

NSW Training Awards 2026

Be Recognised

Riverina



Digital Program

25 May 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wiradjuri 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

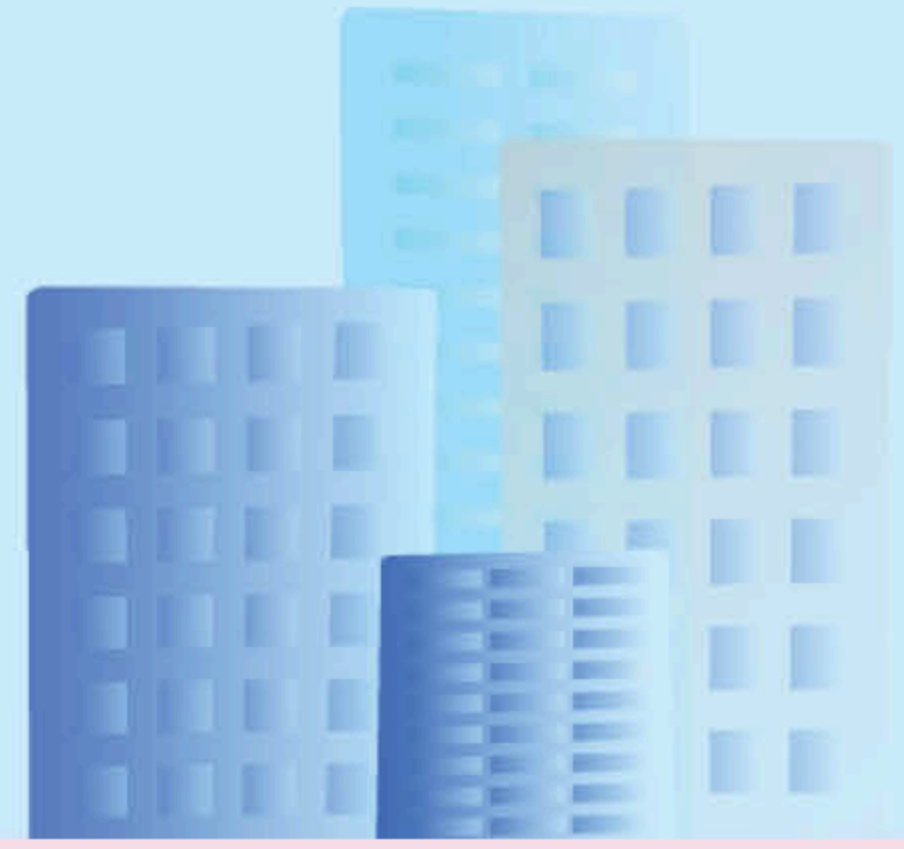
Artist: WUPA Artist - Craig Layer

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 State Sponsors



Diamond Sponsor



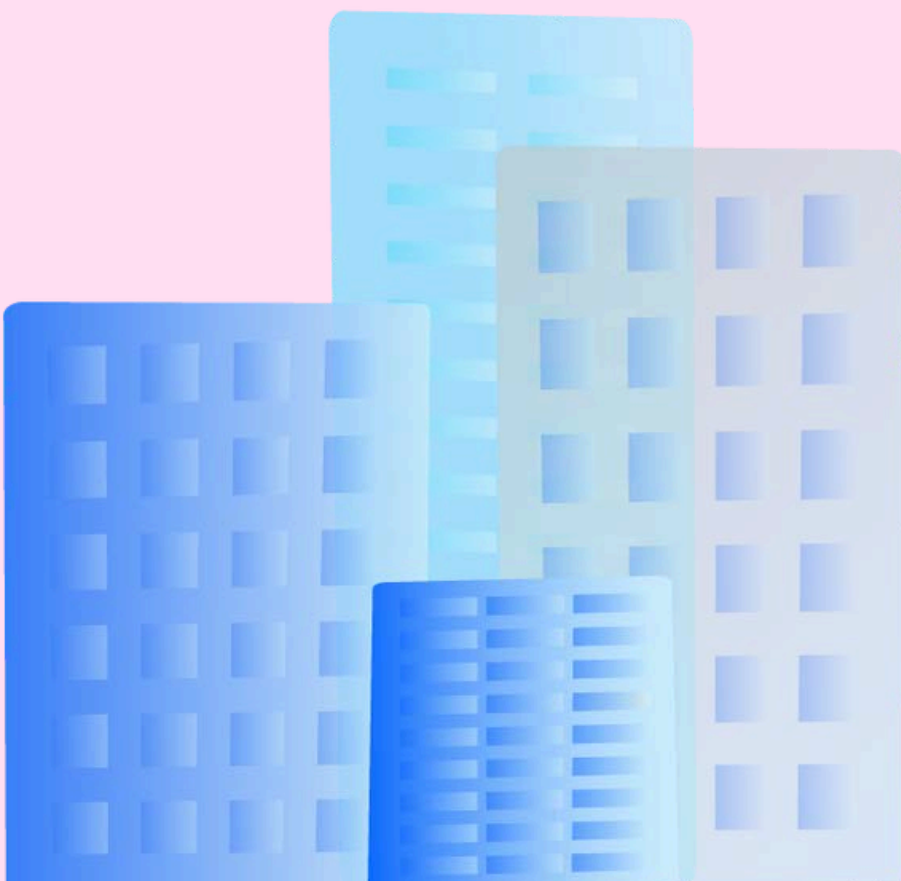
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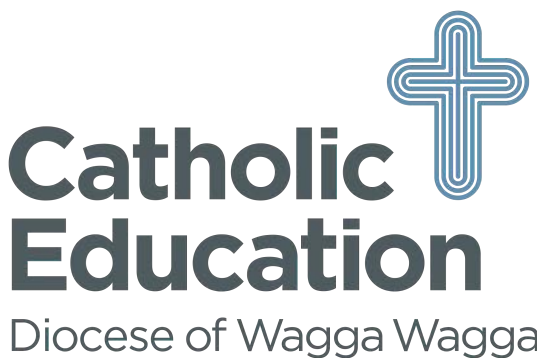
Thank you to our 2026 Regional Sponsors



Gold Sponsor



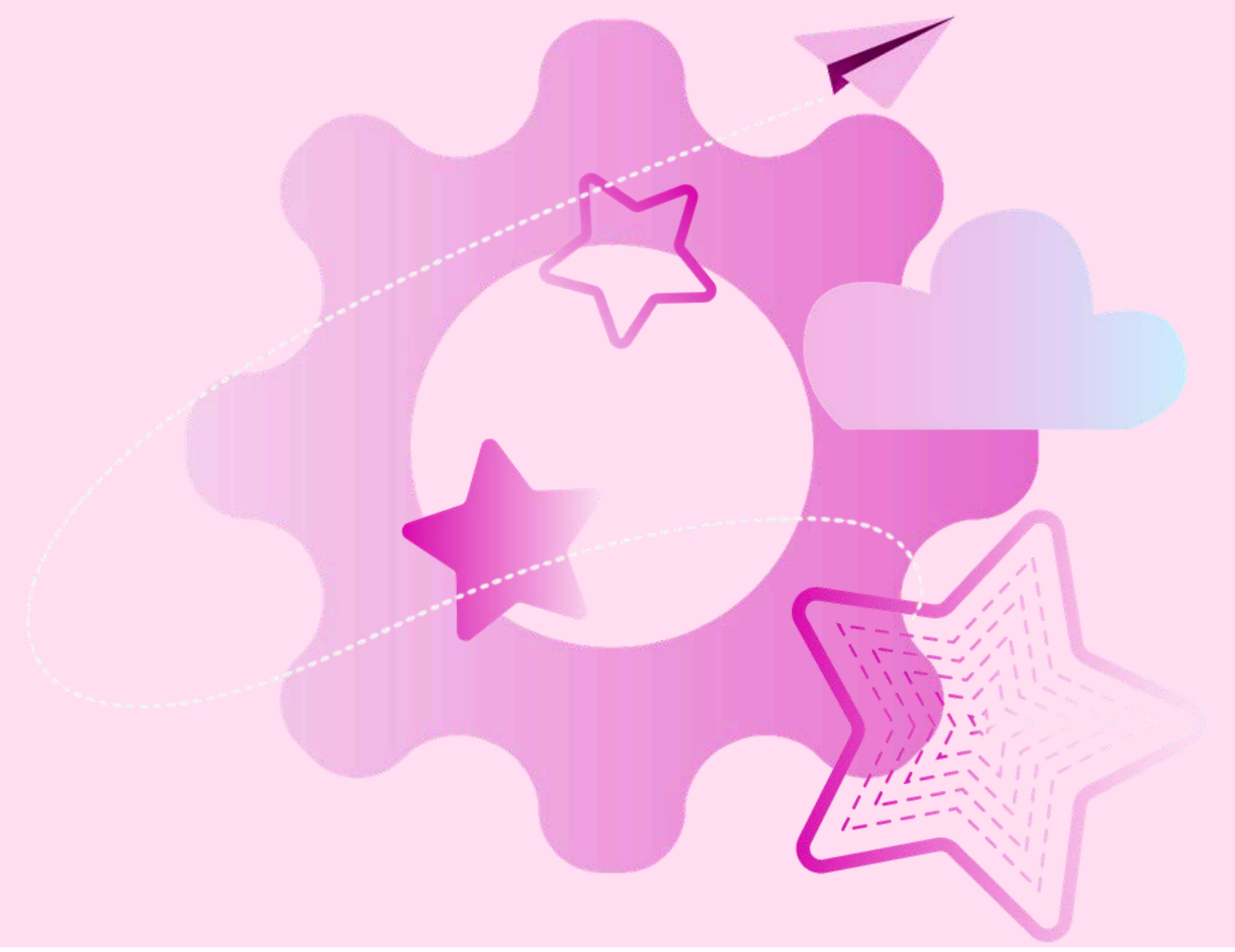
Silver Sponsors



Bronze Sponsors



Order Of Proceedings



Welcome to Country

Aunty Mary Atkinson

Master of Ceremonies Introduction

Abbey Hartley

2024 Riverina VET in Schools Student of the Year

Imogen Young Maloney

2025 NSW Trainee of the Year

Welcome Address

Glenda Buckley

Director, Regional Training Services

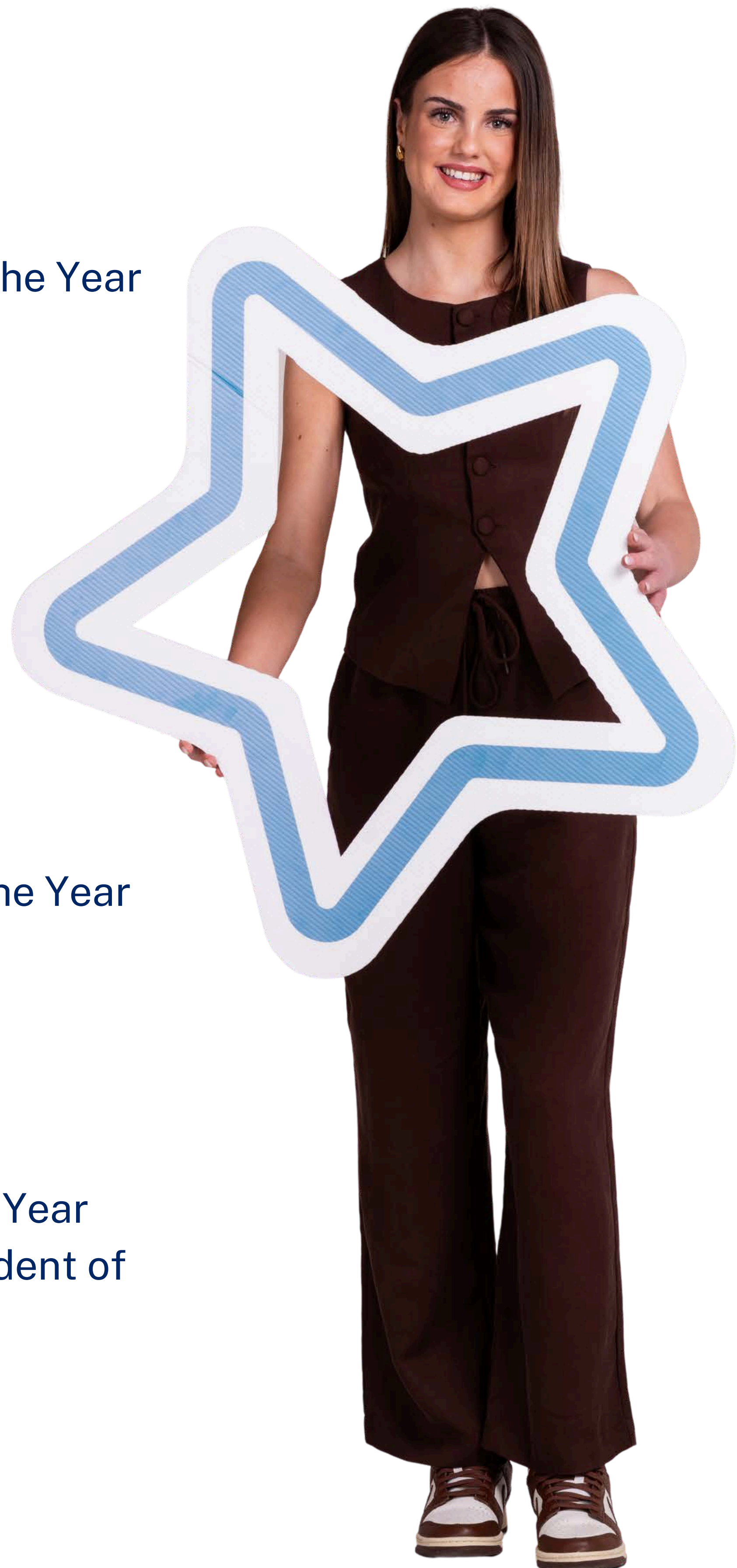
VET Ambassador Speech

Penny Mackay

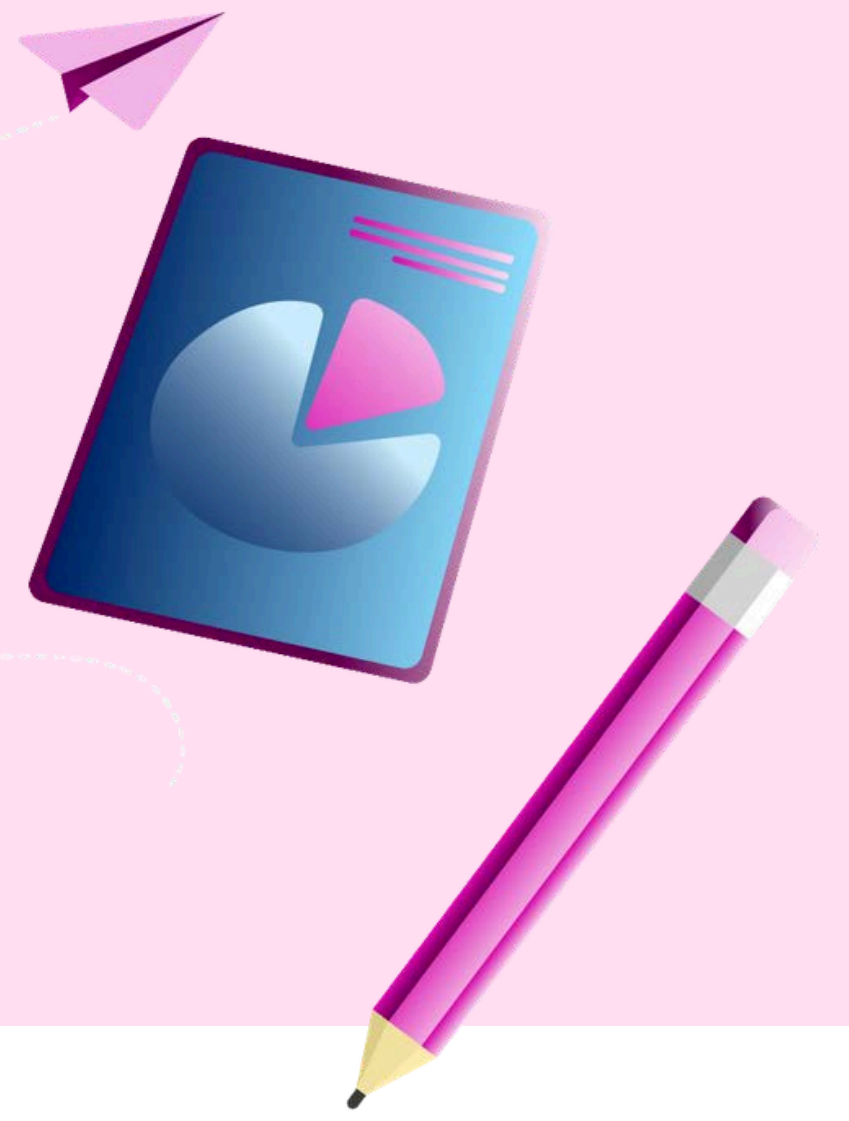
2025 Australian VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year

Award Categories

- Vocational Student of the Year
- VET Trainer/Teacher 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



Riverina

As the Regional Manager for Training Services, I sincerely welcome you to this evening's celebration of excellence in Vocational Education and Training within the Riverina-Murray.

Tonight the 2026 NSW Training Awards – Riverina Region presentation event marks the culmination of immense dedication and skills development.

Our Region, built on the solid foundations of agriculture and manufacturing, continues to thrive through growing sectors in health, community care and construction. This progress is underpinned by a spirit of hard work and innovation – qualities uniquely embodied by our distinguished finalists.

These awards celebrate the transformative power of skills acquisition in shaping individual lives, strengthening our businesses, and building resilient communities. Whether it is an apprentice mastering a traditional trade, a trainee gaining vital industry experience, or a provider delivering specialised training, every finalist demonstrates remarkable talent and perseverance. Your efforts underpin our local economies and inspire others to strive for success.

We also acknowledge the pivotal contributions of the employers, trainers, and mentors whose guidance remains vital to our region's growth. Tonight we acknowledge and celebrate the Riverina-Murray Regions success stories. Congratulations to all our finalists! Your achievements represent a promising and prosperous future for our region.

Garry Whittaker

Riverina 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.



Abbey Hartley

Abbey Hartley is a dedicated young professional whose VET journey reflects strong growth, emerging leadership and a commitment to practical, real-world learning. Through her studies, she has developed strong communication, collaboration and problem-solving skills that continue to support her success across both personal and professional environments.

Abbey is passionate about promoting the value and opportunities that Vocational Education and Training can provide. She actively encourages others to embrace hands-on learning and recognise the strength of transferable skills across a wide range of career pathways.

In her current role, Abbey applies her VET developed skills daily through client communication, supplier collaboration and coordinating project deliverables.

Recognised with the 2025 Award of Excellence for her customer focus, she continues to approach new challenges with confidence, professionalism and adaptability, making meaningful and positive contributions to those around her.

Imogen Young-Maloney

Imogen Young-Maloney decided to use a traineeship to explore the world of human resources, and her studies have given her the chance to develop a range of versatile skills which are valued across various industries. She is passionate about making an impact on people and supporting the organisational functions within a business.

Throughout her traineeship, Imogen has been able to practice her time management, while building up strategies for effective communication and collaboration. Her proactive approach has seen her step up to organise community events and engage with local youth at career expos. Imogen's journey has transformed her into a confident individual eager to seize new opportunities. She is excited to continue her studies and is committed to making a positive impact in her community, advocating for the importance of vocational education and training, and the doors it can open for others.





MURRAY MALLEE
TRAINING
CO. LTD.

‘More Than Just a Training Company’

MMTC Ltd is a highly successful Group Training Company and plays a vital role in servicing industry and community needs through its wide range of employment and training programs.

MMTC Ltd has offices located in Deniliquin and Kerang with the administrative centre based in Swan Hill.

MMTC Ltd provides the following services:

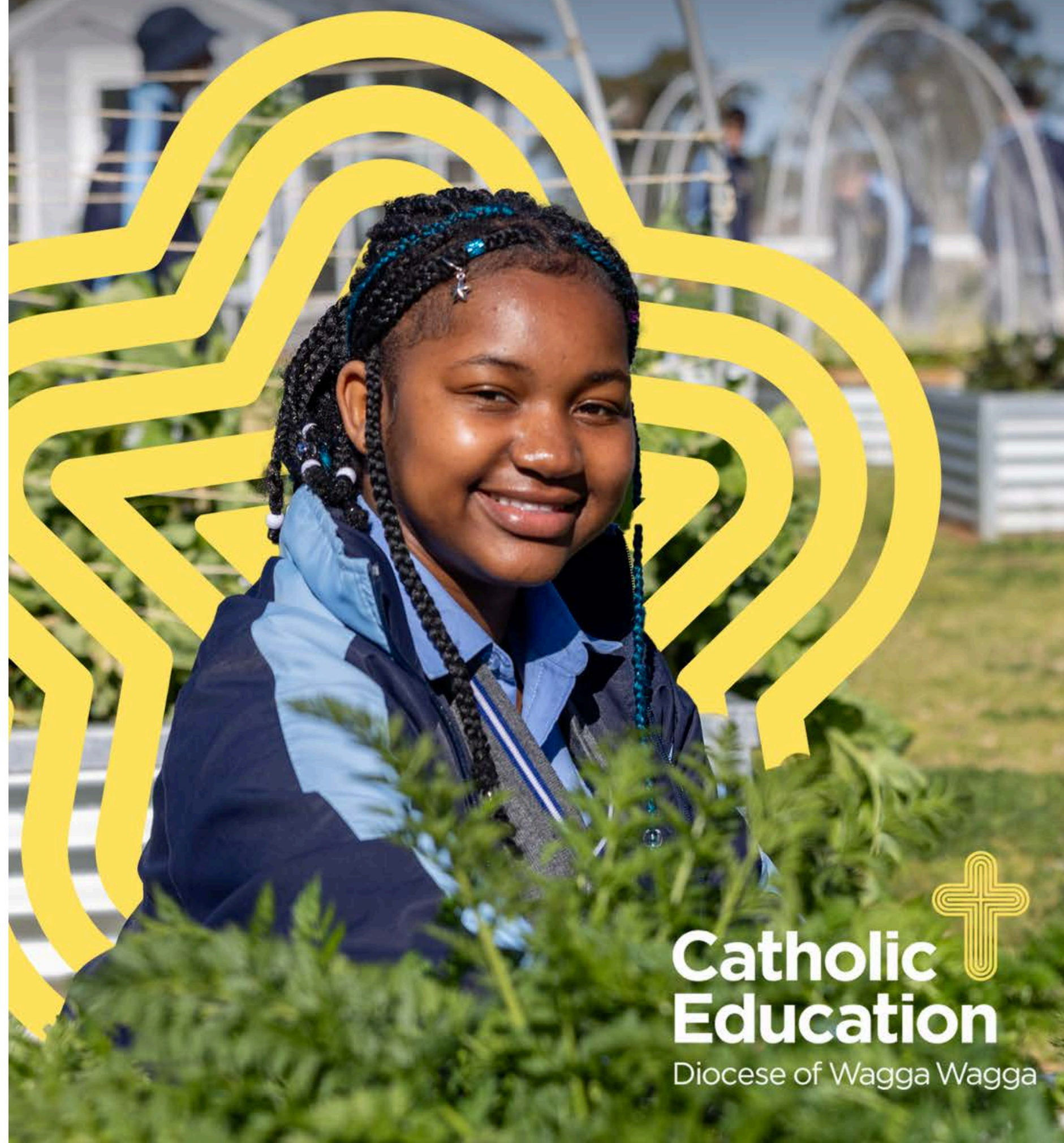
- Group Training Services
- Registered Training Organisation
- “Pipeline To A Career” Reece ASbA Program
- Member of National Apprentice Employment Network

Murray Mallee Training Company Ltd has been a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) since 1996, providing Nationally Accredited Training to Apprentices and Trainees Australia wide. Qualifications ranging from Certificate II to III are available for a diverse range of Business and Industry including General Construction, Retail, Engineering, Transport & Logistics, Agriculture/Horticulture, Business Administration & Automotive.

Looking for an Apprenticeship or Traineeship? Want to know more about a particular trade? Want a trade but want to finish your schooling? Murray Mallee Training Company Ltd has a wide range of services available for jobseekers.

Go to our Website – mmtc.com.au for more information.

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FCIA Training Academy (FCIATA)

Training the Future of the Flooring Industry

The FCIA Training Academy (FCIATA) is a specialist Registered Training Organisation dedicated exclusively to the flooring industry.

As the training arm of the Floor Covering Institute of Australia (FCIA), we are committed to developing highly skilled, job-ready flooring professionals who meet the evolving needs of our industry.

FCIATA delivers nationally recognised qualifications, including the **MSF30822 Certificate III in Flooring Technology**, supporting apprentices, employers and businesses across Australia. Our programs combine practical hands-on learning with strong industry knowledge, ensuring apprentices gain real-world skills that translate directly to the workplace.

At FCIATA, we believe strong training builds strong businesses. By investing in education, safety, compliance and technical excellence, we are helping secure the future of the Australian flooring industry.

For more information, contact us today.

Suchitra Ahlawat
National RTO Manager

P: +61 (0) 478 315 658
E: sahlawat@fcia.org.au

*Partner with FCIATA
and invest in the future of flooring.*

www.fcia.org.au



Congratulations

TO ALL 2026 REGIONAL FINALISTS

WE WISH YOU THE BEST OF
LUCK





Vocational Student of the Year Finalist

Tori Dockett

Qualification

Certificate III in Individual Support

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Pearl Home Care



Tori Dockett is a passionate Individual Support worker who holds a Certificate III qualification and studies at TAFE NSW. Known for her kindness, empathy, and dedication, Tori communicates with warmth and confidence, making her an exceptional carer. She consistently delivers high-quality work and embraces learning opportunities with maturity beyond her years.

Tori loves supporting elderly clients, often travelling to towns such as Griffith and Leeton to provide one-on-one care. She values the positive impact personalised home care has on her clients, believing it helps maintain their dignity and happiness. Though she initially planned to pursue nursing, Tori has found deep fulfilment in her current role, advocating for more funding and compassionate workers in aged care.

She encourages others to consider vocational education for its flexibility and real-world focus. Tori's commitment to lifelong learning and excellence exemplifies the spirit of vocational education.

Vocational Student of the Year Finalist

Merilin Karv



Qualification

Certificate III in Laboratory Skills

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Flavourtech Pty Ltd

Merilin Karv completed her Certificate III in Laboratory Skills while working in a winery laboratory, gaining valuable practical skills. Known for her maturity, reliability, and thoughtful approach to learning, Merilin consistently sought to understand and improve processes. She identified a cost-effective way to enhance laboratory documentation and created flexible data analysis tools that improved accuracy. Merilin also developed a detailed safety floor plan for staff induction, showcasing her strong communication skills.

Despite her success in the wine industry, concerns about its future led her to pursue an electrical apprenticeship in the Griffith region, embracing a new career path in a male-dominated trade. Merilin's training experience gave her confidence and practical knowledge, with theory and hands-on practice complementing each other. She encourages others to explore vocational education as a gateway to unexpected and fulfilling careers.



Vocational Student of the Year Finalist

Lavinia Walesara

Qualification

Certificate III in Individual Support

Training Provider

REACH for Training Pty Ltd

Employer

For Purpose Aged Care



Lavinia Walesara is a dedicated learner and compassionate carer who has completed the Certificate III in Individual Support through REACH for Training. Originally from the Solomon Islands, Lavinia balances her studies with family responsibilities and part-time work. She chose this qualification to support vulnerable elderly people and provide specialised care that respects their independence.

Lavinia consistently demonstrates professionalism, maturity, and eagerness to learn, excelling in coursework and her work placement at Gumleigh Gardens Aged Care in Wagga Wagga. Her strong communication skills and natural leadership enrich her teamwork and enhance client outcomes. Motivated by personal experience with mental health in her family, Lavinia is currently progressing to Certificate IV in Ageing Support to deepen her knowledge in specialised mental health care.

Active in her community, she passionately inspires others from her cultural background to pursue vocational education.

VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year Finalist

Nichole Clarke



Field of Study

Laboratory Operations

Employer

TAFE NSW

Nichole Clarke is a highly skilled vocational educator specialising in Laboratory Operations. With a strong background as a laboratory manager in the wine industry, Nichole brings extensive industry expertise to her teaching, delivering Certificates III and IV in Laboratory Skills and Techniques. Based in Griffith, she revitalised a previously unused campus laboratory and developed a hybrid learning model that combines online study with intensive practical sessions. This innovation has significantly improved access for regional learners, shift workers, and those balancing work and family commitments.

Nichole's commitment to quality training is reflected in her strong industry partnerships and ongoing consulting work with producers of wine, beer, vinegar, and olive oil. Holding a Bachelor of Applied Science (Wine Science) and a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, Nichole is further expanding her qualifications with a Bachelor of Health and Medical Science. Her student-focused approach ensures learners gain confidence and industry-ready skills, representing the very best of vocational education in regional STEM careers.



VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year Finalist

Deanna Lea

Field of Study

Hospitality

Employer

Learning Sphere



Deanna Lea is an experienced and passionate vocational trainer specialising in Hospitality. With a background as a chef and business owner, Deanna brings extensive industry knowledge and practical expertise to her training. She is highly committed to supporting learners across metropolitan, regional, and rural NSW, often adapting to their unique circumstances to ensure engagement and completion.

Deanna's flexible, learner-centred approach helps individuals overcome personal and professional challenges, achieving an impressive 87 percent program completion rate. Beyond delivery, she actively improves training quality by developing industry-relevant materials and working closely with employers to build workforce capability.

She advocates passionately for vocational education, breaking down stigmas around cleaning qualifications and promoting lifelong learning. Her dedication to marginalised cohorts, combined with a desire to transform lives through skills development, has made her a trusted trainer and respected ambassador for VET.

VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year Finalist

Bradley Ryan



Field of Study

Construction, Manufacturing & Engineering
and Metal Work

Employer

NSW Department of Education

Bradley Ryan is a dedicated VET teacher specialising in Metal Work, Construction Pathways, and Manufacturing & Engineering at Shepherds Park School. Growing up in Arian Park and beginning his career through TVET and an electrical apprenticeship, Brad brings extensive industry experience to his teaching. He has shown strong commitment in establishing VET programs within the Youth Justice system, navigating complex safety and operational challenges with careful planning and organisation.

Brad focuses on creating practical, hands-on learning experiences that build confidence and job readiness among young people facing unique educational obstacles. His efforts have led to nearly 60% of students entering the workforce after release. Brad's leadership extends to motivating staff and developing meaningful community and industry partnerships, ensuring pathways to meaningful employment.

With real-world expertise and a deep understanding of young people's needs, he inspires students to see broad career possibilities. Brad's work reflects his passion for positive impact and empowering vulnerable learners through vocational education.



VET in Schools Student of the Year Finalist

Charlie Degnan

Qualification

Certificate III in Agriculture

Training Provider

NSW Department of Education

School

Yanco Agricultural High School



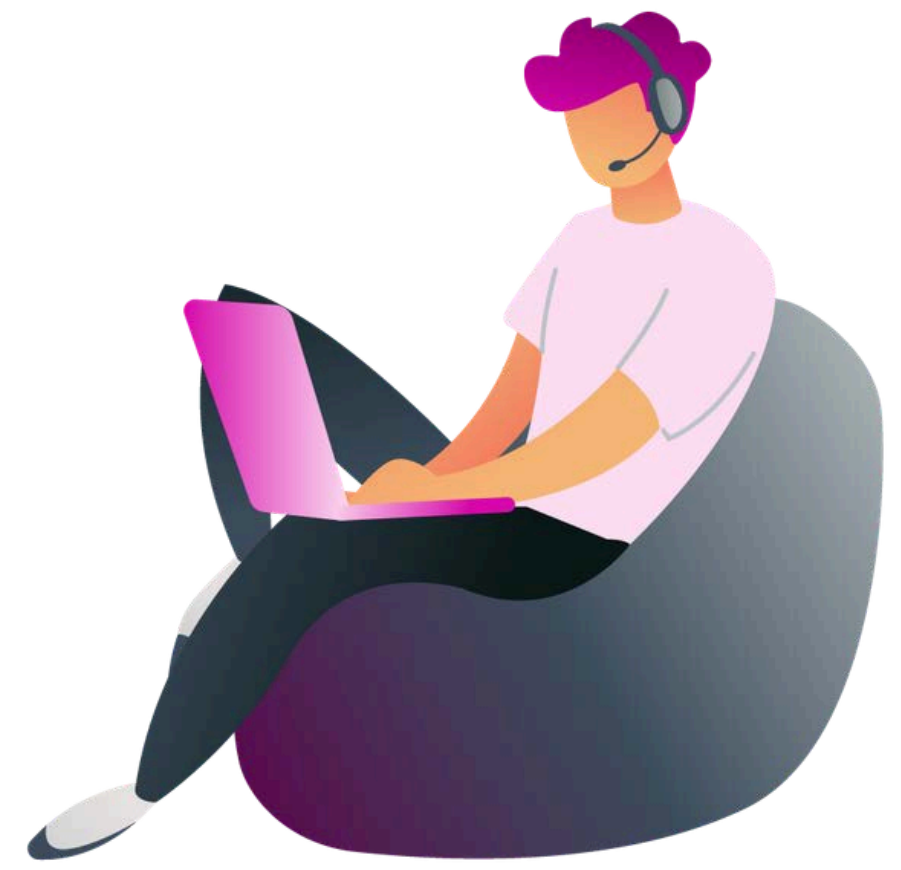
Charlie Degnan is completing his Certificate III in Agriculture at Yanco Agricultural High School, where he has emerged as the top all-round student. Despite not growing up on a farm, Charlie has passionately gained practical experience in livestock management through weekend and holiday placements on friends' farms. He demonstrates strong leadership skills as Year 12 School Captain, setting an example through reliability, initiative, and teamwork.

Charlie's expertise in cattle herd health and his commitment to volunteering on the school farm highlight his practical skills and dedication. He actively supports and encourages his peers, embodying the values of vocational education. Charlie recognises that success in agriculture is achievable even for those without a farming background, and he promotes this message among his friends and classmates.

With plans to advance his agricultural career and explore options in agri-finance, Charlie exemplifies the qualities of a skilled leader and passionate advocate for vocational education in agriculture.

VET in Schools Student of the Year Finalist

Sophie Donelan



Qualification

Certificate III in Business

Training Provider

Catholic Education Diocese of Wagga Wagga

School

Mater Dei Catholic College

Sophie Donelan is currently completing her Certificate III in Business at Mater Dei Catholic College, where she has demonstrated remarkable dedication and professionalism. Sophie consistently exceeds expectations by delivering high-quality work and actively engaging in her learning. Her hands-on approach to training has helped her develop valuable skills such as time management, communication, and teamwork.

She has balanced schoolwork with work placements, including valuable experience at the Catholic Diocese and Corner Table Café. Sophie's leadership shines through her quiet support of peers, fostering a positive learning environment, and taking initiative in projects like creating a school store and raising funds for charity.

Her work placement supervisor praised her eagerness to learn and ability to handle complex tasks, confirming her readiness for the workplace. With a passion for business and a natural talent for collaboration, Sophie is an excellent ambassador for vocational education and training.



VET in Schools Student of the Year Finalist

Tayah Wade

Qualification

Certificate II in Hospitality

Training Provider

Catholic Education Diocese of Wagga Wagga

Employer

Coffee Guru

School

Kildare Catholic College



Tayah Wade is a dedicated student currently completing a Certificate II in Hospitality while already holding a Certificate III in Business. Studying at Kildare Catholic College, she has demonstrated exceptional time management and resilience by progressing through her studies ahead of schedule.

Alongside her academic achievements, Tayah applies her barista and culinary skills in a local coffee shop, where she is known for her consistency and efficiency.

Tayah's natural leadership shines in both her school's commercial café and community, where she volunteers weekly as a mentor for disadvantaged youth. Her commitment to supporting others and her proactive approach to teamwork underscore her strong character. Ambitious and compassionate, Tayah aims to continue her career journey while inspiring peers as an ambassador for vocational education.

School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year Finalist

Felicity Bacon



Qualification

Certificate III in Health Services Assistance

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Murrumbidgee Local Health District

School

The Riverina Anglican College

Felicity Bacon is an enthusiastic and highly skilled School-based Trainee completing her Certificate III in Health Services Assistance at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. Known for her warmth, humour, and genuine care, Felicity brings energy and positivity to every task, inspiring those around her to do their best. She embraces the diverse challenges of healthcare work with a “let’s get this done” attitude and actively seeks to connect with patients and colleagues alike.

Felicity has confidently shared her experiences at media events and SbAT Orientation Day, captivating audiences with her authenticity. Balancing senior studies and vocational training, she appreciates the hands-on learning and plans to pursue a nursing career specialising in surgical nursing.

Outside of work, Felicity is engaged in netball, church, and youth leadership. Her professionalism, eagerness to learn, and natural ability to inspire make her a standout SbAT.



School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year Finalist

Matilda Sidebottom

Qualification

Certificate III in Health Services Assistance

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Murrumbidgee Local Health District

School

St Francis de Sales Regional College



Matilda Sidebottom is a dedicated School-based Trainee completing a Certificate III in Health Services Assistance. With a personal connection to nursing following a significant surgery in her youth, Matilda has a strong passion for caring and advocating for patients. She is known for her exceptional skill, professionalism, and reliability, consistently delivering high-quality care in clinical settings while balancing her studies and work commitments. Matilda approaches every task with focus and responsibility, demonstrating a calm and compassionate bedside manner that fosters positive relationships with patients and colleagues alike. She values the support from her supervisors and TAFE, which has helped her apply her learning effectively at work.

Outside of training, Matilda is active in her community, enjoying netball and leadership roles. She is motivated to continue her nursing journey through university and aspires to contribute to healthcare with empathy and resilience. Matilda's commitment and growth make her a standout SBAT and a promising future nurse.

School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year Finalist

Noah Tait



Qualification

Certificate III in School Based Education Support

Training Provider

KARBEN Training Solutions

Employer

NSW Department of Education

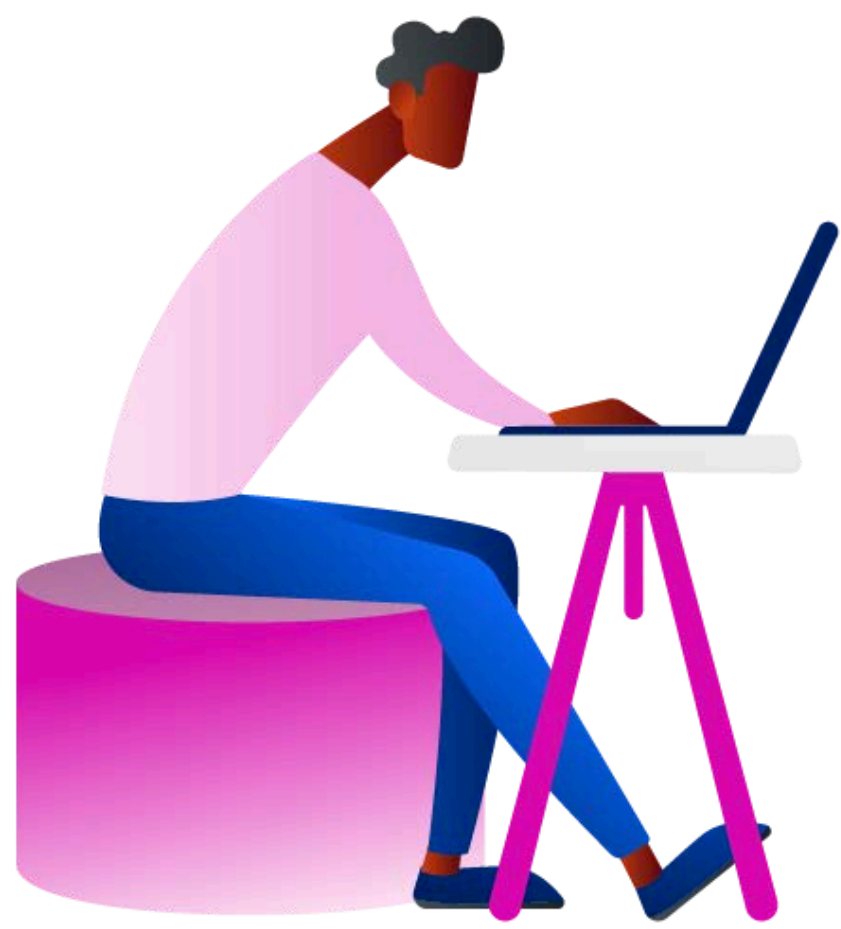
School

Narrandera High School

Noah Tait is an exceptional School-based Trainee at Narrandera High School, currently undertaking a Certificate III in School Based Education Support. He has demonstrated maturity, skill, and a genuine passion for supporting students' learning and development beyond his years. Noah values the opportunity to engage with students, helping improve their spelling and maths abilities, and appreciates the impact his work has on their education.

His training has inspired him to consider further studies in teaching at Charles Sturt University. Noah has grown significantly by balancing school and work, finding that extended work placements deepen his understanding of student relationships. He encourages others to pursue vocational education pathways, recognising their valuable role in opening diverse career options.

Noah's commitment, teamwork, and positive influence make him a respected and valuable member of his school community.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Finalist

Kaya Favero

Qualification

Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Murrumbidgee Local Health District

School

Wade High School



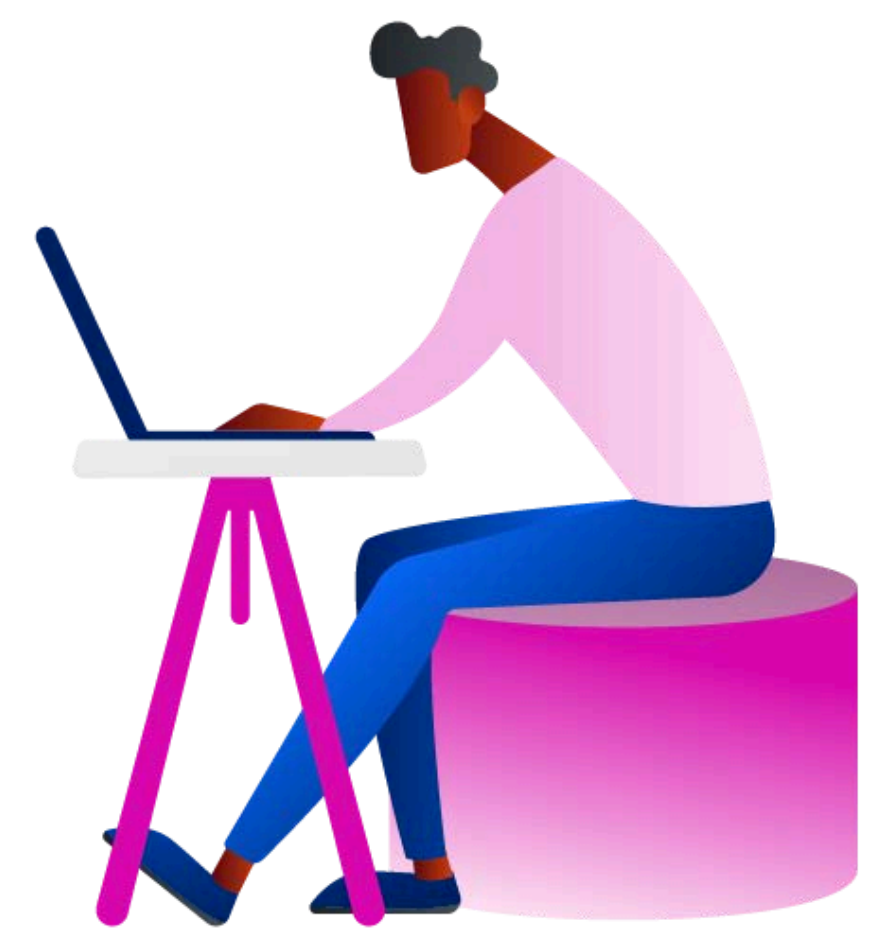
Kaya Favero is a dedicated Allied Health Assistant at Griffith Base Hospital and a proud Aboriginal learner who has completed her Certificate III. Starting as a shy Year 11 student, Kaya has shown remarkable confidence, resilience, and professionalism throughout her training journey. She now works independently, contributing meaningfully within the allied health team by supporting a range of patients and shadowing various health professionals, including occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and speech pathologists.

Kaya values the hands-on learning experience that broadens her understanding of diverse allied health careers and enhances her practical skills. Passionate about culturally inclusive care, she recognises the importance of increasing Aboriginal health workers to improve patient comfort and wellbeing. Outside of work and study, Kaya actively participates in her community through sports and cultural dance.

Her journey highlights how vocational education empowers Aboriginal students to succeed and make a positive impact in healthcare, making her a strong ambassador for VET.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Finalist

Ruby Hall



Qualification

Certificate III in Business

Training Provider

Sureway Skills Training

Employer

GTES

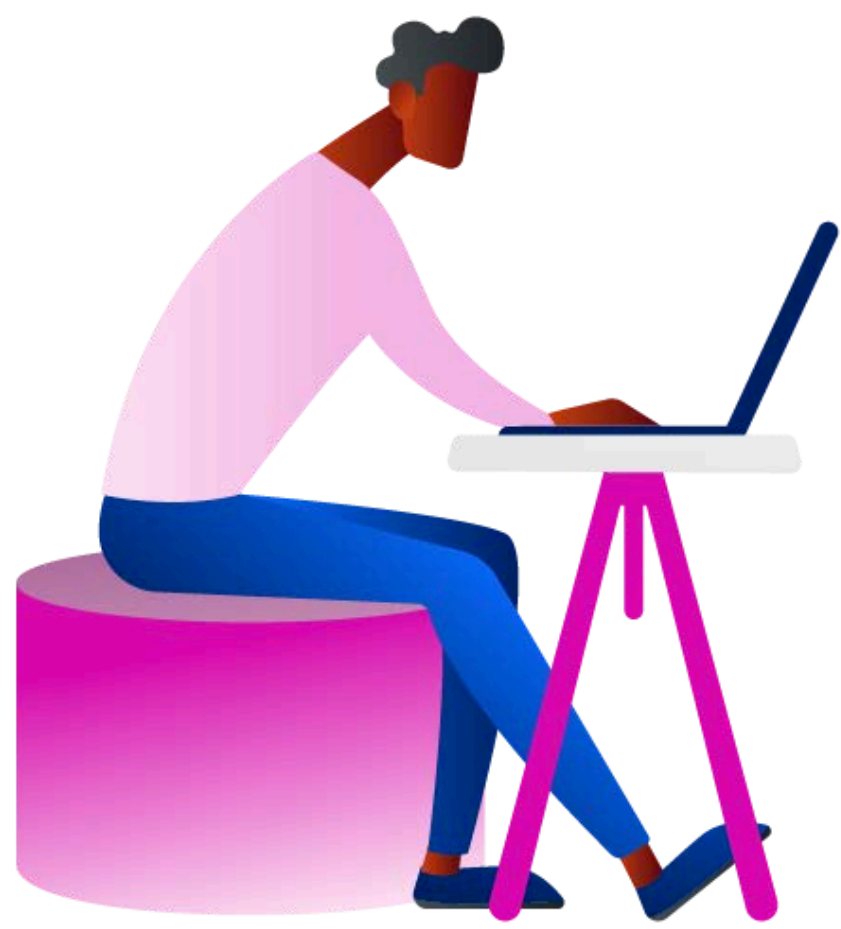
Host Employer

Hammond Health

Ruby Hall is a determined young professional from Lake Cargelligo who completed a Certificate III in Business with a focus on the medical sector. Leaving school after Year 10, Ruby embraced vocational education as a pathway to build meaningful skills and broaden her career options.

Throughout her training, Ruby developed strong organisational, communication, and time-management skills that helped her thrive in a demanding workplace. Despite facing significant personal challenges, including the loss of a family member and cultural responsibilities, she persevered and successfully completed her qualification on time. In the workplace, Ruby became a reliable team member who supported colleagues and contributed positively to daily operations.

She also proudly shares her VET experience to inspire others, especially those in her Aboriginal community, and remains closely connected to her culture through active participation in NAIDOC events. Ruby's journey exemplifies resilience, professionalism, and the power of vocational pathways.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Finalist

Kiera Morgan

Qualification

Certificate III in Health Services Assistance

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Murrumbidgee Local Health District

School

Billabong High School



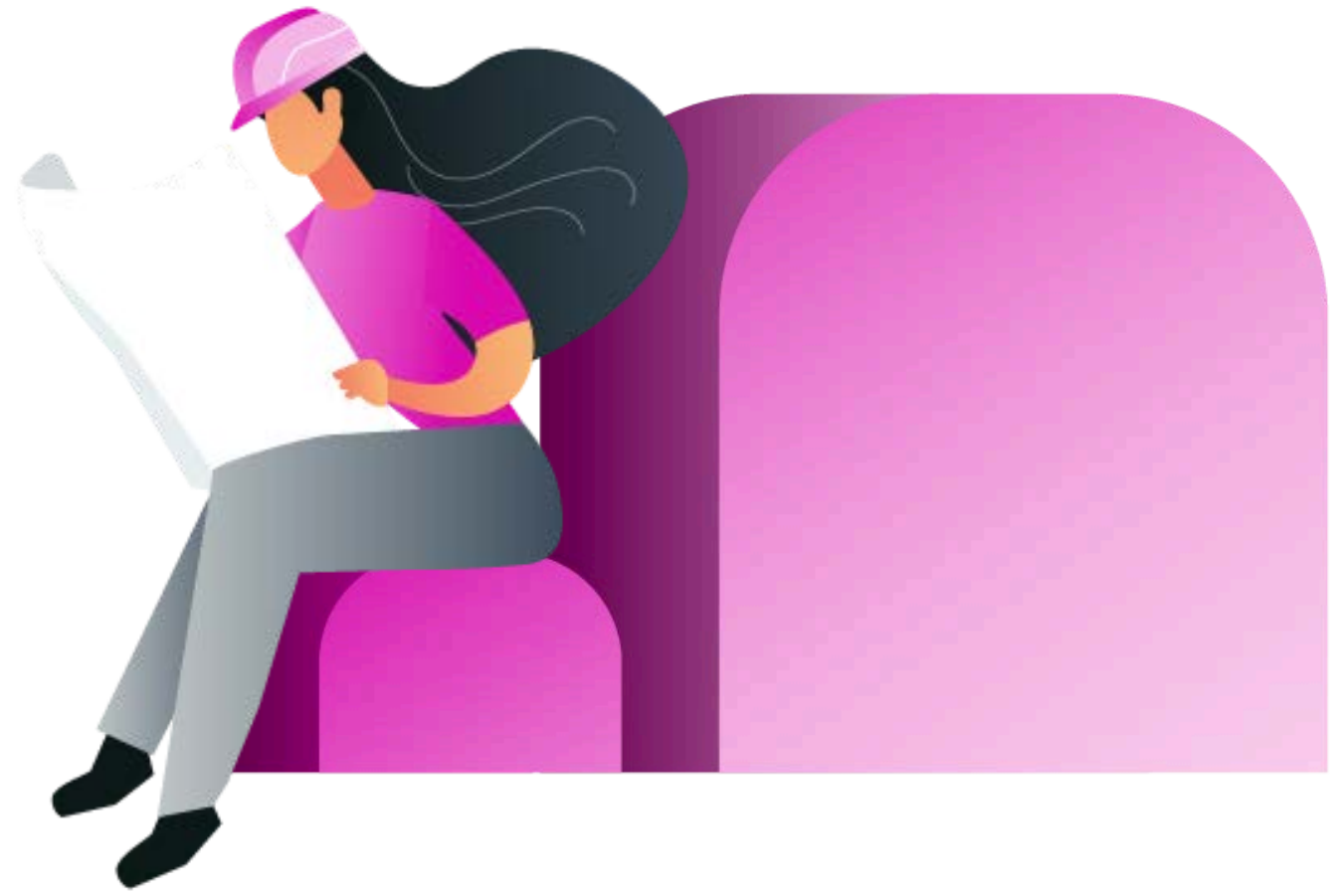
Kiera Morgan is a committed and compassionate trainee who completed a Certificate III in Health Services Assistance while working training at the Murrumbidgee Local Health District. Kiera has grown into a confident and skilled healthcare worker, demonstrating safe clinical practice and excellent communication with patients, families, and multidisciplinary teams.

Her calm, organised approach allows her to excel in a busy rural healthcare setting that includes aged care, emergency, and acute environments. Kiera actively seeks feedback, embraces challenges within her scope of practice, and supports her peers, showing maturity and professionalism beyond her years.

She values the hands-on learning experienced through vocational training, building her confidence and practical skills in real-world situations. Kiera is also engaged in her community through volunteer work and sporting activities. With aspirations towards paediatric nursing, she exemplifies the strengths of the VET pathway, proving that practical, workplace-based training prepares future nurses to provide person-centred care in rural and remote communities.

Trainee of the Year Finalist

Noah Glasheen



Qualification

Certificate III in Business

Training Provider

Australian College of Commerce & Management

Employer

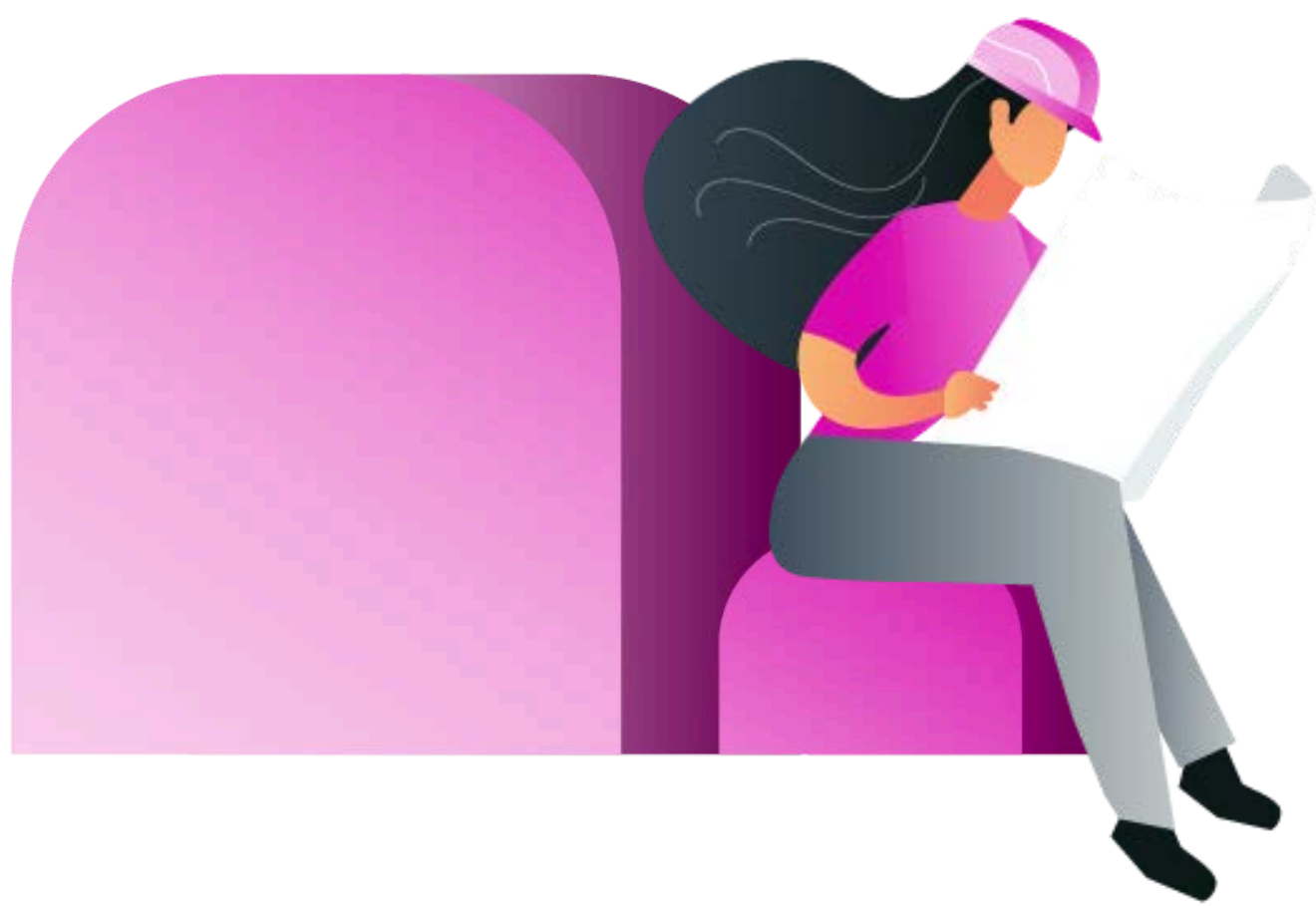
GTES

Host Employer

GIO

Noah Glasheen completed a Certificate III in Business and has demonstrated exceptional professionalism and initiative throughout his traineeship. Starting as an entry-level trainee, Noah quickly developed strong administrative and customer service skills, earning the trust of colleagues and supervisors. He completed his qualification well ahead of schedule while maintaining high standards in both practical work and formal studies.

Known for his positive attitude and willingness to embrace new challenges, Noah actively sought feedback and contributed to improving workplace processes. He values teamwork, openly sharing knowledge and supporting colleagues during busy periods. Noah's commitment to vocational education is evident in his pursuit of further study, beginning a Certificate IV in Leadership and Management. As a confident advocate for VET, he engages with the community to promote training pathways and serves as a role model for others aspiring to similar careers.



Trainee of the Year Finalist

Jasmine Naumoski

Qualification

Certificate III in Early Childhood
Education and Care

Training Provider

International Child Care College

Employer

Wagga Wagga Early Years
Learning Centre

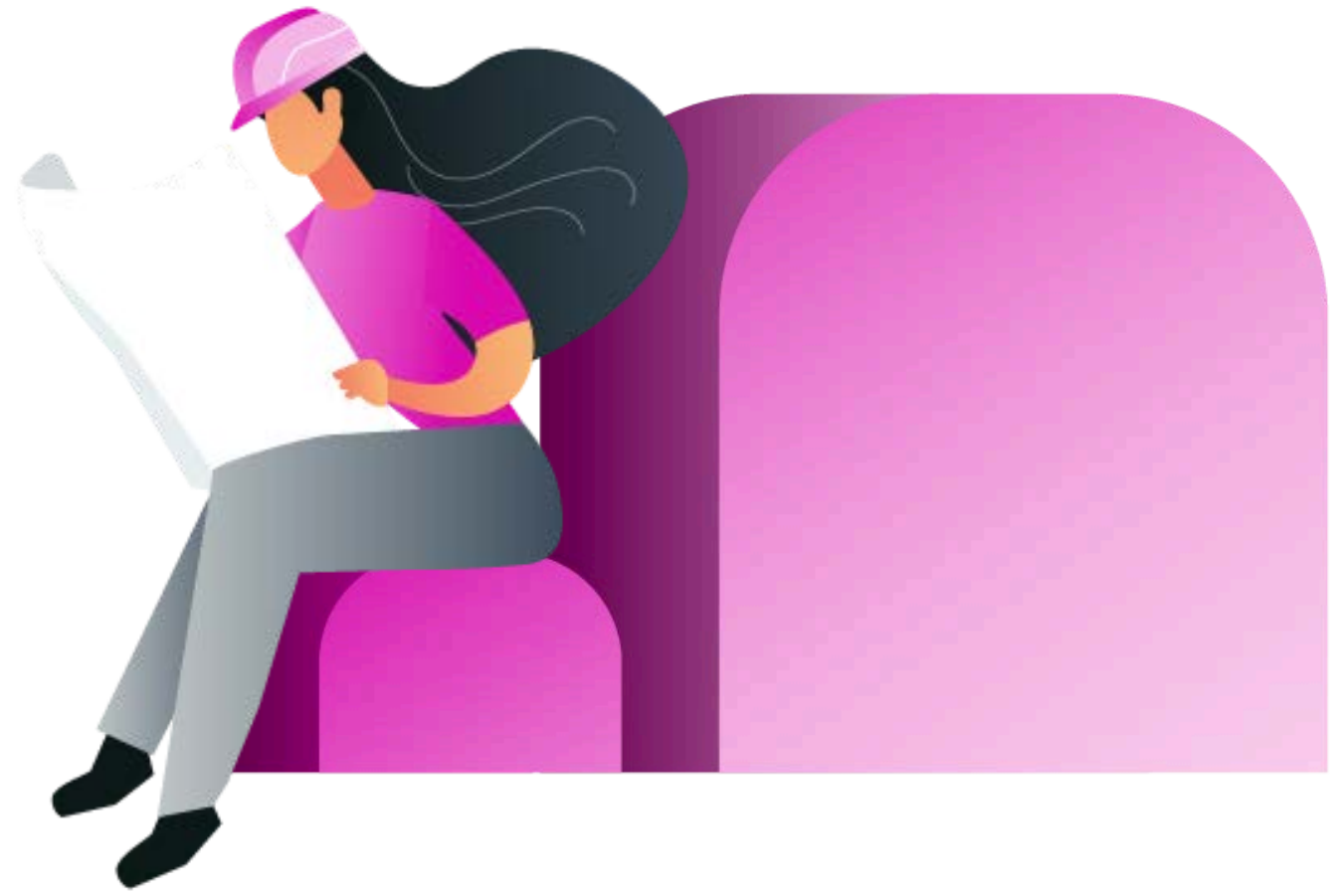


Jasmine Naumoski is dedicated and resilient having completed her Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. Her journey has shown considerable growth and commitment, balancing the demands of work, school, and a second job with determination and maturity. Jasmine is known for her calm, approachable nature and her ability to build positive relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and children alike.

She values teamwork and is highly respected for her willingness to contribute and learn from feedback. Her passion for the sector is reflected in her decision to continue her professional development by undertaking a Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care. Jasmine's adaptability and proactive attitude have been key to her success, as she navigated changes in training and overcame challenges with a positive outlook. She credits her traineeship for improving her mental health, providing hands-on learning, and offering a fulfilling career pathway beyond traditional school options.

Trainee of the Year Finalist

Halle Watson



Qualification

Certificate III in Business

Training Provider

Australian College of Commerce & Management

Employer

Catholic Education Diocese of Wagga Wagga

Halle Watson is a committed and high-achieving student who completed her Certificate III in Business through Catholic Education Diocese of Wagga Wagga. Recognised for her exceptional organisational skills, professionalism, and eagerness to learn, Halle has successfully balanced a demanding traineeship alongside Certificate IV studies and university enrolment at Charles Sturt University.

Her practical problem-solving and communication skills have impressed employers and trainers alike, enabling her to contribute meaningfully in the workplace while exceeding academic expectations. Halle values the VET pathway for its real-world relevance and career progression opportunities, viewing it as a foundation for lifelong learning and leadership development.

Outside of study, she is active in sport and community volunteering. Halle's dedication, maturity, and ability to manage multiple commitments exemplify the best of vocational education and training. She is a natural ambassador for VET, inspiring others by showcasing how this pathway can lead to job-ready skills, professional growth, and long-term academic success.



Apprentice of the Year Finalist

Zhofi Boglari-Davykoza

Qualification

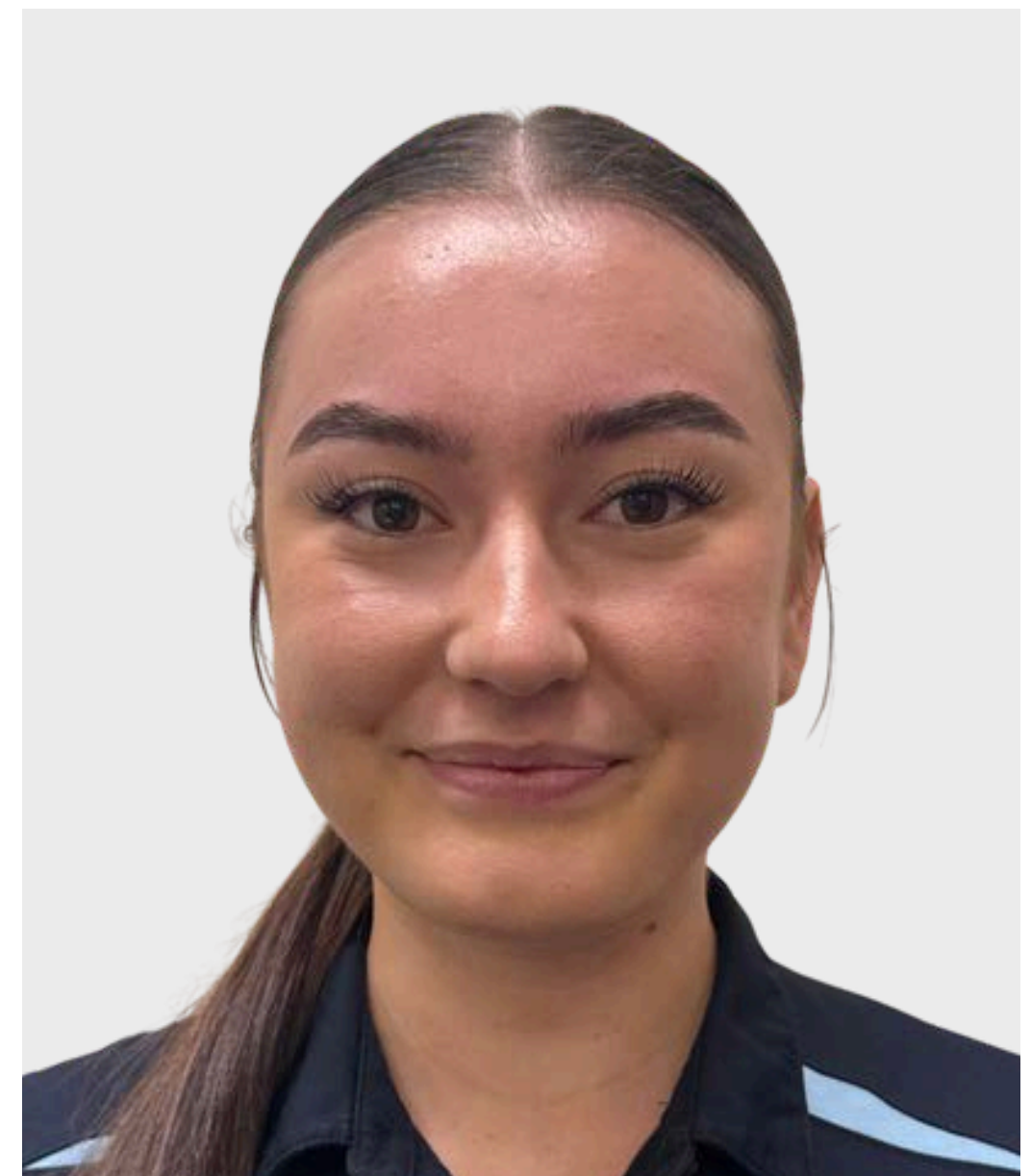
Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician

Training Provider

TAFE NSW

Employer

Albury City Council



Zhofi Boglari-Davykoza is an Electrotechnology Electrician who has demonstrated determination, professionalism, and productivity throughout her apprenticeship with Albury City Council. After finishing school, she chose this pathway to pursue hands-on, kinaesthetic learning. From the start, Zhofi impressed her team by delivering water and wastewater pumping assets with accuracy and efficiency.

She actively seeks opportunities to grow her leadership skills, volunteering on projects such as the Mandella Project and managing control switchboards for key pumping stations. Zhofi values the supportive, family-like environment at work and appreciates the work-life balance her trade offers.

She openly communicates the realities of her trade and inspires others by speaking to school and TAFE classes. Her proactive attitude, reliability, and pride in her work have earned her the respect of colleagues and mentors alike. Zhofi plans to continue her career at Albury City as a licensed electrician.

Apprentice of the Year Finalist

Joseph Hale



Qualification

Certificate III in Flooring Technology

Training Provider

FCIA Training Academy Pty Ltd

Employer

Payne's Carpet Court

Joseph Hale completed his Certificate III in Flooring Technology through his commitment and dedication as an apprentice. As the first apprentice in his workplace to finish the full qualification, Joseph has demonstrated exceptional perseverance and leadership by supporting two fellow apprentices throughout their training. He values the trade for its constant growth opportunities, job security, and the satisfaction of transforming houses through quality flooring work.

While the physical demands and time management posed challenges, Joseph remained determined with strong support from his employer, RTO, and colleagues. He understands the importance of workplace safety and advocates for more young people to join the flooring industry to address workforce shortages due to retirements. Joseph thrives in a positive workplace that values social connections and team collaboration.

His journey highlights the rewarding, lifelong learning nature of vocational training and how apprenticeships can set individuals up for a stable and fulfilling career across Australia.



Apprentice of the Year Finalist

Elise Knobel

Qualification

Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade

Training Provider

Wodonga TAFE

Employer

Kotzur Silos



Elise Knobel is a passionate and dedicated tradeswoman who has completed her Certificate III in Engineering - Fabrication Trade. Beginning her journey as a shy Year 11 SbAT student, Elise overcame challenges including dyslexia, gender bias in a male-dominated industry, and social pressures to pursue university. Through persistence and creativity, she developed effective methods to excel in fabrication and welding, winning the 2024 regional finals of the WorldSkills competition and competing nationally in 2025.

Elise is known for her problem-solving attitude, never giving up and always finding solutions her own way. Now studying Certificate IV in Engineering, she aims to move into a managerial role. Elise actively promotes vocational education, speaking publicly at events like the 2025 Henty Machinery Field Days to inspire others, especially women, to enter the trades. Her journey demonstrates that with determination, support, and resilience, anyone can succeed in a rewarding and sustainable career in welding and fabrication.

Thank You



On behalf of the Riverina 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 Riverina Training Awards a success.

