

# Top Class Honour

DRIVING home late at night after meetings that go far beyond his requirements as a principal, Kevin Mackay sometimes feels lonely and wonders why he takes on extra commitments. But the Cranbourne man said being awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Queen's Birthday honours list on Monday put in all into perspective.



Mr Mackay received the honour for his service education, which he has been involved in for more than 50 years. While he has been the principal of Dandenong North Primary School since 1986, the OAM was also in recognition of many other roles he has taken on to improve the teaching profession.

Mr Mackay is the current principals' representative on the Policy Reference Group, an executive member of Federal and State Governance of the Australian Principals Federation, life-member of the Victorian Principals Association and has represented principals in two Enterprise Bargaining Agreements (EBA).

"This is recognition from my peers and that's very important to me," he said.

"These people understand what it means to give up so much time to sit on a committee or be a part of the EBA negotiation to benefit the profession.

"Sometimes I feel quite alone when I'm travelling home late at night from an EBA negotiation and you wonder why you do it.

"But awards like this show that people do understand all you do and appreciate what you're doing for the profession.

"I think that one of the things we miss in education is acknowledging of the work that teachers do.

"It's opportunities like this that confirm your belief in what you're doing is actually acknowledged and valued."

Mr Mackay said he has seen a huge change in Dandenong North Primary School since he started there.

"When I first went there the make-up of the student population was majority Anglo-Saxon," he said.

"Over the years, Dandenong has become one of the centres for refugees and immigrants.

"The school now has 80 per cent of students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

"In many ways it's been a change for the better as we have gotten to see the integration of new children and cultures into Australia.

"When see the way all the kids integrate and mix together it gives you hope for the future of Victoria and Australia as a society."

Mr Mackay said what he loved most about the teaching profession was the impact they had on people's lives.

"Every day we get to help change people's lives through education," he said.

"I've gotten to see former students come back as adults and they are now doctors or lawyers or now teachers themselves and it's fantastic to see."

Mr Mackay said there was a particular student that made him realise the difference he could make to people's lives.

"He was very difficult at school back in the day," he said.

"I looked after him in my office when he was sent there quite frequently.

"I saw him recently and he said he would probably have been dead from a drug overdose if it wasn't for the way we helped and treated him at school.

"He is now making a good living for himself and contributing to society."

Mr Mackay said another student stuck out in his head from his years of teaching.

"A former student who now works as a doctor at Dandenong Hospital was walking past recently and I called her in and we had a chat," he said.

"She said I had contributed to her becoming a doctor as we had given her opportunities to deviate from the normal path in primary school and gave her the freedom to do those things.

"At secondary school she didn't get that and ended up leaving and studying herself.

"So her primary education gave her, her first start."