

**Launch of Group Training Australia's Today's Skills, Tomorrow's  
Leaders Program  
Government House, Canberra  
17 August 2009**

Chair, Group Training Australia, Mr Iain McDougall;

CEO, Mr James Barron;

Field officers and facilitators;

Apprentices and Trainees;

Ladies and gentlemen,

I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we gather, and I offer you the very warmest of welcomes to Government House this morning.

At the threshold of an exhilarating and important national training event – Today's Skills, Tomorrow's Leaders – I am thrilled, as Patron of Group Training Australia, to have this opportunity of meeting outstanding apprentices and trainees on the cusp of your leadership journey.

I want you to know how highly I think of you, how much I value what you contribute to our society, how your skills and talents, your leadership, will enrich and enhance our shared life.

Vocational Education and Training are experiencing an energetic and vigorous national profile. In a huge range of fields, they underpin our economy and prosperity. They ensure that the finest craftsmanship, knowledge, and professionalism are passed on to new generations of practitioners.

As our world becomes more globalised, digitised and future-focused, as we 'outsource' more of our basic needs, we risk losing what earlier generations valued most: strength, skill, ingenuity, know-how, tangible connections between traditional and contemporary practice.

I know that each of you is building and sustaining those values in your lives through your training programs, your apprenticeships in diverse and highly specialised areas of work.

On top of these, for you, is another layer. A layer of reflecting back to those around you what drives and empowers you, of having a say in how your professions will evolve and adapt, of guiding that transformation. It is a layer of leadership.

It's a subject close to my heart and efforts, and one I often speak about: to groups of school children, and school leavers, to young people and experienced educators and managers.

To each one, my message is the same:

- Leaders are everywhere:
- some obvious and outspoken;
- others quieter, yet no less active or valuable;
- there is no formula that guarantees good leadership;
- indeed, leaders are distinguished by the unique qualities an individual brings to the role;
- each leader will do their job differently, in their own way;
- and a leader's journey has no clear signposts or certain end;
- rather it is an evolution in thought, insight, and behaviour, tested and shaped by experience.
- Leaders must know what is expected of them — by those who appoint them, and those they lead;
- they must know the values they rely on, that underpin their decisions and actions;
- they must be secure in their knowing, and flexible in their delivery, for no situation requiring their leadership will ever be the same;
- and they must keep their minds and hearts open — for learning, for opportunities and possibilities.

And I counsel them, as only grandmothers can:

- Don't punish yourself for your mistakes;
- rather, respond to their message.
- Say sorry when you get it wrong.
- Say thank you or well done when no one else notices or bothers.
- Listen to everyone: surprises come from the most remarkable places.
- Don't be afraid to make a leader of another.
- And know when your ego is getting in the way of your job.

My friends, I'm sure you'll add your own to these ingredients, and pass on your recipes to the ones *you* will mentor and train.

I hope you have a fantastic time at the Australian Institute of Sport, and that your leadership journeys continue well beyond this week.

Congratulations on being a part of Group Training Australia's 2009 Today's Skills, Tomorrow's Leaders Program, which I now declare officially launched.