

MEDIA RELEASE

2 August 2021

Prestigious Award for Beloved Cairns Teacher

A respected Cairns teacher is one of just six across Queensland to receive a prestigious award recognising excellence in education.

Ann Blakeney, a Prep teacher and Leader of Engagement at St Gerard Majella School in Woree, is a recipient of the 2021 Spirit of Catholic Education (SOCE) Award.

She is the only person in the Far North to receive the award and was chosen from more than 150 nominations across Queensland.

Ann said she was “incredibly honoured” to receive the award and grateful to those who nominated her.

She said the best thing about being a teacher was the students.

“Knowing you have had a positive impact to help students develop and learn is not something money can buy,” Ann said.

“I was inspired to become a teacher by the wonderful teachers I had in primary school. I spent a lot of time as a child playing 'school' with my younger brothers and as I grew up, I knew that being a teacher was the right career path for me.”

Ann has taught at St Gerard Majella School for 12 years, after five years at St Joseph’s School in Parramatta Park.

The SOCE awards are presented annually to recognise individuals or teams making an outstanding contribution to Catholic education in Queensland.

Ann was also one of seven outstanding staff from across the Far North to receive a Cairns Catholic Education Docemus Award (meaning “to teach”) during a ceremony held at St Andrew’s Catholic College in Redlynch on Friday night.

She took home the gong in the Primary Teacher category, while Mitch Griffiths from Holy Spirit College in Cooktown was the recipient in the Secondary Teacher category and Natisha Ford from St Monica’s College in Cairns received the Early Career Teacher award.

Maria Caltabiano, from Good Counsel Primary School in Innisfail, was named the recipient of the Leadership award, Jason Cislowski from St Joseph’s School in Atherton received the School Officer honour and Jennifer Shannon from St Gerard Majella School in Woree topped the Volunteer category.



The Lifelong Contribution award went to Cairns Catholic Education Services Director of School Effectiveness – Primary, Gerard Kearney.

Cairns Catholic Education Services Acting Executive Director Ian Davis congratulated the award recipients.

“Our staff – teachers, school officers, volunteers and those in leadership – consistently go above and beyond in their roles to give students in the Far North every opportunity for success,” he said.

“We are grateful to have such a dedicated and hardworking network of staff across all schools in our Cairns Catholic Education community.”

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For further information:

CAITLIN FRANCIS

Digital Media Officer, Catholic Education Services

Ph: 4050 9738 or 0418 855 827 | **Email:**

cfrancis1@cns.catholic.edu.au

