

Award Night

Celebrating Training Excellence

At the recent award evening 65 of the most outstanding students from the South West Regional College of TAFE were acknowledged for their performance and received certificates, trophies or prizes from local industry sponsors.

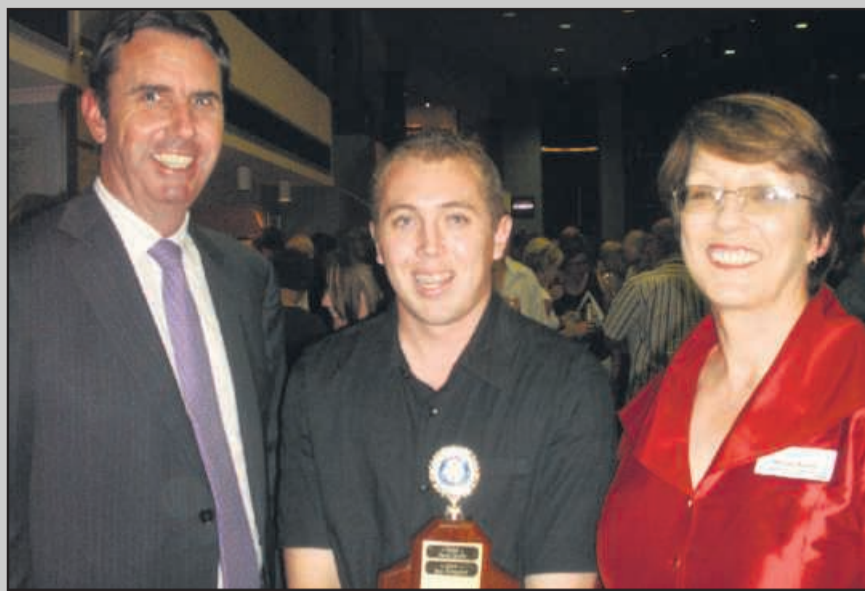
The highlight of the evening was the Student of the Year Award and this accolade was won by Ben Dempster who completed Certificate III in Automotive Mechanical (Heavy). Other nominees for this prestigious award included Grant Calvert, Natasha Shields, Renee Flaxman, Misako Walker and Brianna Nilsson. Regional campus award winners included Peter Mitchell (Busselton), Erin Malatesta (Collie), Amanda Winter (Harvey) and Joshua Sawyer (Manjimup).

Present at the award night was Hon Peter Collier, Minister for Energy, Training and Workforce Development who delivered the key note address. Other dignitaries attending the function included Ms Nola Marino MP, Federal Member for Forrest, Mr Mick Murray MLA, Member for Collie-Preston, Hon Nigel Hallett MLC, Member for South West Region and David Smith, Mayor City of Bunbury

In his address the Minister congratulated the students and encouraged them to continue to refresh and enhance their skills to ensure their relevance to the contemporary work environment.

Speaking on behalf of the Governing Council of the South West Regional College of TAFE, Ian Piggot highlighted the College's school-based programs, involvement in international education and the ongoing role that the College plays in training students who are equipped with work-ready skills, experience and qualifications.

Student of the Year - Ben Dempster



■ Student of the Year Ben Dempster (centre) flanked by the Minister for Energy, Training and Workforce Development, Hon Peter Collier (left) and Ms Wendy Burns, Managing Director of the South West Regional College of TAFE (right).

Exemplary student and model employee, Ben Dempster has not only won the prestigious Student of the Year Award but also set the benchmark in his apprenticeship as an automotive fitter where he has used his initiative, ingenuity and capability to develop a career path which resonates with promise.

In addition to the raft of skills and knowledge attained whilst studying toward the Certificate III in Automotive Mechanical (Heavy) at the South West Regional College of TAFE, Ben has built up an impressive portfolio of additional qualifications and licences that attest to his drive and ambition and that affirms his passion to succeed in heavy duty automotive industry.

Expressing his appreciation at being named as the winner of the Student of the Year Award, Ben said, "Winning this award has tremendous significance for me. It is a recognition of my performance and acknowledgement that I applied myself to my studies which I thoroughly enjoyed."

Ben believes his positive attitude, technical aptitude, and his willingness to help fellow students were the attributes that contributed to him winning the award.

Currently employed by Komatsu Australia, Ben believes his training and employment have given him a broad tapestry of future possibilities and the opportunity to enhance the scope of his technical skills through further study.



Natasha Shields

Seeking a career change following twelve years as a school teacher Natasha Shields recognised that the tourism industry offered challenging and engaging possibilities as well as healthy employment prospects.

An interest in other cultures, languages and travel, together with her natural ebullience, spontaneity and confidence, were additional factors that triggered her decision to embark on a career in the travel and tourism industry.

"Being nominated for the Student of the Year Award has been a very humbling experience and I'm extremely appreciative that I was singled out from my peer group and given the chance to compete for this mark of personal recognition," Natasha said.

Having completed the Certificate II and III in Tourism, Natasha is determined to continue her studies at Diploma level, undertake a trip to Italy and then seek employment in the tourism sector.



Grant Calvert

A visit to Australia proved to be the catalyst for a new way of life for Grant Calvert who emigrated to WA just over a year ago. Leaving behind a successful career in the British civil service meant that he had to re-train for employment in Australia. His aptitude for mathematics and appreciation of the outdoors prompted his decision to study toward the Certificate IV in Mining & Engineering Surveying and he has reaped the rich rewards of his diligent efforts by being nominated as a finalist for the Student of the Year Award.

Shocked by the nomination, Grant said he felt honoured at being considered for the accolade. "I believe that my hard work and exceptional grades were part of the reason for my selection. Through my training at the South West Regional College of TAFE and fly-in-fly-out mining experience I've grown in confidence, been inspired to work harder, and acquired the skills and knowledge to equip me for my career."

As a relatively recent arrival in WA Grant is still settling in to life in Australia and is continuing his study toward the Diploma of Mining and Engineering Surveying.



Renee Flaxman

A career path prompted by circumstance rather than choice has given Renee Flaxman the opportunity to find not only her niche as a mental health support worker but also her life's passion – advocating for people suffering from mental illness, supporting their capacity to rebuild their lives and relationships, encouraging their recovery and becoming an integral part of helping to create an awareness and understanding of mental illness within the community.

Speaking candidly about her training, Renee said, "It was a fantastic experience and the supportive lecturers, interactive transfer of knowledge and the contact with my fellow students all played a significant role in ensuring that I gained both the skills and broader expertise to manage the demanding situations that will confront us on a daily basis."

Her inherent potential was nurtured at the College where the lecturers fuelled her enthusiasm to complete the qualification and reignited her long held dreams of completing a degree.

"Being nominated for the prestigious Student of the Year Award recognises the efforts of my lecturer, acknowledges the support of my Executive Officer and will serve as an example to my children and others that you can achieve your dreams irrespective of circumstances."

Renee's future plans include undertaking a degree in social work and gaining an understanding of the clinical aspects of mental illness.



Misako Walker

Misako Walker's progress from being a non English speaker just five years ago to a science graduate of the South West Regional College of TAFE bears testimony to her indomitable spirit, tenacity to adapting to life in Australia and her ability to shape an exciting career path.

Convinced that she could enhance her employment prospects Misako enrolled in the Certificate for General Education for Adults in 2007 which enabled her to improve her English and gain insights into possible careers.

On completion of this initial qualification Misako elected to continue her studies in science because of the employment prospects that would be available to her. Despite her initial trepidation, her personal doubts and misgivings, Misako was determined to achieve her goal and continued to attend classes even though this was extremely challenging at first. Her perseverance yielded rich dividends as she grew in confidence, developed a passion for her chosen field and attained her Diploma of Laboratory Technology which has provided her with both a passport to employment and sense of personal achievement.

Reflecting on her nomination for the Student of the Year Award Misako said, "I was both surprised and delighted by my nomination for the Student of the Year Award. Just being nominated is very exciting and has made all the effort and hard work worthwhile."

Brianna Nilsson

Confident that business administration was the ultimate career choice Brianna Nilsson started her training in this field whilst still at high school where she completed the Certificate II in Business Administration. This proved to be the springboard for her training at the South West Regional College of TAFE where she soon followed up on her initial success by completing the Certificate III & IV in Business Administration.

When asked about her reaction to being nominated for the Student of the Year Award, Brianna responded, "I was quite overwhelmed at being nominated and feel very honoured at being considered as a candidate."

Commenting on her future plans Brianna indicated that she would initially like to consolidate her experience before exploring other options.

