Training the workforce to meet the challenges of the 21st century is a key priority for the nation and also will give workers better opportunities.

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He says the winners of the Australian Training Awards, of which finalists are the winners of each state award category, have made a proud achievement for themselves and the nation.

“Winners are proof of what’s possible with skills and a qualification,” Evans says.

The Federal Government is investing more than $15 billion in skills and training over the next four years to help more Australians have the opportunity to get their first qualification or upskill.

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Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show workers who have a Certificate III or
higher are almost three times more likely to have a job compared to someone who has only completed Year 10.

A Certificate III will help Australian School-based Apprentice of the Year Award winner Alistair Keller continue his family tradition.

Keller has always felt an affinity with the land, so when the opportunity arose to formalise his skills while still at school, he jumped at the chance.

The 18-year-old has since graduated from Booleroo Centre District School in the southern Flinders Ranges.

Never one to enjoy working in the classroom, he says the opportunity to get on a farm one day every week was the best thing to happen to him.

“I was not enjoying school and they were not going to keep me there,” he says.

“I was already working out on the farm and the farmer said I could do a school-based apprenticeship with him. The whole course took two years.

“I would have a week off school and go away and do agronomy as well as dealing with working dogs and carrying out machinery maintenance.”

Keller comes from five generations of livestock farmers and takes much of his cues from his late grandfather, who was a skilled sheep shearer.

In completing a Certificate III in Agriculture he learned about breeding with a wide range of show poultry, cropping, shearing, judging rams or fleece, raising sheep and working with cattle.

He also got the opportunity to learn other innovative farming practices and expand his practical knowledge and understanding of the industry.

He worked with farmers H & A Bastian throughout the apprenticeship and is now going into business with them in February next year.

Asked what advice he can offer young people in a similar position to him, he says they should do a school-based apprenticeship.
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<td>Comstar Systems, TAS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employer of the Year</td>
<td>Drakes Supermarkets, SA</td>
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<td>Small Training Provider of the Year</td>
<td>Labtech Training, WA</td>
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<td>Large Training Provider of the Year</td>
<td>Challenger Institute of Technology, WA</td>
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<td>International Training Provider of the Year</td>
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<td>Industry Collaboration</td>
<td>Minerals Council of Australia – Northern Territory division in collaboration with Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education</td>
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<td>Australian Apprenticeships - Employer</td>
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<td>Australian School-based Apprentice of the Year</td>
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<td>David Failla, NSW</td>
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“There are not a lot of kids who have a certificate III qualification when they have finished school. You are just that step ahead of everyone else if you want to go into a particular industry. There is a lot of benefit in it.’”

Alistair Keller