MEDIA RELEASE | GTNT GROUP AWARDS 2026

GTNT Group celebrated Territory successes on Friday, 3rd of July, holding their annual Awards Ceremony under the stars at Mindil Beach Casino Resort. The awards celebrate the achievements of our GTNT Group apprentices, trainees, students, supervisors and host businesses as well as 36 years of employing and supporting thousands of apprentices and trainees and partnering with host businesses across the Northern Territory.

GTNT Group's Employment Services Manager – Emma Koerner welcomed guests, highlighting that the Awards Ceremony is about recognising, rewarding and celebrating the achievements of our local Territory talent and those businesses that partner with GTNT Group to provide opportunities for Territorians! Guests enjoyed the music stylings of Max Fredericks and Natalie Pellegrino on the Mindil Beach Casino Resort Lawns; with Master of Ceremonies, Amy Hetherington keeping guests entertained facilitating the night with humour.

This year's event was well supported with memorable night for the 360 guests attending. The event had a great representation of the Northern Territory, from 17-year-old apprentices and trainees to a pool of mature apprentices, coming from Groote Eylandt, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Alice Springs, Yulara and of course Darwin to celebrate the night together.

Guest speakers included the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, the Honourable Lia Finocchiaro, Hon. Jo Hersey - Minister for Education and Training, Employment Services Manager- Emma Koerner, Platinum sponsor, Dean Calvert – CEO of Calvert Technologies, Sam and Ant from HOT100 and GTNT Group Board Chairman – Christopher Lay.

Other **special guests** welcomed were:

- His Honour the Honourable David Connolly, Administrator of the Northern Territory
- Hon Lia Finocchiaro - Chief Minister of the Northern Territory
- Hon Jo Hersey - Minister for Education and Training
- Hon Robyn Cahill OAM, Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations
- Dianne Dayhew – Chief Executive Officer – National Apprentice Employment Network (NAEN)
- Craig Westwood – Chief Executive Officer – Apprentice Employment Network QLD & NT
- Kate Heelan – Chair of Australia Indonesia Business Council NT, President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) – NT
- GTNT Group Board Chairman - Christopher Lay; and the GTNT Group Board of Directors – Terry Lawler, Samoane Regattieri, Kate Heelan and Max Stretton.

The Awards Ceremony consisted of 12 categories with 49 finalists. **Damien Aarons** was named the winner of the *'2026 GTNT Group Apprentice of the Year'*. He has completed her Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician, and hosted Power and Water Corporation. The *'2026 GTNT Group Trainee of the Year'* was won by **Brandon Marshall who completed a** Certificate III in Information Technology, employed by Kinetic IT (managed by GTNT Group). The *'2026 GTNT Group Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year'* was won by **Isabella Savage who completed a** Certificate IV in Business, employed by Kinetic IT (managed by GTNT Group). Territory Generation were awarded the '*2026 GTNT Group Host Business of the Year – Large Employer' for the second-year running, and the '2026 GTNT Group Host Business of the Year – Small Employer'* was awarded to FMA Contracting in Tennant Creek. These businesses were celebrated for their demonstrated dedication to delivering quality training programs to suit the needs of our apprentices.

Throughout the evening GTNT Group thanked the **event sponsors:** BlackBird IT, Hot100, Mindil Beach Casino Resort, The NT News, Master Builders NT, Charles Darwin University - TAFE, MATES in Construction, Bridge Toyota and Gove Toyota, Morton Bros Contracting, NT Build, South-32-GEMCO and WANT Training Services.

As well as **category sponsors**: Australian Industry Group - Apprentice and Trainee Centre, Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (NAEN), ISACNT, HIA, Kinetic IT, Power and Water Corporation, NAWIC NT, Northern Territory Government – Department of Education, Nyirrunggulung-RISE, Shell Australia, South-32-GEMCO, Territory Generation, YouthWorX NT. **Prize sponsors** were thanked for their generous contributions: Makita, North Australia Media and Mindil Beach Casino Resort.

GTNT Group would like to congratulate all 2026 finalists and winners and wish them the very best for their careers and future endeavours!

Quotes:

Hon. Jo Hersey – Minister for Education and Training

"Group Training Organisations like GTNT, working in partnership with employers, play a vital role in growing the Territory's skilled workforce. By creating opportunities for apprentices and trainees across the NT, they help develop the local skills our businesses and industries desperately need. They also ensure Territorians have a pathway into rewarding careers, and that our economy is supported by a strong and skilled workforce. Thank you to the employers who continue to back our apprentices and trainees, and organisations like GTNT that are helping to make the Territory the best place to live, work, and invest."

Hon. Lia Finocchiaro, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory

"To our apprentices and trainees, the Territory needs your skills, and you, to stay and help make this incredible part of the world an even better place to live, work, visit, and invest. This is why we as the Northern Territory Government are so proud to sponsor the GTNT Group “Apprentice of the Year Award”."

GTNT Group Board Chairman - Christopher Lay

“Your presence here tonight speaks volumes about the power of community and what we can achieve when we come together behind a shared purpose. Because the reality is, none of this happens without employers who are willing to step forward, invest in people, and open their doors to apprentices and trainees.

Without this support, our future workforce risks being underprepared to meet the growth and opportunities ahead—both here in the Northern Territory and across Australia. I encourage all businesses here tonight to reflect on the skills and roles that will be critical to your future success, and how you can contribute to building those capabilities within our community.”

GTNT Group Chief Executive Officer – Kathryn Stenson

“Our community depends on our apprentices and trainees but most importantly our employers. We deeply value our host businesses and employers who take on apprentice or trainee – giving them an opportunity to build a career and ensure our community grows with us. Creating Territory Futures is only achievable when we work together.”

Employment Services Manager, GTNT Group – Emma Koerner
"Seeing our apprentices, trainees, supervisors, and host businesses recognised on this stage is truly one of my favourite nights of the year."

"To our wonderful host businesses, without you creating opportunities within your organisations, territory apprentices would not have a space to learn and grow to become the skill workforce the territory needs."

+ Download the Program on our website
+ Listen to the Awards Night Spotify Playlists – Finalists Playlist | Awards Night Playlist
+ Photos available on Dropbox (Will be uploaded when available)
Please note if photos are to be used publicly – Photo Credit is to given to ***North Australia Media.***

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Below is a summary of the 2026 Category Winners:

CATEGORY	NAME	QUALIFICATION	HOST BUSINESS/EMPLOYER
Apprentice of the Year	Damien Aarons	Certificate III in ESI - Power Systems - Distribution Overhead	Power and Water Corporation
Trainee of the Year	Brandon Marshall	Certificate III in Information Technology	Kinetic IT
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year	Isabella Savage	Certificate IV in Business	Kinetic IT
Host Business of the Year - Large Employer	Territory Generation		
Host Business of the Year - Small Employer	FMA Contracting		
Supervisor of the Year	Simon Hartley	South32-GEMCO	
School-Based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year	Melanie Timber-Trudgett	Certificate III in Commercial Cookery	Pee Wee's at the Point
Shell Prelude to the Future Apprentice	Aaron Fairweather	Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician	Territory Generation
Outstanding Apprentice – Stage 1	Riley Hujbert	Certificate III in Automotive Electrical Technology	South32-GEMCO
Outstanding Apprentice – Stage 2	Anna Wensing	Certificate III in Light Vehicle Mechanical Technology	Bridge Toyota
Outstanding Apprentice – Stage 3	Jamil Turpin	Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician	Benash Maintenance Services
Institute of Skills and Training Australia – Student of the Year	Jack Henry Burkenhagen	Certificate IV in Business	TOLL Group
Outstanding Female Apprentice / Trainee of the Year	Janna Ransome	Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician	Territory Generation
Commendation Awards			
Hot100 Rising Star Commendation Award	Sandon Bott	Certificate III in Light Vehicle Mechanical Technology	Bridge Toyota
BlackBird IT Commendation Award	Cody Hodgins	Certificate III in Heavy Commercial Vehicle Mechanical Technology	RK Diesel Services
GTNT Foundation Commendation Award	GEBIE Civil and Construction		



Pictured Left to right: GTNT Group Board Chainman - Christopher Lay, Minister for Education and Training – Hon Jo Hersey, GTNT Group Awards 2026 Apprentice of the Year – Damien Aarons, His Honour the Honourable David Connolly and GTNT Group Chief Executive Officer – Kathryn Stenson.

GTNT Group Awards 2026 Finalists Group Shots



