

Afroshine Award celebrates **Best African Business**

BY EDWINA WILLIAMS

LAST month, the Afroshine Best African Business and Entrepreneurship Award found a home in Ballarat with a new winner.

Principal consulting process engineer and director of MKPro Engineering Group, Dr Michael Akindeju received the honour at Africa Media Australia's ceremony for his injection of knowledge, entrepreneurial skills and mentorship into the African Australian business community.

With 200 nominees and 20 successful awardees throughout proceedings, Dr Akindeju said the gongs were prestigious.

"There were people nominated from all over Australia and they're the foremost African awards in the country," he said.

"They're highly contested, so it's something I'm very happy about. It validates what we're doing here in Ballarat."

He said his established business supports credible clientele, making him proud to be one of many African Australian contributors to the economy in Ballarat and regional Victoria.

"We want to be celebrating the achievements of our people, so for me to have won the award is validating our desire, and I want it to reflect on the Ballarat African Association.

"Africans in Ballarat are doing very well and we are contributing more than our fair share to the economy. We want to raise the profile of African Australians in Ballarat generally," Dr Akindeju said.

The Afroshine Awards celebrate the achievements and stories of African Australians around Victoria and across the country.

Dr Akindeju was also given a Premier's Award for Business Excellence in 2015.



Honoured: Dr Michael Akindeju received his award from former CEO of East and Central African Communities Council of Victoria, Dr Apollo Nsubuga-Kyobe. Photo: SUPPLIED



Dana Reynolds.



Freya McGowan.



Layne Frawley.

Trio to sing with Carols' guest of honour

WHEN Santa arrives at Ballarat Carols by Candlelight presented by Harcourts on Sunday, 22 December, he'll be guided in with some musical help from fresh faces.

Three young singers, Dana Reynolds, Freya McGowan and Layne Frawley will perform children's favourites together as Father Christmas lands at the City Oval.

All rising, passionate musical theatre stars, they've all performed across Ballarat and Melbourne, with Dana even treading the boards up north in Newcastle, and as far as Los Angeles.

Ballarat Centre of Music and the Arts teacher Paula Heenan guides Freya and Dana, while Layne is under the tuition of Carolyn Bennett.

Ms Heenan said it was an

honour for her students to be asked to perform at the Carols, having been heard at other events throughout the year.

"These are an example of kids that say yes to everything that pops up for them," she said.

"They've both been involved with lots of high-profile events before, so they're very confident and have represented us at the basketball stadium singing the national anthem, but this is a very exciting new venture for them.

"They've certainly enjoyed rehearsing with Layne and with the others involved in the program, and they'll both be singing with the BCMA Vocal Ensemble in the mass choir as well."

Mainly ushering the "big fellow in the red suit" around the stage, Dana, Freya and Layne will get

the children attending the Carols involved in some very simple, well known songs.

"They'll be leading everybody in the audience along in song, so hopefully the crowd will all sing along with them.

I'm very proud of them and grateful for the opportunity. It's very nice to be invited," she said.

Providing chances like this for local young talent to shine is "absolutely important" to Ms Heenan.

"We find opportunities all the time for our kids to do productions and performances outside of what we offer. We've had kids performing all over Australia this year, just jumping into every opportunity."

Ballarat Carols by Candlelight is set for City Oval on Sunday, 22 December from 4pm.