

LOCAL WINNERS IN QUEENSLAND TRAINING AWARDS

Seven of Brisbane North's local employers, students and workers have been named regional winners in the 2009 Queensland Training Awards.

The Queensland Training Awards, now in their 48th year, showcase Queensland's best vocational education and training achievements. These regional winners are outstanding examples of those who are furthering skills and strengthening communities at a local level.

The Queensland Training Awards regional finals comprise seven categories — Small Employer of the Year, Employer of the Year, School-Based Apprentice or Trainee of the Year, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year, Vocational Student of the Year, Trainee of the Year and Apprentice of the Year.

Celebrated at the Brisbane North Regional Final on Wednesday 22 July 2009 at the Old Museum, below are the 2009 Regional Winners:

Andrew Hanifin - Apprentice of the Year

After finishing Year 12, trying a few different careers and finally finding inspiration in fellow tradespeople within his family, Andrew has embraced every aspect of his plumbing apprenticeship, and even enjoyed digging trenches for the first six months.

Boasting a full attendance and pass rate for his theoretical studies, the Salvation Army volunteer is now undertaking further study as he works towards his goal of some day starting his own business.

Jitendra Bhashkar - Trainee of the Year

Jitendra worked in the banking sector until 11 years ago, when he made the switch to education, and since becoming a teacher's aide in Hercules Road State School's special education unit on the Redcliffe Peninsula, he has been inspired to pursue further training.

His 30 years of soccer coaching experience have also come into play, as he helps children with physical and learning difficulties join in games and activities.

Keely James - School-based Apprentice or Trainee of the Year

While many of her classmates at Dakabin State High School are still asleep, Keely is up at the crack of dawn and galloping towards her dream of becoming a successful jockey.

She completed her Certificate III in Racing in just seven months and has spent many mornings, lunch breaks, afternoons and weekends learning the practical and theoretical sides of the racing industry.

Rhona James-French - Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year

Rhona is presently juggling motherhood with study and full-time employment at the Sandgate Magistrates Court, where she has worked for the past 14 years. She has recently added a Diploma of Government to her list of achievements, and enjoys supporting other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women through the Jumbunna Women's Group.

Cynthia Macklin - Vocational Student of the Year

Cynthia had spent many years out of the workforce before completing her certificate II in Business Administration, which symbolised a turning point in her life as she learnt new skills, gained confidence and inspired her sons. She is now employed at the Kurbingui Youth Development Association, where she provides support to Indigenous women in Brisbane's northern suburbs.

Gilkatho Pty Ltd - Small Employer of the Year

Located in Milton, Gilkatho has been a coffee and coffee making equipment distributor since automatic machines took off in 1999, and four of its seven staff are currently undertaking further study or training.

Individual job roles and career aspirations are taken into consideration when the organisation plans training, and internal sessions cover company-specific information such as pricing, warranties and product knowledge.

McDonald's Australia (Windsor) - Employer of the Year

McDonald's is a quick service restaurant within the hospitality industry and one of the nation's largest employers, with more than 75,000 staff across Australia, including 175 restaurants in Queensland. Training across the organisation, and especially at the Windsor store is a high priority.

Recipients now progress to the state finals at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre in September, where a further four awards will be presented — Public Training Provider of the Year, Private Training Provider of the Year, the Skilling for the Future Award and the Premier's Innovation in Skilling Award.

State winners will then go on to compete at the 2009 Australian Training Awards in Canberra on 19 November.