

NSW Training Awards 2026

Be Recognised

Hunter &
Central Coast



Digital Program

5 June 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Awabakal people who are the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this event is being held. We would like to pay our respect to the Elders both past and present, and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People present this evening.



Title: Ceremonies

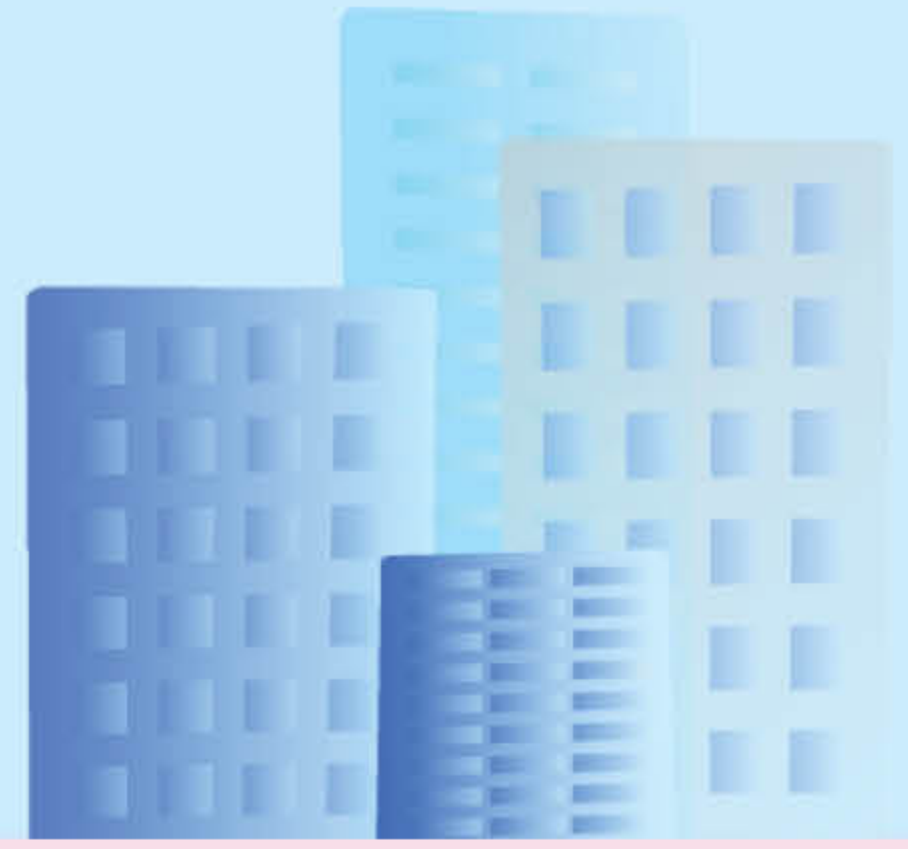
Artist: WUPA Artist - Craig Layer

The main circle in the centre represents the Jobs Together Program and like an important meeting place draws others to it. The circles attached to it are other support mechanisms associated with the program such as our communities and Aboriginal mentors.

The three symbols above and below the main circle represent our elders and their cultural knowledge and how important it is that Aboriginal culture be central to the success of the Jobs Together Program.

The three dotted lines going into and coming out from the circles represents both the journey taken by Aboriginal people as they endeavour to find education and employment pathways as well as being a threefold cord that is hard to break and symbolises the strength that comes from having Aboriginal and Non Aboriginal working collaboratively together.

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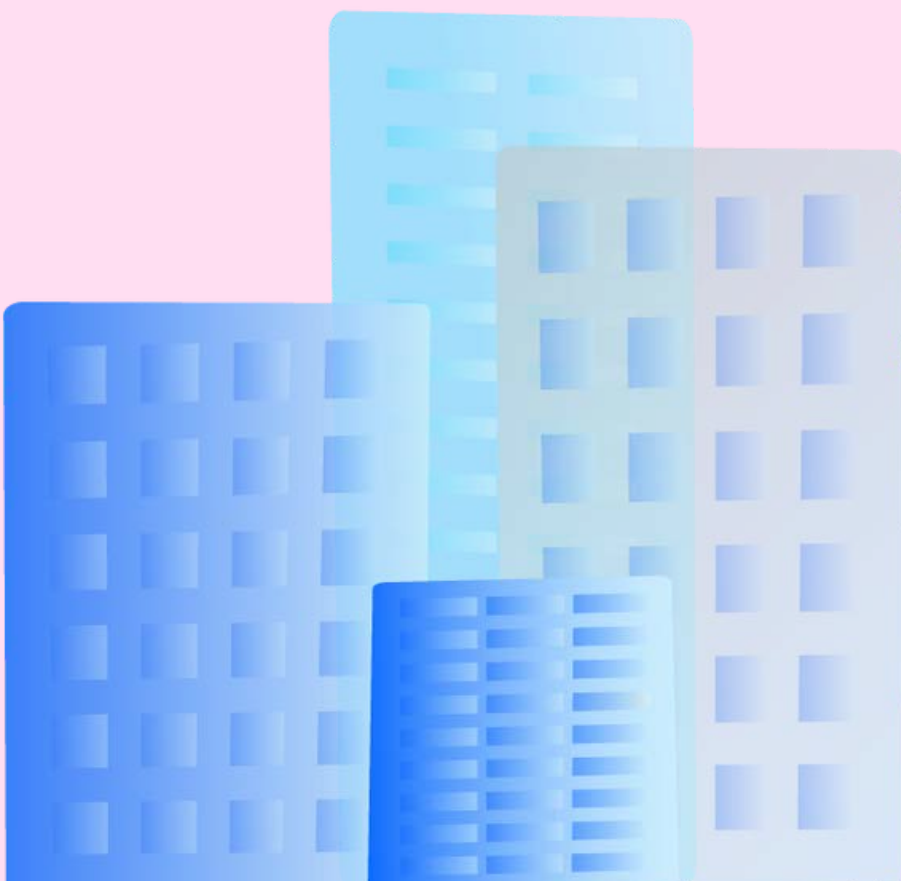
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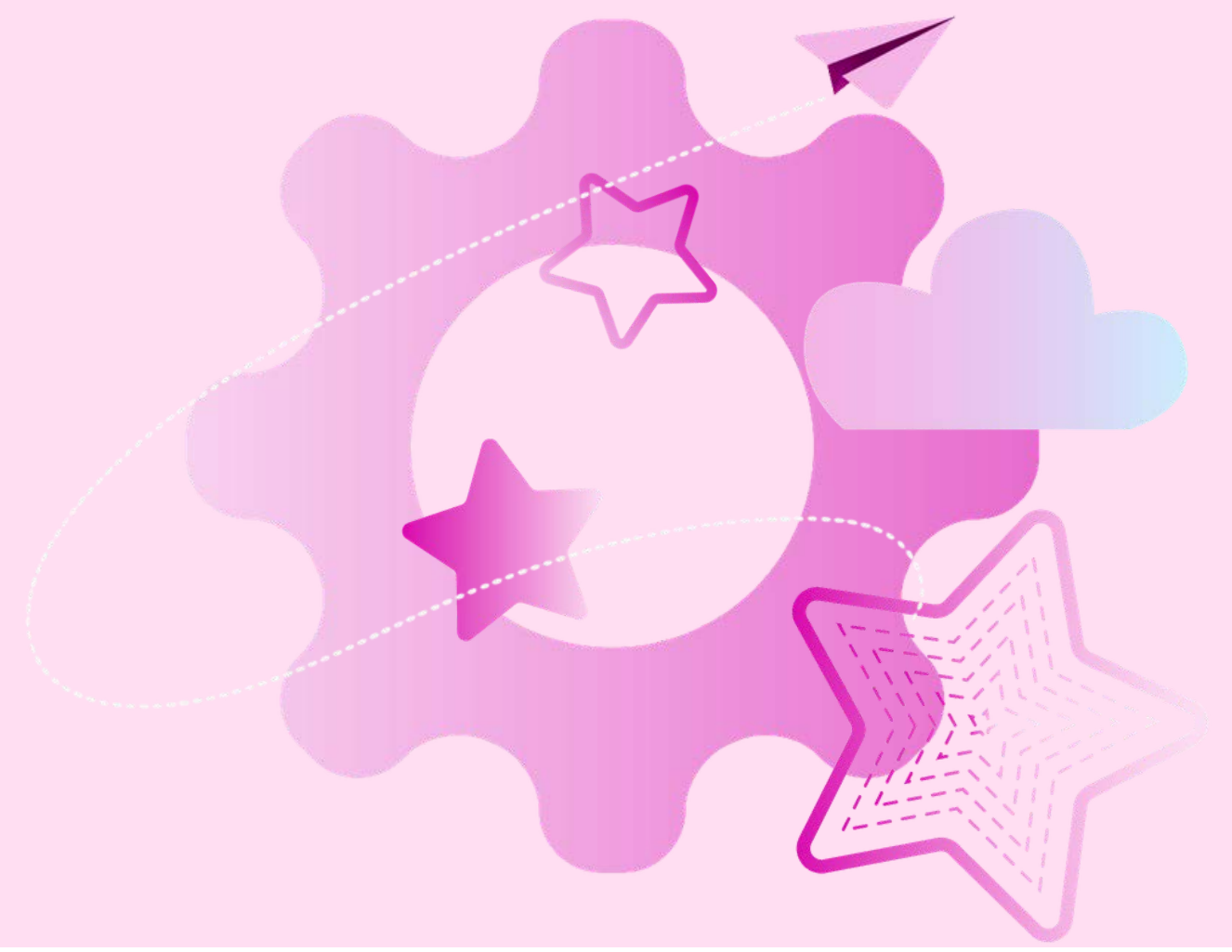
Silver Sponsors



Bronze Sponsors



Order Of Proceedings



Welcome to Country

Randall Briggs

Master of Ceremonies Introduction

Lachie Carey

2024 Australian Trainee of the Year

Esteban Cervera

2025 Hunter & Central Coast VET in
Schools Student and NSW Finalist

Welcome Address

The Honourable Jodie Harrison (MP)

Member for Charlestown

Member of the NSW Legislative Assembly

Minister for Women

Minster for Seniors

Minister for the Prevention of Domestic
Violence and Sexual Assault

Award Categories

- Vocational Student of the Year
- VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year
- VET in Schools Student of the Year
- School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year
- Trainee of the Year
- Apprentice of the Year



Message from the Regional Manager



Hunter & Central Coast

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the lands across the Hunter and Central Coast region, Darkinjung people of the Central Coast, the Wonnarua/Wanaruah people of the Upper and Lower Hunter, the Awabakal people of Newcastle, and the Worimi people of Port Stephens. Pay my respects to the Elders past, present and emerging, I extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and recognise their deep and continuing connection to land, waters, culture, and community. Their traditions and aspirations continue to enrich our region and the lives of all Australians.

Welcome to the 2026 Hunter & Central Coast Training Awards. Tonight, we gather to celebrate the outstanding achievements of apprentices, trainees, students, teachers, and trainers from across our diverse region. It's incredibly uplifting to hear how vocational education and training has transformed lives, opened new pathways, and built stronger futures for individuals and communities alike.

Congratulations to all our finalists. You have not only completed your qualifications, you've done so with commitment, talent, and perseverance. You now stand on a solid foundation to take your next steps, whether that's advancing your career, pursuing further study, or exploring new opportunities. Take pride in what you have accomplished and continue using your skills and knowledge to grow and uplift others. Your journey is just beginning, and the future is full of potential.

I'd also like to acknowledge Lachlan Carey, the 2024 NSW & Australian Trainee of the Year and Esteban Cervera, 2025 Hunter & Central Coast VET in Schools Student of the Year, for supporting this year's event by helping showcase the journeys of our finalists and winners. Thank you for continuing to inspire and be ambassadors of Vocational Education and Training.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to our sponsors, guests, families, and friends for your continued support. Your encouragement and presence make tonight truly special. And a special thank you to the dedicated staff at Hunter & Central Coast Training Services, your commitment and hard work have made this celebration possible.

Liana Nadalin

Hunter & Central Coast Regional Manager
Regional Training Services

Meet Our Masters of Ceremonies

Helping us celebrate tonight are our fantastic Master of Ceremonies — passionate ambassadors for Vocational Education and Training. Having undertaken their own VET journey, they embody the transformative power of vocational education and are proud representatives of its impact.



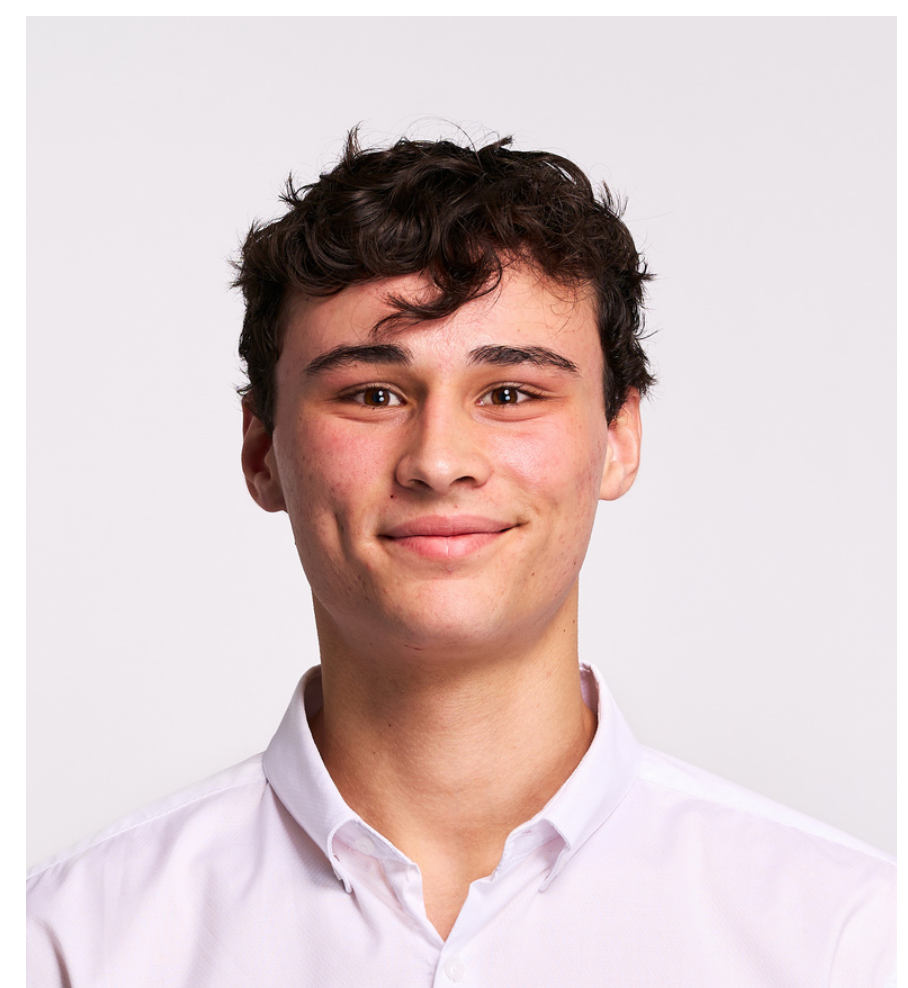
Lachie Carey

Lachlan Carey is driven to make a difference in the lives of children. Facing his fair share of challenges for someone so young, he's been inspired to pay forward the acts of kindness he received by enrolling in a Certificate III in Early Childhood and Care. Suffering two strokes in year 10 that required multiple surgeries and lengthy recovery times,

Lachlan decided to enter a VET pathway and decided to pursue his passion for educating kids. Bringing his fun, nurturing and patient nature to every interaction in his traineeship, he was immediately adored by colleagues, families and, most importantly, the children in his care. As someone with dyslexia, Lachlan found the pace and style of learning game changing. He has completed both a Certificate III and a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care and is now completing a Bachelor of Education, Lachlan has a future he'll forever be grateful for

Esteban Cervera

Esteban Cervera has always loved food and working in a team, so a Certificate II in Cookery was an easy choice for him. From a young age he enjoyed cooking and experimenting with recipes, and his studies have allowed him to transform this passion into a career. Throughout his qualification, Esteban found that his interest in the hospitality industry broadened, encompassing everything from culinary arts to customer service.



Esteban thrives in the fast-paced, dynamic environment of hospitality, and he relishes the challenge of working under pressure with his teammates. With his growing confidence, he has taken on the opportunity to step up to run a training café and collaborated with classmates to launch a cookie business. Not only have these experiences honed his cooking skills, but they have reinforced essential lessons in teamwork, communication, and time management. Esteban is excited to continue his career in hospitality where he can keep crafting memorable experiences for others.



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We employ 17,420 people in Australia and in 2024 contributed almost \$19.6 billion to the regional, state and national economies. This included spend of \$13.5 billion with 6,810 businesses, as well as \$3.6 billion in government tax and royalty payments. Learn more about [Glencore Australia](#)



BUILDING SKILLS. EMPOWERING FUTURES. SHAPING THE HUNTER.

The Hunter Regional Apprenticeship and Traineeship Advisory Committee (HRATA) connects industry, employers, training organisations, and educators to drive excellence in the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

WHAT WE DO

- Identify and address skills gaps in the Hunter
- Facilitate collaboration between training providers and industry
- Advocate for quality training, apprenticeship, and traineeship programs
- Promote innovation in vocational education delivery

CONNECT WITH US

Join us in shaping the future of the Hunter region's workforce.



Hunter Region Apprenticeship & Traineeship Advisory Committee (HRATA)

Building Skills. Empowering Futures. Shaping the Hunter.

The Hunter Region Apprenticeship and Traineeship Advisory Committee (HRATA) brings together employers, industry associations, Group Training Organisations (GTOs), Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), trainers and educators to strengthen vocational education and training (VET) pathways across the Hunter Region.

Through shared insight and practical collaboration, HRATA helps identify emerging skills needs, champions high-quality apprenticeships and traineeships, and supports initiatives that improve uptake, retention and completion outcomes for learners.

Whether you're an employer growing your workforce, a training provider seeking stronger industry alignment, or a VET professional passionate about better regional outcomes, HRATA provides a forum for strategic dialogue and local action.

Connect with us and stay up to date via [LinkedIn](#) and [Instagram](#) for updates on our next events.



We're proud to be a sponsor of the 2026 Regional Training Awards.

Our commitment to our communities has been a passion for over 185 years, and we're pleased to support future skills and training for our region.

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Congratulations

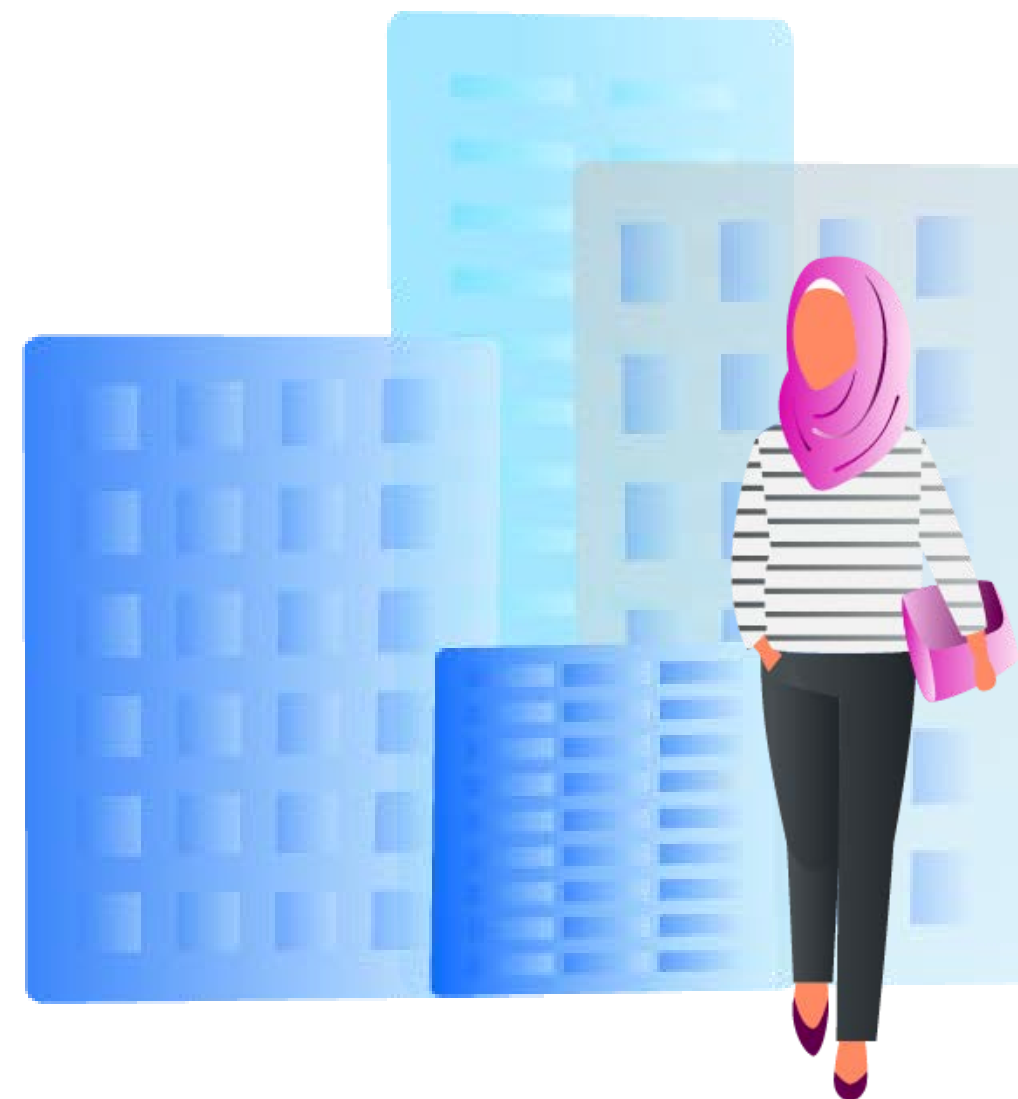
TO ALL 2026 REGIONAL FINALISTS

WE WISH YOU THE BEST OF
LUCK



Vocational Student of the Year Finalist

Tyla Lowden



Qualification

Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care

Training Provider

International Child Care College

Employer

Our Place Play School

Tyla Lowden's journey in early childhood education began as a school-based apprentice and trainee (SbAT) during high school, inspiring a passion for nurturing young minds in safe, supportive environments.

Recognising the importance of early care, Tyla has continued her studies by completing a Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care, with a growing interest in developmental and speech delays.

Balancing work and study effectively, she values hands-on experience alongside formal learning to enhance her practice. Tyla is committed to continual professional development, advocating for better staff-to-child ratios and ongoing training to maximise child safety and learning outcomes. She actively contributes ideas for community engagement activities and prioritises strong team communication and parent partnerships to support children's needs.

Now progressing to university studies, Tyla champions vocational education pathways as a valuable alternative to traditional academic routes, inspiring others to pursue careers aligned with their passions without the pressure of an ATAR score.



Vocational Student of the Year Finalist

Stephanie Scanes

Qualification

Certificate IV in Disability Support

Training Provider

ARC Training

Employer

The Disability Trust



Alongside her role at The Disability Trust, Stephanie Scanes recently completed a Certificate IV in Disability Support through ARC Training. The qualification builds on her Certificate III and nearly six years of practical experience in the sector.

Passionate about delivering high-quality, evidence-informed care, Stephanie embraces person-centred and rights-based approaches to support. Balancing study, part-time work, and raising two children, she has shown resilience and dedication to professional growth. Stephanie's training has enhanced her skills in communication, documentation, risk management, and individualised support planning — which she applies daily to promote dignity, choice, and independence for people with disabilities.

Committed to best-practice and collaborative teamwork, Stephanie also contributes positively to her workplace culture through mentoring and advocacy. Her ongoing development supports both her career and her heartfelt mission to make a meaningful difference in the lives of participants and the broader disability community.

VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year Finalist

Kane Burns



Field Of Study

Music Industry

Employer

NSW Department of Education

A trailblazing VET teacher and passionate music industry advocate, Kane Burns recognised gaps in the traditional curriculum and pioneered the development of the Cert III Music Industry course to better prepare students for real-world careers. By establishing collaborative regional hubs, including after-school programs and innovative events like the Country to Coast music festival, Kane has brought together students and teachers from multiple schools, enabling authentic learning and high rates of engagement and completion.

Kane's strong industry partnerships with venues such as Drifters Wharf, The Grove Studios, and APRA offers students unique access to professional environments, workshops, and scholarships.

Deeply committed to teacher training and mentoring, he supports colleagues across NSW in delivering industry-focused VET programs. Kane's ongoing professional development ensures his teaching remains current, and his collaborative projects have inspired confidence and fostered genuine pathways for students seeking careers in music. His impact is shaping the NSW regional music education landscape.



VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year Finalist

Angela Cox

Field Of Study

Hospitality

Employer

NSW Department of Education



With extensive experience in hospitality and event management, Angela Cox is a dedicated VET trainer who passionately supports student success through innovative, hands-on learning.

Angela transformed her school's canteen into a thriving Industry Training Centre, employing industry professionals to provide authentic front and back-of-house experience for over 300 students. Her leadership in developing hospitality syllabuses and coordinating pathways has increased student engagement and employment outcomes, with several securing jobs through work placements.

Actively balancing teaching with running a side business, Angela offers students real-world event opportunities at local venues like Ettalong Diggers and the Racecourse.

Committed to professional growth, she stays current in industry trends, ensuring relevance in her teaching. Angela champions strong industry partnerships with local hospitality businesses, enriching student exposure and readiness. Passionate about student-centred learning, she inspires resilience, guiding learners to achieve multiple VET qualifications and authentic career pathways in hospitality and retail sectors.

VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year Finalist

Jordan Crotty



Field Of Study

Screen & Media

Employer

NSW Department of Education

With a lifelong passion for the creative industries, Jordan Crotty began working in music, event production, radio, and set building from age 13. Transitioning into teaching, Jordan became an Entertainment and Screen & Media teacher and developed a state-level course addressing the gap between classroom learning and real industry pathways.

Renowned as a subject matter expert, Jordan created innovative “I do, We do, You do” instructional videos widely adopted statewide, ensuring rural and remote students have quality access.

Jordan has successfully grown course enrolments and upskilled fellow teachers, while maintaining active roles in the industry to keep his teaching current and authentic. Focused on bridging the challenging gig-based creative sector with education, he fosters partnerships with industry bodies including NIDA and the Australian Film Television and Radio School to enhance student opportunities.

Using his personal career journey as a powerful teaching tool, he inspires resilience, adaptability, and real-world success in students aiming to thrive in a creative career.



VET in Schools Student of the Year Finalist

Zachariah Brady

Qualification

Certificate III in Fitness

Training Provider

NSW Department of Education

School

Wyong High School



Zachariah Brady is completing a Certificate III in Fitness while studying Year 12 at Wyong High School and has developed a strong passion for promoting health and wellbeing through sport and physical activity. Originally planning to pursue an ATAR pathway, Zach discovered VET through a TAFE YES program and quickly realised it aligned better with his career goal of becoming a personal trainer.

Zach has gained practical skills and industry knowledge while benefiting from hands-on learning in his school's fitness facilities. He values the opportunity to focus his studies on an area he is passionate about while gaining a nationally recognised qualification that supports future study and employment opportunities in the fitness industry.. "Some people don't see VET as a viable career pathway - I'd like to change that"

He hopes to inspire other students to explore vocational learning opportunities that align with their interests and career goals.

VET in Schools Student of the Year Finalist

Mia De Azevedo



Qualification

Certificate II in Hospitality

Training Provider

NSW Department of Education

School

Kariong Mountains High School

Mia De Azevedo is completing a Certificate II Hospitality, specialising in Food and Beverage while studying Year 12 at Kariong Mountains High School. She has embraced VET as an opportunity to build practical skills and real-world experience. Through her training and work placement, Mia developed strong hospitality skills, resilience and time management, ultimately securing casual employment in the industry.

A school prefect and passionate community contributor, Mia demonstrates values of kindness, respect and initiative. She has been actively involved in volunteering, fundraising and community projects, including organising bushfire relief fundraising to support local families affected by fires.

Mia believes VET provides students with life skills and a head start in the workforce. With plans to pursue university studies in education, she intends to continue using the skills and confidence gained through her vocational training to support her future pathway while encouraging other students to “give VET a go” and explore the opportunities.



VET in Schools Student of the Year Finalist

Jacob Merrick

Qualification

Certificate II in Agriculture

Training Provider

Catholic Diocese of Maitland Newcastle

Employer

Nundah Pastoral Pty Ltd

School

St Catherine's Catholic College, Singleton



Jacob Merrick is completing a Certificate II in Agriculture and works on the family farm, at Nundah Pastoral. Growing up in a working-class farming family where neither of his parents completed Year 12, Jacob has embraced his VET pathway at St Catherine's Catholic College Singleton, building skills, confidence and industry connections.

Through his training at Catholic Diocese of Maitland Newcastle, Jacob has developed strong technical knowledge while applying new techniques and ideas back on his family's farm to improve productivity and sustainability. He is highly engaged in the agricultural community, regularly participating in cattle shows, judging competitions and connecting with industry leaders.

A confident communicator and natural leader, Jacob is a big advocate for VET pathways. Aspiring to study veterinary science in the future, he encourages other students to explore practical learning opportunities that allow them to follow their passion, gain real industry experience and open doors to future careers.

School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year Finalist

Chloe Hillard



Qualification

Certificate II in Maritime Operations
(Coxswain Grade 1 Near Coastal)

Training Provider

Maritime & Safety Training NSW

Employer

HunterNet Career Connections

Host Employer

Svitzer Australia

School

Callaghan College Jesmond Senior Campus

Chloe Hillard is completing her Certificate II in Maritime Operations (Coxswain Grade 1 Near Coastal) through Maritime and Safety Training and employed as a trainee deckhand with Svitzer Australia.

She plans to continue her studies by undertaking Certificate III and IV in Maritime Operations, further strengthening her skills and opening pathways to higher responsibilities within the maritime industry.

Drawn to the ocean, Chloe has gained invaluable experience in towage operations, vessel handling, and safety procedures, all critical to supporting shipping and port activities. She expertly balances school studies, training, and employment, applying classroom knowledge in real-world situations and learning from experienced seafarers.

Chloe's dedication is evident in her decision to transfer from St Mary's Catholic College to Callaghan College to ensure she could complete her SbAT and pursue her goals in the maritime field. Her commitment, determination, and willingness to embrace new challenges make Chloe a standout trainee.



School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year Finalist

Katana Magnus

Qualification

Certificate II in Wool Handling

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

De Waal Shearing Pty Ltd

School

Merriwa Central School



Katana Magnus is a highly motivated and dedicated school-based trainee currently completing her Certificate II in Wool Handling at TAFE NSW.

Throughout her traineeship, she has demonstrated exceptional commitment to the Australian wool industry, showing competence in shed operations, wool preparation, safety procedures, and teamwork. Katana approaches her work at De Waal Shearing with maturity, professionalism, and reliability, consistently completing tasks efficiently and to a high standard.

Her initiative and willingness to learn set her apart, as she actively seeks guidance, applies feedback, and confidently develops her skills within a traditionally male-dominated field. Balancing the demands of senior schooling with hands-on industry training, Katana has proven resilient and well-prepared for workplace expectations.

Katana is a positive role model for young women in agriculture, with a passion for rural industries and long-term career ambitions. She is a valuable asset to her community and the wool industry.

School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year Finalist

Luke McLennan



Qualification

Certificate III in Commercial Cookery

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Ettalong Alfresco Brasserie

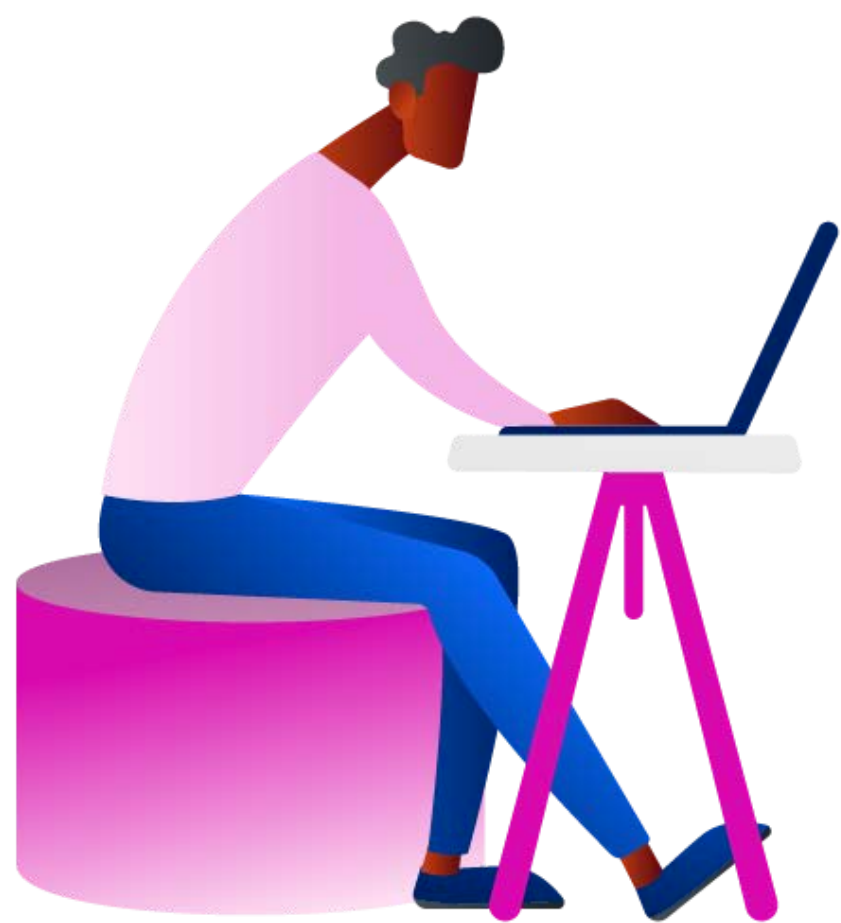
School

Brisbane Waters Secondary College
- Woy Woy Campus

Currently undertaking a Certificate III in Commercial Cookery through TAFE NSW, Luke McLennan works at Ettalong Alfresco Brasserie. Choosing this qualification for its practical, nationally recognised training, Luke is developing essential skills in kitchen operations, techniques, and industry standards.

Inspired by his first hospitality job over two years ago, he found a passion for the fast-paced kitchen environment, embracing teamwork, creativity, and challenges. Although initially focused on completing his ATAR at Brisbane Waters Secondary College – Woy Woy Campus, his teachers helped him discover a pathway aligning with his passion without sacrificing education. His school-based apprenticeship offered a flexible, hands-on learning approach which suited his goals and learning style.

Combining school and work, he gains valuable on-the-job experience while advancing formal education. Learning from experienced TAFE educators and skilled chefs has enhanced Luke's personal and professional growth, providing clarity, confidence, and a strong foundation for a successful long-term career in hospitality.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Finalist

Kealah Boldery

Qualification

Certificate III in Business

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Hunter New England Local Health District

School

Callaghan College Jesmond Senior Campus



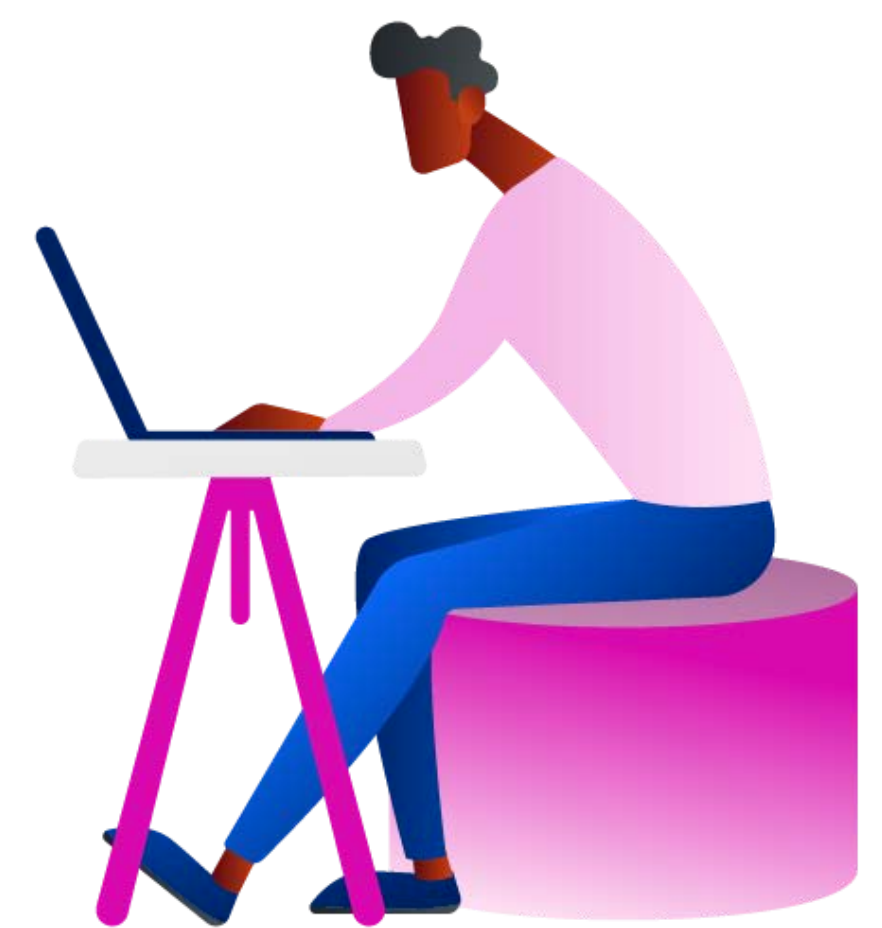
Kealah Boldery is an emerging professional in the healthcare sector, completing a Certificate III in Business, specialising in Medical Administration while working at Hunter New England Local Health District. With a strong interest in working with children and a passion for learning, Kealah has gained valuable experience supporting administrative functions, including within specialised areas such as NICU.

She is actively involved in her community as a junior AECG Vice President, a sports coach, and a participant in Aboriginal community events, demonstrating strong leadership and communication skills.

Kealah sees the medical field as a stable and rewarding career pathway and hopes to progress into corporate roles within the hospital system. She is a strong advocate for SbATs, highlighting the confidence, skills, and career head start they provide without compromising school life.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Finalist

Andrew Dates



Qualification

Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care

Training Provider

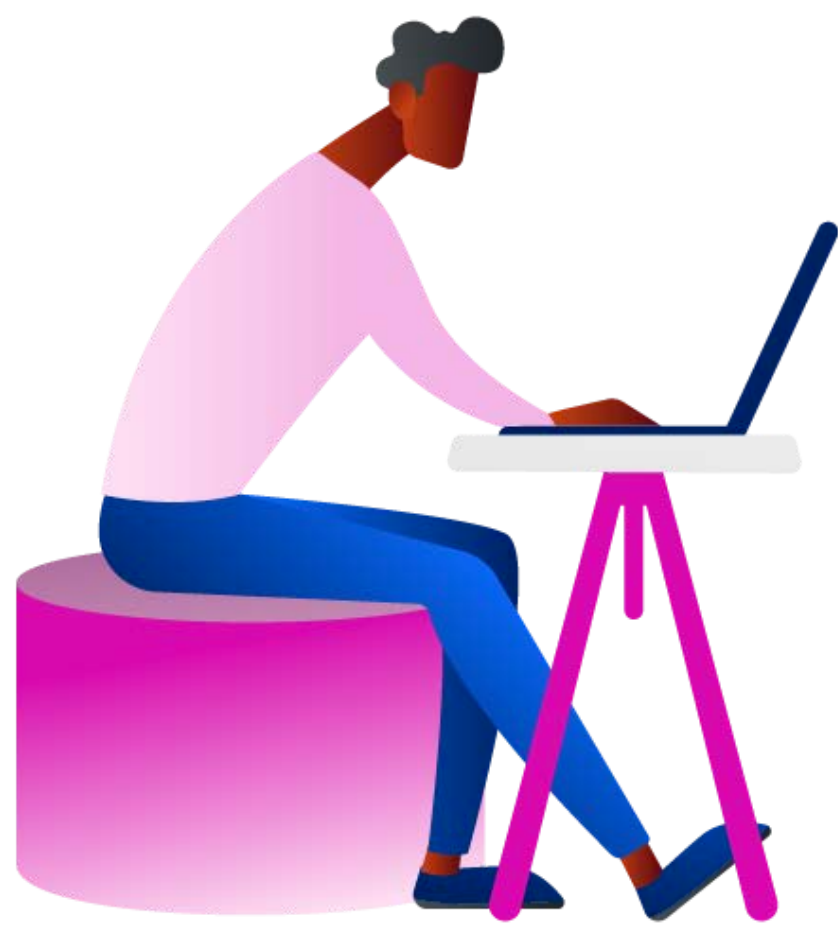
International Child Care College

Employer

Tillys Play and Development Centre

Andrew Dates is a dedicated early childhood educator with a strong passion for culture, community, and empowering young learners. His traineeship in Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, sparked a deeper connection to his role. This particularly shines through his involvement in Reconciliation Action Plan initiatives where he shares his experiences as an Aboriginal person and promotes meaningful cultural practices back to his team at Tillys Play and Development Centre.

Andrew is committed to creating inclusive, child-led learning environments that give children a voice and foster trust, respect, and curiosity. He actively embeds cultural learning through gardening, storytelling, and community connections, drawing inspiration from other centres to strengthen his approach. Andrew credits his VET pathway with International Child Care College for helping him discover and grow his passion, and he is passionate about inspiring others to pursue similar opportunities in early childhood education.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Finalist

Malayah Hurst

Qualification

Certificate III in Early Childhood Education
and Care

Training Provider

International Child Care College

Employer

Salamander Child Care Centre



Malayah Hurst, a proud Kamilaroi woman from NSW's Pilliga region, is passionate about creating safe, supportive environments for children to learn and grow. After realising university didn't suit her hands-on learning style, she transitioned into early childhood education through a VET pathway with Awabakal Preschool, before moving to Salamander Bay Child Care Centre to be closer to home.

While completing her Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, Malayah balanced work and study, overcoming challenges such as time away from family with strong support from her trainers and workplace. She finds purpose in helping young children develop confidence and curiosity, while also connecting them to culture and community through activities like excursions and cultural learning experiences.

Malayah is a strong advocate for VET pathways, highlighting the accessibility, practical learning, and support systems that helped her succeed.

Trainee of the Year Finalist

Tilley Murgatroyd



Qualification

Certificate II in Maritime Operations
(Coxswain Grade 1 Near Coastal)

Training Provider

Maritime & Safety Training NSW

Employer

HunterNet Career Connections

Host Employer

Port Authority of NSW, Port of Newcastle
and Svitzer

Tilley Murgatroyd completed a Certificate II in Maritime Operations traineeship with HunterNet Career Connections, undertaking rotational placements with Port of Newcastle, Svitzer and Port Authority NSW while studying with Maritime and Safety Training. During the program she achieved her Coxswain Grade 1 Near Coastal qualification, enabling her to operate vessels up to 12 metres in near-coastal waters.

Growing up in a family of seafarers, Tilley was naturally drawn to the maritime industry and embraced the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in a busy working port. Throughout her traineeship she developed strong vessel handling skills, situational awareness and a deep understanding of port operations, teamwork and safety.

Reflecting on the experience, Tilley says, “My traineeship opened my eyes to just how many different pathways there are in the maritime industry.”

Her resilience, professionalism and passion for learning led to ongoing employment with Port Authority NSW.



Trainee of the Year Finalist

Seth Poznaks

Qualification

Certificate III in Hospitality

Training Provider

Quality College of Australia

Employer

Zeal Futures

Host Employer

Tamburlaine Organic Wines



Seth Poznaks completed a Certificate III in Hospitality traineeship through Zeal Futures and trained by Quality College of Australia. Employed at Tamburlaine Organic Wines, his role included hosting tastings, school tours, and engaging diverse customers while applying his knowledge from his training. Seth's traineeship strengthened his skills in customer service, teamwork, and sustainable wine practices, including organic production and recycled packaging initiatives.

Reflecting on his experience, Seth explains, "The traineeship gave me a sense of belonging and purpose. It showed me how much I could learn and grow, while being supported by a team that encouraged me to ask questions and share knowledge." He also mentors school groups about sustainability and the hospitality industry, inspiring future workers to consider VET pathways.

Seth's dedication, professionalism, and community-minded approach make him an outstanding advocate for vocational education, demonstrating how hands-on learning and supportive workplaces can develop confident, skilled, and motivated young professionals.

Trainee of the Year Finalist

Samantha Schick



Qualification

Certificate IV in Human Resource
Management

Training Provider

Australian College of Commerce &
Management

Employer

Catered Supports

Samantha has successfully completed three traineeships through Catered Supports and Australian College of Commerce and Management, culminating in a Certificate IV in Human Resource Management. Her training journey progressed from Accounts and Administration to Business Administration, and finally to Human Resources, enabling her to combine her passion for learning with practical workplace application.

Samantha reflects, “Vocational training gave me the confidence and skills to support others and make a meaningful impact in the workplace.” She has led initiatives including recruitment campaigns, onboarding programs, payroll management, and staff training, while fostering a positive workplace culture.

Her traineeship strengthened Samantha’s communication, conflict resolution, and leadership skills. She has supported staff wellbeing initiatives, facilitated Mental Health First Aid training, and applied her learning to improve organisational processes with dedication and resilience. Samantha demonstrates how hands-on training empowers individuals to grow, lead, and positively influence their workplace and community.



Apprentice of the Year Finalist

Nicole Clifton

Qualification

Certificate III in Engineering - Mechanical Trade

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

HunterNet Career Connections

Host Employer

Rexnord Australia



Nicole Clifton has completed her Certificate III in Engineering – Mechanical Trade, followed by a Certificate IV in Engineering (Fluid Power) through HunterNet Career Connections, hosted by Rexnord and trained by TAFE NSW.

Inspired by her father’s career as a process engineer, Nicole was drawn to a trade-based apprenticeship to gain practical skills and start “from the ground up.” She explains, “My Dad was my inspiration for starting my apprenticeship.” Nicole’s pathway combines on-the-job experience with formal qualifications, positioning her well to achieve her long-term goal of becoming a process engineer.

Being the first apprentice at Rexnord, new apprentices look to her for her practical advice, support and encouragement as they start their training journeys. Her dedication to hands-on work, problem-solving, and building skills reflects her commitment to the industry, and she serves as a role model for others considering vocational training as a stepping stone to career success.

Apprentice of the Year Finalist

Callan Gerick



Qualification

Certificate III in Engineering - Mechanical Trade

Training Provider

Zeal Futures Learning

Employer

Multotec Pty Ltd

Callan Gerick began his Certificate III in Engineering - Mechanical Trade apprenticeship with Multotec in February 2023. Having already contributed as a Trades Assistant and Service Technician, Callan became the youngest supervisor in branch history. Motivated by his passion for mechanical systems and precision work, Callan embraced this training to formalise his skills and advance his career. Under the mentorship of his supervisor and with ongoing support from Zeal Futures Learning, he's developed capabilities in precision machining, workplace safety, and quality assurance.

Callan leads complex projects, ensuring clear communication and safe practices — particularly during high-pressure plant shutdowns. He embraces teamwork and encourages newer apprentices, believing “strong leadership comes from listening and staying calm under pressure.” Callan has earned recognition such as Employee of the Month and actively contributes to process improvements.

Outside work, he balances fitness, guitar, and parenting three children, seeing his apprenticeship as “building the foundation for my career.”



Apprentice of the Year Finalist

Josh Maher

Qualification

Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Zeal Futures

Host Employer

Pipe Lining & Coating



Josh Maher began his Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade apprenticeship in 2021 with Pipe Lining and Coating and hosted by Zeal Futures. His apprenticeship provided him with a strong balance of practical, on-the-job experience and structured learning, supported by TAFE NSW.

His interest in fabrication was ignited during high school metalwork subjects, leading him to pursue hands-on experience and training. Josh highlights the satisfaction he gains from “being able to see your work come together in front of you.”

Throughout his apprenticeship, Josh has demonstrated commitment, reliability, and attention to detail, earning recognition from mentors and supervisors. He combines creativity, technical skill, and problem-solving in his trade, with a strong ambition to become a highly skilled and well-rounded tradesman. His journey reflects the value of vocational education and training in building a successful career in engineering fabrication.

Thank You



On behalf of the Hunter & Central Coast Regional Training Awards team, we extend our heartfelt thanks for your generous support and involvement in this year's program and event. Your contribution played a vital role in celebrating the achievements of our region's outstanding VET learners, trainees, apprentices, employers, and training providers.

Your commitment to fostering excellence in vocational education and training inspires future generations and strengthens our local workforce. We are truly grateful for your support and look forward to continuing this important work together.

Thank you once again for helping make the Hunter & Central Coast Training Awards a success.

