

# PUBLIC SERVICE MEDAL – AUSTRALIA DAY 2025

NOMINATION GUIDELINES

The Public Service Medal is a prestigious medal within the Australian Honours System designed to recognise Public Sector Officers who have made a contribution to the community through the outstanding performance of their duties.

These guidelineswill answer your questions about the nomination process, eligibility and selection criteria for the award.

## Who can be nominated?

Current public sector employees of the Commonwealth Government, State and Territory governments and local governments are eligible to be nominated for the Medal.

Department employees who deserve recognition for outstanding performance of their duties can be nominated. The Medal is awarded for meritorious service. Long service alone is not a sufficient basis for nomination.

The medal is not confined to senior officers. It is available to any public sector employee. In the past has been awarded to administrative or clerical staff and employees involved in operational roles. In all of these instances, "outstanding service" has been the definitive criteria for the Medal.

## What are the selection criteria?

Outstanding service could be shown through:

* service excellence to the public, or to external or internal clients;
* innovation in program, project or policy development;
* leadership, including as a member of a team; or
* the achievement of more efficient processes, improved productivity or better service delivery.

## When do nominations close?

Nominations for the Public Service Medal are sought twice a year for Australia Day and King's Birthday.

Nominations for the Public Service Medal for announcement on **King’s Birthday 2024** close at **5pm on Wednesday 13 December 2023**. Nominations should be forwarded to the department’s People, Culture and Capability directorate at [OurCulture@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:OurCulture@det.nsw.edu.au)

The nomination form can be downloaded from the [Awards and recognition page](https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/careers-at-education/scholarships-and-programs/awards).

**Contact for NSW Department of Education –** Culture and People Experience team by email at [OurCulture@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:OurCulture@det.nsw.edu.au)

## How to complete the nomination form?

The nominator must:

* complete the nomination form which includes:
  + the nomination statement (2-3 page limit)
  + signed referee statement of support from at least 3 people (2 page limit each)
* ensure the nomination form and referee statements are signed and dated
* ensure nomination is endorsed by the relevant Director Educational Leadership, Director, Executive Director or Deputy Secretary.

### The nomination form and statement

The nomination statement must contain comprehensive information on the service or achievement for which the nomination is being made. A list of positions held over a number of years is not sufficient. Because the nomination will be considered alongside other nominations in what is essentially a competitive process, the committee needs to be given a clear idea of what the nominee has done to fulfil the criterion of outstanding service. It should not be assumed that the committee has a detailed knowledge of the area in which the nominee has worked, or a full understanding of the significance of certain achievements. The nominee’s service should be put into context in the nomination statement. The nomination statement is limited to 2-3 pages.

### Referee support

To be considered by the committee, all nominations must be accompanied by at least 3 referee statements which comment on the service of the nominee. It is also often appropriate to obtain referee statements from outside the agency, especially if the nominee is being nominated for outstanding service to a particular community or industry. If the nominee’s service relates to the work of another agency, a referee statement from that agency may also help the committee in their consideration of the nomination. The referee statements must be signed.

### Endorsement

Nominations should be endorsed by the relevant Director Educational Leadership, Director, Executive Director or Deputy Secretary who should then forward the nomination to the People, Culture and Capability Directorate at OurCulture@det.nsw.edu.au

Please **do not** **send** nominations directly to the NSW Premiers Department as all nominations are required to be approved and endorsed by the department’s Secretary.

## Who selects the awardees?

### At the departmental level

A selection panel comprised of senior departmental officers reviews all nominations and recommends the most meritorious nominations in rank order to the Secretary for endorsement.

### At the Premier and Cabinet level

NSW nominations for the Medal are made to the Premier, through the NSW Public Service Medal Committee which is administered by the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Each State Public Service Medal Committee meet twice a year to consider nominations. After considering the nominations, the committee recommends a list of proposed recipients to the responsible Minister or Premier, who then makes a recommendation to the Governor-General who has the authority to approve the awards.

## How many awards are made each year?

Only 100 awards of the Public Service Medal can be made in any calendar year across Australia. Of these up to 30 can be awarded to employees of Government agencies and the remainder are awarded by states and territories.

## Past recipients nominated by the Department of Education

### Australia Day 2024

**Mr Glenn James Downie, Executive Director, Asset Management, School Infrastructure NSW**

*For outstanding public service to the community and students, in particular, the delivery of COVID-19*

Mr Downie's outstanding service excellence to the NSW school community is exemplified through leadership in ensuring the continuity and safety of school assets during some of the worst and unabated natural disasters NSW has witnessed including bushfires, smoke impact on schools, damaging storms, threatening floods, a mice plague, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021 alone, Mr Downie's Asset Management teams have progressively worked through the construction shutdown to ensure schools are fully supported and available and he led the mobilisation of resources for a state-wide ventilation audit, ensuring students could return to schools. Over 550,000 windows, 160,000 fans and 17,500 exhaust fans were inspected, and the audit identified a range of remediation works that were completed and ensured that all students could return safely to face to face learning.

Mr Downie led and oversaw the rectification of these findings to ensure schools were available to every NSW student in time for the Minister’s commitment to the reopening. The scale of the asset audit has never before been undertaken and will for all future years ensure a lasting legacy for the school infrastructure portfolio.

In 2022, Mr. Downie was instrumental in initiating and coordinating the immediate flood response emergency to the flood-affected communities in the Northern Rivers area. To lead the recovery effort, over 100 temporary classrooms were rolled out across the region, helping more than 1,200 students and 150 teachers from nine different schools get back onto their schools sites, while a further three schools with smaller cohorts were able to continue face to face learning using the 'school within a school' model.

Glenn’s achievements in recent years is highlighted by the way schools have operated as ‘normal’ during unprecedented times.

**Mr Nicholas Magriplis, R/Director, Office of the Deputy Secretary, Public Schools**

*For outstanding public service to public education, in particular, the delivery of COVID-19 related services.*

Nicholas Magriplis (Nick) is an outstanding senior officer, who has dedicated thirty years of service to public education across the state's most disadvantaged school communities in south-western Sydney. Recognised as a successful, influential educator, Nick, authentically inspires and adds value to our workforce ensuring excellence and equity, integrity with a continued focus on school improvement for student benefit.

As a proud product of Public Education, growing up in Narromine, the son of a migrant family and school Captain of Narromine High School Nick credits his teachers for inspiring him to live within and serve the state's most disadvantaged communities through a belief in the transformative nature of Public Education. His acute understanding of the challenges of disadvantage and disability, are key drivers that motivate Nick to model the values of Public Education: inclusion, equity, integrity, compassion and excellence. As an exemplary educator Nick continuously demonstrates systems leadership and courage across school performance directorates, leading the implementation of the High Potential Gifted Education Policy.

Nick has worked in the NSW Teaching Service since 1993 and has held every school-based leadership position including leading Moorebank High School as Principal from 2010-2015. His professional performance has consistently been regarded as exceeding expectations across a broad range of roles, but always focused on serving our most disadvantaged communities, including through the COVID-19 pandemic period.

**Ms Suzie Matthews, Executive Director, Skills and Pathways (Education and Skills Reform)**

*For outstanding public service to the community and students, in particular, the delivery of COVID19 related services.*

Ms Matthews has been employed by the Department of Education since 2018 and took on the role of leading the NSW Department of Education's COVID task-force at the beginning of 2022. During this time she demonstrated an ability to achieve superior results in a timely and effective manner while demonstrating compassionate leadership through a time of widespread community crisis.

Ms Matthews was instrumental at ensuring that NSW Schools were provided with the support, resources, and procedures to promote continuous learning for NSW students during a period of immense disruption. This included the coordination and implementation of remote learning strategies, provision of personal protective equipment (masks & sanitizer), and further lead the introduction of vaccination clinics at schools. Ms Matthews demonstrated excellence in service delivery through both her internal delivery but additionally to the broader community through the implementation of COVID safe practices to get students back to school as soon as it was safe.

Ms Matthews demonstrated a great capacity to adapt in times of crisis by also taking the lead on the recovery activities following both the Northern NSW floods (2021) and Western NSW Floods (2022). This was the first test of recovery activities during COVID and Ms Matthews not only guided Education, but contributed to the whole of government response to crisis to create new and efficient processes that were COVID safe to ensure that the people of NSW received excellent service.

### Medal of the Order of Australia

**Ms Sheree Anne Bourke**

*For service to education.*

**Ms Barbara Ann Whitcher**

*For service to the community through a range of organisations.*

### King’s Birthday 2023

**Mr Paul Edward Hughes, Principal, Rosemeadow Public School**

*For outstanding public service through leadership in the New South Wales public education system.*

As an indicator of the high esteem in which he is held by his peers, Paul was nominated by his colleagues to represent them as the President of the local Primary Principals Association for Campbelltown in 2023.

Paul was pivotal in supporting the department's Connected Communities Strategy. He took a key role in actions and initiatives to attract people to work and support Connected Communities schools, and supported professional learning and created links through initiatives that extend beyond local networks. This built teacher and leadership capacity and a culture of collective efficacy.

Paul is active and influential with leadership development programs, and he developed and expanded the Joining the Dots initiative from a small number of schools in the Campbelltown Network to more than 40 schools. This program enhances professional networks, researches best practice and recognises talented staff. Over 100 aspiring leaders work in cross-school teams to target current educational reforms, and the program has led to substantive promotions for participants.

His involvement in aspiring leadership programs and state-wide Early Career Professional Learning to enhance professionalism reflects Paul's proactive approach to modelling, coaching and mentoring educational leaders to meet the challenges and demands of the principal role.

In addition to his leadership in the professional learning field, Paul is also involved in local and regional initiatives for students such as managing the Yalagang Aboriginal student Gifted and Talented program, facilitating the Garry Waldron memorial education awards school sponsorship program, and (in his own time) accompanying students and parents on weekend camps for those in Out of Home Care.

**Dr Ann Elizabeth Daly, Assessment and Development Advisor, School Improvement and Education Reform Group**

*For outstanding public service in educational innovation programs supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.*

Ann epitomises the mantra of the NSW Department of Education in that she works tirelessly to eliminate all forms of discrimination. She promotes the idea of equality and inclusivity within all aspects of the work she does, as well as supporting her colleagues to adhere to this ideology. In constructing assessments she encourages the team to include Aboriginal texts in every assessment, which conveys the histories of Aboriginal peoples so that non-Aboriginal students have access to, and can develop a deeper understanding of the cultures and stories that First Nation peoples carry with them. By doing this, Ann also ensures that Aboriginal students feel included and can access these assessments, as they see their stories being told. It makes these assessments engaging and real for these students and demonstrates the value they bring to Australia as a nation. Through addressing these issues, Ann is demonstrating to schools how to make assessments more genuine for Aboriginal students through the incorporation of their story. By doing this it will allow all students to develop the capacity to participate in a just and equitable Australian society and not just for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, but also for students from a Non-English Speaking Background. (NESB). The work of the team has done in this area contributed to it being awarded the 2022 Premier's Award for Highest Quality Education for the Check-in assessments. As Ann has worked for 36 years to close the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and to conscientiously promote Aboriginal histories, I would ask that you would consider Dr Ann Daly worthy for the award of the Public Service Medal. She has shown diligence and courage in the telling of Aboriginal histories through teaching and learning programs, and this has been reflected in her private life as she has promoted a deeper understanding of a shared history and been a voice for Aboriginal people with integrity and honesty.

**Mrs Denise Anne Robens, Classroom Teacher, Regentville Public School**

*For outstanding public service in classroom teaching at Regentville Public School.*

### Denise has a significant impact on colleagues within Regentville Public School and outside the school. With a strong focus on collective teacher efficacy and as a skilled and highly effective classroom practitioner, Denise routinely works collaboratively to improve the practice of other teachers, effectively contributing to the Department's goal of continuous teacher, student and school improvement.

### Denise has outstanding skills in the analysis of student learning data at the individual, class, grade, school and system level. She uses these skills to identify areas of need and to plan for improvement for individual students or for class and grade cohorts. Working well above the level expected of a classroom teacher, Denise regularly analyses national, system and school-level student achievement data. She leads other teachers in collaboration sessions to identify areas for student improvement and corresponding improved teaching practice and supports teachers in the classroom through modelled teaching sessions and lesson observations.

### Through her practice, Denise ensures that students have a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy, deep content knowledge and confidence in their ability to learn. Her leadership in High Potential and Gifted Education, her expertise in inquiry-based action learning and her contribution to teacher learning across the system contributes to the Department's goals to increase the proportion of public school students in the top 2 NAPLAN bands for reading and numeracy and to increase the proportion of public school students achieving expected growth in reading and numeracy.

### Denise is a role-model for others within the school and across the system. Her accreditation at Highly Accomplished level, is testament to her knoweldge, skills, commitment and practice and is inspirational for other teachers within Regentville Public School and across our system.

### Order of Australia Medal

**Mr Ken Barwick, Principal, Bathurst High Campus od Denison College**

*Awarded for his leadership and commitment to driving educational outcomes for students of the Bathurst High Campus of Denison College.*

**Ms Mechel Pikoulas, Principal, Strathfield Girls High School**

*Awarded for her leadership and commitment to driving educational outcomes for students at Strathfield Girls High School.*

### Australia Day 2023

**Mr Mark Harris, Principal of Auburn North Public School**

*For outstanding public service through leadership in the New South Wales public education system.*

Mark Harris has been Principal of Auburn North Public School for over 20 years leading a team of 60 staff and 650 students. He focuses on a whole-school approach to literacy and numeracy, deepening teachers' curriculum and assessment knowledge, enhancing evidence-based practices and maximising parent involvement and engagement in students' learning.

His vision is for NSW to have the best education system in Australia and to be one of the finest in the world. As Principal, he is driving strategies to build 21st century learning skills and to ensure that every child is primed for success at secondary school and in later life.

In his career, he has been guided by three principles; a school is only a school when leadership is distributed and focused on whole school improvement; the key to teaching improvement is through authentic professional learning; and the driving force of a school is focussing on students and their community. He supports and leads some of NSWs most disadvantaged students, including from low socio-economic, non-English-speaking and refugee backgrounds.

He has developed award winning programs such as Harmony House, homework clubs for parents and various community link services to encourage authentic connection between school and home. Auburn North Public School is regularly called upon to share their educational platforms with others and has been recognised by several Minister's and Secretary's Awards. Under his leadership, Auburn North Public School has become one NSWs most successful schools in terms of student educational growth. The school has been selected as one of only 10 Ambassador Schools for NSW. The program identifies high-performing schools to research their high impact and highly effective practices, and scale these to similar schools across NSW.

Mr Harris' dedication to education will ensure he will continue to make a major difference not only at Auburn North Public School, but in schools throughout NSW.

**Mrs Meghanne Wellard, Executive Director (Rural North), School Performance**

*For outstanding public service in the recovery of the Department of Education's Rural North community following the Northern Rivers flood crisis.*Meghanne Wellard began teaching with the Department of Education in 1992 and has held leadership roles for over 15 years, including eight years as School Principal and currently Executive Director (Rural North), School Performance, where she is responsible for 260 schools across the rural northern NSW.

Throughout the Northern Rivers flood crisis, she displayed an unwavering focus on student wellbeing in the context of community needs. At the peak of the emergency, more than 130 public schools within Mrs Wellard's region were forced to close. The flooding would prove catastrophic, with at least four fatalities in Lismore and more than 3,000 homes inundated. As of 1 March 2022, only 18,000 of the region's 50,000 school students were able to attend school.

Despite her own home being under threat, she worked tirelessly to ensure staff and students were quickly located and confirmed safe, adequate spaces were sourced for students to continue schooling, and counselling and mental-health support were made available for those affected. Her sensitive and empathetic approach was crucial in supporting her team as they navigated their own losses during the crisis. Her nuanced leadership empowered team members working on the recovery process and strengthened their ability to provide outstanding service across the Rural North. Combining her own local knowledge with departmental learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic and the Bushfires 2019-20 (Black Summer bushfires), she led the Department's initial flood response and continues to lead recovery efforts. Her leadership has provided hope, routine and safe spaces for children and communities that were devastated by the floods.

Mrs Wellard’s efforts to ensure the Department's response to the crisis was swift, effective and delivered with care have endeared her to the community and further strengthened the regard in which she is held as a leader.

**Mrs Anne Flint, Member (AM) in the General Division of the Order of Australia***Awarded for significant service to education, and to those with disability.*

**Mr Wilfred MacBeth, Medal (OAM) of the Order of Australia in the General Division***Awarded for service to the community through a range of roles, most recently as a temporary teacher at Currabubula Public School.*

### Queen’s Birthday 2022

**Deborah Summerhayes, Executive Director, School Performance Metropolitan South and West**

*For outstanding public service to education in NSW.*

Since 1987, Ms Summerhayes has demonstrated deep commitment to public education and influential leadership across the NSW Department of Education. During her educational career, Ms Summerhayes worked as a teacher and head teacher, curriculum consultant and principal throughout South-Western and Western Sydney. She has tirelessly supported and advocated for improved learning and life opportunities for students, including those from Aboriginal, low socio-economic, intellectually disadvantaged and multicultural backgrounds.

Ms Summerhayes was featured as a reformer in the Sydney Morning Herald's 100 Most Influential People for 2012, in recognition of her positive impact on school and local community as the Principal of Cranebrook High School. Her relentless advocacy for Aboriginal students has also produced outstanding results. Indigenous students from the Penrith and Cambridge Park networks now regularly exceed state targets for school attendance and completion, and literacy and numeracy learning. Such a commitment was recognised when she received the NSW Nanga Mai Award for her significant contribution to Aboriginal Education in NSW public schools.

Ms Summerhayes has held a number of executive roles at the NSW Department of Education with a core focus on building system capacity. Her ability to manage and improve the leadership capacity and development of the Directors Educational Leadership, Principals and middle leaders in her schools is well recognised within the Education community, and of the highest standard. She has led and navigated schools through difficult challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, industrial action and severe flooding across NSW.

Ms Summerhayes currently leads the operations of 266 schools with over 111,000 students. She models the Department's values of trust, integrity and excellence, serving her community and providing equitable access to high quality education for children.

Ms Summerhayes displays great courage and accountability in the way she advocates for students and schools. She is held in the highest regard by her colleagues, peers and communities and valued for her ability to drive executive capability and development, motivate individuals and create a culture where leaders strive for excellence.

### Australia Day 2022

**Mark Greentree, Executive Director, Customer Experience and Service Delivery, Director Technology for Learning (T4L)**

*For outstanding public service to improved digital learning and innovation to support education in NSW.*

Mr Greentree commenced service in the NSW education sector in 1994 and is currently serving as the Director - Technology 4 Learning at NSW Department of Education. His commitment to high quality digital learning and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education in NSW public schools has delivered significant outcomes for students and families.

In his current role, Mr Greentree is responsible for the annual rollout of computer devices into NSW schools for educational use. Since 2017, he has overseen the delivery of over 170,000 individual devices into schools which has been critical for student learning during the COVID-19 response. Mr Greentree has shown exceptional state-wide leadership and has implemented initiatives and reforms to prepare all students in NSW Public Schools to meet the challenges of a dynamic regional and global future.

In 2018, he spearheaded the STEM.T4L project in response to the Chief Scientist's report *Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics: Australia's Future*. This project provides NSW schools direct access to high quality expert staff, teaching and learning challenges via a purpose built STEM.T4L eLearning library and online teaching community. In 2019, with a focus on improving the outcomes of Aboriginal students, Mr Greentree implemented the *Technology for Connected Communities initiative*. This initiative provided 16 schools across 11 communities with essential, expert face-to-face support in the area of technology and ongoing mentorship to staff, with the aim to strengthen the educational outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Mr Greentree is dedicated to delivering improved student outcomes through his visionary use of digital resources. He is a supportive leader with an unflappable commitment to navigating challenging circumstances and identifying innovative solutions for the advancement of public education.

### Queen’s Birthday 2021

**Karen Jones, Executive Director, Aboriginal Outcomes and Partnerships**

*For outstanding public service to education in NSW.*

Mrs Karen Jones has displayed a strong commitment to public education, with a particular focus on Aboriginal education, for over 39 years. Beginning her career as a special education teacher in 1982 she has been dedicated to improving the education system to meets the needs of all students.

She has led a number of large scale change reforms as a Principal, Director and Executive Director, to the benefit of the Department of Education and public schools across the state. As the Principal of Wyoming Public School, she significantly transformed and unified the then struggling school and her teaching and learning initiatives resulted in the percentage of students achieving literacy growth between Years 3 and 5, increasing from 12% to above 86%.

As Executive Director, Aboriginal Outcomes and Partnerships, she has advanced the education of 64,655 Aboriginal students in public schools across NSW. She has delivered quality education experiences and engaged positively and genuinely with Aboriginal communities. Most notably, she facilitated partnerships across 16 schools to implement a shared direction for reading, resulting in a significant decrease in the percentage of students below minimal standards.

She was also instrumental in developing a 10 year formal partnership agreement with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated.

Mrs Jones is a highly regarded education leader and her achievements in improving opportunities for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students displays her commitment to the community of NSW.

**Patrisha van Tussenbroek, Director, Risk and Governance, Operations Group**

*For outstanding public service to emergency planning and response in the education sector in NSW.*

Ms Patrisha van Tussenbroek has been instrumental in the enhancement and improvement of the NSW Department of Education's emergency planning and response systems which serve as a means to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff, students and visitors in schools and workplaces. As Manager of the Emergency Response she is responsible for all disaster and critical event responses across 2,200 schools, encompassing over 900,000 students.

Most recently she has been instrumental in the management of natural disasters which significantly impacted the NSW education system. In 2020 this included bushfires, smoke impact on schools, damaging storms, threatening floods, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to the 2019-2020 bushfires she prepared schools for the possibility of a major fire event, establishing a system wide response which allowed the Department of Education to rapidly evacuate schools and workplaces should fires threaten local communities.

Her capacity to resolve complex issues, her insightful knowledge, and her liaison skills make her an asset to the Department. She is highly regarded by other agencies for her collaborative approach, and her commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of others.

Ms van Tussenbroek has demonstrated the importance of emergency management planning across government entities, and the benefits of well-co-ordinated systems to support a whole of government response.

### Australia Day 2021

**Dr Paul Wood, Director, Early Learning and Primary**

*For outstanding public service to education in NSW.*

Dr Paul Wood has demonstrated dedication and commitment to improving student outcomes across a diverse range of leadership roles for the NSW Department of Education.

As a Teacher, Principal and Director, he has led the Department's delivery of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy; the curriculum initiatives for Early Learning and Primary Education; and curriculum and learning resources.

In March 2020, and the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in the Government's request for parents to keep their children at home, he was instrumental in leading the drive for remote learning in NSW Public Schools.

As a member of the Department of Education's Continuity of Learning Taskforce he was instrumental in leading the development of curriculum units of work designed to be adaptable by teachers and applied in all learning environments whether students were school-based or learning from home. This included the design of single units of work, learning sequences for Kindergarten to Year 10 teachers, five week learning packs for Kindergarten to Year 6 students, as well as the provision of over 120 on-demand curriculum courses and webinars to support continuity of learning.

One of the key initiatives he oversaw during this time was the creation of curriculum based virtual state-wide staffrooms which provided an environment to facilitate discussions between teachers, as well as sharing of their own resources and insights. These staffrooms were attended by more than 30,000 teachers seeking support in delivering remote learning. He also established a partnership with ABC TV to nationally broadcast additional teaching resources to complement existing learning tools.

Dr Wood's knowledge, commitment and ability to adapt and overcome the most difficult of circumstances have been of incredible benefit to the NSW Department of Education, and to students, parents and teachers across the community.

**Susan French, Strategic Projects Officer, Secondary Education, Learning and Teaching Directorate**

*For outstanding public service to education in NSW.*

Ms Susan French joined the NSW public service in 1979 as a teacher at Dover Heights Girls High School.

As a high school teacher and Principal, NSW Coordinator of the Australian National Schools Network, member of the Secondary Principal's Council and Strategic Projects Officer, she has significantly improved the performance of students, teachers, school leaders and schools, as well as leading system-wide reform at the state and national level.

Throughout her career she has been an advocate of equal educational opportunities for all students and has been active in seeking additional support and resources for students from lower socio-economic, Indigenous, and multicultural backgrounds. She also played a significant role in the development of policies on how gender is constructed and the impact of class, race, cultural background and sexuality on the lives of students. The policy focussed on ensuring both boys and girls had equal opportunities in schools and in society.

During her service as Principal at St Johns Park High School, she was instrumental in leading the transformation of the disadvantaged and diverse school community. In 2015, with 61% of her students in the lowest socio-economic quartile, with more than 90% from a non-English speaking background, and with more than 100 refugees, five of her students achieved ATARs over 99, and 146 out of 170 students received a university offer.

She also led the review of the NSW Department of Education Gifted and Talented policy. The High Potential and Gifted Education policy, scheduled for implementation in 2021, will impact on every school setting, curriculum and program framework, school and system professional learning and potentially each student.

Ms French's commitment to the education and development of students in NSW has been of the highest order.

### Queen’s Birthday 2020

**Jane Simmons, Executive Director, School Services**

*For outstanding public service to education in NSW.*

Ms Simmons joined the NSW Public Service in 1987 as a teacher at Westfield Sports High School. Since that time she has proven herself to be a committed educator in her positions as a School Principal, School Education Director, Regional Director, and a number of positions at Executive Director Level; currently as an Executive Director, School Services.

Underpinned by a desire to ensure equitable learning occurs for all students she has demonstrated a commitment to system-wide and local level improvement in public schools. She has a strong focus on developing students' confidence and resilience and creating opportunities for them to excel. She has led the coordination of several large-scale programs including the NSW Department of Education's Strategic Services Tailored Support initiative, the ROSETE Program in partnership with Western Sydney University, and Girls in Property Week, a partnership with the Property Council NSW.

As the Co-Executive Producer of the Schools Spectacular she has led this established annual event's rebranding and growth into a world-class show involving 5,500 diverse students from public schools across NSW.

In her role as Executive Director School Services she provides strategic leadership for a team of more than 700 staff spread throughout the state. This enables schools to deliver highly effective teaching and leadership services, wellbeing services, Aboriginal education, community engagement and systems support. She encourages innovation and responsible risk-taking, transparency and shared expertise. Some of the outcomes this approach has achieved are improved Literacy and Numeracy results, and decreased suspension rates in targeted schools.

Ms Simmons throughout her career has positively impacted many thousands of students in NSW.

**Melinda Commens, Assistant Principal, Sandon Public School**

*For outstanding public service to education in NSW, particularly to families of children with disabilities.*

Mrs Commens first joined the NSW Department of Education at Mirambeena School for Specific Purposes in 1990, as a support class teacher for students with an intellectual disability. In 1993 this school became the Sandon Public School.

She has made significant contributions to education and to the people of the Armidale Community through her work as a classroom teacher and leading the Positive Behaviour for Learning team, and the Learning Support Team. She has developed a range of 'Best Practises' that have been most successful and have resulted in staff from other schools visiting Sandon Public School to observe these practices in action.

Her work and reputation in the community has been recognised as a drawcard for many parents considering Sandon for their children. She has gone above and beyond the parameters of her role and her commitment to the holistic care of students, her ongoing support of children and families, and her sharing of strategies that families can incorporate into routines outside of school has been exemplary.

Her significant and sustained contributions throughout her career continue to have direct, long term positive outcomes for the community. She leads by example, whether it be the language she uses, the conversations she initiates or her actions towards others. This makes her a great role model for all students as well as her colleagues.

### Mrs Commens' commitment and dedication to the students of the Sandon School, to the NSW Department of Education, and to the broader community are of the highest order.

### Australia Day 2020

**Mark Grant, Executive Director, Leadership and High Performance**

*For outstanding public service to education in NSW.*

Over a diverse career Mr Grant has displayed dedication and passion for improving outcomes for all members of NSW school communities. Having served as a teacher, Principal, Executive Director, and the current Chief Executive Officer for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, he has successfully implemented large scale and significant educational reforms to the benefit of NSW Department of Education and public schools across the state.

As Executive Director, Leadership and High Performance, Mr Grant was instrumental in leading the implementation of the Resource Allocation Model (RAM) for NSW public schools.

The RAM was a new way of allocating $9.1b of funds to schools, increasing transparency and flexibility in the way schools could use funding.

As Executive Director, Learning Management and Business Reform, Mr Grant transformed a high profile, state-wide change strategy to modernise student administration and finance systems. The success of the program under his leadership is a testament to his passion and commitment.

Mr Grant's leadership promotes trust in his teams and their stakeholder relationships and he consistently promotes and maintains high standards. His attention to detail in program planning, communication, governance, marketing, procurement and project management has greatly assisted the NSW Department of Education to meet its strategic goals.

### Australia Day 2019

**Magda Pollak, Leader, High Performing Students**

*For outstanding public service to education in NSW.*

Ms Pollak has displayed dedication and passion for improving outcomes of all students during a career of over 48 years of service with the NSW Department of Education.

Since 2005, she has managed the High Performing Students Unit where she oversees the placement processes of academically gifted and talented Year 5 students into opportunity classes, and Year 7 students into selective high schools. The Unit processes approximately 27,000 applications each year, and she has led the Unit to streamline the processes to increase the efficiency of the team, and to ensure high integrity and security.

She has identified strategies to increase the representation of Aboriginal students in opportunity classes, and selective high schools, and worked closely with the University of Western Sydney on a four-year longitudinal study to identify better options for these gifted students. Consequently the number of Aboriginal students who have lodged applications for a placement has doubled since 2010, and there is now a greater representation of Aboriginal students attending opportunity classes and selective high schools.

As a result of her leadership and administrative skills, there is now a high level of confidence in the integrity of the placement processes within the school communities and across the Department. Since 2010, the program has expanded from 33 to 46 selective high schools and during this time she has also been a part of the team which led the implementation of a virtual high school for gifted and talented students, the first of its kind in Australia. She is currently working to roll out this initiative to rural and remote primary schools.

Ms Pollak is an exceptional change champion, leader and educator who has made a significant impact to the NSW Department of Education initiatives, with students always at the core of her ethos.

### Queen’s Birthday 2018

**Michael Waterhouse, General Counsel, Legal Services, Department of Education**

*For outstanding public service to education through legal counsel roles in NSW.*

Mr Waterhouse has served the Legal Services directorate at the Department of Education where he has undertaken the roles of Director, Legal Services and General Counsel.

During his 14 years of service, he has led sensitive, contentious, high profile and complex legal matters and has delivered positive outcomes for the department.

Of particular note, Mr Waterhouse has contributed to the promotion of quality outcomes for Indigenous people through his leadership in developing processes to guide the settlement scheme, and the delivery of personal apologies on behalf of the State to members of the Stolen Generation in the settlement of legal claims.

As part of this process, Mr Waterhouse has provided each claimant with the opportunity to tell their story and the impact on their life. He then provides an apology that encapsulates the key features of each individual’s experience in a way that acknowledges their personal resilience in the face of adversity. To date, Mr Waterhouse has deliver in excess of 120 apologies.

Mr Waterhouse has made a significant contribution to the NSW Government and to those of the Stolen Generation.

**Jason Ardler, Executive Director, Aboriginal Affairs, Department of Education**

*For outstanding public service to Indigenous people in NSW.*

Mr Ardler has dedicated over 30 years of service to the NSW Public Service. Since 2012, as Executive Director of Aboriginal Affairs, he has excelled in delivering strong public administration, and sound and rational policy making, and has been committed to addressing key issues affecting Indigenous people in NSW.

He oversaw the implementation and initial community consultation that led to the ground breaking Aboriginal Affairs plan, 'Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment' (OCHRE) which was of vital importance to the NSW Government. As the lead of the OCHRE plan, he presented a compelling case that represented the voices of Indigenous people and included healing within the final plan - the first Aboriginal Affairs Policy in Australia to do so. He also conceived and led the introduction of the NSW Aboriginal Languages ACT 2017, the first legislation in Australian to recognise the significance of Aboriginal languages to Aboriginal culture and identity, as well as the broader cultural heritage of the State.

He also played an instrumental role in the NSW Government's response to those of the Stolen Generation, including leading a team that conducted over 180 interviews with members of the Stolen Generation, allowing those affected to tell their own personal story. As part of this process he ensured they each received a personal apology on behalf of the State and a suitable settlement payment. He advocated for the establishment of a fully funded stolen generations reparations scheme and funeral assistance fund which was accepted by the state government.

Mr Ardler's untiring commitment to the advancement of Indigenous people across NSW, and his leadership with the Stole Generations, are most noteworthy.