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NT Principal recognised at the 2016 John Laing Awards

A Northern Territory principal has been officially recognised for her dedication and commitment to education and professional development in the annual Principals Australia Institute, John Laing Awards 2016.

Helen Chatto is the Principal of Girraween Primary School and began her teaching career in 1980 in East Gippsland in Victoria teaching at Lucknow and Stratford Primary Schools before moving to Darwin in 1990. She worked as a leader in four schools: Moulden Park, Driver, Howard Springs and Girraween. Helen started at Girraween as the senior teacher before the school opened and worked with the principal to establish whole school policies, procedures and practices. After a period in corporate she returned to Girraween as the Assistant Principal in 2008 and became the Principal in 2010. She was officially recognised today for her contribution to the profession.

The John Laing Awards acknowledge principals in every state and territory who demonstrate outstanding leadership in providing professional learning in schools. They celebrate the contribution principals make to support the professional learning and development of teachers and other school leaders.

"It is important to recognise and celebrate the role principals play in providing leadership and development in their schools and the wider community. Great schools have great leaders who inspire both their staff and their students every day. We are honoured to be able to run these awards every year, as they truly demonstrate the commitment made by our school leaders in educating students in primary and secondary schools across Australia.," said Paul Geyer, Chief Executive Officer, Principals Australia Institute.

Set up in 2004, the Awards honour John Laing, a former Tasmanian school principal who worked for PAI (the then Australian Principals Association Professional Development Council). He was the motivating force behind the innovative initiative in the early 1990s to bring principals together for national professional learning projects and programs to support their role as school leaders.

More information about Helen is below. Helen Chatto is available for interview. Please contact Gianna in the first instance.

Click here for more information about the Awards:

<http://www.pai.edu.au/content/john-laing-professional-development-awards-2016>

Media Contact

Gianna Ferrara
General Manager, Marketing and Brand

E: Gianna.Ferrara@pai.edu.au

P: 08 8394 2177

M: 0438 054 360

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About Principals Australia Institute

Principals Australia Institute (PAI) is a leading national organisation providing quality professional learning, leadership development and principal certification to Australia's 9,500 school leaders. With an established network of locations in all capital cities and in regional areas, PAI delivers key programs to all schools and systems across Australia.

PAI also supports the social and emotional health and wellbeing of children in thousands of Australian schools through its delivery of the Australian Government-funded KidsMatter Primary and MindMatters programs.

Through its relationships and connections across the education sector, it assists school leaders to achieve the best possible outcomes for themselves, their staff and their students, through ongoing professional development and learning.

PAI provides leadership and advocacy to Government in the areas of school leadership, professional development and Australian Principal Certification to help raise the profile and reputation of principals in the community.

About Helen Chatto

Helen established a strong professional learning community and culture at Girraween Primary School by presenting professional learning, coaching others to run sessions and facilitating action research projects with teams and individuals. Staff are encouraged to strive for continuous improvement, with quality professional learning organised with visiting experts and the school's own staff as presenters. Teachers are encouraged and supported to attend workshops and conferences and to get involved in local and national projects. Girraween staff have worked with ACARA and ALEA to produce resources for teachers around Australia. Building capacity of teachers leads to greater personal satisfaction for them and creates a network of committed educators. Many of the staff Helen has mentored are now in leadership positions themselves.

Helen spent two and a half years as the Northern Territory Literacy Project Manager providing professional learning for teachers across the Northern Territory. In this role she organised 'First Steps' facilitator courses and established a network of teachers working to build the capacity of teachers and whole school understandings of best practice in the teaching of literacy. She was able to present systemic initiatives and tailored professional learning events.

Helen became a facilitator in all components of First Steps English, Stepping Out Reading, Primary Connections and the Child Protection Curriculum, where she has presented these courses over the last ten years to whole staff and small groups. She has also designed workshops to meet identified needs of schools, based on data analysis and utilising research based practice from her learning, through professional reading and regularly attending national conferences.

Helen has also been an active member of the Australian Literacy Educators' Association and has been on the local council for twenty years and the national executive for eight years as NT State Director. In this role she co-convened the national conference in 2014 where 600 teachers from all over Australia came to Darwin for three days of research and classroom based presentations and workshops. Helen attends the ALEA national conference every year and has been a regular presenter. Her professional network has had a huge impact on her growth as a leader and has helped her to stay current in her pedagogical knowledge, giving her credibility when working with teachers.

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At the local level Helen has facilitated many professional learning sessions with interstate presenters, for teachers and has helped to build a strong local council who promote exemplary teaching of literacy. Running alongside the work with ALEA she has collaborated with her principal colleagues on the literacy improvement agenda through the provision of quality professional learning and discussions.