NOMINATIONS FOR BERT EVANS SCHOLARSHIPS NOW OPEN

Apprentices facing financial hardship while pursuing trade qualifications can apply for a Bert Evans Scholarship which can help them with buying tools or their travel to on-the-job training.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Skills, John Barilaro, said the man honoured by the scholarships, the late Bert Evans, was a distinguished advocate of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector in NSW for more than 30 years.

Up to 50 scholarships are awarded each year including 10 NSW Country Apprentice Scholarships, and each is worth $5,000 per year over three years.

“The Bert Evans Scholarships help apprentices who have significant personal challenges but demonstrate a high aptitude for vocational education and training, and a positive attitude in the workplace and off-the-job training,” Mr Barilaro said.

“In some cases they may be the sole supporters of their family and have difficulty buying tools for their trade, while others travel hundreds of kilometres just to attend formal training, or they may be the first in their family to break a cycle of generational unemployment.”

Scholarships recipients are more likely to complete their apprenticeships with figures showing their retention rate at 83 per cent.

Even more promising is the retention rate for women benefiting from the scholarships, at more than 87 per cent.

“My message to training providers and employers is this – if you know of a deserving apprentice, encourage them to apply for a scholarship today.”

One such deserving apprentice is Stephen Norris, from the Campbelltown area in Sydney’s outer south-west, who qualified for a Bert Evans Scholarship as an Indigenous apprentice working in a skills shortage area.

Despite a challenging childhood, including being in out-of-home care when he was just nine, Stephen has shown great resilience and determination to overcome those challenges.

The Master Plumbers Apprentices took him on as an apprentice at the age of 16.

Two years on, he has left out-of-home care and says he will use his Bert Evans Scholarship to become a “respected, hard-working tradesman” through completing a Certificate IV in plumbing and becoming a licensed plumber.
Background: The Bert Evans Scholarships were launched in 2014 to support apprentices facing significant challenges in completing their qualification.

Under Bert’s leadership, the NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training implemented The Way Ahead for Aboriginal People initiative, which significantly increased Indigenous participation and completion of apprenticeships.

The number of Indigenous apprentices and trainees increased markedly, by more than 89 per cent, between December 2004 and December 2011 (3008 to 5703 apprentices).

Bert’s career started in the manufacturing industry where he eventually rose to become the head of the Metal Trades Industry Association (MTIA).

During his time in charge (between 1982 and 1996) Bert worked tirelessly to foster a more cooperative approach to the management of business and union interests.

After retiring from the MTIA, Bert led reforms in the NSW training system which has resulted in participation in Vocational Education and Training (VET) reaching record levels under greatly improved and strengthened industrial and workplace conditions.

In 1996, Bert was appointed Chair of the NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training (BVET) which was designed to provide the NSW Government with independent advice on the VET system.

Under his leadership, BVET supported innovative practice, research and development activities to develop new strategic directions for NSW and a national VET policy which resulted in unprecedented growth to the VET sector.

Bert was instrumental in the introduction of school-based traineeships and later school-based apprenticeships, which are now highly valued as transition pathways from school to work.

Finally, Bert’s leadership of various industry bodies ensured that “skills” assumed a prime position in the nation’s micro-economic reform agenda.

For more information and to apply, visit www.training.nsw.gov.au