

**SPEECH BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY  
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**LAUNCH OF GROUP TRAINING AUSTRALIA'S  
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
"TODAY'S SKILLS – TOMORROW'S LEADERS"**

**GOVERNMENT HOUSE  
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2004**

- Mrs Marea Moulton, Chair, Group Training Australia
- Mr James Barron, Chief Executive Officer, Group Training Australia
- Representatives of Group Training Schemes, Employers, and Government authorities
- Apprentices and Trainees

Marlena and I are delighted to welcome you to Government House this morning, and I want to say what a privilege it is, as patron of Group Training Australia, to launch the inaugural Youth Development Program, “Today’s Skills – Tomorrow’s Leaders”.

I want to offer a specially warm welcome to the young participants in the Program. On reading about you, I have to say how impressed I am by your personal achievements – and how encouraging it is to know that Australia is producing people of your calibre – your great wealth of talent, energy and creativity – young people who know how to get things done. You deserve to do well – and you will.

I am encouraged by the breadth of your specialisations:

- Building and Construction
- Electrical
- Mechanics
- Electronics
- Hospitality
- Furniture manufacture
- Printing
- Business Administration
- Youth Work
- Horticulture

We look to you at a time when our nation needs very highly skilled men and women as it moves forward through the challenges that lie ahead.

The value of taking up a variety of opportunities, like those in the three-day leadership program ahead of you, is that it exposes you to a range of training and leadership experiences not otherwise available in this period of your careers.

Leadership: are great leaders born or made?

The answer, I think, is a bit of both.

Alexander the Great and Napoleon were natural leaders of great skill at a very young age, as were William Pitt the Younger and Nelson.

On the other hand, the leadership skills of Gandhi, Mandela, Churchill and Mother Teresa were tempered through experience, hardship and unswerving faith in their cause.

At the end of the day, the value in what you will see and do during the program will depend as much on your spirit and attitude as well as listening and learning.

In recent times I have been emphasising the importance of Australia being recognised as and thinking of itself as a “Nation of Excellence – the Global Example” as a way of underpinning our long-term prosperity and security.

By this I do not mean ‘excellence’ in an elitist sense, but rather in trying to be the best at everything we turn our minds to – individually or collectively.

Australia has many challenges ahead and enormous opportunities to be grasped. I think of our neighbours, China and India – already great centres of growth where vast sums of capital (and thus opportunities) are moving, countries which are part of what is likely to be the most dynamic region of the world over the next fifty years.

Australians must compete with intelligence in every area of human endeavour – in agriculture and aquaculture, in medicine and biotechnology, in distance education, and most especially by providing technical skills, expertise and innovation.

Within this latter context the country must turn to its young Australians who are constantly thinking through problems and devising solutions.

And you are they. I see young apprentices and trainees as very much part of this benchmarking of excellence; not only in the way you apply yourselves to the many aspects of your careers, but also to your thinking – the wonderful ideas that flow from young people, of seeing better ways of achieving results, at times turning conventional wisdom on its head, engaging with different people and experiences, of not being limited to the things you already know.

I know also that there are other demands on you – working hard at what you do, earning that weekly income, managing finances (for some a mortgage and others that persistent car loan repayment, or both), organising holidays, making time for friends and families, getting to the gym or playing sport.

Can I quote Sir Winston Churchill who put it best, I think, when he said: “*We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.*”

Ladies and gentlemen.

In that sense too I want to commend Group Training Australia for its visionary leadership program for young Australians.

What a tremendous contribution group training has made to Australia since the late 1970’s when the concept was first introduced – opening up training opportunities that would otherwise not have been available, counselling small businesses on career paths

and options for local apprentices and trainees, lightening the administrative burdens of employers, developing relevant training packages and skills formation programs.

Clearly, the formula developed by Group Training Australia is hugely successful – there are now some 150 groups, recognised by State and Territory Training Authorities, comprising the group training network across Australia. I wish Group Training, and the tremendous partnerships it has formed with employers across Australia, the continuing and growing success it deserves.

Finally, as Patron of Group Training Australia, I want to express my admiration to the participants in the leadership program. I am certain this will be a marvellous, memorable experience for each of you, where you will learn from one another, and I hope be motivated to continue giving the very best you have for the benefit of our country. I look forward to hearing of your contributions in the years ahead.

It is now my great pleasure to declare the Training Program, “*Today’s Skills – Tomorrow’s Leaders*”, officially launched.