MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS OF THE YEAR

Deputy Premier and Minister for Trade and Investment Andrew Stoner today announced international students from China, Malaysia and Peru as the winners of this year’s NSW International Student of the Year Awards.

Mr Stoner said the Awards showcase the initiatives and achievements of NSW-based international students across a range of educational programs, including higher education, vocational education and training, and schools programs.

“It gives me great pleasure to announce the winners of this year’s NSW International Student of the Year Awards, selected from 17 fantastic finalists representing nine countries,” Mr Stoner said.

“Overseas students help to bring fresh ideas and deeper cultural connections to NSW, and play a key role in making our State a global, vibrant, and multicultural location.

“The NSW International Student of the Year Awards offer an opportunity to recognise the achievements of these talented individuals and the significant contribution both they and the international education sector as a whole makes to NSW.

“Strong overseas trade and cultural links are supported in no small part by international education and the NSW Government is working closely with the sector to ensure its long term growth and to make NSW the number one location for international study.

“NSW is home to world-class universities, vocational institutions and research organisations, and offers high quality teaching, cultural diversity and a safe study environment. We want to build on these strong foundations and make NSW an even more compelling location for international students.

“We are working closely with the Australian Government to make it easier for international students to study here by improving visa processing arrangements and by identifying more opportunities for students to stay and work for a period once their studies are completed.

“The NSW Government has also provided better access to safe affordable public transport options for international students with public transport fare discounts of up to 35 per cent for students in the Greater Sydney, Hunter and Illawarra regions.

“A strong international education sector can deliver many benefits to our State and I am proud to celebrate the achievements of today’s award recipients,” Mr Stoner said.
The winners of the NSW International Student Awards are:

Schools: Mr Hengji Mei (China) – The Illawarra Grammar School

In April 2011, despite being a newly arrived student focussing on his own language development, Hengji immediately joined the Year 10 Peer Reading Group where older students read to younger children on a weekly basis. This confidence and commitment to help other international and non-international learners participate in activities alongside their peers has since proved to be characteristic of Hengji’s good nature. Hengji was also actively involved in Basketball both at school and outside of school. He facilitated a means by which younger international students could join in activities and interact with the local boys. In Year 11 Hengji volunteered to play basketball with the Jammers Basketball for the Disability Trust / Sport and Recreation. He attended the 2012 ‘Essential Personnel’s Sky’s the Limit Mini Olympics’, which provides young people living with a disability the opportunity to compete in a caring and encouraging environment in events that suit their abilities. Hengji’s ability to navigate cultural differences and bring all the positive aspects of his cultural heritage to his community makes him a role model for younger students; he has inspired them to have the confidence to do the same.

VET: Ms Marisol Miró Quesada le Roux (Peru) - TAFE NSW - Northern Beaches

While undertaking her Diploma of Event Management at the Northern Beaches Campus of TAFE NSW Northern Sydney Institute, Marisol played a key role in the success of the first totally sustainable events held at the campus. Marisol designed and curated the Michael Tweddles’ 2012 photographic exhibition Machu Picchu – 100 years of its discovery at the Cervantes Institute in Sydney (November 2011- January 2012); and was an invited delegate to the Hult Global Challenge Competition (Shanghai, 2012), which aims to tackle world poverty through social housing. Marisol has also contributed her leadership skills and expertise as a volunteer at events including the Seven Bridges Walk, Seniors Week and the Manly Jazz Festival. Marisol has demonstrated a genuine commitment to sustainable event management. She is a conscientious and talented student, whose quiet energy and readiness to support others are an inspiration to her peers and teachers alike.

Higher Education: Mr Mohamed Ehsan Ebrahim (Malaysia) – University of Newcastle

Since arriving at the University of Newcastle in 2007 Mohamed has balanced a demanding Bachelor of Medicine program with a wide range of community roles. He has advocated for the rights and safety of international students; represented the interests of Muslim and international students on various student bodies, and worked tirelessly toward cross-cultural understanding between Muslims and Non-Muslims in schools and the local community. As president of the Islamic Society for over three years, Mohamed organised many cross-cultural activities on campus with the aim of countering negative stereotyping and misperceptions about Muslims. His passion to help his fellow students regardless of their background saw him elected as an executive of the International Students Department of Newcastle University Students’ Association (ISD-NUSA) and as the Public Relations Officer for the Council of International Students Australia (CISA) in July 2012. He has played a key role in the Department of Education’s Multicultural Ambassador program. In January 2013, Mohamed will be a part of a task force to look into student safety in Newcastle headed by the NSW Police Commissioner. Since February 2013, as elected Vice-President of the Newcastle University Students Association, he has advocated for local and international students welfare on campus.

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