

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Monday, 5 October, 2009

Santa Maria College receives \$50,000 *Schools First awards announced*

Santa Maria College has been announced the recipient of a \$50,000 Schools First Local Impact Award. The award recognises the outstanding community partnership they have developed with The University of Melbourne's Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence Coherent X-ray Science (CXS).

Brought to life by NAB in partnership with The Foundation for Young Australians and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), Schools First is a three year commitment by these organisations to recognise and promote excellence in school community partnerships.

This large Catholic girls school was faced with the challenge of increasing and retaining the number of girls undertaking academic studies, including the physical sciences.

The school has worked with CXS – a collaboration between the University of Melbourne, La Trobe University, Monash University, Swinburne University and two CSIRO divisions - to develop the "Growing Tall Poppies" program. This initiative provides a science experience for Year 10 students that requires them to work away from school campus in teams of six on projects.

Santa Maria College was able to demonstrate that the "Growing Tall Poppies" program was genuinely collaborative, met an identified need, and effectively improved student outcomes. The school was also able to clearly show how they would use the \$50,000 award money to further enhance and develop this partnership.

The school will be hosting a local award presentation at La Trobe University, Physical Science Building 1 on Friday 9 October at **2:00 pm** where a local representative of NAB on behalf of Schools First will present the school with a \$50,000 cheque.

The school is now in the running for a State Impact Award, valued at an additional \$50,000. The State Award winners will be announced in late October.

Over 800 applications were received nationally for the Impact Awards, all of which were judged anonymously by an independent panel of education and research experts appointed by ACER.

"We are delighted to highlight and reward Santa Maria College for its outstanding work in improving student results through its partnership with CXS," said Jodi Cryan, Head of Schools First. "We look forward to helping the school utilise the \$50,000 to further enhance this partnership in the coming years, and also hope that this will inspire other schools."

Schools First is based on evidence that indicates strong school - community partnerships can make a significant difference to outcomes for young people, including increased skills and greater engagement with learning. It is also anticipated that these partnerships will leave a meaningful legacy in the local community.

This is the first of a three year commitment to Schools First from the three partner organisations, with another \$5 million in awards available again next year and in 2011. Those interested in applying for



Schools First brought to life by 



the Schools First awards next year are encouraged to visit www.schoolsfirst.edu.au and register as a user. The website will showcase this year's winners and provide advice to schools on how to form effective school community partnerships.

What:	Local Award presentation to Santa Maria College - announced winner of \$50,000 Schools First Local Impact Award
Who:	Principal, teachers and students from Santa Maria College Local Nab representative on behalf of Schools First Representatives of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coherent X-Ray Science - University of Melbourne, La Trobe University, Monash University, Swinburne University, and CSIRO
When:	2:00 pm - Friday, 9 October, 2009
Where:	Physcal Science building 1, La Trobe University, (further address/directions required - campus map?)
Pictorial Opp:	Presentation of \$50,000 cheque to teachers of Santa Maria College Students and community partners sharing Schools First cake Students talking about their participating in the "Growing Tall Poppies" program

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For further information, please contact:

Stuart Osbourne
PR for Schools First
03 9696 2636
0412 190 820

