


## Drive to strive for goals

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By Casey Neill

*A Dandenong teen has won a national disability award. Mark Alvares accepted the Samantha Sophia Ramsey Memorial Award at the Dandenong Civic Centre on Friday 28 July.*

*He received the \$2000 prize to help with education and employment for his outstanding achievements as a young person with a disability.*

*"It's really good. I feel happy and privileged," the 19-year-old said.*

*A youth program worker from Greater Dandenong Council's Youth Services team nominated Mark and Skilling Australia said he was a standout candidate. He was diagnosed with attention-deficit/ hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and cerebral palsy after arriving in Australia from India in 2006.*

*He has participated in many programs, volunteered around the community, and pushed himself to further his employment skills.*

*Skilling Australia Foundation said Mark had shown exceptional motivation to strive and achieve his goals.*

*Mark said the council's youth programs gave him the opportunity to meet people and be independent, and that he'd learnt plenty from fellow participants as well as teaching them a thing or two.*

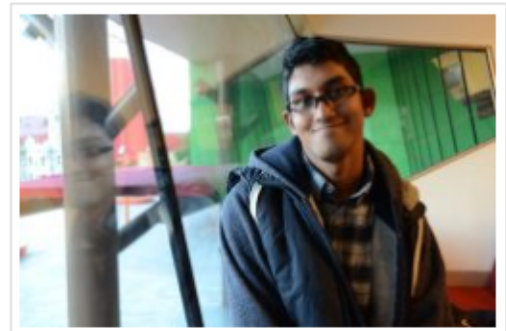
*"They're really good at helping me," he said.*

*He's worked at The Bridge Works in the packing area for the past year.*

*The annual Samantha Sophia Ramsey Memorial Award honours Skilling Australia Foundation director Sophie Ramsey's daughter, who passed away in August 2015.*

*Samantha's disability made it increasingly difficult for her to walk and communicate but she persevered.*

*"Samantha would bring the house down with her cheeky laughter and always had a sparkle in her eye," Sophie said.*



**Award-recipient Mark Alvares.**  
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