

NSW Training Awards 2026

Be Recognised

New England



Digital Program

15 May 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Gomeroi 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

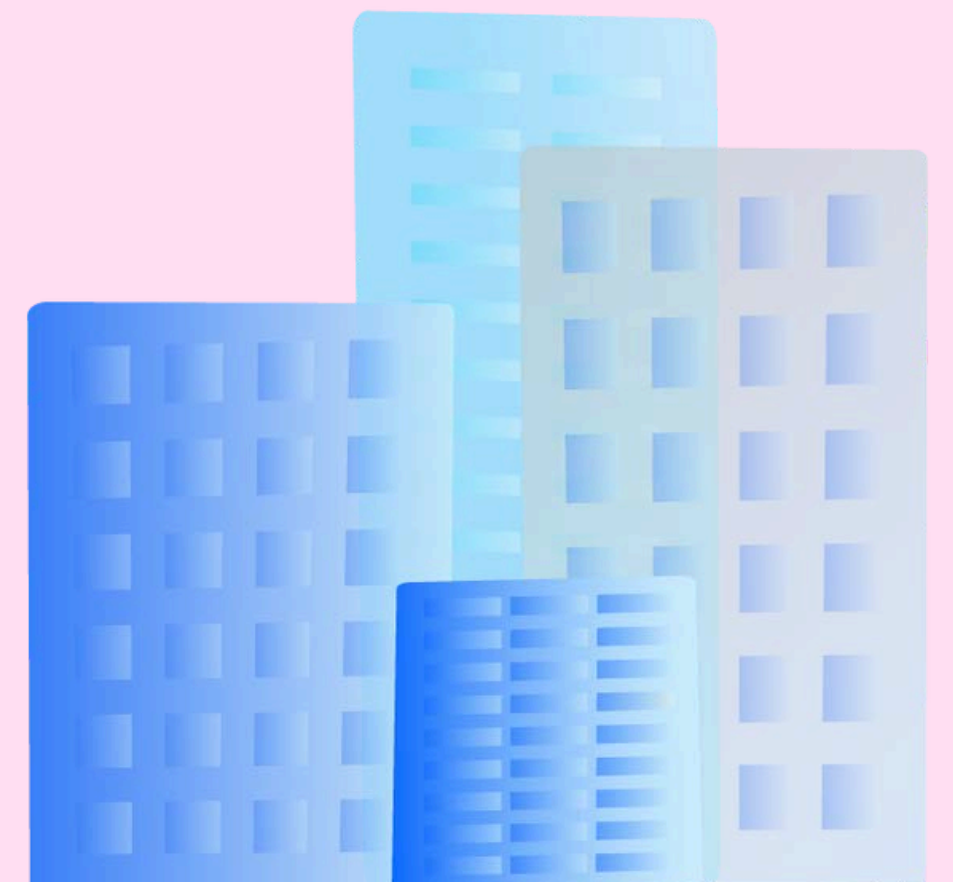
Artist: WUPA Artist - Craig Layer

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.

Thank you to our 2026 Regional Sponsors



Gold Sponsors



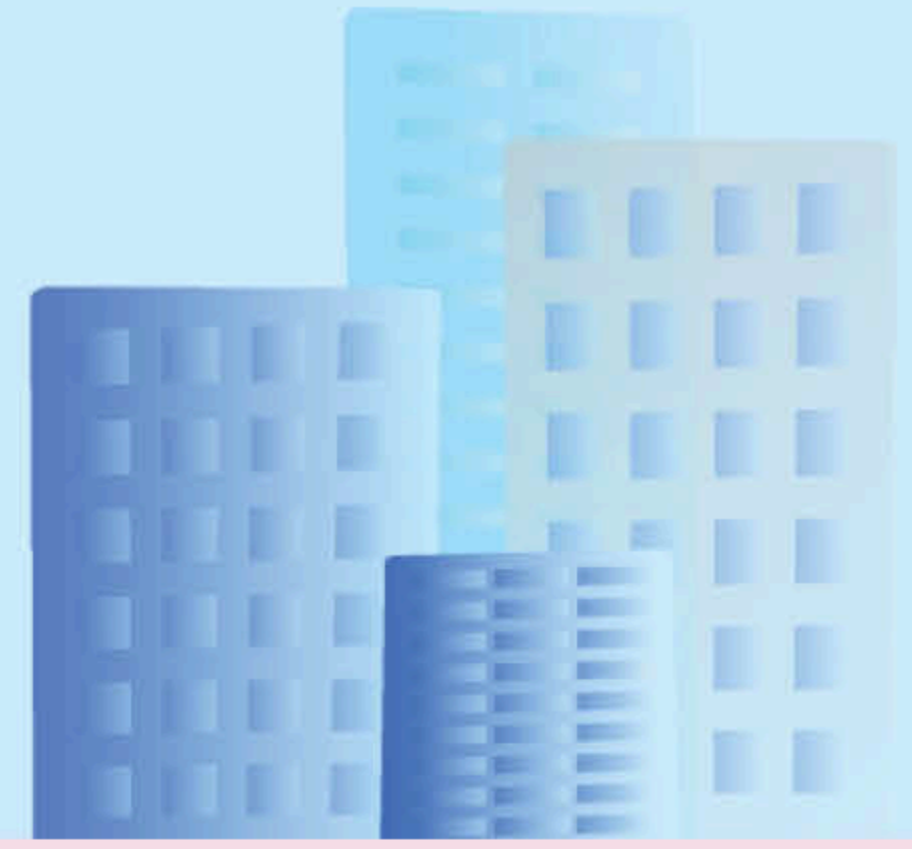
Silver Sponsors



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Thank you to our 2026 State Sponsors



Diamond Sponsor



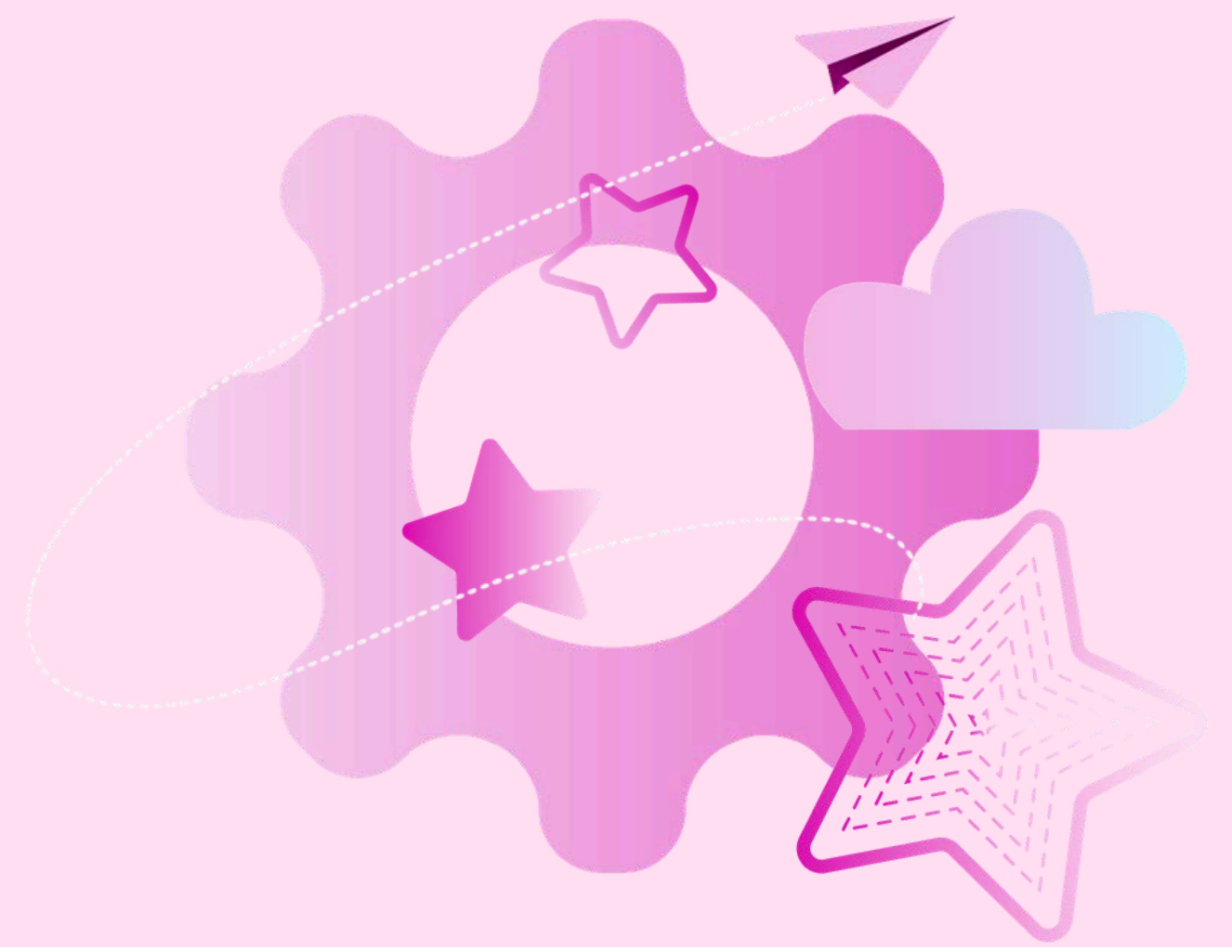
Platinum Sponsor



Gold Sponsors



Order Of Proceedings



Welcome to Country

Councillor Marc Sutherland

Entertainment

Bulaangu Cultural Services

Master of Ceremonies Introduction

Bateson Pittman

2025 New England VET in Schools
Student of the Year

Thea Sheridan

2025 New England School-based
Apprentice/Trainee of the Year & State
Finalist

Welcome Address

Glenda Buckley

Director, Regional Training Services

VET Ambassador Speech

David Rippin

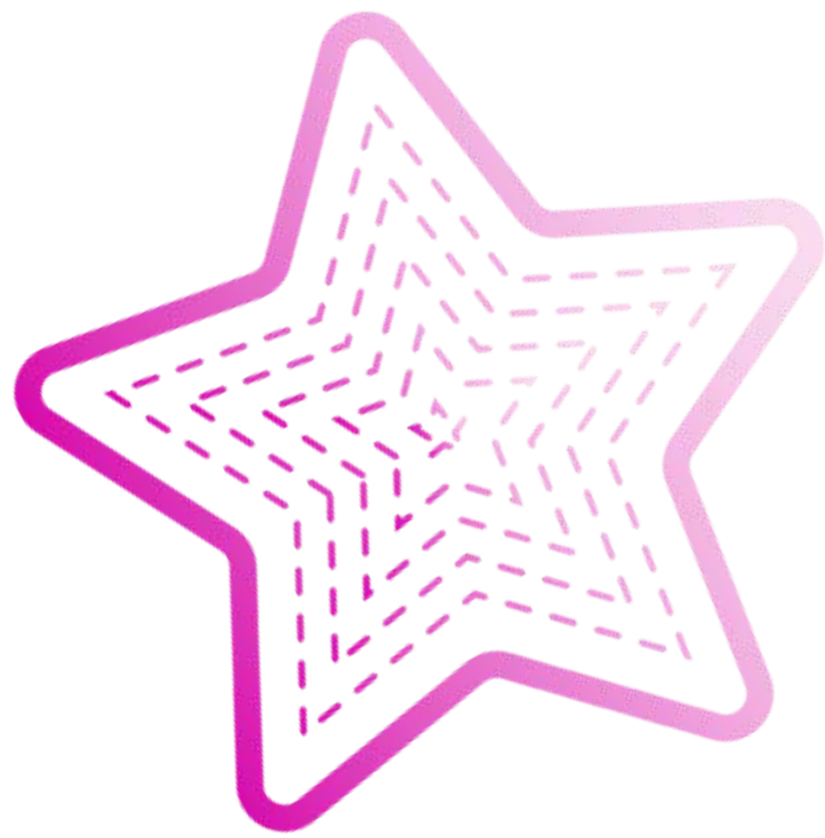
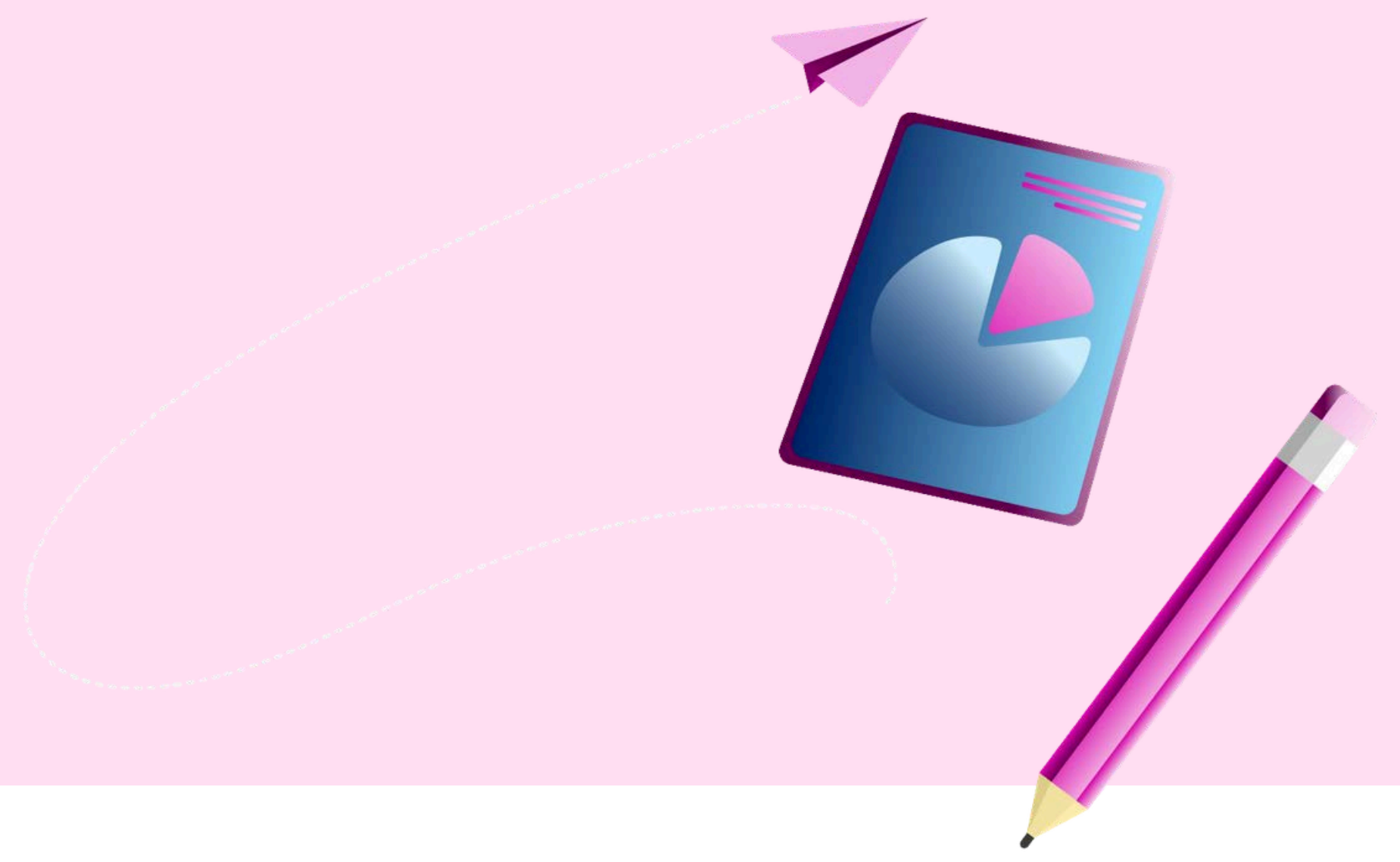
2025 New England Trainee of the Year &
State Finalist

Award Categories

- 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



New England

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and a warm welcome to our 2026 New England regional finalists.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet this evening, the Gomeroi People, and pay my respects to Elders past and present. We honour the wisdom, culture, and leadership they continue to pass on, helping to shape a strong future for the next generation.

It is a pleasure to welcome you to Tamworth as we celebrate the outstanding achievements of individuals and recognise excellence in vocational education and training across the New England region.

Across the region, more than 3,120 apprentices and trainees are supported by 1,180 employers, contributing to a skilled and capable workforce. Tonight, our finalists stand out as exceptional examples of skill, dedication, and promise.

Their achievements are made possible through the support of TAFE NSW, private training providers, schools, employers, community partners, and family who have guided and encouraged them throughout their journey.

To our finalists, congratulations on your remarkable achievements. Your hard work, passion and commitment are truly commendable, and you are an inspiration to us all. Being named a finalist is an outstanding achievement, and you should feel incredibly proud of all you have accomplished.

To everyone here tonight, I hope you enjoy a wonderful evening.

Naomi Spark

New England 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.



Bateson Pittman

Bateson chose to undertake his qualification while completing his senior years, successfully receiving first in the state for the HSC in Agriculture. With a strong interest in agriculture already present, Bateson's studies have now equipped him with the working knowledge for future success in the industry. Bateson thrives in the dynamic agricultural industry and has been able to develop the

know-how needed for a range of farm work; he has thrived with the hands-on learning opportunities afforded to him during his studies. Bateson has built his confidence in agricultural practices, workplace safety, and risk management and is reaping the rewards. He values teamwork and communication as crucial cornerstones within the industry and he actively shares insights about the benefits of VET when speaking to peers and colleagues. With a solid foundation in agriculture, Bateson is excited to contribute meaningfully for many years to come.

Thea Sheridan

Thea Sheridan knew she wanted to work in healthcare from an early age, thanks to shows like Paramedics Australia and Operation Ouch, and her conviction deepened when she witnessed the vital role nursing staff played in the lives of her family members. Committed to giving back to her community, Thea embarked on a school-based traineeship in Health Services Assistance, solidifying aspirations she's held since Year 9.



Balancing her studies with 500 hours of hands-on experience at Tamworth Rural Referral Hospital is a testament to her dedication to her craft and her commitment to the work. Alongside her qualification, Thea's volunteer work with the Tamworth Netball Association has honed her leadership skills which continue to serve her well in all she does. Thanks to the support from her teachers and colleagues Thea is thriving and determined to make a positive impact in the healthcare system while improving health outcomes for others.

JOIN OUR TEAM ...

For your Lifestyle
For your Career
For your Community
To Belong



Tamworth
REGIONAL COUNCIL
A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK

Working with **Tamworth Regional Council** is more than a job. It's an opportunity to contribute meaningfully to community life while building a sustainable and rewarding career. As one of the region's major employers, we offer diverse roles and clear pathways for professional growth, where you can start in entry-level positions like traineeships and apprenticeships, and progress with ongoing development and training.

Beyond career prospects, we emphasise work-life balance. Flexible arrangements, rostered days off and family-friendly policies recognise productivity and wellbeing go hand in hand. Staff benefits such as paid parental leave, long-service leave after five years, and educational assistance reflect our commitment to supporting our team.

Importantly, our work carries a strong sense of purpose. You'll help shape local infrastructure, support economic growth and deliver services that improve everyday life for our community.

Working with council is good for your lifestyle, your career, your community and is somewhere to belong. Chat with us about opportunities today - www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/work

Careers Network Inc are proud sponsors of the Training Awards, supporting young people to the introduction of Vocational Education and Training and Employment through quality industry placements.

Our aim is to work collaboratively with stakeholder groups to strengthen partnerships between industry and education, to increase knowledge and opportunities for careers and further education for youth.

Careers Network Inc have enjoyed supporting young people to achieve their successes over the last 20 plus years.



(02) 6763 4800 | info@careersnetwork.org.au

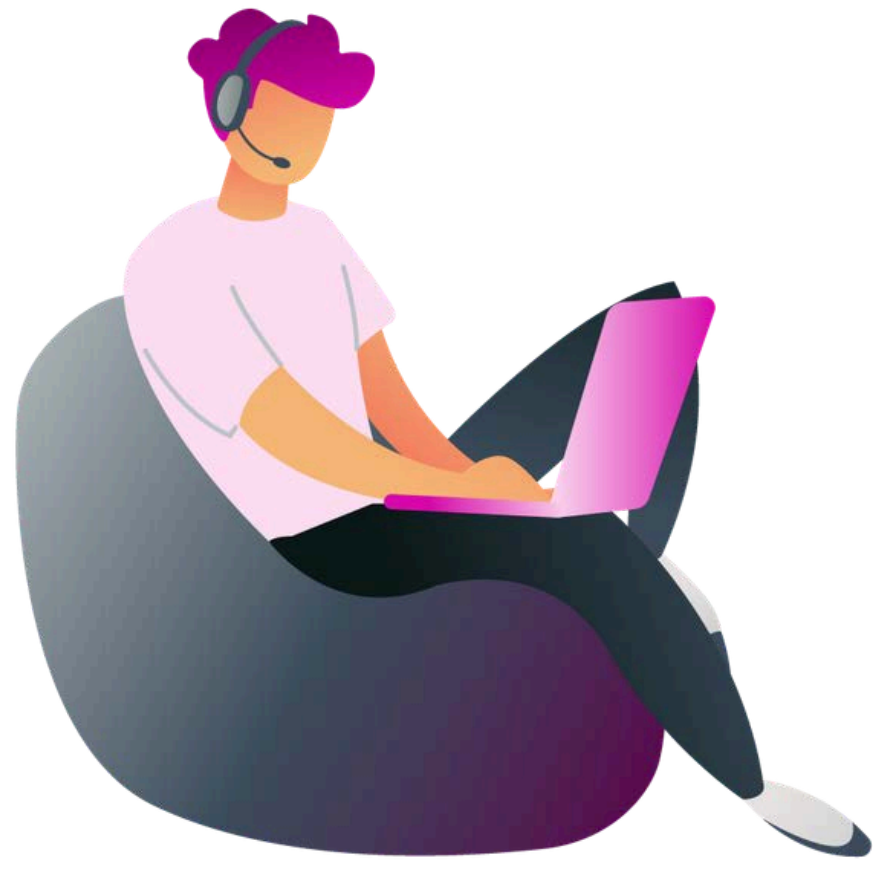


Congratulations

TO ALL 2026 REGIONAL FINALISTS

WE WISH YOU THE BEST OF
LUCK





VET in Schools Student of the Year Finalist

Lucy Henry-Berryman

Qualification

Certificate III in Health Services Assistance

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

School

Peel High School



Lucy Henry-Berryman is a Year 12 student at Peel High School, enrolled in a Certificate III in Health Services Assistance through TAFE NSW. Lucy is passionate about paediatric nursing and combines academic excellence with practical healthcare training. She thrives in team environments through hospital placements and dental assistant work, developing key skills in communication, infection control, and patient care.

Lucy balances her studies with competing nationally in rodeo, demonstrating remarkable time management and commitment. Her leadership roles in the Student Representative Council and coaching reflect her dedication to community engagement and mentoring. Recognised for her empathy, professionalism, and resilience, Lucy is inspired by nurses and educators who exemplify strong ethics.

She actively encourages peers to explore vocational education, sharing her positive experience of the course's real-world relevance and supportive learning environment. With a clear career path and a heart for helping others, Lucy aims to make a meaningful impact in healthcare.

VET in Schools Student of the Year Finalist

Suhailah Mohamed Krishan



Qualification

Certificate III in Health Services Assistance

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

School

Oxley High School

Suhailah Mohamed Krishan is a dedicated Year 12 student at Oxley High School completing a Certificate III in Health Services Assistance through TAFE NSW. Passionate about pursuing a career in nursing, particularly paediatric nursing, Suhailah has gained valuable hands-on experience working alongside healthcare professionals at Tamworth Base Hospital. Her training has developed skills in patient care, communication, infection control, and teamwork, boosting her confidence in clinical settings.

Balancing school, TAFE, and personal commitments, Suhailah shows strong organisation and resilience. She actively promotes vocational education, sharing her positive experiences to encourage peers to consider VET pathways. Recognised for her empathy, reliability, and clear communication, Suhailah strives to lead by example, both academically and through her roles as a peer mentor and school committee member.

With a mature and compassionate approach, she is committed to making a difference in healthcare and inspiring others to explore practical, rewarding careers through vocational education.



School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year Finalist

Lily Androutsos

Qualification

Certificate III in Health Services Assistance

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Hunter New England Local Health District

School

Oxley High School



Lily Androutsos is a dedicated Year 12 student at Oxley High School, completing a Certificate III in Health Services Assistance through a School-based Traineeship with Hunter New England Local Health District and TAFE NSW. Passionate about healthcare, Lily balances school, TAFE, and work at Tamworth Base Hospital, gaining invaluable hands-on experience alongside health professionals. This traineeship has sharpened her communication, time management, and empathy, helping her grow from shy beginnings into a confident team player in a fast-paced hospital environment.

Lily's experiences have inspired her interest in podiatry, and she plans to continue her studies at university while working as a Health Services Assistant.

Outside of her traineeship, Lily is an active leader and athlete, excelling in water polo and swimming, mentoring younger students, and volunteering with local charities. Her resilience, optimism, and passion for helping others make her a positive role model and future healthcare professional.

School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year Finalist

Joseph Reading



Qualification

Certificate III in Health Services Assistance

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Hunter New England Local Health District

School

Tamworth High School

Joseph Reading is completing his Certificate III in Health Services Assistance through a School-based Traineeship while finishing his HSC at Tamworth High School. Motivated by a deep passion for healthcare, Joseph has gained invaluable clinical experience working alongside medical professionals. He has developed strong skills in teamwork, communication, and working under pressure, complementing his academic achievements, including top rankings in Society and Culture and Biology.

Joseph is vice-captain and prefect at his school, actively leading community initiatives and volunteering, such as organising charity events and supporting local schools. He remains dedicated, resilient, and proactive in balancing study, work, and life commitments. Joseph is eager to inspire other males to pursue careers in this traditionally female-dominated field.

His commitment to patient care and continual learning motivates him to pursue further studies in nursing, psychiatry, or paramedicine, aiming to make a positive difference in the medical community and beyond.



School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year Finalist

Zac Watson

Qualification

Certificate III in Sport, Aquatics and Recreation

Training Provider

Australian Training Company

Employer

Creating Chances

School

Oxley High School



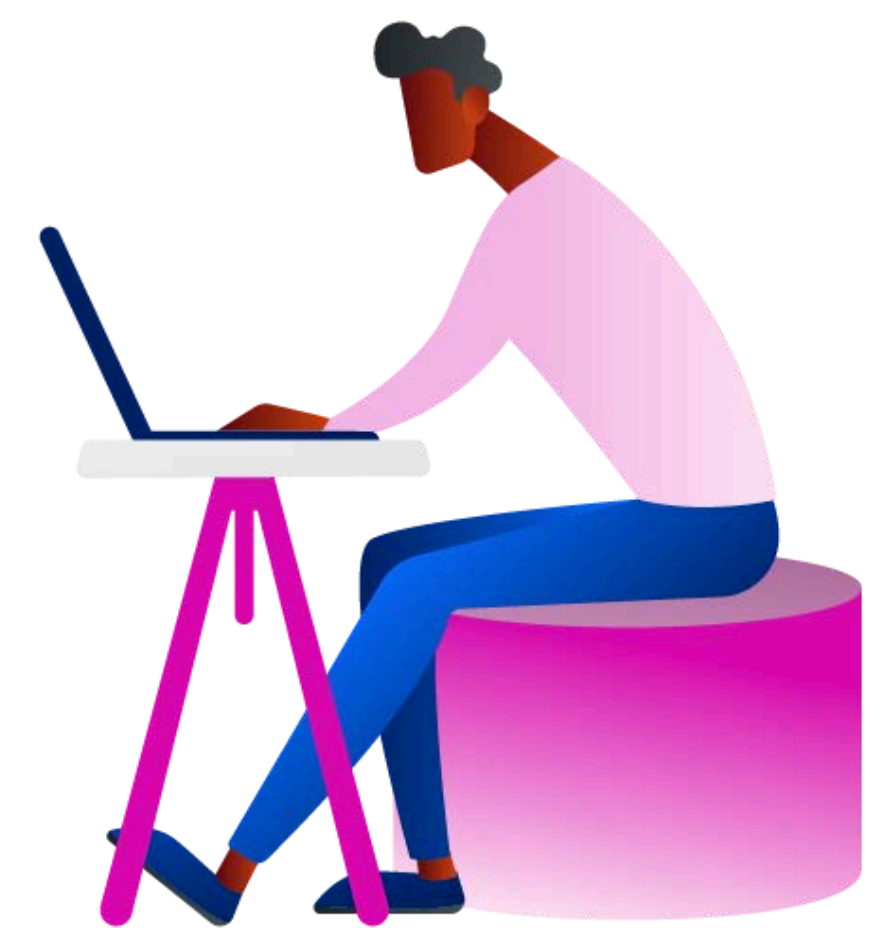
Zac Watson's journey took a meaningful turn at the end of Year 10 when, after facing uncertainty and challenges, he embraced a new path through a School-based Traineeship with Creating Chances. Pursuing a Certificate III in Sport, Aquatics and Recreation, Zac has grown personally and professionally, developing resilience, leadership, and communication skills. Working mainly with students at Peel High School, Zac connects deeply with the kids, understanding their struggles from his own experience.

Beyond work, Zac took up golf a year ago, quickly excelling in competitions and finding a new passion. His supportive team at Creating Chances feels like family, encouraging him to be his best. With a positive mindset and determination, Zac values teamwork, empathy, and clear communication.

This School-based Traineeship has shaped him into a confident, caring leader, ready to take on future challenges and opportunities with enthusiasm and purpose.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Finalist

Laynee Cain



Qualification

Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care

Training Provider

ECTARC

Employer

Skillset

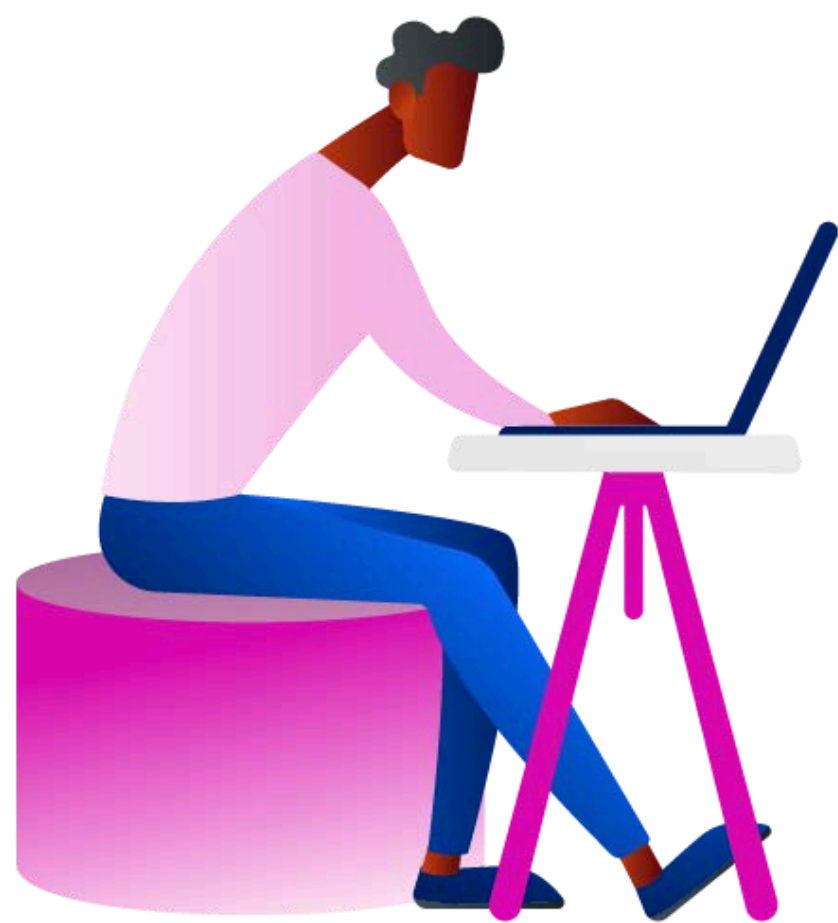
Host Employer

Warrumbungle Shire Council

Laynee Cain is dedicated to early childhood education and care, driven by her passion to support children during their important developmental years. Having completed her Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, she gained valuable hands-on experience while balancing study, work, and personal commitments.

A proud Gamilliraay woman, Laynee brings cultural respect, empathy, and teamwork to her role, positively impacting her workplace and community. She excels at delivering developmentally appropriate learning experiences, observing children's behaviour, and promoting inclusive practices aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework and National Quality Standard. Laynee supports educators, maintains safe environments, and fosters strong relationships with children, families, and colleagues.

Her communication, leadership, and reliability skills have been strengthened through training, enabling her to serve as a positive ambassador for the sector. Laynee is committed to continuous learning, professional growth, and creating nurturing spaces where every child feels a sense of belonging.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Finalist

Joanne Campbell

Qualification

Certificate IV in Housing

Training Provider

CHIA NSW

Employer

Homes North Community Housing



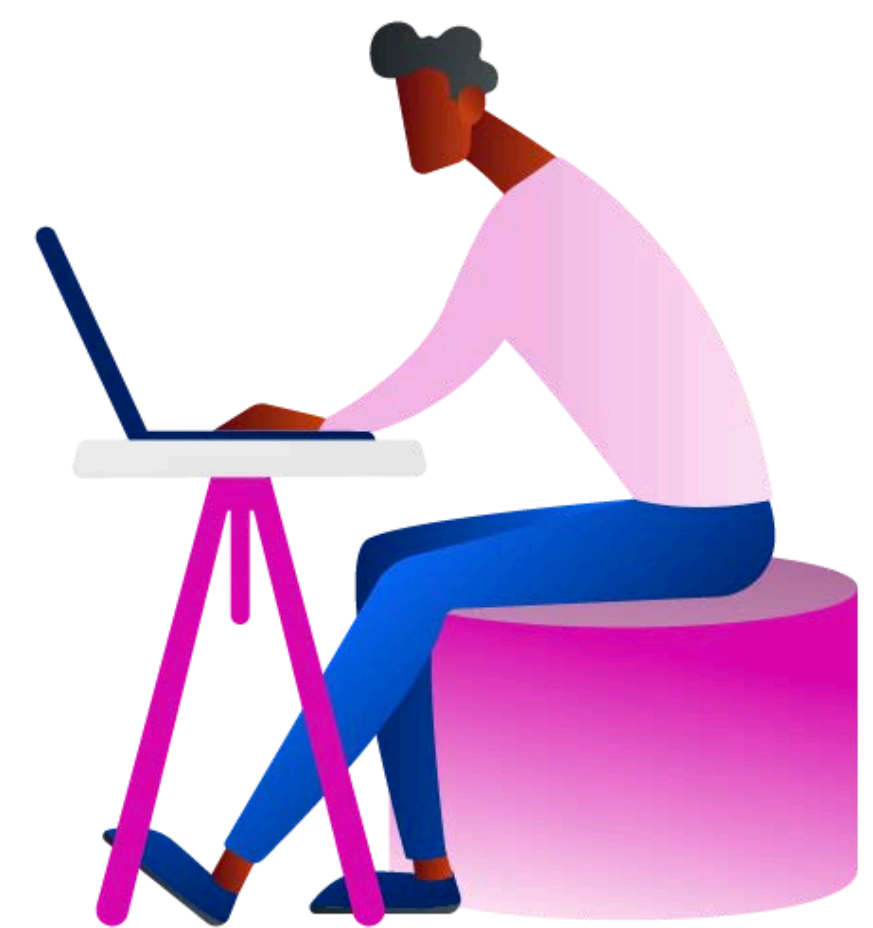
Joanne Campbell is enrolled in a 12-month Cadetship Program through CHIA NSW, working with Homes North Community Housing undertaking a Certificate IV in Housing. Motivated by personal experiences, including overcoming a house fire and domestic violence, Joanne is passionate about supporting others facing housing challenges. As a caseworker on the Tingha Pathways Project, she directly assists community members by providing guidance and access to safe, affordable housing. Joanne prioritises building trust, empathy, and respect in her work, drawing on strong community connections and lived experience.

She credits her mentor and colleagues for helping develop her confidence and leadership skills. Committed to making a positive difference, Joanne inspires others through resilience, practical knowledge, and compassionate service.

This Cadetship has transformed her life, allowing her to give back while showing her family the power of perseverance and hope.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Finalist

Sarah Gill



Qualification

Certificate III in Aviation (Ground Operations and Service)

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

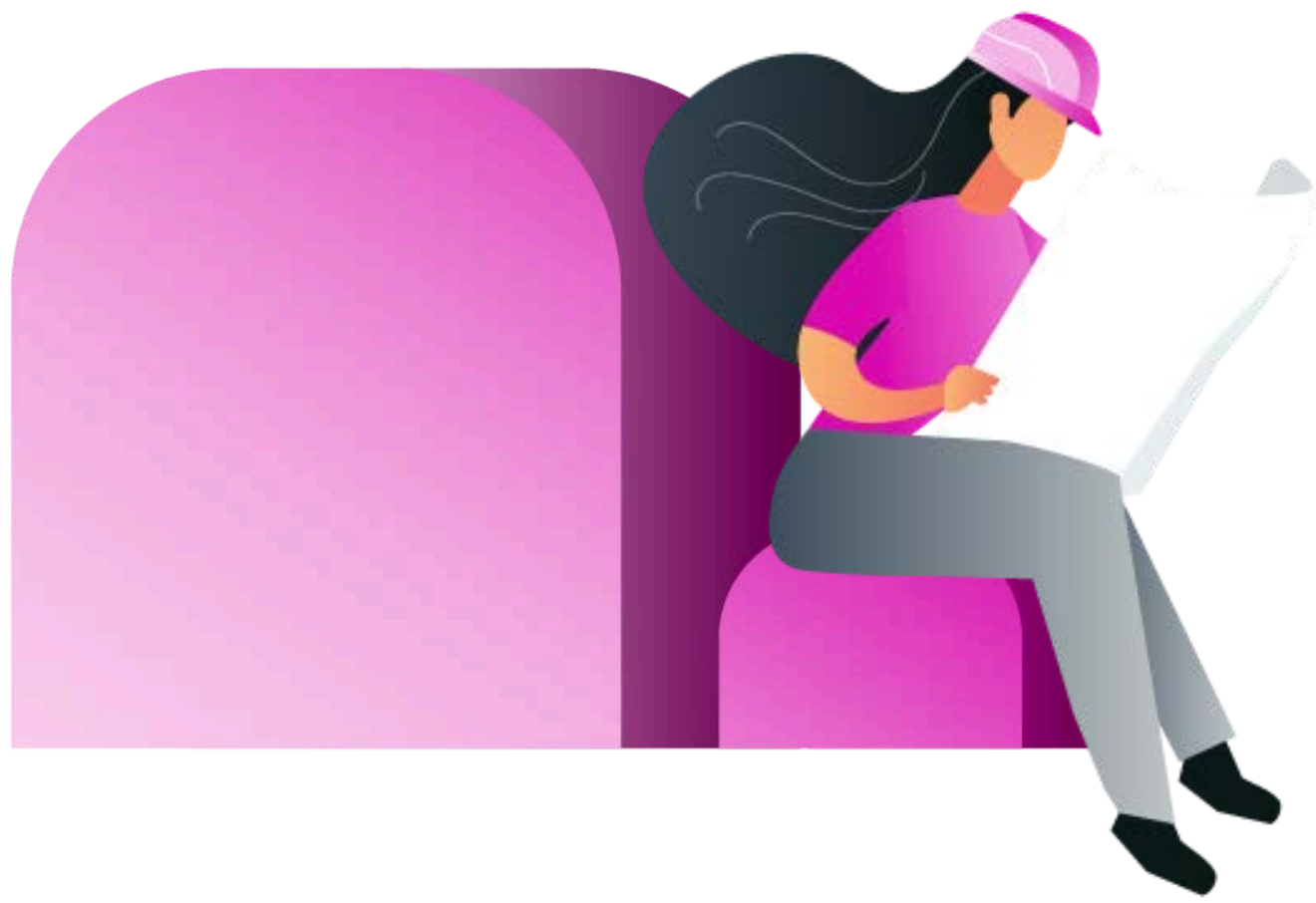
Employer

Tamworth Regional Council

Sarah Gill is an aviation professional with a strong connection to her local community. She completed a Certificate III in Aviation (Ground Operations and Service) at Tamworth Regional Council ahead of the original two-year schedule. Before starting the course, Sarah had already gained two years of industry experience. She found the training engaging and enjoyable, which helped her build confidence and grow her skills beyond her previous knowledge.

During her studies, Sarah took on leadership roles by supporting fellow students and sharing her expertise. She also represented Tamworth Regional Airport and the Council in an airport reporting officer training course in another town. She is active in community sport and is known for her approachable and positive nature. Sarah embraces teamwork and leadership, drawing on her Aboriginal heritage.

Her commitment to professional development and community involvement makes her a valuable asset to the aviation industry and her region.



Trainee of the Year Finalist

Jorja Easterman

Qualification

Certificate IV in Business

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Tamworth Regional Council



Jorja Easterman recently completed her Certificate IV in Business through TAFE NSW while working full-time with Tamworth Regional Council's Sport and Recreation team. She fast-tracked her qualification in just nine months, applying new skills directly to her workplace, including customer service strategies, digital tools, and organisational processes. Jorja thrives in team environments where her strong communication, adaptability, and leadership qualities shine.

Balancing study, work, and personal commitments has strengthened her resilience and time management skills. Her dedication is recognised by supervisors and mentors who praise her initiative and professionalism. Growing up in a regional area, Jorja has overcome challenges such as limited internet access by efficiently using available resources.

Beyond work and study, she actively supports her local community and family, encouraging others to pursue vocational education. Jorja is passionate about continuous learning and looks forward to advancing her career in local government while inspiring others through her positive attitude and strong work ethic.

Trainee of the Year Finalist

Hayley Flemming



Qualification

Certificate IV in Real Estate Practice

Training Provider

Entry Education

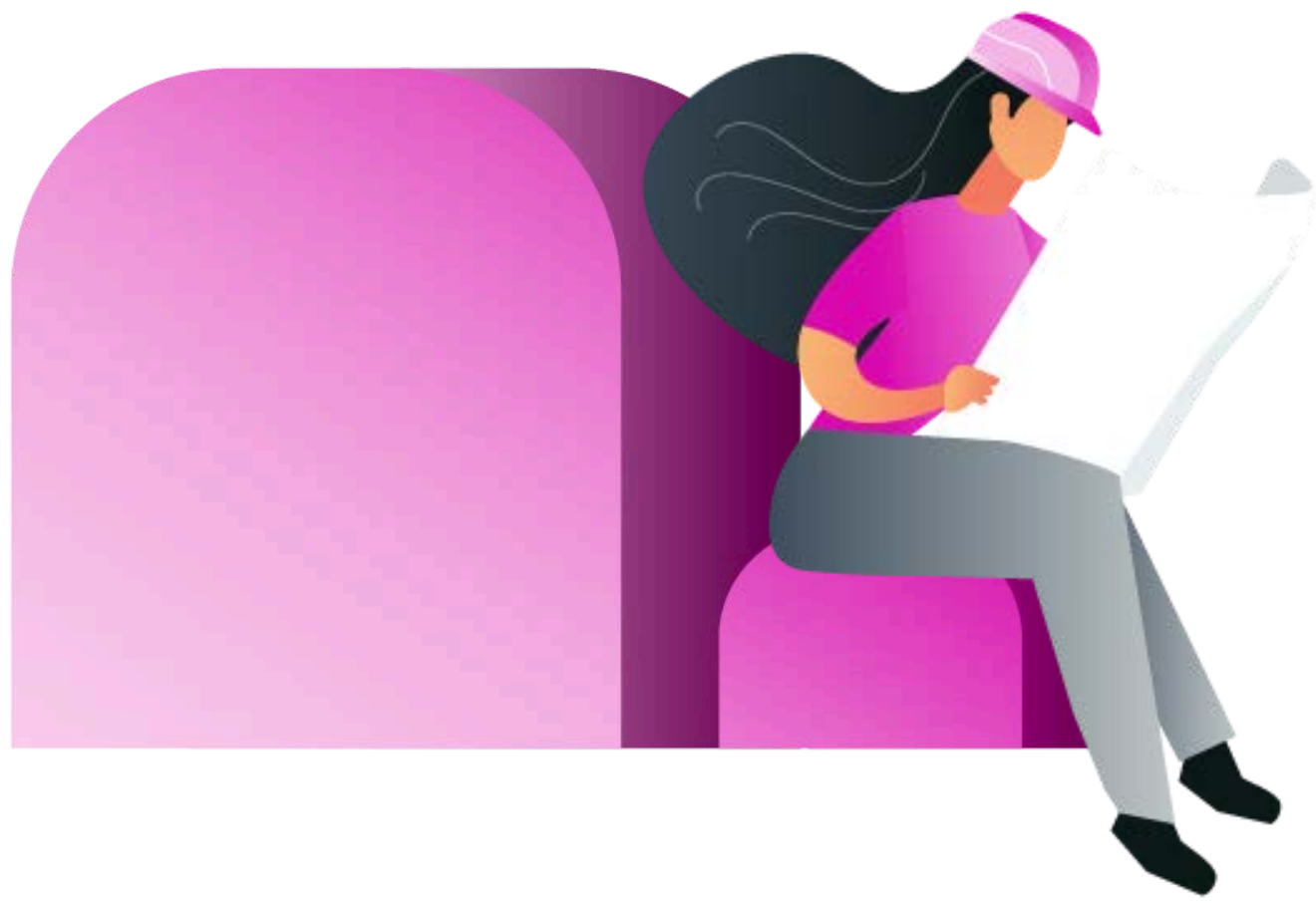
Employer

Elders Real Estate Tamworth

Hayley Flemming began her career in real estate in 2024, inspired by her father's experience in the industry. She currently works as a Rural Sales Support Officer at Elders Real Estate Tamworth and has completed her Certificate IV in Real Estate Practice. Hayley's role has evolved from reception duties to sales support, enabling her to develop strong communication, client management, and industry knowledge.

She embraces challenges such as managing difficult client interactions and adapting to significant system changes with resilience and initiative. Hayley takes pride in sharing her learning with colleagues to ensure team compliance and efficiency. Motivated by continuous growth, she enjoys contributing to a positive team environment.

Active in community and workplace sporting events, Hayley values teamwork both inside and outside the office. With a passion for real estate and a commitment to professional development, she looks forward to advancing her career and becoming a licensed agent who makes a trusted impact in the industry.



Trainee of the Year Finalist

Arianna Klein

Qualification

Certificate III in Horticulture

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Tamworth Regional Council



Arianna Klein has successfully completed Certificate III qualifications in both Horticulture and Landscaping through a Tamworth Regional Council traineeship. Passionate about working outdoors and caring for nature, Arianna combines her hands-on experience with a strong foundation in plant life, environmental stewardship, and community engagement. She played a key role in developing a wedding garden at the Tamworth Botanical Gardens, showcasing her practical skills and teamwork.

Balancing her studies with sporting commitments and work challenges, Arianna developed excellent time management and communication skills. Her sporting background as a state-level basketball representative helped build her leadership skills, which she applies in mentoring colleagues and supporting work experience students.

Arianna embraces lifelong learning, aiming to advance into botany or biodiversity studies. She also runs her own small garden care business mainly assisting local seniors with their garden maintenance. With a positive attitude, initiative, and a love for nature, Arianna is committed to making a lasting contribution to her community and the environment through her horticultural expertise.

Apprentice of the Year Finalist

Kada Hutt



Qualification

Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication
Trade

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Richard Murphy Ausbox

Kada Hutt is a passionate metal fabrication and engineering professional who has confidently pursued a non-traditional path. Leaving school after Year 10, she enrolled in a four-year apprenticeship, working with Richard Murphy Ausbox and training with TAFE NSW. As the only female in her course, Kada embraced the challenge, developing a strong character and resilience. She dedicated extra hours to mastering welding and practical skills, leading to permanent work on projects such as ANU Sidings Spring Observatory and Australia's next class of naval ships.

Kada's commitment to safety and teamwork stands out in her demanding work environments. Beyond her trade, she actively engages with her local community in Coonabarabran through sports and fitness. She represented her community at the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards and sailed on the Young Endeavour, earning the Young Endeavour Award.

Kada is excited to support and inspire other young Australians, especially from remote and diverse backgrounds, as she embarks on her next chapter building Navy's Hunter Class frigates in South Australia.



Apprentice of the Year Finalist

Kannan Krishnan

Qualification

Certificate III in Telecommunications

Technology

Training Provider

JB Hunter Technology

Employer

CSIRO



Kannan Krishnan is an experienced telecommunications professional, now formalising his extensive hands-on background undertaking a Certificate III in Telecommunications Technology through JB Hunter Technology. Over the past two decades Kannan has worked across Telecommunications, RF systems, Geospatial, and Drone technology, His practical expertise covers hardware assembly, system integration, quality assurance, and prototype development, adhering to ISO standards and clean-room procedures. His decision to undertake the Certificate III was to benchmark his skills, stay current with industry standards, and reinforce safety and regulatory compliance.

At CSIRO, he delivers reliable telecommunications solutions supporting space, astronomy, and defence-related operations. He values teamwork, knowledge sharing and problem-solving within multidisciplinary environments to ensure mission-critical system reliability.

Combining formal training with professional certifications, Kannan's drive for continuous improvement makes him a valuable contributor, positioning him for future leadership in high-technology fields.

Apprentice of the Year Finalist

Nikita Wells



Qualification

Certificate III in Hairdressing

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Cooper & Co Hairdressing

Nikita Wells is an enthusiastic apprentice hairdresser who completed her Certificate III in Hairdressing. Balancing structured study with hands-on salon experience, Nikita is growing her technical skills, confidence, and industry knowledge daily. Employed in a professional salon, she thrives in a collaborative environment, supporting senior stylists and delivering excellent customer service. Nikita's passion for hairdressing stems from creativity and the joy of helping clients feel confident. Her apprenticeship has strengthened her time management, communication, and teamwork abilities, preparing her for a lasting career in the industry.

Selected as a WorldSkills Australia NSW Ambassador, Nikita proudly represents vocational training and promotes apprenticeships for young people. Through dedication, resilience, and a positive attitude, she embraces challenges and remains motivated to continually improve. Nikita values the combination of practical training and theoretical learning provided by her Registered Training Organisation, which supports her development. She is committed to contributing positively to salon culture and inspiring others to explore vocational pathways in hair and beauty.

Thank You



On behalf of the New England 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 New England Training Awards a success.

