



Skillaros praised for medal haul

AUSTRALIA'S best and brightest young tradies and apprentices have been honoured for their medal-winning performance at the 40th International WorldSkills Competition held in Canada last month.

Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard was the guest of honour at the Parliament House ceremony, congratulating members of the Australian WorldSkills Team, the Skillaros, who brought home a hoard of medals from the International Competition, which is known as the Olympics of Economic Skills.

The WorldSkills Australia Team that took on the best from the rest of the world last month was composed of our nation's top 26 young skilled apprentices and trainees, across a range of trade-oriented professions from Plumbing and Joinery, to Web Design and Floristry.

In total, the team secured 10 medals across 24 trade disciplines, including two gold medals in the fields of Beauty Therapy and Restaurant Service, and reaffirmed Australia's reputation as a global leader in trade skills education by securing a ranking of fifth in the world class field.

Ms Gillard praised the young squad for their remarkable achievements.

"The Australian Government is exceptionally proud to be associated with such a powerful demonstration of Australia's skills excellence," Ms Gillard said.

"Every team member represents the pinnacle of achievement for the vocational education and training sector in Australia, and

are wonderful role models to other young Australians."

The remarkable performance of the Australian WorldSkills team seems to have come at the turn of the tide for youth participation in trade. Increased Government spending on vocational training for youth is aiming to address the country's skills shortage and replenish the traditional trades industry, following a slump in participation rates during the Global Financial Crisis.

WorldSkills Australia is playing an integral part in the skilled trade resurgence, working to engage youth in trade by promoting a level of skills excellence through a series of competitions, and providing opportunities for young tradies and apprentices to develop their career at an international level.

The WorldSkills program is aligned to national training institutions, including TAFE facilities Australia-wide. With over 80 percent of the current WorldSkills Australia team having learned their craft at a TAFE institute, the welcoming ceremony was also a cause for celebration for National TAFE Day.

Meanwhile, a new breed of Skillaros is emerging from the 30 Regional Competitions currently being held around the nation.

The current squad will prove to be a tough act to follow for their incumbents, but, with new opportunities continuing to open up for youth to develop skills in a range of vocations, Australia stands in good stead to set a new level of excellence in trade on the international stage.