



Young workers to vie for national honours

SOUTH East “tradie” Ben Hooper took out dual gold in fitting and turning categories when medals were presented on Friday night at TAFE SA’s Mount Gambier campus for the region’s Worldskills Australia competition.

Dubbed the “Olympics for Tradies”, the South East event featured 13 categories, ranging from welding to hairdressing and information technology, run across the region from June to October.

Competitors came from across the Limestone Coast, including Mount Gambier, Millicent, Beachport, Kingston SE, Penola, Naracoorte, Lucindale, Bordertown and western Victoria.

Project manager Andrew Knowles said 160 people, representing the trades, government, business and other sectors attended the presentation night, which featured guest speaker and past national gold medallist Jodie Taylor.

Gold, silver and bronze medals were presented in each category, which also included beauty, metal fabrication, machining, carpentry, electrical, construction and business services,

Gold medal winners will compete in the national championships in Brisbane next year, with winners earning the chance to represent the nation as part of the “Skillaroos” at the world championships in London against 50 other countries.

Ms Taylor, who had success in the business services category, is from the South East, which has showed continued dominance in the sector with fellow regional entrant

Nikita Block winning nationally last year and now on a scholarship in London.

Mr Knowles said the competition gave people aged under 23 an opportunity to test their skills against their peers, with the challenges stepping up at national and world level.

“It gives a good indication of the health of our trades,” he said, adding that 143 people competed in the regional heats.

“The regionals are a serious step-up from what they do in their normal learning and the intensity will be up again at the nationals for the 13 gold medallists who can now continue on - the world titles is obviously much bigger again.”

Regional competitions are held every two years and Mr Knowles said the South East event had two additional categories this year and was expected to continue to grow, with up to 40 sections available.

“It depends on what we have in numbers to run competitions, but it is slowly building in the South East,” he said.

Employment, Training and Further Education Minister Michael O’Brien said the competitions gave young people the opportunity to challenge themselves to excel in their particular field.

“There are also major benefits for employers, including more highly motivated staff, increased pride in trades as a career path, recognition amongst clients of highly skilled workers for their business within the industry and kudos within the industry,” he said.