



VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT YEAR 11 SPORTS GERALD MINI FARFAN

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Gerald Mini Farfan is an International student here at Salesian College Chadstone. On Thursday 21 May, Gerald attended a ceremony hosted by the Victorian Government at Parliament House. He was awarded the prestigious 'Year 11 Sports Achievement Award', which recognises the hard work he has dedicated to his education and to his sport (swimming).

International students from across the State, from all school sectors, were nominated by their schools for a range of categories, including Global Citizenship, Community Engagement, Academic Excellence and Sports Achievement. Gerald was justly rewarded for his contributions to his sport, his school and his community.

Gerald's journey towards being an elite sportsman and student began when he was a young boy growing up in Lima, the capital of Peru. A highly intelligent and also athletic child, he began competitive swimming at the age of eight, and by the age of just nine years he broke the record for the 50 metre backstroke in his country. Even at this young age, Gerald showed determination and tenacity, training more than seven sessions each week. He attended school during the day and trained most mornings and evenings.

When Gerald was just fourteen years old, his family decided that it would be in his best interests to leave Peru to pursue his ambitions of becoming an elite swimmer in Australia, as well as gaining the opportunity of an excellent education abroad. Gerald and his father have come to Melbourne, leaving his baby brother, mother and extended family back in Peru. The journey has included significant sacrifice for Gerald and his close-knit family.

Gerald started studying at Salesian College Chadstone in May of 2012, with very little English. To say that it wasn't easy would be an understatement. Gerald felt

overwhelmed, and the confidence he had in Peru as a witty, popular teenage boy and an elite athlete vanished suddenly. But, channelling the determination that he knew so well, he persevered.

Gerald's family chose Salesian College Chadstone because of



their strong Catholic faith. It was important for them that Gerald receive an excellent education in a school which, fundamentally, supported their strong religious beliefs.

Gerald immersed himself in school life, quickly making many good friends and improving his English skills. He continued with his swimming ambitions too, joining the Nunawading Swimming Club within two weeks of arriving in the country. He started training six to seven sessions each week, often waking



ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RECIPIENT

up at 4:30am to train between 5:00am and 7:00am before catching the bus to school. To date, Gerald has had successes in Australia. However, his main goal is to join the national swimming team, a level of swimming that is much more difficult than in home country Peru. "I have to stay motivated... and I hope that all the pain I feel now is going to turn into

makes it his aim to get to know all newly arrived students at Salesian. He can often be seen at lunchtimes playing sport with both new and local students, encouraging all boys to maintain strong bonds of friendship and understanding, despite the language barrier.

Since coming to Salesian College, Gerald has also contributed to the sporting success of the College. He has been the best performing swimmer at the Associated Catholic Colleges' (ACC) swimming competitions, and he has played an important role in the success of the school soccer team and cross-country team.

Gerald has consistently pushed himself to achieve his goals. Recently he was given the opportunity to speak at an International Student Forum which was convened by an organisation called American Field Service (AFS) Intercultural Programs, an American based worldwide student exchange organisation. He delivered his presentation in front of the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, Mr James Merlino MP, and a host of other officials from the Victorian Education Department, school Principals and International and local students from across the state. He did so with determination and poise, describing to this group of people his experiences as an International student in Victoria, both the high points and the challenges he faced.



something successful one day... my strength is a source of inspiration for my family and my school community".

In addition to his swimming ambitions, Gerald hopes one day to go to University in Australia, to study design or architecture. He says that he has learnt a considerable amount since coming to Australia, specifically about the country, culture and, profoundly, about himself. Gerald

Nine winners of the International Student Awards from across the state were presented with their awards at Parliament House on Thursday 21 May. Gerald was justly awarded the Year 11 Sports Achievement Award.

The Salesian College Chadstone school community congratulates Gerald on his successes and achievements in the sporting arena, as a valued member of our school, and as a remarkable individual.