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Best and brightest

A REMARKABLE group of Riverina residents who have decided to further their education and training were recognised at the 25th NSW Training Awards last week.

The awards showcase and acknowledge outstanding vocational education students and teachers across seven categories.

Regional manager of State Training Services Riverina at the NSW Department of Education and Communities, Garry Whittaker, said all finalists should be proud of their accomplishments.

Winners from Thursday night's awards in Wagga will now go through an interview process to be considered for the state awards in Sydney.

"From what I've seen, we are in a good position to pick up a winner at the state level," Mr Whittaker said.

Mr Whittaker said finalists in the Riverina were nominated for their passion and enthusiasm towards their education and training.

"It shows you how powerful education can be," he

said.

"We want to show people what is good about our region in vocational education and training with the view of encouraging others and encouraging further participation."

Big winners on the night were the Trainee of the Year, Karen Clemson with The GEO Group Australia Pty Ltd and Apprentice of the Year, hairdresser Audrey Bowman.

Teachers were also recognised for their contributions with their own category.

Most entrants studied at TAFE NSW but others completed courses through Access Group Training Pty Ltd, Dynamic Learning Services, Public Schools NSW and Murray Mallee Training Co Ltd.

More than 200 people attended the awards on Thursday night at the Champagne Bar at the Murrumbidgee Turf Club in Wagga.

Mr Whittaker is encouraging Riverina residents to enter the awards in 2016.

NSW Training Awards winners:

- 2015 Riverina Trainee of the Year – Karen Clemson
- 2015 Riverina VET in Schools Student of the Year – Corey Graham
- 2015 Riverina School-based Apprentice/trainee of the Year – Shania Bentley
- 2015 Riverina Vocational Student of the Year – Shane Baldry
- 2015 Riverina Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year
- 2015 Riverina VET/Teacher Trainer of the Year – Dianne Sutherland
- 2015 Riverina Apprentice of the Year – Audrey Bowman



WINNER: NSW Training Awards Apprentice of the Year, Audrey Bowman, with Terri Connellan, Institute Director at TAFE NSW Riverina Institute. **Picture:** Kieren L Tilly