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Ben Balaba from Gold Coast Institute of TAFE named Trade Teacher of the Year

The Institute for Trade Skills Excellence Recognises Excellence in trade skills teaching

Ben Balaba from Gold Coast Institute of TAFE has been named the Horticulture Trade Teacher of the Year at a ceremony in Sydney.

The Trade Teacher of the Year Awards are in their inaugural year and recognise excellence in training and teaching across the eight industry groups of focus for The Institute for Trade Skills Excellence, covering the: Automotive; Building and Construction; Electrical; Manufacturing; Metals and Engineering; Hospitality and Personal Services; Rural and Farming; and Mineral Resources.

The awards have been developed by The Institute for Trade Skills Excellence, which is funded by the Federal Government and led by three industry groups: The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; the National Farmers' Federation; and the Australian Industry Group.

The Chief Executive Officer of the Institute for Trade Skills Excellence, Brian Wexham said that the Trade Teacher of the Year Awards were an important initiative.

“The Institute has been established to promote and advance learning, teaching and training in Australian trades education. One of our three key purposes is to foster and recognise excellent standards and teaching in trade’s education and training.”

Mr Wexham also said that the Awards enabled teachers to further develop their teaching.

“The Trade Teacher of the Year Awards are an excellent way to recognise teachers who excel in their chosen fields, amongst their peers and also provide the teacher with some funding to

further develop the teaching practices in their industry, which in turn will also reward the students. This is an important initiative as this specifically recognises and awards teachers within the vocational trade training arena” said Mr. Wexham.

A total of 18 awards were presented across 18 categories in the inaugural Trade Teacher of the Year Awards, each with prizes of \$10,000 to individual teachers or teams of teachers who work in a trade area. The prize money was awarded as a \$5,000 cash prize and a \$5,000 developmental activity or program that will contribute to industry and teaching.

Ben Balaba was named the Horticulture Trade Teacher of the Year in recognition of his tireless efforts to ensure his students reach their potential and push their limits.

Ben has studied extensively himself and is the final stages of a Doctorate of Education at the Queensland University of Technology.

Ben plans on using the prize money to partly fund a project he is working on called “Productive Diversity Horticultural Skills – Towards an inclusive teaching practice”.

“The aim of this project is to document diverse horticultural practices. Skills of selected refugee communities in Southeast Queensland and then I want to integrate these skills into required competency framework to result in an inclusive curriculum” said Ben Balaba.

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