



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**100 DAYS TO CALGARY**

Hairdressers are sharpening their scissors, chefs are pre-heating their ovens and dozens of other young Australians are preparing the tools of their trade as the countdown to the 2009 International WorldSkills Competition hits 100 days on 22 May, 2009.

The '100 days' milestone will be marked during an exhibition competition between WorldSkills Australia's 'Skillaroos' and the WorldSkills New Zealand team, to be held at the Newcastle Exhibition Centre at the Newcastle Showgrounds from the 20 – 23 May, 2009.

Australia's 'Skillaroos' are the top young trainees and apprentices from across the nation, selected from the A, B, Cs of trade skills – Autobody Repair, Bricklaying and Cabinetmaking, to name just a few.

During the Newcastle event, the Skillaroos will be engaging in a mock competition emulating the rigours of international competition as they go head-to-head with their competitors from across the Tasman.

Thousands of people are expected to attend the mock competition to see young skilled apprentices and trainees, like Skillaroo Nigel Croke, honing their skills in the lead up to the International Competition. Nigel, who comes from the Macquarie region, NSW, will be competing in the field of 'Bricklaying' for which he won a gold medal at the National WorldSkills Competition in 2008.

"The WorldSkills competitions are like the Olympic Games of the trades and I am honoured to be representing Australia at the International Competition in Canada. It will be a great experience to rub shoulders with the best young tradies in the world, but for now the focus is on beating the Kiwis," Mr Croke said.

The 27 most outstanding young tradesmen and women were selected from a pool of over 5000 competitors nationwide, each having earned their place to represent Australia in a specific trade discipline at the 40<sup>th</sup> International Competition to be held in Calgary, Canada from 1 – 7 September, 2009.

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CEO of WorldSkills Australia, Mark Callaghan, thinks that the Australian team has the right stuff to sweep aside the New Zealand team.

"Traditionally, Australia and New Zealand have enjoyed a healthy competitive relationship and the Newcastle competition will be another opportunity for one country to claim the bragging rights. This would be a huge morale boost in the lead up to the International WorldSkills Competition later in the year.

"At the last International Competition, the Australian team placed fifth overall and were the highest ranked English-speaking country. New Zealand finished with a ranking of 15, so going on that form you would have to say that Australia are going in as the overwhelming favourites," Mr Callaghan said.

Spectators at the exhibition will also be encouraged to try their hand at a number of the disciplines that are being performed by the Skillaroos as part of the 'Try'a Trade' initiative run by WorldSkills Australia. As well as providing some hands-on entertainment, the 'Try'a Trade' program encourages young people to consider a skill-based career as a viable and rewarding career option.

The Newcastle event will be the last opportunity the Skillaroos have to compete alongside one another before boarding the plane to Canada, culminating the journey which began at a regional level almost two years ago.

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*WorldSkills Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that has been supporting youth in trade for over 27 years. WorldSkills Australia aims to raise the profile of skill-based vocations through a series of regional, national and international competitions, engaging industry, government and vocational education and training authorities to promote the benefits of skill development as a pathway to a career in trade.*

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