

FNU sponsors Rookie Youth Entrepreneur of the Year award for FDB's 2019 National SME Awards

The Fiji National University (FNU) has been commended for supporting the development of youth entrepreneurship and education after confirming its sponsorship of the Rookie Youth Entrepreneur of the Year award for the Fiji Development Bank's (FDB) 2019 National Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Awards which was launched in Suva today.

Speaking at the launch, the FDB Chief Executive Officer Mark Clough said it was encouraging to see FNU partner for the awards for the first time.

He said the Bank is looking forward to further strengthening its relationship in the future.

"The Fiji National University is joining the awards for the first time. The Rookie Youth Entrepreneur is a new award sponsored by our new sponsor, welcome onboard FNU. We are pleased to have your brand associated with this award," said Clough.

FNU Vice-Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey said providing access to quality education and encouraging young people to become entrepreneurs are part of the universities key objectives.

He said with the government investing millions of dollars in infrastructure and technology, graduates needed to be mentored in becoming job creators instead of just being job seekers.

Professor Healey said the sponsorship signals a significant change in the direction for the University.

"Our new national strategic plan emphasises on job creation and business start-ups so I think this sponsorship came at a perfect time," said VC Healey.

"Over the last three-four years, the Fiji government has laid the foundation for a very



FNU Vice-Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey (left) with Fiji Development Bank CEO Mark Clough and other sponsors of the FDB 2019 National Small and Medium Enterprise Awards.

fertile ground for business startups. The digital technology and digital penetration are as high as most developed countries but what we have not got at the moment is e-commerce. So all of the things that you take for granted in countries like the United Kingdom or the United States, where you can buy anything online, it's all absent here in Fiji," he added.

Prof Healey said alongside today's sponsorship announcement, FNU plans to further strengthen its support for young entrepreneurs through new initiatives next year.

"We are going to start a business start-up competition in partnership with an international university, to encourage final year students to think about starting their businesses. We are particularly interested in young tech-savvy students interested in setting up their tech companies," he said.

The Rookie Youth Entrepreneur of the Year, a new award under the Empowerment Awards category, will provide recognition to small and medium enterprises for being innovative and for approaching growth in a sustainable manner.

The awards are divided into four categories namely, Developing Small and Medium Enterprise, Impact Awareness SMEs, Empowerment Awards and FDB's 2019 National SME of the Year.

"With support from our sponsors and partners, we will recognise SMEs that not only practice but also promote and empower peers to be innovative, inclusive, green, responsive and sustainable," said Clough.

"The empowering entrepreneurs of sustainable SMEs will be sharing in more than \$50,000 in prize money," he added.



FNU Vice-Chancellor Professor Nigel Healey speaking during the launch of the Fiji Development Bank's 2019 National Small and Medium Enterprise Awards today.