

Businesses celebrate award wins

■ Heather McNeill

Pilbara-based signage company Signswest took out the business of the year award at last week's Port Hedland Chamber of Commerce and Industry business awards.

The company, which also won best business with 12-20 employees, was chosen over other minor category winners on the night including Category 5, Pharmacy 777 and ibis Styles Port Hedland.

Owner Tamara Heckingbottom said the business had grown from a husband-and-wife team working in the back room at home in 1997.

"I'm so blown away (to win the award)," she said.

"I have the best staff in the Pilbara by far.

"Thanks to Port Hedland for taking us on board and embracing us to become the business that we are."

Apprentice of the year award winner Christopher Dark, 25, turned his life around after being dismissed from an apprenticeship at 18.

"I'd like to thank Fortescue Metals for giving me the opportu-

nity to complete my apprenticeship ... and lastly I'd like to thank my mother," Mr Dark said.

ibis Styles Port Hedland received two gongs for best business with more than 20 employees and its manager Jason Green was named best business leader.

"Port Hedland is a great town and we own the North West, don't worry about that," Mr Green said.

IBN Corporation won the inaugural best Aboriginal business award with the corporation servicing more than 1000 beneficiary families in the Pilbara.

Award winners:

- Business of the year: Signswest
- Apprentice of the year: Christopher Dark
- Employee of the year: Garry South
- Best community organisation or contribution: South Hedland Volunteer Fire and Rescue
- Best home-based or mobile business: Red Earth IT
- Best Aboriginal business: IBN Corporation
- Best business with 1-6 employees: Category 5
- Best business with 7-11 employees: Pharmacy 777
- Best business 12-20 employees: Signswest
- Best business 20+ employees: ibis Styles Port Hedland
- Business leader: Jason Green



Robbie and Emily Peck.



Anna Duffield, Jessica Melia and Sara Bryan at the Port Hedland Chamber of Commerce and Industry business awards. Pictures: Ben Leahy



Mark Hinch loosens his tie and hits the dance floor.



Signswest owner Tamara Heckingbottom with her award for business of the year.



Marilyn and Nelson Damian.