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VIC Principals recognised at the 2016 John Laing Awards

Three Victorian school leaders have been officially recognised for their dedication and commitment to education and professional development in the annual Principals Australia Institute, John Laing Awards 2016.

Andrew Strooper, Pitsa Binnion, Gaynor Robson-Garth and Steve McGarrigle all received the John Laing Award for Professional Development from Principals Australia Institute at a special presentation in Melbourne today.

- **Andrew Strooper** - Head of Malvern Campus, Caulfield Grammar School has been a respected educator leading and mentoring other aspiring school leaders in the independent sector. Andrew was nominated by the Independent Primary School Heads Association VIC (IPSHA VIC)
- **Pitsa Binnion**, - Principal, McKinnon Secondary College has developed a rich learning environment at her school experiencing huge enrolment growth in recent years and is now one of the largest secondary schools in the state. Pitsa was nominated by the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals (VASSP)
- **Steve McGarrigle** – Principal, Rollins Primary School has implemented the student writing and mathematics programs in his school, which have led to improved student outcomes in these areas. Steve was nominated by the Victorian Principals Association.
- **Gaynor Robson-Garth** – Principal Siena College, Camberwell, has invested much time in promoting professional development, as well as setting up the structure and a dedicated position to enhance, encourage and support professional development of the staff.

Each of the recipients is an outstanding school leader and has made substantial contributions to education in VIC through strategic senior leadership roles over a considerable time. These leaders have been responsible for working with other senior educators to develop capacity in government, Catholic and Independent schools.

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.

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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 the 4 recipients are below. All are 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>

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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.

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Award Recipients

Andrew Strooper - Head of Malvern Campus, Caulfield Grammar School

Andrew has been a Junior School Head for 20 years and for the past 16 years has been an instrumental member of Caulfield Grammar's Senior Management team. He has led a dedicated team of teachers at the Wheelers Hill Campus and has just recently been appointed the new Head of Caulfield Grammar School's Malvern Campus. Andrew is a respected educator and is known for his encouraging personality, dedication and attention to detail.

Since his appointment as his Junior School Head, Andrew has been a passionate member of the Independent Primary School Heads Association (IPSHA). He joined when the association was known as the Junior School Heads Association of Australia (JSHAA). Andrew served on the JSHAA and IPSHA committees entrusted to organise professional development for teachers in its schools.

This included the Biennial Staff Refresher School, organising professional development days and coordinating the Professional Development Groups for many years. Andrew's tireless efforts ensured that the association delivered and facilitated quality professional learning opportunities for members and their schools by providing opportunities for professional development and networking for staff.

Andrew has served on the Victorian Branch Executive for 16 years. Initially, his role on Executive was as State President Elect 2005-2006, State President 2007-2008, and Immediate Past President 2009-2010, and then continued on as Coordinator of the Professional Development Groups. Andrew fulfilled his duties as a member, and leader, of the Victorian Branch Executive with his signature encouragement and dedication.

When serving as President, Andrew made consistent efforts to promote the goals of the Association by being part of the national voice of independent primary schools, fostering the cause of independent primary education in Australia and maintaining links with other associations and bodies involved in primary education. He represented members of the Victorian Branch at meetings of the Federal Board of IPSHA as a board member of the Centre for Strategic Education (CSE) and at meetings of the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority (VCAA).

Andrew has a strong passion for creating an inclusive and engaging learning environment. He works closely with his teaching staff to ensure the students in his care are challenged and nurtured. He strives to constantly seek out the best teaching and learning practices for his community. Most recently, this has included becoming a candidate school for the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program.

Andrew is a respected leader amongst his peers. He is a source of wisdom for many other Independent Primary School Heads and is admired for his management and professionalism. Andrew has always been an informed, reliable and proud educational leader, who takes the time to support IPSHA and the Victorian Branch members. Andrew has also been most generous with his time and expertise.

As a leader, Andrew has made a point of making new members of the association feel most welcome and has provided ongoing collegial support and mentoring. He has been an enthusiastic attendee and active contributor at all Victorian Branch and Executive Meetings, as well as Federal Board and Executive Meetings, Biennial Seminars, National and International Conferences. As an experienced educator, his guidance and support is deeply appreciated by the members in Victoria and across Australia.

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Andrew has been an active leader in the field of professional development. In his role as Coordinator of the IPSHA Professional Development Group for over 7 years, Andrew has worked tirelessly to inspire educators to form collective groups with a collective understanding and has coordinated professional learning opportunities for these groups.

He has been a passionate voice for all teachers and he inspires them to constantly seek out collegiality and professional growth. Above everything else, Andrew is an inspirational leader and a genuinely caring man.

The John Laing Award for Professional Development recognises Andrew's outstanding commitment and contribution to leadership development of his colleagues.

Pitsa Binnion,- Principal, McKinnon Secondary College

Pitsa fulfils the Leadership propositions from the L5 Leadership framework and her colleagues particularly highlight her ability to inspire leadership actions and aspirations in them. She devotes considerable energy to supporting others and is very influential in Victorian educational circles.

Pitsa models professional leadership in her school, her local network and in the wider Victorian context. She is frequently requested to act as a Peer Observer, critical friend and Challenge Partner when other schools are engaged in their School Review.

This indicates that other principals in the state school system hold her in high esteem. She brings focused and visionary leadership to her school and develops quality relationships.

Pitsa has developed a rich learning environment at McKinnon Secondary College. The school has experienced huge enrolment growth in recent years and is now one of the biggest secondary schools, with families moving into the residential zone to ensure enrolment. Pitsa has ensured teachers and middle level leaders in her school can develop their capabilities to the highest level. She ensures a focus on the core work of teaching and learning and maximising student outcomes is undertaken.

Staff at Pitsa's school experience wonderful opportunities for professional development and are challenged to build personal capacity and improve their skills. She ensures her school leaders have the opportunity to be involved in professional development activities beyond the school. She regularly brings a team of leaders to statewide professional learning events ensuring they are exposed to bigger picture thinking and developing their wider aspirations.

Some of Pitsa's achievements are as follows:

- Mentoring of new Principals and undertaking "growth coaching" professional learning
- Responding to leadership development of middle managers at the school through engaging "Leading Teams" to facilitate an extended Professional Development program
- Executive role on Southern Principals Sage/Bayside group, organising professional learning and collegial support – driving improvement in their schools
- Initiated and led McKinnon's attainment of CIS accreditation; delivered extensive professional learning to all members of the community through rigorous self-assessment (and peer assessment) of every aspect of the College; initiated significant professional learning on the importance of developing students as globally-minded citizens
- Driving school-wide improvement through development of strategic plan/AIP, curriculum committee, school improvement team; use staff meetings to inspire and lead teachers, explore and explain data behind the professional learning goals set for teaching staff

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- Actively creating leadership and improvement opportunities for the staff at McKinnon – many staff actively encouraged to undertake course at Bastow; supported through further studies such as Masters; school improvement agenda has been supported with the creation of relevant positions of instructional leadership – opportunities given to existing staff members, supported in their development as leaders
- Member, Strategic Council of Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership – influencing the professional learning opportunities delivered now by Bastow and the DET's preparation of prospective principal class officers Victoria wide
- Presenter, Bastow's principal preparation courses (delivering seminars to public education's future generations of leaders)
- President, Southern VASSP – coordinating relevant professional learning for principal class members in the South Eastern Region
- Member, Expert Principals' Advisory Group (DET) advising the Department about implementation of policies
- Regularly involved in peer reviews of other schools, bringing own knowledge and experience to inform other schools' improvement journey
- Nominated for IPSHA Fellowship Award in 2012

Steve McGarrigle – Principal, Rollins Primary School

Steve was first appointed to a Principal position in 1995 when he became the Assistant Principal of North Shore Primary School in Geelong. Upon the retirement of the Principal in 1997, he was promoted to the position of Principal of North Shore PS.

He was later appointed to the position of Principal at Rollins Primary School from the commencement of 2000 where he still works. During his time at Rollins PS, Steve has seen the school undergo a significant transformation with a shift in demographics and an almost complete overhaul of staffing. He has built a culture of trust and collaboration that has seen the school take great strides in recent years. They work together, with the school community, with an unrelenting focus on the school values of Respect, Encouragement, Ambition, Consideration and Honesty (REACH).

Within the school there are many and varied opportunities for professional learning and growth. There are high functioning teaching teams and Professional Learning Teams in place and staff meetings provide an ideal opportunity for ongoing professional learning tailored to the specific needs of staff within the context of the school and its continued development.

The professional learning supports the school goals that are identified in its Strategic Plan and Annual Implementation Plans each year. The staff value the opportunities provided by the sharing of knowledge and skills with peer observations, professional readings and targeted professional development being critical elements of their professional growth.

Rollins PS has a highly valued Professional Development Program which not only addresses the specific school goals but also supports the personal areas of interest of individual members of staff. Pupil Free Days are vital to the continued growth of staff and a collective responsibility towards the development of the students. Staff identify areas which can provide a whole-school focus and work together to ensure consistency of teacher quality throughout the school.

The most recent examples of this include the Student Writing program which has resulted in vastly improved student outcomes and attracted interest from a number of neighbouring schools and the more recent work with Mathematics where the school has commenced a professional relationship with Michael Ymer who will work closely with staff to continue to build on their

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capacity to deliver a high quality and engaging Mathematics program to the students. Over time Steve has built a truly collaborative and supportive environment at the school.

In addition to his role as the Principal of a school, Steve has also demonstrated a commitment to 'system' leadership and support for not only aspirant but also established leaders. His involvement in programs which support the development of aspirant leaders includes facilitation of, and mentoring in, programs such as Principal 21 (Barwon South Western Region), Leaders in the Making (Geelong North Network, Aspiring Leaders (VPA) and Unlocking Potential (Bastow Institute). In addition to this Steve has been fortunate to have supported newly appointed principals in DET's mentoring for First Time Principals program.

Steve has held positions on the Geelong North Network Executive and made several significant contributions to the professional development of both teachers and school leaders in this capacity. Amongst these contributions have been iPad workshops organised with an Apple Educator, Leaders in the Making (previously mentioned), planning and implementation of interstate study trips for Principals and a number of presentations to colleagues based on successful initiatives being delivered at his school.

Steve was also fortunate enough to be a participant in the High Performing Principals program in 2011-2012 and after researching and visiting schools in both the UK and North America, he was able to share his learnings with other Principal colleagues.

In 2012-2013 he was a member of the Barwon South Western Region's 'Literacy & Numeracy Reference Group' which focused on building the capacity of school's to develop and sustain Literacy and Numeracy programs which would have a positive impact on student outcomes.

During the period 2007-2008, Steve was seconded to the Conduct & Ethics Branch where he was fortunate enough to work with a skilled team of people who enhanced his ability to manage staff performance and conduct. He considers this period to have been that which has contributed the most to his development as a school leader and growth as a person. As a result of this experience Steve is often contacted by colleagues seeking advice on how to manage difficult staff issues and he willingly provides support in these situations and has assisted many colleagues to work through challenging scenarios ending in successful resolutions.

Steve has been a long-standing VPA member with over 20 years of membership. During this time he has contributed fully to the Association's work of supporting and advocating for government primary school leaders in Victoria. Through taking on key roles in the VPA he has demonstrated his commitment to personal leadership development as well as influencing and "inspiring leadership actions and aspirations in others".

He has been a VPA Board Member since the beginning of 2015. As a VPA State Councillor between 2011 and 2014 he represented school leaders in South-Western Victoria. In his roles of Deputy Convenor in 2013 and Convenor in 2014 he was most effective at organising VPA regional meetings with a consistent record of achieving very high attendance numbers.

These meetings have provided valuable professional learning for attendees through the organisation of guest speakers and the sharing of practice and ideas. He has also contributed to the professional reading available to school leaders in VPA publications. He has regularly participated in VPA conferences, workshops and professional learning programs such as Principals as Literacy Leaders and encouraged his staff and colleagues to attend.

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Gaynor Robson-Garth – Principal Siena College, Camberwell.

Gaynor strongly believes that staff professional development is central to the growth of the individual, the team and the school. During her time at Siena College, she has invested much time in promoting professional development, as well as setting up the structure and a dedicated position to enhance, encourage and support professional development of the staff. The main areas have included: Faith/Mission and Leadership, Learning and Teaching, Student Wellbeing, Administrative Development and Community Development.

These have been identified around three pillars of equal significance for this development:

- The need to enhance the Catholic and Dominican ethos of the school.
- The need to deepen and develop staff understanding as to what constitutes authentic leadership.
- The need to maximize students' learning outcomes.

Faith and Leadership

- Some of the key activities that Gaynor has undertaken under the Faith and Leadership area includes:
 - Bi annual Dominican Conferences. Gaynor has convened and led the planning and running of the 2011 Dominican Conference at Siena College for over 140 delegates from New Zealand and across Australia. In 2017, the College will again organise this conference.
 - Dominican Ethos seminars with a range of speakers/presenters on contemporary issues followed by discussion groups.
 - South African Immersion Program – where staff and some students are immersed in African culture and work in areas such as a feeding scheme, kindergarten for orphaned children, a women's project, and an after school homework programme for students in the area.
 - Dominican Educators' Enrichment Program (DEEP) – Four after school sessions are offered per year plus a reading module.

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- Indigenous Spirituality – An annual immersion program for 3 staff and 12 students to remote parts of central Australia with Jungala Enterprises, an indigenous run organisation.
- Dr David Vinegrad on '*Difficult Conversations with Staff using a Restorative Approach*'
- Leading for All - Leadership training offered to House Coordinators.

Student Wellbeing

- The Student Wellbeing pillar has included the following areas of development:
 - Student Wellbeing, Connect, Grow, Learn, Flourish - House Coordinators Wellbeing seminars over 4 days (2016).
 - Restorative Practices (annually) and a series of seminars offered by Dr David Vinegrad for staff at different entry levels.
 - Full day on Child Safe Schools with lawyer Stephen Troeth and Social Worker Robyn Miller (2016)
 - Neuroplasticity and resilience with Dr David Collins in preparation for the BrainGro trial with students.

Curriculum/Learning and Teaching

- The third area of focus is Curriculum Learning and Teaching. Some of the professional development for this pillar has included:
 - Looking for Learning Program 2014 – 2016 which involved ongoing collection of data by all staff about students' learning via 'Learning Walks' and classroom visits, followed by feedback to individual teachers and a 'coaching conversation'
 - After School Learning Series for staff. These seminars are an opportunity for staff to showcase and share their professional practice. The final seminar each year is an 'exhibition' of innovative strategies and pedagogy used by staff over the year.
 - Schoolbox Pilot implementation program 2016 – Teams of staff are trialing and setting up a new learning management system that will be extended in 2017 to include all staff

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- Learning and Teaching Professional Learning Days are offered annually and facilitated by speakers with particular expertise based on strategic goals for the year. Examples include psychologist Andrew Fuller (the learning brain (neuroscience), the implications for girls' learning and for teaching, Positive Mindsets and the psychology of success.
- Gaynor has also ensured that there has been professional development and learning for the Administration based staff. Some of the activities have included: Team Building Workshops, Synergetic Training, Care Monkey Training and First Aid Training, EducatePlus Conferences for Marketing staff.
- From a **Community Development perspective**, Gaynor has ensured that there are Parent Seminars at the college and Catholic Development Network meetings. She has also run School Law conferences and other community based sessions to further support the wider school community.