



Teaching efforts rewarded

WITH the onset of climate change, teaching smarter and greener methods of farming has become the focus of sustainable agriculture into the future.

And three of the finest TAFE teachers in Australia were rewarded with \$10,000 scholarships for their contribution to the cause at the Australian National Field Days on Tuesday.

The scholarships are awarded by the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) and the Institute for Trade Skills Excellence and are aimed at raising the profile of rural trade skill teaching and its importance to rural communities.

The inaugural scholarships were won by the Gold Coast's Ben Balaba (National Horticulture Teacher of the Year), Albany's Andrew Nicholson (National Conservation and Land Management Teacher of the Year) and Tamworth's Graeme Harris (National Agriculture Teacher of the Year).

Mr Harris was also selected as the rural trade teacher of the year.

The trio's efforts were praised by NFF workplace relations committee chairman, who said their achievements came at a time when "Australian agriculture is facing unprecedented demand for skilled labour".

"The sustainability of regional communities



TOP TEACHERS: Andrew Nicholson, Ben Balaba and Graeme Harris. Photo: JUDE KEOGH 101.0am1.7

and businesses – including farms – are heavily reliant on the ability to provide interesting and rewarding employment opportunities. Trade teachers are at the forefront of those opportunities," he said.

"We want to encourage, recognise and reward excellence in an area that is, essentially, the breeding ground for people servicing the farm sector."