Leading the way in senior secondary education
It's hard to believe that, when Manea Secondary College opened its doors at the start of the 2009 school year, it had just 28 students.

Today the Bunbury school is close to capacity with 400 eager and excited young people studying at the unique university-like facilities every day.

Such a significant increase in student numbers can only be achieved, says regional executive director Neil Milligan, through carefully calculated and well managed risks and a daring to be different – all signs of a good leader.

“Paul Mathews recognises that successful management of a school is determined by a range of factors that includes developing a strong team approach, staff ownership of the vision and a comprehensive business plan – all of which are not just in place but are highly effective at Manea Secondary College,” Neil says.

“Paul has created specific roles to meet contextual needs including a marketing manager, associate principal, Indigenous teacher and an attendance officer with a youth work qualification.”

For Paul, leading a public school is a real privilege.

“We have a really high quality group of students and staff along with some great programs,” says Paul.

“These include the new Approved Specialist Program in Health and Medical which is giving our students fantastic opportunities. We are the first secondary school in Australia to develop such a program.”

Other unique characteristics of the college include being the only school in the southwest specialising in educating Year 11 and 12 students; and the first regional secondary school to gain the status of Independent Public School. That was in 2010.

Under Paul’s leadership, students at Manea Secondary College have the opportunity to choose from an extensive range of courses.

More than one third of students have chosen to leave private schools for this opportunity – a statistic that defies the national trend in secondary schooling.

Seventeen students travel three hours each day specifically to attend the college and there have been no student suspensions this year.

Tian Del Borrello, brand director from 92.9 – this year’s award sponsor – says Paul’s proven dedication and the many positive references highlight his leadership and willingness to go to great lengths for students, the school and the wider community.

Dr Anne Coffey agrees. She is coordinator of secondary programs at The University of Notre Dame Australia’s School of Education and awards judge.

“Paul’s untiring efforts have helped Manea Secondary College become a senior school of first choice in the Bunbury area,” she says.

“Paul is a visionary school leader who has an unwavering commitment to both students and staff.

“He has developed an environment in which the college vision is clearly articulated by all members of the college community – teachers, students and parents.

“A strong sense of trust pervades the school. There is a focus on the individual student and ensuring that each has a clear pathway to success.

“The school’s proximity to Edith Cowan University and training organisations, and partnerships within the local community have been central elements in supporting students to achieve their goals.”

The challenge for Paul Mathews started four years ago when he was appointed foundation principal of Manea Secondary College, a Year 11 and 12 senior school in the southwest of the State. Now the college is making its mark in the community. Maria D’Agostino reveals the person behind the WA Secondary Principal of the Year.

Paul addresses the school at Year 12 graduation.

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Finalists

James Hayres
Comet Bay College

Nick Jakowyna
Belridge Senior High School

Michael Morgan
Shenton College

WA Secondary Principal of the Year Sponsor

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92.9’s breakfast team of Lisa, Paul and Baz love having a laugh and always make sure their listeners are laughing along with them. Every morning is different – listeners might wake up to the team helping the community with a 92.9 Rescue, they could be laughing their way through Paul’s Horoscopes or getting the sporting inside word with Baz’s Spin on Sport.

92.9 sponsors a number of community events and our commitment to these awards highlights our dedication to the Western Australian community.