

LOCAL WINNERS IN QUEENSLAND TRAINING AWARDS

Seven of North Queensland'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 North Queensland Regional Final on Saturday 25 July 2009 at Thuringowa Community Centre in Townville, below are the 2009 Regional Winners:

Darrell Geary - Apprentice of the Year

Darrell has wanted to be a baker since first tasting the locally-made bread at Bama Bakery in Yarrabah. He won the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE's second-year Apprentice of the Year award as he works towards his dream of some day opening his own bakery.

Ronald Kris - Trainee of the Year

Ronald hails from the remote community of St Pauls on Moa Island in the Torres Strait, and seeing a RoadTek crew doing road maintenance work in his tropical paradise first inspired him to consider a career in construction.

He embraced the challenge of his certificate training and finished it almost a year ahead of schedule. Ronald has since secured a permanent job with RoadTek which is helping him save to buy a car.

Jessica Conn - Vocational Student of the Year

As a little girl, Jessica would pretend to be a teacher with her brother and neighbours. She is making her lifelong career dream a reality by studying a Bachelor of Early Education and adding to her growing list of qualifications.

Last year, she juggled full-time school work while completing four certificates in a range of industries, and won Kirwan State High School's Vocational Educational Student of the Year Award for her efforts.

Jake McDonald - School-based Apprentice or Trainee of the Year

Jake has spent much of his childhood fixing planes, flying with his father and working with pilots, and his lifelong dream of working in the aviation industry is taking off.

At just 14, he began a school-based traineeship with the support of Atherton State High School and the North Queensland Warbirds, where he helped restore rare vintage aircraft. Every cent saved from his two-year traineeship is funding flying lessons as he works towards gaining his Commercial Pilots Licence.

Vincent Schrieber - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year

Vincent enjoys being on-call to maintain Yarrabah's water systems to ensure the safety of supplies and while he has juggled work and study with raising four children,

he has also faced unusual workplace challenges, such as coming across snakes and crocodiles.

Pacific Coast Engineering - Employer of the Year

Pacific Coast Engineering began in 1984 as a one-man engineering and repair business operating from a small backyard shed, and now employs 120 people with nearly 40 per cent of them completing an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Andrew Evans Plumbing - Small Employer of the Year

Since the inception of the company in 1996, Andrew Evans Plumbing has developed a streamlined structure to keep its training organised, planned and supported so it can build the skills of all staff. The organisation spends \$120,000 annually on its successful further education initiatives because it believes well-trained employees have great work ethics and workplace practices, resulting in exceptional products for clients.

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 November 19.