

LOCAL WINNERS IN QUEENSLAND TRAINING AWARDS

Seven of Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast'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 Wide Bay Sunshine Coast Regional Final on Saturday 18 July 2009 at the Caloundra RSL, below are the 2009 Regional Winners:

Luke Brown - Apprentice of the Year

Luke hopes to become a naval architect and although he was accepted into university and a national maritime course, he decided an apprenticeship would provide a more practical start to his career.

While juggling study with his job at Amerro Engineering is busy enough, Luke is also a competitive ballroom dancer ranked among Australia's top 15, and he has found that teamwork, networking and sponsorship are benefits that cross over both industries.

Mary McCallum - Trainee of the Year

After being treated with cancer, Mary found herself looking in another direction and she effectively created her own traineeship at Nanango's Burnett Business Centre to study a Certificate III in Business Administration, and her dedication was so impressive that she is now employed full-time in a supervisory position.

Michaela Graaf - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student

For Michaela, completing her school-based apprenticeship has increased her overall confidence and she is now taking on more challenging tasks in the office such as performing property searches and updating legislation manuals. Michaela wants to one day, open her own law firm.

Ariella Anderson - Vocational Student

Ariella is a ceramic artist, using her talents to document her journey as a female artist settling into Australian culture after moving to Bundaberg from Israel.

Juggling her studies while raising three children, Ariella has enhanced her practical skills while learning to manage the business side of the art industry with her work featuring in exhibitions, commissioned artworks and an educational CD-Rom for art students at the University of Ulster in the United Kingdom.

Saira Manns - School-based Apprentice or Trainee of the Year

Saira is school captain at Beerwah State High School and wants to work for a not-for-profit organisation after completing her traineeship with Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors Worldwide, a charity which raises money to save endangered animals.

Her training has helped build confidence in communication and encouraged her to use initiative in a team environment. Saira's dedication was recognised by becoming the first school-based trainee nominated as Australia Zoo's Staff Person of the Month.

Bundaberg and District RSL and Citizens' Memorial Club Inc. - Employer of the Year While around 15,500 members enjoy the gaming machines, bistro and function area at the 'Bundy RSL', 12 of its 64 employees are currently undertaking apprenticeships or traineeships.

Staff enjoy a host of learning opportunities including attending gaming expos in Brisbane and Sydney, while the club itself is used as a training venue for external organisations.

RnR Hairdesigners - Small Employer of the Year

Jodyrénée Ridgeway and Corey Roberts started their hairdressing business two years ago, and their RnR Hairdesigners salon now boasts a team of eight who enjoy a range of training opportunities in-store and even interstate. All staff receive a training plan for their learning activities which are regular, varied and delivered across a variety of mediums to keep them at the cutting edge of their profession.

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.