The Department of Health and Families (DHF) and staff members have won several major workforce awards, including the title of National Employer of the Year (Government category) in the prestigious Australian Training Awards.

Health Minister Kon Vatskalis said the national award, presented at a ceremony in Sydney, recognised his Department’s focus on vocational educational and training (VET) to develop health leaders and increase job opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

The VET program is an important frontline initiative aimed at addressing skill shortages in the workforce and increasing its capability in the area of Indigenous health care.

Other gongs for DHF in the past week have included a win by its Director of Aboriginal Health Workers, Nathan Aucote, in the urban category of the Aboriginal Health Worker Excellence Awards.

NT Health Minister Kon Vatskalis said he was delighted by the recognition given to staff in such a wide range of activities, but the real winner was the Department at large.

“While the awards were given to individual staff and their work units, the acknowledgement is for the entire DHF team, which provides the framework for success. I would like to congratulate and thank everyone for their efforts over the past year.

“Departmental staff are committed to improving services and health outcomes for the whole NT community, and these awards acknowledge they are performing well, often in challenging circumstances, and have truly earned our confidence,” Mr Vatskalis said.

He said the VET programs implemented by DHF have had an impact across the Department, with particular success in the area of Aboriginal Health Alcohol and Other Drugs.

“These initiatives have boosted Indigenous employment in these critical skills shortage areas, resulting in improved health outcomes for many people.”

Mr Vatskalis also acknowledged the winners of the Chief Minister’s Awards for Excellence in the Public Sector, held on Thursday. The winners were Tina McKinnon, a Program and Policy Officer with Maternal Child and Youth Health, and Linda Bunn, an Aboriginal Health Worker at Minjilang Health Centre, both won Public Sector Medals.

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