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Media Release
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Medals For Young NZ Trades Team In Calgary

The young New Zealand team of "Tool Blacks", contesting the WorldSkills International competition in Calgary, Canada, gained six medals of excellence from the seventeen trade categories in which they competed during the four-day event.

While the team did not win gold, silver or bronze at the 2009 contest, the medals won showed that they were well amongst the leaders of the over 800 competitors from 50 countries who took part.

The New Zealand medal winners were Ben De Groot, of Gore, competing in the Electrical Installations category; Elliott Wilkes, of Palmerston North, Sheet Metal Technologies; Thomas Townsend, Auckland, Cooking; Marcel Woods, Kaikohe, Automotive Technology; Royce Richards, Christchurch, Printing; and Jared Lamb, Palmerston North, Welding.

Ben De Groot was judged "Best in Country" by the international judging panel.

The New Zealand team of 17 was the largest from this country to compete in the international event that is held every two years.

The next WorldSkills International competition will be held in London in 2011.

The WorldSkills competition has a 55-year history, and has come to symbolize the pinnacle of excellence in skilled trades and technologies training.

WorldSkills New Zealand is an independent, non-profit charitable trust that was founded in 1986.

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Its purpose is to encourage young people to excel in vocational skills, achieved through exposure to competitions at a regional, national, and international level and to enable New Zealand Industry to benchmark it's training against the rest of the world.

The New Zealand organization is a member of WorldSkills International which conducted the world championships in Calgary.

"We are extrordinarily proud of our young people who have participated and achieved at a high standard against the best of the rest of the world," says chief executive, Peter Spencer.

Erica Cummings, Chief Executive of the Hairdressing ITO who was in Calgary for the competitions says, "It is amazing to see the youth of the world in competition completing suchchallenging tasks. These competitions provide a good reminder of how critical our trades are. The Award Ceremony was uplifting and awe inspiring and we need to make sure we continue to have a New Zealand team competing in the world arena."

The young New Zealanders had to fight back following the personal sadness and sudden withdrawal from the team of Kirsty Lister of Palmerston North, whose father accompanying the team suddenly died in hospital in Calgary, following admission with influenza symptoms on the first day of competitions.

The team arrives back in New Zealand at Auckland Airport at 6:40am on Thursday 10 September – flying Air New Zealand Flight number NZ 5.

-Ends-

For more information, contact:

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