

media release



MASTERS OF OUR INDUSTRY

Master Builders Association of Victoria
ABN: 38 004 255 654

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Determined pair of chipper chippies named joint 2014 Master Builders Apprentices of the Year

For the first time, a male and female tradie have shared top honours at the Master Builders Association of Victoria, Apprentice of the Year Awards in Melbourne.

Minister for Higher Education and Skills Nick Wakeling presented Dandenong North local Rhonda Neil, 24, and Omeo man Brandon Betts, 20, with their award during a ceremony in front of more than 700 guests at The Pullman, Melbourne tonight (9 May). They win \$4000 worth of tools, workwear and vouchers.

“The calibre of apprentices graduating from TAFE building and construction courses is impressive. It shows the very important role TAFEs play in higher education and skills,” Mr Wakeling said.

Mr Wakeling also presented the awards for best female, metropolitan and regional apprentices.

Master Builders CEO Radley de Silva said the award winners exemplified the skills, work ethic and positive attitude required to be a successful tradesperson in the building and construction industry.

“This year was too close to call, causing our judges to award the first ever joint State Apprentice of the Year Award,” Mr de Silva said.

Rhonda, who was also named Female Apprentice of the Year, is described as capable, diligent and professional by her host employer Willright Nominees Pty Ltd. She is completing her carpentry apprenticeship with Apprentices Group Australia.

“Rhonda has ambitions to run her own business and would like to teach young apprentices the trade,” Mr de Silva said.

“She is a skilled and generous trainee who would like to give back to the industry,” he said.

Brandon is a previous Master Builders Foundation Scholarship recipient and trains at Advance TAFE. His employer Dinner Plain Construction would agree that he has proven his dedication to the trade by travelling long distances to both trade school and jobs each day.

“Living in Omeo means Brandon not only travels long distances for work but has more than an hour to travel to TAFE,” Mr de Silva said.

“Proof that a little help can go a long way, Brandon has used his scholarship to pay for his schooling and has become a jack of all trades – he’s able to frame, tile, plaster and even use an excavator,” he said.

“Brandon has made the most of all the opportunities that have come his way and has developed into a skilled, dedicated and reliable all-round tradesman who should one day become a respected builder.”

Both Rhonda and Brandon will represent Victoria at the Annual Excellence in Building and Construction Awards to be held at Parliament House, Canberra on 21 November where the National Apprentice of the Year will be announced.

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Other winners are:

Metropolitan Apprentice of the Year

David Nygaard, Warranwood, employed by Heritage Building Services, attends Holmesglen.

Regional Apprentice of the Year

Gabe McClelland, Ocean Grove, employed by Duncan Pascoe Builders, attends The Gordon.

Female Apprentice of the Year

Rhonda Neil, Dandenong North, host employed by Willright Nominees Pty Ltd, and employed by and attends Apprenticeships Group Australia.

Employer Nominated Award Winner

Jason White, Traralgon, employed by D&D Milne, attends Apprenticeships Group Training.

Diploma Student of the Year

Troy Gudgeon, Carrum Downs, employed by Hacer, attends Swinburne University.

Florence M Taylor Award Winner

Richard McPherson, Warragul, employed by Integra Quality Homes, attends Murray Mallee Training Company.

Presidents' Award Winner

Brandon Betts, Omeo, employed by Dinner Plains Constructions, attends Advance TAFE.

Apprentice Bricklayer of the Year

Rhys Linnett, Springvale South, employed by Andrew Larman, attends Holmesglen TAFE

Apprentice Carpenter of the Year

Haydon Solomano, Werribee, host employed by Ivy Tower Pty Ltd, employed by Porter Davis Homes, attends Victoria University.

Apprentice Off-Site Construction (Joiner) of the Year

Robert Kenney, Wollert, employed by Schiavello (Vic) Pty Ltd, attends Victoria University.

Apprentice Solid Plasterer of the Year

David Nygaard, Warranwood, employed by Heritage Building Services, attends Holmesglen.

Wall and Floor Tiler of the Year

Taylor Lees, Mornington, employed by C.J Eden & D.N Eden, attends Murray Mallee Training Company.

Interview and photos/ photo opportunities available with winners. Contact Laura Luvara on (03) 9411 4534.