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For distribution after 28 November 2016

NSW Principals recognised at the 2016 John Laing Awards

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

Eric Littler, Jackie Malecki, Geoff Hastings, Graeme Feeney and Mandy Sanderson all received the John Laing Award for Professional Development from Principals Australia Institute at a special presentation in Sydney today.

- **Eric Littler** – Principal, St Joseph’s College Banora Point had had a long career as a principal, leading both his own and his staff’s professional development. Eric was nominated by the Association of Catholic School Principals of NSW.
- **Jackie Malecki**- Principal, Rooty Hill Public School, has been instrumental in principal leadership roles contributing to the mentoring of other school leaders. She was nominated by the NSW Primary Principals Association.
- **Geoff Hastings** – Principal, Denison College, Bathurst has made a substantial impact on public education through his tireless commitment to achieving the best outcomes possible for students, teachers and his colleague principals. Geoff was nominated by the NSW Secondary Principals Council.
- **Graeme Feeney** – Head of Primary and Deputy Principal, Scone Grammar School has been a strong advocate for building awareness of student/staff social issues, and for the provision of PD support for leaders, teachers and students around these areas. He was nominated by Independent Primary School Heads Australia NSW.
- **Mandy Sanderson** – Principal, St John the Baptist, Maitland, has allowed her staff to focus on the individual child and allowing the curriculum to be differentiated to suit the needs of that child. Mandy was nominated by the Association of Catholic School Principals NSW.

Each of the recipients is an outstanding school leader and has made substantial contributions to education in NSW 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

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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 the 5 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

Eric Littler – Principal, St Joseph’s College Banora Point

Eric Littler has spent 25 years in leadership positions and is currently the Principal of St Joseph’s College Banora Point in NSW. He has been the President of the Lismore Diocesan Principals Association for 10 years and Secretary of the Diocesan Principals Association for 5 years. Eric has also served as the President of Lismore Diocesan Secondary Principals Association for 10 years and has been a Member of the Lismore Diocesan Education Board for 9 years.

Eric was the Convenor of the Diocesan Staff Development Programme for 3 years and was a Member of ACSP Executive for 2 years. He was also a Board Member of Enterprise Training Company for 5 years. He was also the Chief Consultant in setting up ET Secondary College, an innovative secondary College for students at risk on the NSW Central Coast.

His commitment to professional development is evident. He designed and implemented the model of Integrated Sport for Secondary Colleges in the Diocese of Lismore and designed and implemented a model for Professional Learning Teams in the secondary schools in the Diocese of Lismore.

In his early career, Eric was Principal of John Paul College Coffs Harbour for 7 years. Whilst here, he established a partnership school with St Marys Primary School Bowraville (a school with predominately indigenous students. Eric was also the Foundation Principal of Xavier Catholic College Ballina for 11 years.

He trialled and implemented a Leader of Pedagogy position to enhance teacher performance and set up school wide interactive classrooms in 2003 in Xavier Catholic College, where he was acknowledged for this as best practice by Dr Brendan Nelson the then Minister for Education when he opened Stage Three of the college.

Eric also established a Trade Skills Centre at St. Josephs Banora Point, and was instrumental in supporting other principals in the Diocese in expanding their vocational bases, in a country comprehensive secondary school setting with strategies and advice.

Jackie Malecki- Principal, Rooty Hill Public School

Jackie is committed to the development of high quality school leaders. Currently Vice President of the NSW Primary Principals’ Association (NSWPPA), the professional association representing over 1700 Principals in NSW Government Schools, Jackie has played a leading role in the professional development of beginning teachers, school executive and colleague Principals, for more than 40 years.

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Jackie has served in a variety of schools, both in the United Kingdom and in Australia. Her first school promotion position in Australia was as Deputy Mistress at St. Clair Public School and she has since filled positions as Assistant Principal St. Mary's North, Deputy Principal Tregear, Principal Villawood East, Principal Windsor South and Principal Rooty Hill Public Schools.

She has also been elected to leadership positions within the NSWPPA at Local, Regional and State levels, filling the positions of Research Officer, Vice President and Deputy President, with distinction, from 2005 to the present day. Jackie was awarded Fellowship of the NSWPPA in 2009, in recognition of her significant contributions to Principal development and support.

Among her many achievements during her early career, Jackie:

- Organized and conducted regional teacher inservice courses in 1975 and subsequent years on topics ranging from the Integrated Day to differentiated curriculum delivery. She served as a Guest Presenter on teaching methodologies to Graduate Students at Western Sydney University, commencing in 1978. She also played a leading role in the commencement of the Western Sydney Beginning Teachers Development Program and was a leading member of the organizing committee from 1994 onwards.
- Jackie was elected as the Cluster Schools representative on the South West Sydney Regional Primary Principals' Council and developed from 1994, with fellow Principals Janet Chan and Chris Brooker, the Mt. Druitt Primary Executive Program (MPEX), which provided professional development for school executives and teachers aspiring to school leadership positions;
- She commenced Principal Induction courses, whilst an Executive member of Western Sydney Region Primary Principals' Council, producing support materials highly valued by newly appointed colleagues, between 1994 and 1996, and acted as State Research Officer for the NSWPPA, informing the establishment of a leadership development focus for the Association.
- Jackie also chaired the Mt. Druitt Public Education Committee, which communicated the high quality of Public Education in the area and showcased the talent of students and teachers.
- She is currently working on behalf of Principal colleagues as a member of the National Council of the Australian Government Primary Principals' Association (AGPPA), filling the role of National Secretary since 2011.

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- Currently, Jackie provides advice and mentoring to the leadership committee of the Western Sydney Primary Executive Support Group (PESG), a vibrant and active professional body of school executives, numbering more than 150 participants, focusing on developing leadership skills and preparation for higher levels of leadership.

Geoff Hastings – Principal, Denison College, Bathurst

Geoff Hastings is an outstanding school leader, working primarily in rural schools, for many years. He has been principal at Bathurst High School from 2006 - 2007 and Denison College Bathurst High Campus from 2007 - 2016. He has been a highly articulate and passionate advocate for the need to build a culture of highly engaging pedagogy as the key to successful learning outcomes for all students. In his role as a school leader he has embodied the aims and ideals of Principals Australia's L5 Leadership Framework.

Beyond his normal role of school Principal, Geoff has made major contributions to the professional learning of other school leaders by his work with a range of associations and projects in the area of integration of technology.

Geoff has been a member of the NSW Secondary Principals' Council since 2006 when he commenced as Principal of Bathurst High School. He has been a secretary and president of the Central West Secondary Principals' Council and the SPC representative on the Western Region Technology Reference Group.

He has an ongoing interest in the place of technology in the learning process and in 2008 volunteered to be on the SPC Digital Education Reference Group, a small team of Principals who worked directly with SPC senior executive and leaders from the department to shape the Digital Education Revolution in NSW public schools. The result of this endeavour was the rollout of an extremely successful technology program in all public schools across NSW.

As a member of the SPC Executive, Geoff has been responsible for the technology portfolio including, most recently, the rollout of the Learning Management Business Reform program across NSW. Throughout the time he led this portfolio he was responsible for the coordination and delivery of a wide range of professional learning activities for other school leaders, focusing upon high quality integration of technology in the learning process.

In 2015, Geoff was part of 10-member delegation from the State's Education Dept to attend biennial International Confederation of Principals Conference in Helsinki, Finland.

Geoff has made a substantial impact on public education through his tireless commitment to achieving the best outcomes possible for students, teachers and his colleague principals. Hef

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engages the support of those around him in the pursuit of quality outcomes and models superior interpersonal skills in a manner which reflects humility as well as formidable drive and purpose.

It is these qualities that make Geoff a most worthy recipient of a John Laing Professional Development Award.

Graeme Feeney – Head of Primary and Deputy Principal, Scone Grammar School

Graeme was educated in NSW and began his teaching career in NSW Department of Education and Training schools in Mt Druitt and Lower Blue Mountains. He established and led a Christian School in WA as Principal for 8 years and worked in Qld and NSW independent schools in Primary Leadership roles over the last 24 years.

Graeme's Educational Qualifications include

- Diploma of Teaching - Mitchell College of Advanced Education, Bathurst (1977)
- Bachelor of Education - University of New England (Computer Education), Armidale (1995)
- Master of Education - University of Southern Queensland (Educational Management), Toowoomba (2000)

Graeme became a member of Independent Primary School Heads of Australia (IPSHA) in 2000, as Head of Primary at Scone Grammar School. Since then, he has been actively involved, contributing to ongoing professional development of members in a number of state branch and federal roles including Member of the IPSHA NSW State Branch Executive from 2006 onward, initially as Chair of Social Issues Committee, and then as Branch President and member of the IPSHA Federal Board from 2010-2012, with President Elect and Immediate Past President roles extending from 2008-2014.

Graeme is a strong advocate for building awareness amongst branch members of student/staff social issues, and for the provision of PD support for leaders, teachers and students around these areas. Some of these examples included:

- assisted in initiating JSHAA Social Issues Expo in 2007, co-ordinating this activity in 2007 and 2009
- assisted in initiating JSHAA Social Issues Commendation program for students and teachers in 2007
- assisted in writing JSHAA National Reconciliation Statement in 2004
- assisted in initiating and organising Student Leaders' Discussion Days in 2004 and 2006
- assisted in writing JSHAA/IPSHA Social Issues Discussion Papers (2004-2008)

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- assisted as a member of 2014 IPSHA Federal Biennial Conference (Sydney) Planning Committee

Graeme also led school staff by example through regular personal involvement in IPSHA PD opportunities (Branch meetings, Executive involvement, and Biennial Conference attendance), and was determined that regional location/'tyranny of distance' would not be a hindrance to finding ways to participate and access PD opportunities and association participation.

He encouraged, supported and facilitated regular school staff and student involvement in IPSHA NSW Branch PD Umbrella Groups and JSHAA/IPSHA activities, including:

- JSHAA Music Festivals in 2005, 2007 and 2009;
- IPSHA Performing Arts Festivals in 2014 and 2015;
- IPSHA Debating Gala Days in 2001, 2012, 2013 and 2015.

Graeme hosted the NSW Branch Country Weekend in Scone in 2003 providing collegial PD support and represented the IPSHA (NSW Branch) at the Prime Minister's 'National Conversation with Principals' Forums in 2009 and 2011, to provide a regional, independent, primary voice.

He has also served as a representative on the IPSHA NSW APPA NEC (National Executive Council) 2013-2014, IPSHA NSW APPA NAC (National Advisory Council) 2015-2016, was the IPSHA (Federal) representative on APPA Secretariat in 2014 and the IPSHA (Federal) representative on APPA Board 2015-2016.

Graeme is also an active member of the following professional associations;

- Australian College of Educators (ACE) 1998 -
 - Member of Hunter Branch Executive (2000-2008),
 - responsible for organising various branch PD activities, including
 - WTD - Teacher Recognition Awards 2005
 - ABC Radio 1233 Newcastle 'Classroom Stories' series 2005
- Junior School Heads' Association of Australia (JSHAA) 2000 - 2007
- Independent Primary Heads of Australia (IPSHA) 2008 -
 - Awarded IPSHA Fellowship in 2014
- Australian Primary Principals' Association (APPA) 2000 -current
- Hunter Region Independent Schools' Association (HRIS) 2000 - current
 - Member of HRIS Primary Heads Group,
 - responsible for organising annual Teacher Development Day programmes for Primary staff across 16 Hunter-based member schools
- Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) 2001 – current.

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Mandy Sanderson – Principal, St John the Baptist, Maitland

Mandy Sanderson has been a Principal in the Maitland Newcastle Diocese for 28 years. In her time as Principal, Mandy has always been respected as a hardworking leader. School communities enjoy Mandy's leadership and capacity as she builds positive relationships. Mandy's staff have a great respect for her and her capacity as a leader.

Mandy is proactive as a learner and the professional learning she has undertaken is then applied to her school setting. In recent times, Mandy has lead her school in peer coaching and developing a professional environment.

Mandy's staff focus on the individual child and the curriculum is differentiated to suit the needs of that child.

Mandy's initiative in this regard has changed substantially the way her teacher's teach and as a result the way students' learn.

The improved change in collaborative processes and the building of teacher capacity, has been dramatically improved in Mandy's current school.

Mandy is willing to share her knowledge and experiences with colleagues. Mandy hosts visiting school staff and executive to observe and learn from Mandy's experiences.

School Based Professional Development

The need for redefining the learning framework at St John's followed the plateauing of student achievement in Literacy and Numeracy. To initiate a change of culture, Mandy undertook a range of Professional Opportunities that equipped her with knowledge, skills and understandings which she then used to develop her staff over a two year period. The very experienced staff with whom she worked, needed strong leadership with clearly articulated goals and pathways for evidenced-based change.

Her own research and professional development had given her the confidence, enthusiasm and determination to weave a number of strands of educational theory and practice into the special formula that was needed for transformation of the school's particular learning landscape.

Together, with three other teachers, she attended three days of Professional Learning Communities followed by two different presentations on Responding to Intervention. External Consultants presented three days to all staff on Writing, Spelling and Comprehension Strategies. Mandy also provided a further three days on Maths and six teachers attended a 12 hour course on Education for Gifted Learners. All staff attended 2, 3 or 4 day Growth Coaching Courses.

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The Professional Development laid the foundations for change but the success lay in the follow-up, consolidation and practice of new knowledge and strategies which was school-based, led by both Mandy and her Leaders of Learning Team.

The intense and consistent follow-up followed a structure and pattern which engendered confidence in the staff and allowed them to move forward at a pace that was prescriptive while still allowing for individual rates of learning and abilities.

New procedures in staff meetings saw teachers proficiently use their newly acquired coaching skills in the pursuit of learning from their peers. The first 40 minutes of the weekly staff meeting was totally dedicated to Professional Development with input by the Leaders of Learning Team according to the PD Map and the current classroom focus that had been developed by the Team and the staff. The input session, which incorporated a goal for classroom action, was followed by a coaching session during which coaching buddies would guide each other in their personal follow-up of the day's PD session.

During the coaching session, stage groups and whole staff would reflect on the previous week's classroom action and share successes, disasters, observations, show samples of pre and post-tests, explain the variations of extension / core / and support activities which evolved from results of assessments. Strategies for tier 3 intervention for the students who did not respond appropriately to classroom support activities were planned.

Coaching skills were utilized in peer observation of lessons and specific practices in lessons as well as in giving feedback. Teachers were always affirmed on their achievements and as their confidence grew so did their willingness to learn, coach, share and mentor. Their commitment and dedication to a change in learning culture was consistently validated as their student's learning achievements reached new heights.

Professional Development in the Wider Community

During and following the raising of student achievement at her school, Mandy shared the school's journey with other Diocesan personnel. She gave a presentation to the Diocesan Learning Framework (a group of Principals and Assistant Principals), to the Diocesan Primary Coordinators, a Regional Executive Meeting and to visiting colleague Principals and teachers. Her teachers willingly open their classrooms to others so the learning can be seen in action.

The level of Professional Development, follow-up, procedures and practices has the same intensity now as it did when the journey first began. The routine is embedded into the fabric of the school and has become usual practice that reaps the reward of higher student achievement.