

Media Release

The Hon Gayle Tierney MLC

Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Minister for Training and Skills
Minister for Higher Education



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REFUGEE PROGRAM WINS BIG AT LEARN LOCAL AWARDS

A Bendigo-based program that helps refugees into training and jobs has won half the awards on offer at the 15th annual Victorian Learn Local Awards.

Starting Work in Australia – Karen Engineering Studies, run by Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services, won four categories including the Pre-accredited Program Award (For small providers), and awards for innovation and partnership. Its founder Robyn Matthews was also recognised with the Pre-accredited Trainer Award.

The program provides bilingual support and industry-relevant literacy and numeracy skills to refugees from the Karen community on the Thailand-Burma border doing their Certificate II in Engineering Studies at Bendigo TAFE.

Omer Ntunzwenimana was awarded the Ro Allen Award – Learn Local Pre-accredited Learner (skills for study and life) for his participation in the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council’s conversational English and reading program. He will now study a Bachelor of Arts at LaTrobe University.

The Victorian Learn Local Leadership Award went to Rana Tbaileh of Banksia Gardens Community Services in Broadmeadows, while the Catering for Success program run by The Basin Community House was named the winner of the Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Program Award (For large providers).

The prize money totals \$77,000, with organisation award category winners receiving \$10,000, individual category winners awarded \$5,000 and category finalists given \$1,000.

The Learn Local Awards are presented by the Adult, Community and Further Education Board and shine a spotlight on the industry and its learners, trainers and leaders.

Learn Local providers offer a unique, community-based learning option, with a focus on the individual needs of learners. They are particularly suited to adult learners of all ages looking to develop their digital, literacy, numeracy and employability skills for study, work and life.

There are more than 240 not-for-profit community organisations registered as Learn Locals across Victoria, which deliver pre-accredited training and other programs to nearly 30,000 people each year.

Find out more at vic.gov.au/learn-local-awards.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Training and Skills Gayle Tierney

“The Victorian Learn Local Awards are a celebration of the extraordinary work of the hundreds of organisations that provide vital training and job opportunities within their communities across the state.”

“Congratulations to the winners of this year’s awards and to the fantastic finalists whose nominations recognise the invaluable work they do to change lives.”

Quote attributable to Adult, Community and Further Education Board Chair Maria Peters

“The Learn Local sector strengthens communities and creates life-changing opportunities for thousands of Victorians each year – giving them the essential core skills for life and work.”

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Learn Local Awards 2021 winners:

- **The Ro Allen Award - Learn Local Pre-accredited Learner (Skills for study and life)** – Omer Ntunzwenimana, Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council
- **Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Learner (Skills for work) Award** –Mariam Yacoub Ibrahim, Farnham Street Neighbourhood Learning Centre
- **Victorian Learn Local Leadership Award** – Rana Tbaileh, Banksia Gardens Community Services
- **Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Trainer Award** – Robyn Matthews, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services
- **Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Program Award (For small providers)** – Starting Work in Australia, Karen Engineering Studies, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural
- **Victorian Learn Local Pre-accredited Program Award (For large providers)** – Catering for Success, The Basin Community House Inc.
- **Victorian Learn Local Innovation Award** – Starting Work in Australia, Karen Engineering Studies, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural
- **Victorian Learn Local Partnership Award** – Starting Work in Australia, Karen Engineering Studies, Loddon Campaspe Multicultural