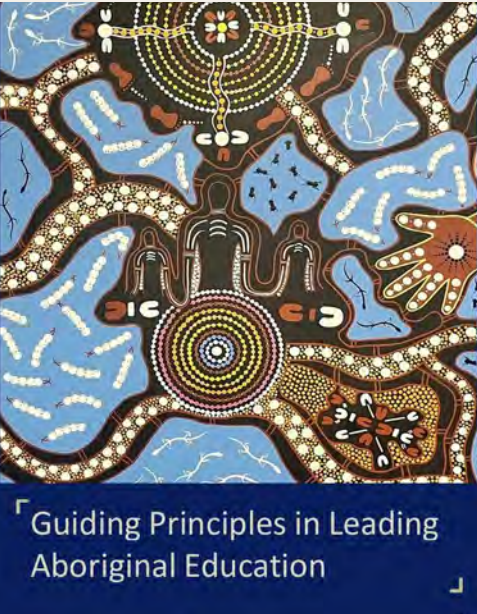


Finalist Citations

Excellence

Aboriginal Education and Communities Directorate

The Aboriginal Education and Communities Directorate (AEC) has demonstrated outstanding leadership in strengthening Aboriginal education across NSW public schools. Through the development and implementation of the Guiding Principles in Leading Aboriginal Education, the team has worked alongside principals and school leaders to embed Aboriginal education into everyday leadership practice. By providing ongoing coaching, professional learning, and tailored support, and working in partnership with the NSW AECG and local communities, AEC has built leadership capability, strengthened culturally responsive school environments, and contributed to improved engagement, wellbeing, and educational outcomes for Aboriginal students across the state.



Developed by the Aboriginal Education and Communities Directorate.

Year 1 Number Screening Check

In response to an identified assessment gap, the cross-divisional Year 1 Number Screening Check team collaborated to design and implement a high-quality numeracy screener for all Year 1 students. The team's disciplined three-phase approach enabled extensive testing, refinement and continuous improvement prior to statewide launch, underpinned by research, academic partnership and data collection and analysis. In 2026, the project team's work reached over 1,600 schools and 60,000 students, providing teachers with actionable data and resources to enable targeted teaching and early intervention.

Equity



Mary Ann Binder
Interpreting and Translations
Advisor

Mary Ann Binder ensures families of all language backgrounds can fully engage in their children's education. She leads statewide interpreter access, translation development, and multilingual resource creation, including major 2026 translations of the Student Code of Conduct, Community Code of Conduct, and School and Community Partnership Commitment into 35 languages. Her rigorous oversight of more than 11,000 interpreter assignments and her culturally responsive practice remove barriers, build trust, and advance the department's commitment to equity, ensuring every student can thrive regardless of linguistic or cultural background.



Pilot sponsorship program to support women with disability and from CALD backgrounds.



Literacy and Numeracy: Building a trauma-informed workplace team

Kelly Overhall and Kim Arandale exemplify Equity through their collaborative leadership in adapting Everyone’s Business professional learning for the statewide Literacy and Numeracy team. Drawing on their lived experience as Aboriginal women and commitment to culturally responsive practice, they created a trauma-informed learning journey that prioritised cultural safety, reflection and inclusion. Through Cultural Bites sessions, personalised learning materials and collaborative facilitation, they strengthened staff understanding of Aboriginal histories and their relevance to professional practice. Their leadership fostered a more culturally safe workplace and inspired purposeful action to better support Aboriginal students and colleagues across NSW public education.



100 Public Preschools program team – recently completed preschool.

Pilot sponsorship program to support women with disability and from CALD backgrounds

Volunteers from the Disability Employee Network (DEN), Women’s Network, and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Network adapted the Office of the NSW Public Service Commissioner’s sponsorship model to support women with disability and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The program paired 16 participants with senior executive sponsors who actively advocated for their career progression and challenged structural barriers. Delivered entirely through volunteer effort, the initiative not only supported leadership development for participants but also strengthened inclusion capability and changed behaviour among senior leaders, creating lasting organisational impact and advancing equity across the department.

Accountability



Jenni Pendergast
Manager Right to Access

Jenni Pendergast has spent her whole career in the Department of Education, spending many years as a teacher before retraining as a lawyer. Jenni is now the co-leader of the Right to Access team, a team of consummate professionals that support NSW public schools and department staff to navigate the requirements for information access. Jenni is retiring this year after a successful career in public education. Jenni is dedicated to public education and committed to driving excellence in herself and those around her. Her focus on accountability has led her team to be a high performing and professional team that has a commitment to transparency and continuous improvement.

100 Public Preschools program team

The 100 Public Preschools program team demonstrates accountability through strong governance, evidence-based decision-making, and disciplined program management. Responsible for delivering 100 new public preschools across NSW by 2027, the team has effectively allocated resources, monitored performance, and maintained oversight across one of the state's most significant education infrastructure programs. Their proactive management has kept the program on track, with several preschools already open ahead of schedule. By ensuring responsible use of public resources and delivering up to 9,000 additional preschool places, the team is making a lasting contribution to Our Plan for NSW Public Education.

Service



Rachael Tuilaselase
Paralegal Officer, Commercial

Rachael Tuilaselase provides exceptional paralegal support in commercial law, helping turn complex collaboration ideas into workable agreements for schools to use. Across various programs, she makes sure legal documentation is clear, complete, and ready in time for delivery to schools.



Vera Szyjan
Project and Governance Officer

Through her work in the Community Languages Schools Program, Vera has demonstrated outstanding service to students, families and communities across NSW. Her expertise in funding, governance, compliance and stakeholder engagement has supported hundreds of community language organisations and contributed to enriched language learning opportunities for over 500,000 students. By strengthening access to community language education, Vera's work has ensured that students have opportunities to maintain their language, develop a strong sense of identity and belonging, and remain connected to their communities. Her contribution to multicultural communities over 17 years has left a legacy for public education in NSW.

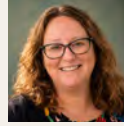
School Website Upgrade Team

The School Website Upgrade team exemplified the department's value of service by delivering a responsive, school-focused transformation that improved communication between schools and families across NSW. Through extensive collaboration, tailored support, and a strong focus on reducing administrative burden, the team helped more than 2,200 public schools transition to a simpler and more accessible website platform. Their work improved parent access to information, strengthened school community engagement, and increased confidence in department-led digital services, ensuring schools of all sizes could better support their local communities.

School Workforce Recruitment Team

The introduction of dedicated recruitment officers in every school has streamlined recruitment processes and enabled quicker and more effective filling of vacancies tailored to local needs. This initiative contributed directly to departmental goals of rebuilding teacher confidence, strengthening the workforce, and improving student outcomes. The improved staffing stability has enhanced classroom consistency, reduced workload pressures, and provided better opportunities for student engagement and achievement across NSW. The School Workforce recruitment and specialist advisory teams have worked tirelessly, responding to urgent needs across rural and regional schools with creative problem-solving, bringing deep subject expertise and tailored support to schools navigating unique staffing challenges.

Trust



Katie Cherrington

Anti-Racism Education Advisor
K-6

Katie Cherrington is a true public education servant, embodying the value of trust. She dedicates herself to ensuring students feel heard, valued, and safe, empowering them to reach their full potential. Katie actively supports schools to become places where anti-racism and other forms of discrimination are eliminated, fostering belonging and connection for all and helping to create safe and inclusive environments. She inspires those she works with and keeps us focused on our purpose in NSW public education.

Breaking Barriers team

The Breaking Barriers team, led by Equity and Inclusion alongside the Disability Employee Network (DEN) and CESE, exemplifies the value of Trust through their commitment to transparency, respectful collaboration, and listening to and amplifying lived experience. Through the groundbreaking Breaking Barriers report into the experiences of staff with disabilities at the department, the team honoured the trust those staff placed in the



Representatives of the Breaking Barriers Team.



School Workforce Recruitment Team.

team, transforming real and difficult conversations, staff voice, and evidence into practical action to improve disability inclusion. Their work has had an immense impact through all schools and across the department, strengthening trust, inclusion, and long-term positive cultural change across NSW public education.

Toolkit for new schools and upgrades

The Community Engagement team demonstrated the value of Trust by recognising a significant challenge facing principals establishing new schools and working collaboratively to develop practical solutions. Understanding that critical information was dispersed across multiple teams and systems, the team built strong relationships with more subject matter experts across the department to create the Principal Toolkit. By valuing expertise, listening to diverse perspectives, and ensuring all content was reviewed and endorsed, they established a trusted, single source of information, resulting in a clear, accessible resource that reduces administrative burden, improves consistency, and better supports principals preparing to open new schools.



Generative AI in HSC Assessment – Coffs Harbour Senior College.

Integrity



Renee Camilleri
Manager, Change Impact
On Schools

Renee has prioritised support to public schools and their staff through roles in EdConnect, School Security, and Strategic Projects. In her current role, Renee coordinates with teams across the department as the gatekeeper to new initiatives and programs for schools. Renee represents Public Schools division with courage and integrity, always prioritising school staff and their work with students as central to ensure that the quantity and volume of new announcements, initiatives, and policy changes, so new work required of schools is kept manageable.

**Professional and Ethical Standards
– Support Services**

The Professional and Ethical Standards (PES) Support Services team has demonstrated a commitment to building trust in PES and public education by navigating the complex relationship between PES and its key stakeholders, including public schools. The team works tirelessly to provide a range of services to internal and external stakeholders. The Frontline Customer Service Officers are often confronted with complex challenges and are required to navigate a range of stakeholder emotions to effectively triage and respond to each individual's needs and deliver a positive outcome.

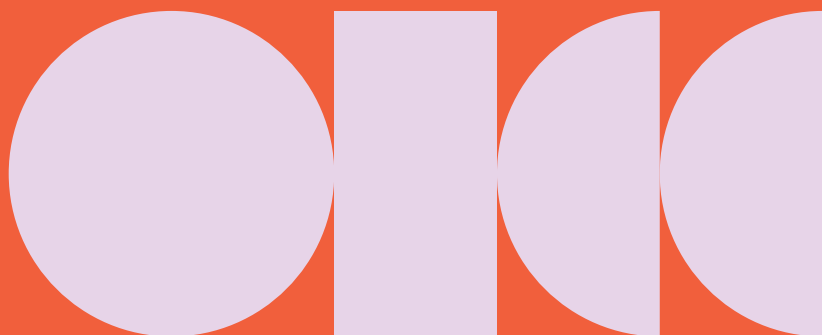


Inclusion without Limits: Creating a School Where Every Student Belongs – Sarah Redfern Public School.



A Whole-School Journey Towards Excellence – Windang Public School.

SECRETARY'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENT SERVICE

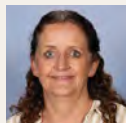


Recipient Citations



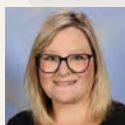
Casey Bertucci
Miller Technology High School

As a dedicated teacher, Year Adviser, Zone and Regional Sports Organiser and Relieving Head Teacher, Casey has demonstrated exceptional leadership and commitment to public education. She has driven innovation in curriculum, strengthened extracurricular engagement through HPGE programs and made a significant contribution to Aboriginal education within her diverse school community. Casey's dedication to inclusive sporting opportunities and literacy improvement has enhanced student engagement, wellbeing and achievement. Through her collaborative leadership, emotional intelligence and authentic partnerships with staff, students, families and the wider community, Casey has strengthened school culture and contributed positively to educational outcomes across the south-west Sydney region.



Danielle Cox
Koorringal High School

Danielle Cox is an exceptional educational leader whose expertise, advocacy and commitment to inclusion have transformed outcomes for students with additional learning and support needs. Through innovative systems, strategic leadership and an unwavering belief in every student's potential, she has strengthened educational access, enhanced wellbeing and built staff capability across schools and communities. Danielle's influence extends beyond her own school through mentoring, professional learning and regional leadership in inclusive education. Respected by colleagues, students and families alike, she consistently demonstrates excellence, equity and service. Danielle embodies the very best of public education and is a deserving recipient of this award.



Leanne Cattell
Koorringal High School

Leanne exemplifies the very best of public education. Through her leadership, innovation and unwavering commitment to students, she has transformed learning support systems within a large and complex school community, ensuring every student can thrive. Her influence extends far beyond her role – she strengthens teacher capacity, supports families, improves school-wide practices and enhances outcomes for hundreds of students. Leanne combines exceptional professionalism with genuine care, building strong relationships and creating lasting impact across the school community. Her dedication to inclusion, excellence and service makes her a truly deserving recipient of the Secretary's Award for Excellent Service.



Chloe Fitzgerald (nee Nuttall)
Thomas Reddall High School

Chloe Nuttall is an outstanding School Support Officer whose unwavering commitment to student wellbeing has made a profound impact on the Thomas Reddall High School community. Through her dedication to providing holistic, student-centred support, Chloe ensures that every student is empowered to achieve success and overcome barriers to learning. She has been instrumental in driving whole-school wellbeing initiatives that build resilience, foster independence and strengthen students' capacity to navigate challenges. Chloe's collaborative approach creates meaningful support networks that extend beyond the school gate, connecting students and families with services that promote long-term wellbeing, engagement and positive life outcomes.



Liza Hamilton
Maclean High School

Liza is an outstanding practitioner who has led the way for strong Aboriginal education programs on the state's North Coast. Her expertise in community engagement and partnerships with local Elders groups has resulted in establishing long-running cultural celebrations that have shifted the culture of her school. She has consistently gone above and beyond the expectations of her role to provide new opportunities for students, including overseas and interstate activities, on Country experiences and community events, all aimed at broadening their understanding of community and the wider world.



Rachel Linsell
Willans Hill School

Rachel demonstrates outstanding dedication to improving learning, wellbeing and inclusion at Willans Hill School. She advocates for equitable education, ensuring students with complex disabilities receive tailored support. Rachel initiated a sensory and play immersion classroom to meet diverse needs, resulting in increased engagement and independence. She builds strong partnerships with families, carers and agencies to provide personalised support, significantly boosting student wellbeing and whole-school practices. Rachel champions inclusion for Aboriginal students through the school's first Aboriginal Education Officer and culturally responsive learning pathways. Her collaborative leadership elevates staff capacity and supports improved outcomes across the Wagga Wagga community.



Vicki Miedler
Fairfield Public School

Vicki Miedler is a champion of public education with over 30 years of distinguished and transformative service as a teacher and leader at Fairfield Public School. Through her profound commitment to trauma-informed practice and student wellbeing, she has driven a significant increase in student attendance and fostered an environment where every child belongs. Vicki's tireless advocacy for inclusion has successfully

advanced equitable outcomes for students with disability within mainstream classrooms and the school's new learning hub. Her exceptional empathy, outstanding transition programs and collaborative mentorship of school leaders and families exemplify true excellence in public education.



Arti Naidu
James Meehan High School

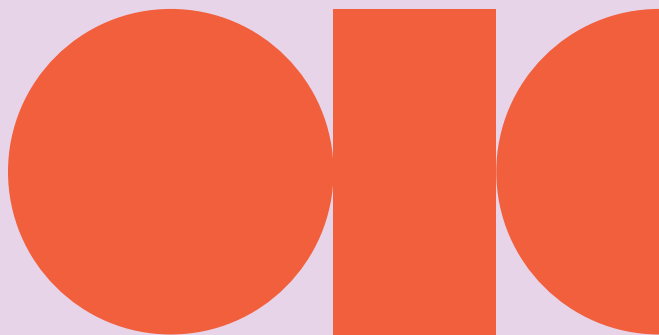
Arti Naidu has led a transformative shift in the learning culture at James Meehan High School through her expertise in data analysis, explicit teaching, differentiation and literacy assessment. Identifying critical learning gaps affecting more than 50% of students, she developed the Integrated Responsive Practice Model to strengthen teacher practice and improve outcomes for diverse learners, including HPGE students and students with learning disabilities. Her leadership has empowered teachers and leaders through sustained professional learning and coaching, building confidence and consistency in high-quality, responsive instruction across classrooms. NAPLAN growth exceeding the state average reflects her outstanding leadership and unwavering commitment to educational excellence.



Rebecca Phillips
Kearns Public School

Rebecca is an exemplary educational leader with a deep understanding of students and how they learn. Her strong moral compass ensures that students remain at the forefront of every decision she makes, underpinned by an unwavering commitment to equity and inclusivity. She consistently prioritises the creation of safe, supportive learning environments and fosters a culture of respect, inclusivity and innovation. Rebecca lives the department's values of accountability, equity, excellence, integrity, service and trust in her service to the school community every day.

SECRETARY'S AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT



Recipient Citations

Ballina Coast High School

School Transformation Through Student Partnerships

Ballina Coast High School demonstrates a highly effective whole-school approach to strengthening student voice and agency through authentic partnership with staff and community. The school has moved beyond traditional consultation, genuinely positioning students as partners in their education. Through initiatives such as O-Week, learning environment design, authentic industry experiences and student leadership in AI, Ballina Coast High School has built an experience of school as something students help shape. This evidence-informed approach delivers measurable impact, achieving significant reductions in behaviour incidents and increased student belonging, learning engagement and community confidence. Student voice and agency have become embedded in the way the school operates.

Canley Heights Public School

Canley Vale Public School

Harrington Street Public School

Lansvale Public School

Smithfield Public School

Early Learners Transition Project

The Early Learners Transitions Project within the Fairfield Network exemplifies the values of public education by fostering equity, collaboration, and quality learning for all children. This initiative unites five public preschools – Canley Heights, Smithfield, Lansvale, Harrington St, and Canley Vale – encompassing nine preschool classes and an Early Intervention Unit. Through shared professional learning and collaboration, principals, teachers and School Learning Support Officers have strengthened their understanding of early literacy, numeracy and evidence-informed practice. The project has strengthened leadership and educator capacity, enabling staff to improve outcomes for children. Fairfield Network preschools are regularly sought as models of best practice, supporting newly established preschools and educators to implement programs aligned with current standards. The collective commitment of all 5 schools has established a sustainable network focused on continuous improvement and excellence in early childhood education.

Cessnock High School

Explicit Teaching with a Literacy and Numeracy Focus

Cessnock High School has demonstrated outstanding whole-school improvement through a consistent explicit teaching framework with a strong literacy and numeracy focus. Through evidence-informed practice, instructional leadership and collaborative professional learning, the school has embedded high-quality teaching across classrooms to improve engagement, achievement and equity outcomes. The initiative has resulted in exceptional literacy and numeracy growth, improved HSC outcomes, increased attendance and stronger student wellbeing and engagement. Recognised as seventh in NSW for NAPLAN Years 7 to 9 value-added growth and acknowledged by ACARA as a 'School Making a Difference', Cessnock High School exemplifies the transformative impact of education through excellence in teaching and leadership.

Coffs Harbour Senior College

Generative AI in HSC Assessment

Coffs Harbour Senior College's Generative AI in Assessment Framework reflects principled, evidence-informed leadership in response to an emerging challenge in education. Identifying a genuine compliance gap, the college consulted current research and built a whole-college response that goes well beyond minimum requirements. The outcome is a coordinated approach to AI literacy that gives every teacher and student clear, shared language and structured capability. The work is rigorous and practical, already shaping how staff approach task design and how students engage with AI as a tool for learning.

Generative AI in HSC Assessment – Coffs Harbour Senior College.



Elizabeth Macarthur High School

The Current Reality – ‘viewing practice from a distance’

The Current Reality has had a significant impact on whole-school culture, evident in an open-door staff culture, professional learning communities that foster academic discussion and data-informed practice, and instructional leadership that has delivered exceptional results. These include an external validation outcome of 14 out of 14 in excelling, NAPLAN Year 9 results above state and Statistically Similar School Group (SSSG) averages across all 5 tests, and strong post-school pathways. The team has been innovative in its use of technology to limit school disruption, and teacher leaders are mentored by executive staff, creating opportunities for teachers to pursue Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher accreditation.

Finley High School

Early Transition Initiative

Finley High School’s Stage 2 History Project exemplifies innovative practice that strengthens community confidence in public education. In response to network discussions on enrolment and engagement, the school proactively built early, meaningful connections with students from local partner schools through a high-quality Stage 2 History unit on First Contacts. The project improved student engagement, strengthened relationships with secondary staff and increased students’ confidence about transitioning to high school, showcasing best practice in early transition and cross-school collaboration.

Goodooga Central School

Indigenous Games Day

Goodooga Central School serves a remote and geographically isolated community, and through the Goodooga Indigenous Games Day, the school has created a powerful vehicle for broadening horizons, celebrating culture and bringing the whole community together. Students work tirelessly to make the Games Day a success, while community members contribute through cultural sharing and activities. The initiative exemplifies outstanding leadership and a deep commitment to excellence, equity and sustainable impact for students in remote NSW.



The Current Reality – ‘viewing practice from a distance’ – Elizabeth Macarthur High School.



Early Transition Initiative – Finley High School.



*School's Attendance Improvement Project –
Gulgong High School*



*Explicit Direct Instruction: Shared language. Shared
practice. Shared responsibility. – Ingleburn High School.*



Pathways for Success Initiative – Jerrabomberra High School.

Gulgong High School

School's Attendance Improvement Project

Gulgong High School's Attendance Improvement Project has significantly improved student attendance through student-centred, data-informed practices. Led by a dedicated team, the initiative combines rigorous data analysis, personalised interventions, student voice and community partnerships to address barriers to attendance. Since 2023, whole-school attendance has risen from 76.6% to 81.6%, and the proportion of students attending 90% or more of the time has nearly tripled. The project has strengthened student wellbeing, enhanced engagement and improved outcomes for Aboriginal students and support unit students. By embedding sustainable attendance practices, the team has created meaningful and enduring change.

Ingleburn High School

**Explicit Direct Instruction: Shared language.
Shared practice. Shared responsibility.**

Ingleburn High School's implementation of Explicit Direct Instruction has transformed teaching, learning and student achievement through a consistent, evidence-based approach embedded across all faculties. Supported by instructional coaching, professional learning and data-informed practice, Explicit Direct Instruction has driven significant growth in literacy, numeracy and engagement, with the school recognised for achieving the highest literacy growth among similarly advantaged NSW schools. Sustained improvements include Excelling Value-Added results, increased NAPLAN growth, strengthened differentiation and improved outcomes for Aboriginal and EAL/D students. Embedded within CAPE and the School Excellence Plan, Explicit Direct Instruction has built teacher efficacy and a culture of high expectations, equity and success.

Jerrabomberra High School

Pathways for Success Initiative

Jerrabomberra High School's Pathways for Success initiative is a powerful example of student-centred innovation in education. Through a deliberate and strategic approach to personalised learning, the school has created meaningful pathways that empower students to understand their strengths, pursue their aspirations and achieve success beyond school. The exceptional Stage 6 retention rate, strong student engagement and breadth of post-school outcomes demonstrate the impact of this work. Pathways for Success reflects outstanding educational leadership and a deep commitment to ensuring every student can thrive.

Kirrawee Public School Makerspace

David Mahoney and Sarah Parker have demonstrated outstanding leadership in developing the dynamic Makerspace program at Kirrawee Public School. Their innovative integration of STEM, digital technologies and podcasting offers students authentic, future-focused learning experiences. The program fosters coding, robotics, design thinking and communication skills, empowering students to become confident creators and communicators. This initiative has notably enhanced student engagement, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking, while building strong community connections. David and Sarah's work exemplifies educational excellence by embedding hands-on, innovative learning that prepares students for the challenges of tomorrow.



Makerspace – Kirrawee Public School.

Koorringal High School, Sturt Public School, Koorringal Public School and Lake Albert Public School

CoS (Community of School) We Care Initiative

CoS We Care is an outstanding example of innovative public education in action. By connecting primary and secondary students through authentic design thinking challenges, the initiative has strengthened transition, developed student leadership and created meaningful opportunities for high-potential learners to thrive. The program has enhanced collaboration between schools, strengthened community partnerships and empowered students to become confident problem-solvers and changemakers. Importantly, it has elevated community confidence in public education, contributing to increased enrolments and positioning Koorringal High School as a school of choice. CoS We Care exemplifies educational excellence, innovation and a commitment to improving outcomes for every student.

Paddington Public School (for Leadership Team, Bondi, Port Jackson and Kamay Principal Networks)

Burbangana Instructional Leaders Network

Burbangana represents the best of what public education can achieve when expertise, collaboration and purpose align. What began as a local network has evolved into a responsive, system-informed professional learning model that advances the priorities of Our Plan for NSW Public Education and delivers benefits for students and communities across NSW. Grounded in authentic partnership, including engagement with the AECG, it reflects cultural integrity and respect for community voice. Burbangana demonstrates how practitioner-informed innovation

can strengthen teaching practice and improve student outcomes, reinforcing the principle that investing in teachers is an investment in every student.

Penrith Selective High School Alumni Learning Labs and HSC Support

Penrith High School's innovative Alumni Learning Labs and HSC support initiatives have transformed academic culture and achievement by harnessing the expertise of high-achieving alumni and students. Through peer mentoring, student-led learning opportunities and targeted academic support, the school has fostered a culture of aspiration, collaboration and excellence. Embedded within strategic school excellence processes, the initiative has contributed to sustained growth in student engagement and HSC success, including increased Band 6 achievements, distinguished achievers and all rounders. By empowering students to learn with and from one another, Penrith High School has created a sustainable model for academic excellence and collective success.

Portland Central School Unconditional Positive Regard: High Support, High Expectations

Portland Central School has demonstrated significant success in integrating explicit teaching methodologies alongside the Berry Street Trauma-Informed Model as key components of its educational practice. This dual approach has fostered a supportive and effective

learning environment that addresses both the academic needs and the emotional wellbeing of all students, while embedding a high-expectations culture in which every student benefits from strong teacher advocacy and a personalised approach to learning that balances challenge with support.

Sarah Redfern Public School

Inclusion without Limits: Creating a School Where Every Student Belongs

Sarah Redfern Public School exemplifies excellence in inclusive education through a genuine whole-school commitment to ensuring every student is known, valued and cared for. Underpinned by the philosophy "Not can they participate, but how can they participate?", the school has embedded inclusive practices across all aspects of school life, including teaching and learning, wellbeing, leadership, sport, cultural programs and community engagement. The school's success is further strengthened through authentic partnerships with families, evidence-based support systems and a collaborative staff culture focused on high expectations for every learner.

Windang Public School

A Whole-School Journey Towards Excellence

Windang Public School has demonstrated an outstanding and sustained commitment to school improvement through evidence-informed practice,

high expectations and a strong collaborative culture. Through the consistent implementation of explicit instruction, curriculum coherence and Science of Learning principles, the school has strengthened teaching practice and student achievement. Instructional coaching, collaborative planning and professional learning have built collective efficacy and shared accountability for success. Sustained academic achievement across NAPLAN and Check-in Assessments has exceeded state and similar-school averages, alongside high levels of student wellbeing, belonging and community confidence. Excellence

Yowie Bay Public School

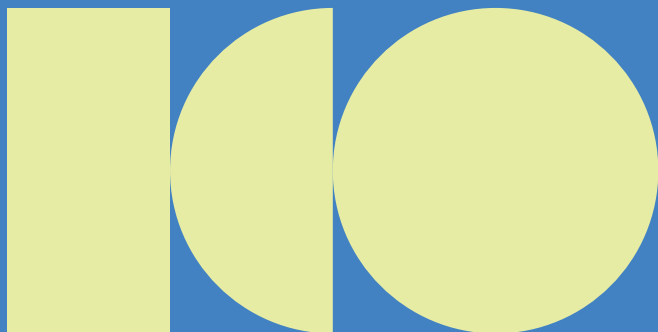
Justum Tene Challenge

The Justum Tene Challenge is an outstanding wellbeing and student development initiative that empowers students to pursue personal growth through service, skills development, physical recreation and adventurous journeys. Operating within a supportive, non-competitive framework, the program fosters resilience, self-regulation, agency and reflective practice while strengthening students' sense of belonging and social-emotional wellbeing. Through personalised goal setting and student voice, learners take ownership of their development and celebrate individual progress. The initiative provides a seamless pathway to the Duke of Edinburgh Award, creating continuity from primary to secondary education while building lifelong values of service, perseverance and self-improvement.



Unconditional Positive Regard: High Support, High Expectations – Portland Central School.

PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT AND VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD



Recipient Citations



John Bicknell
Mount Annan High School

John Bicknell shows extraordinary commitment to public education, deeply shaped by his own lived experience as a former British child migrant. His core beliefs have inspired a strong conviction that every young person deserves to be heard, supported and encouraged. This dedication has earned him immense respect across the student body. For over 20 years, including 6 years at Mount Annan High School, John has provided compassionate and reliable mentoring to vulnerable students. His selfless service, humility and genuine care have greatly enhanced student wellbeing, belonging and engagement, making him a valued member of the school community.



Sabrina Kelly
Kiama Public School

Sabrina engages warmly with the whole school community at significant events, including presentation ceremonies. Her genuine care for the community and her support for staff and students are evident in all that she does. She consistently models the values the school seeks to instil in its students, leading by example both in and out of the classroom. Her positive presence and willingness to go above and beyond have made a lasting impression on those she works with.



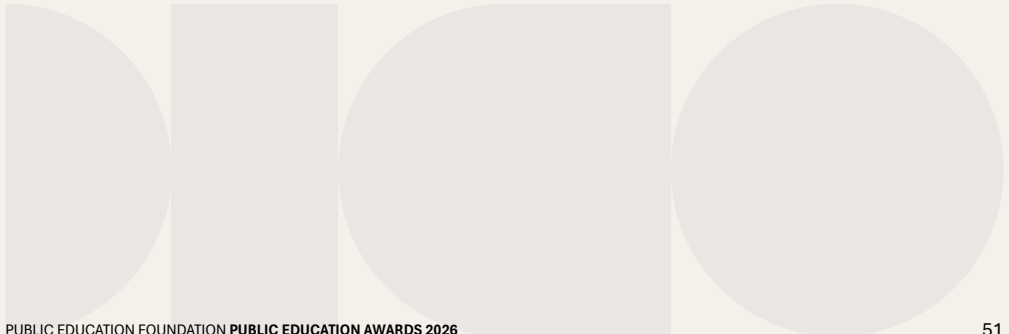
Ann Morey
Orange High School

As President of the Orange High School P&C, Ann has made an exceptional contribution to her school and its community. Through her leadership, enthusiasm, dedication and generosity, she has supported initiatives that enhanced opportunities for students and families. Ann has worked closely with staff, parents and community members to support school priorities and lead fundraising efforts. She is also the driving force behind the school's Year 12 Graduation celebrations, coordinating every detail to create memorable experiences for students and their families. Her commitment, positivity and tireless volunteer service have had a lasting impact on Orange High School.



Grace Guan
Sydney Boys High School

Grace's sustained service has enriched her school community and strengthened its culture of care. For over 6 years, she has contributed across the canteen, school events and P&C initiatives with consistency and professionalism. Her leadership as Canteen Volunteer Coordinator, and more than 140 volunteer shifts since 2022, reflect a significant and ongoing commitment to the school. Grace has also supported major events and sporting activities, giving her time across weekdays and weekends. She is dependable, generous and community-minded, and her contribution is exceptional and deeply valued.





Nina Nguyen
Harrington Street Public School

Nina Nguyen is an exceptional parent leader whose vision, advocacy and commitment have transformed opportunities for students, families and the wider Harrington Street Public School community. As the school's P&C President, she has rebuilt parent engagement, strengthened partnerships between home and school and championed initiatives that promote inclusion, student voice and community connection. Through her leadership, students have benefited from new learning opportunities, scholarship programs, enhanced wellbeing initiatives and improved school facilities. Nina's ability to unite people, secure community support and establish sustainable programs has created a lasting legacy. Her dedication exemplifies the very best of public education and community service.



Hannah Wallace
Waverley Public School

Hannah is a passionate and dedicated advocate for Waverley Public School and public education. As Vice President of the P&C Association, she works with unwavering commitment to support the school, fostering collaboration among students, staff and parents and carers. Recognising that it takes a village to raise a child, Hannah champions initiatives that strengthen this village, including spearheading fundraising for the playground upgrade, advocating for the HPGE STEM+ Enrichment Class and coordinating engaging events such as STEMFEST. Her dedication and enthusiasm have significantly enhanced community involvement and strengthened the partnership between school and community.



Kathryn Reynolds
Sydney Secondary College
(Balmain, Leichhardt and
Blackwattle Bay Campus)

Kathryn is a passionate and unwavering advocate for public education and a highly valued member of the Sydney Secondary College community. She attends and actively supports school events across all three campuses, with a particular commitment to the Instrumental Music Program. Her dedication to promoting public education within the wider community is outstanding. As a proud parent who chose local public schools for her own children, she leads by example in championing the value of public education. Kathryn generously volunteers her time to assist with promotional activities, fundraising stalls and community events, offering enthusiastic support whenever needed.



Elizabeth Stubbs
Wyndham College

Elizabeth is a dedicated advocate for public education and a valued partner of Wyndham College. As a parent, she was featured in the department's Inspiring Excellence campaign, showcasing the college's commitment to wellbeing, inclusion and academic excellence. She also volunteers on teacher recruitment panels, collaborating with staff to select educators aligned with the school's values. Her insights strengthen home-school partnerships and promote public confidence in education. Elizabeth's advocacy and involvement have significantly enriched Wyndham College's culture of collaboration, wellbeing and high expectations, positively impacting students, staff and families.



WHAT WE DO



The Public Education Foundation brings together governments, schools, parents, students, individuals and corporate and philanthropic organisations who share a commitment to improving equity and excellence in education in Australia.

Support students to achieve their full potential through life-changing scholarships.

Provide professional development opportunities to educators and school leaders to enable them to extend their leadership and teaching skills.

Enhance the value and reputation of Australia's public schools, ensuring every Australian has access to a high-quality, inclusive education.

Investing in Education

To support the vital role played by public education in ensuring fair, equitable and high-quality education for all, you can donate to the Public Education Foundation. Donations are tax deductible and can be made online at givenow.com.au/publiceducationfoundation.

Find out how you can help students reach their full potential: publiceducationfoundation.org.au

PLEASE SCAN THE QR CODE TO MAKE A DONATION.



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“A young woman wrote to me to tell me, the PEF scholarship I donated to helped her improve her HSC result and enrol in the university course of her dreams. Says it all, but that is why I keep giving. There is a need to support students who lack the funds to fulfil their educational potential.”

— Anonymous current donor

Email info@publiceducationfoundation.org.au
to find out more, or to donate now visit
givenow.com.au/publiceducationfoundation



publiceducationfoundation.org.au

The Public Education Foundation acknowledges the Dharug people, the traditional custodians of the land on which we work, and we pay our respects to Aboriginal Elders past, present and emerging.





SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

PEF connects students, teachers and school leaders with the scholarships, networks and opportunities they deserve – because public good comes from public education.

Students

Tertiary – Monday **29 June** 2026 to Friday **4 September** 2026

Secondary – Monday **20 July** 2026 to Friday **25 September** 2026

Primary – Monday **3 August** 2026 to Friday **9 October** 2026

Principals and Teachers

Monday **7 September** 2026 to Tuesday **26 January** 2027

Visit our website to find out more publiceducationfoundation.org.au

