

**Speech by Jim Barron, Managing Director of Group Training Australia
BIGA Training - Friday 21st June 2002**

It is a pleasure to be here tonight

Thank you to Robert Rowe and to BIGA for inviting me along to be part of the celebration

It is good to be back in Brisbane

Indeed, when I accepted the position with GTA last October, I was staying here in Brisbane and was given a very warm welcome by Peter deMedici and GTA Queensland

My first visit to a group training company in my new role just happened to be to BIGA and to the Salisbury campus

Needless to say it is one of the jewels in the group training crown....

I was not able to meet Rob then but a few months later I was at least able to send him some flowers following his motorcycle accident

So it is good to see him in one piece tonight

Anyway, I am very glad to be here representing the National Association, Group Training Australia (GTA)

GTA is the member association of group training companies that accounts for over 80% of the total number of apprentices and trainees employed under group training arrangements, which currently stands at over 36,000

36,000 success stories and tonight we applaud some of the more outstanding

It is not a night for long speeches but I thought I would take this opportunity to make just a few remarks

I came into my job with GTA after 14 years of working in politics and government

I was on one "side of the fence" I guess

Politics, election campaigns, policy, bureaucrats, programs, focus groups, numbers (record numbers) and stats were the staple fare of my working life

It was often a fascinating world

What was sometimes lacking in that "world" however were "real" people

In some respects, one became cocooned from the real world

–and of course this result, fairly or unfairly, is often one of the greatest criticisms levelled at those in politics and the bureaucracy

I don't have a ready made answer as to how to turn that perception around – unfortunately it seems to be the “nature of the beast”.....

but maybe a good place to start would be to widen the scope of advice that governments currently receive

Stakeholders must be regularly consulted with and listened to

Good public policy must be as much about managing people than it is about simply managing contracts; and

Delivering a fair go should be just as important a principle, if not more so to government, than, (to use the current lingo) “purchasing an outcome”

So, having “served” my time for 14 years on one side of the fence, I jumped the fence and into something new

It won't surprise you to hear that now I have a somewhat different view of the world

On this side of the fence, there is not much elbow room given the many others fighting for government attention

All trying to get our voice heard above the noise and clamour of the others

All of us are in one way or another trying to get a fairer and better deal for our constituencies

In my case, group training

As you all know, these past few years have been very tough for group training

One feels like you are being asked to do more and more for less and less

Yet despite the hurdles, group training continues to deliver excellent results and indeed leads the way in the areas of indigenous, disability and traditional trades.

Our job at the National Association is to work on your behalf for a fairer deal

To ensure that governments continue to **value** the role of group training and not to **devalue** it

In a very diverse labour market, this is a growing challenge

But tonight we are here to take pride in the achievements of group training...

....To applaud and recognise the skill and dedication of the apprentices and trainees employed by BIGA....

....To acknowledge the success of the BIGA operation and most importantly, to recognise the ongoing and important place that group training holds in our community

To all of tonight's apprentice and trainees and to all those involved in the business of group trainingI say congratulations.

Thank you