



22 June 2009

Media Release

SKILLAROOS FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CHAMPIONS

It's a list that reads like the who's who of Australian sporting achievement: Cathy Freeman, Lucas Neill, Lleyton Hewitt, Jana Pittman, Petria Thomas and Cadel Evans amongst many more – all champions of their trade who mastered their craft at the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) in Canberra during their career.

Now add to this list the Australian WorldSkills team – 26 of our best and brightest young tradies and apprentices who have earned their chance to compete at the 2009 International WorldSkills Competition, known as the 'Trade Olympics', to be held in Canada in September.

During their time at the AIS training camp last weekend, the Australian WorldSkills team (the Skillaroos) were given the chance to mingle with some of Australia's most promising young athletes in the hope that some of their winning spirit rubs off.

On Monday the team met with Senator, The Hon. Mark Arbib, Minister for Employment Participation, who, representing the Prime Minister of Australia, presented the squad with their official competition uniforms, ensuring the team will head to Canada dressed for success.

Senator Arbib himself knows the conditions that await some of the Skillaroos, having spent some time in the workshop as a metal trades assistant in the early 1990s.

"This talented group of Australians are testament to the quality of the vocational education and training opportunities that we have on offer in Australia. The Skillaroos are terrific role models for other young Australians who are considering a career in trade. I imagine the competition they will face in Canada will be tough, but I have every confidence that the very best efforts from the Australian team will be good enough for gold," Senator Arbib said.

The Skillaroos will now head back to their homes equipped with the winning drive and determination they have developed during their training camp at the AIS over the weekend and prepare themselves to take on the world.

CEO of WorldSkills Australia, Mark Callaghan, is excited about the Skillaroos' chances in Canada, especially after their time spent at the AIS.

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“Over 140 Olympic medals have been won by athletes from the AIS over the years. Now with the nation willing them on, I believe our Skillaroos have the resolve to bring home some medals of their own,” Mr Callaghan said.

The time spent in Canberra was the last time the Skillaroos will be united as a team before boarding the plane to Canada in late August.

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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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