

**Speech by Jim Barron, Managing Director of Group Training Australia
Capricornia Training Company - Saturday 22nd June 2002**

The Hon Robert Schwarten, Peter Keene, Peter deMedici. Mr Chris Robinson, other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

It is great to be here tonight

Thank you to Peter Keene for the kind invitation to be here amongst the legends, old and new, of Capricornia Training Company

I have not been to Rockhampton for many years.....indeed I think the last time I was here was in 1995 when I was State Director of the Qld Liberal Party and we were scouting round for “candidates” in the lead up to the ‘96 federal election

It seems a very long time ago now, and of course the State Liberal party, in particular then, was a lot bigger than it is now

Indeed when I left, it numbered the size of a Rugby Union team. Now, only the front row remains on the field – and I won’t nominate who the hooker is!

Can I also acknowledge the very enthusiastic support given by the local Federal Member, Ms Kirsten Livermore, to all things training and apprenticeships in her electorate – I can truly vouch for her commitment, as can many here tonight, given the number of letters she would write to my then boss and Minister, Dr Kemp and of course, to the Department – and the very active battles she would have with some of the more senior bureaucrats.

So it has been a long time between visits but I am very pleased to be back here in a new and different capacity

As Managing Director of the National Group Training Association, GTA, I spend a lot of my time dealing with issues on behalf of the group training constituency

Dealing with various levels of Government, Ministers, bureaucrats and stakeholders

Often a very frustrating exercise – much labour for little or no reward at times

In some respects then, there is a certain similarity with my previous lives in government and politics

But in some other respects it is so very different

Having come from the “other side”, I am afforded a somewhat unique perspective

Where previously I would sometimes (and I stress the word “sometimes”) take a Canberra bureaucrat’s “view” or “spin” on group training as “well considered” – now I challenge every single word

So there is often a bit of shadow-boxing going on – as I guess they know, that I know, that they don’t know sometimes

But I think the biggest difference for me is that now I get to meet some of the people at the “coal face” of what I would consider be among the toughest of businesses in any town – group training and employment

And on nights like these – to be part of the cheer squad and to stand and applaud the outstanding efforts of the young people who have committed themselves to traineeships and apprenticeships through group training

Tonight is not a night for politics but I would like to say this:

Group Training has been an **unqualified** success in this country, particularly in rural, regional and remote areas

It has created tens of thousands of success stories that would otherwise not have been given the chance to be told

It has been a fundamental part of hundreds of “communities” around the country

It has been critical to building social and training infrastructures

Despite all the success, it has yet again been placed under the microscope by government with the recent national review

Whatever the final outcome of this “investigation” into Group Training one thing is clear to me – Group Training must continue to be valued

And that is what tonight is all about

“Value”

The value we place on the achievements of Group Training companies like Capricornia Training Company

The value our communities receive in group training companies playing an integral role in community and local life

The value of providing apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities to our young people and skilling them for the future

The value of keeping families and local communities strong through providing real job opportunities;

The value that is added to local business through group training operations;
and

The value of our young people

Make no mistake, in group training, there is much to celebrate and much to value

Tonight's award winners are thoroughly deserving of their recognition and reward

But awards nights like these are more than just about handing out a few gongs to the chosen few – they are as much about recognising the efforts and dedication of everybody who is involved in the hard slog of group training

No one in group training is in it to become rich.....

but they are in it to enrich the lives of thousands of young Australians and to make a genuine contribution to building a stronger and more vibrant community

Group Training has been at the coalface and doing the hard yards for many years now. It has the runs on the board.

Its success is due to the likes Capricornia Training Company and the commitment and dedication of Peter Keene and the whole workforce.

In spite of the high jump bar being continually raised, group training has delivered a high quality service and thousands of thousands of success stories year after year

It is a pleasure then to be here tonight to pay tribute to and celebrate with the latest success stories in group training and most particularly, the work of the Capricornia Training Company

I thank you again for the invitation to be here tonight and I wish each and everyone of you, the very best in the future