

**Lt Gen The Rt Hon Sir Jerry Mateparae, GNZM, QSO  
Governor-General of New Zealand  
Lion Foundation YES 30 year anniversary reception  
Government House Wellington  
30 November 2011**

E nga mana, e nga reo, e nga iwi o te motu, e huihui nei, tēnei aku mihi māhana ki a koutou. Kia ora tātou katoa. Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, warm greetings to you all.

I specifically acknowledge: Tony Caughey, Chair of the Young Enterprise Trust and your fellow trustees; Terry Shubkin, Chief Executive of the Trust and your staff; Young Enterprise Scheme Alumni, Ian McKinnon, Deputy Mayor of Wellington; Jacinda Ardern and Aaron Gilmore, members of Parliament.

It is a real pleasure for Janine and me to welcome you all to Government House for this reception to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Young Enterprise Trust and the national rollout of the Young Enterprise Scheme in 1981. I thought I'd take this opportunity to speak about why I think enterprise education is important to our nation's future prospects.

When I was appointed as Governor-General, Janine and I reviewed all the organisations that held vice-regal patronage. One organisation that we decided pretty quickly to continue to support was the Young Enterprise Trust.

We did so for a number of reasons.

The first is the notion of enterprise. We are convinced that it is getting New Zealanders working that will improve our lot. Specifically, New Zealanders working on and in businesses will grow our economy, will create jobs at home and will earn export dollars overseas to use here at home. This often repeated and common-sense statement is sometimes not fully appreciated.

With our economy almost in stagnation since the 2008 global financial crisis and the on-going fall out, New Zealand has got to seize ways to perform better.

The Government can help create an environment in which businesses flourish, however, ultimately it is individuals with a passion and a desire to succeed, working in and on businesses, new businesses, creative businesses, that will drive our economy to recover faster and prosper better.

New Zealand's primary industries have long been the foundation of our economy. With a growing world population, a country that produces food will always have a demand for its products. However there is a limit to what we can develop with our primary industries. Understandably, New Zealanders are increasingly concerned about damage to the environment and the impact on our natural heritage – our landscapes and our species. For example, our rivers and streams that comes with increasing the scale of dairy farming.

We need to diversify. Leveraging off services and products associated with our primary industries is one way. I was impressed with what is occurring at Innovation Park in Hamilton. However, it will be in new areas, often with niche markets, where the longer-term future opportunities lie. For these new business ideas to come to fruition, we need to build an enterprise culture.

We need to recognise and celebrate award-winning entrepreneurs as much as we value and celebrate award-winning sports men and women.

The perception that the achievements of those that succeed in business are solely monetary and selfish, and, therefore less worthy, has to change. We need to build an admiration for innovation, enthusiasm and the public good of enterprise. A person who creates a business that earns valuable export earnings and employs other New Zealanders and provides an enduring impact on our community's prosperity is to be applauded. That person's contribution could be enduring, long after the feel-good factor of winning a world sporting trophy has faded. I'll be the first to admit that winning the Rugby World Cup had a darn good feel-good factor; however, that only has a four-year currency!

Building an enterprise culture means teaching entrepreneurial skills early and at all levels in our schools. It has to be as an integral part of the curriculum, not as an occasional or optional add on.

The Young Enterprise Scheme does this. Although it has been 30 years in the making, the Trust and its scheme have been slowly transforming attitudes to business and business success.

As an optional extra when it started, the Young Enterprise Scheme was something that students largely did outside class time. One of my daughters

was involved in the scheme in her 7<sup>th</sup> form year. She was the treasurer for her group, and remains a very canny young woman. She told me:

*“We really enjoyed it, it was a great experience and since we got to combine it with something our whole form year wanted, it was quite fun.”*

A few years ago, enterprise and financial education was recognised in the national curriculum. Last year, almost 50,000 students participated in one of the Trust’s programmes. From next year, NCEA credits in business studies will count towards university entrance.

It has been a slow slog, and much work remains to be done. But the fruit of those years of work can be seen in the YES alumni. People like Seeby Woodhouse, who created telecommunications company Orcon, and Paul Soong, the creator of The Church, a design and advertising company, and Stefan Lepionka, founder and CEO of the Charlie’s Group.

Building an enterprise culture doesn’t mean we all have to work in businesses. The skills that come with enterprise education and the YES scheme are about more than creating a budget and marketing plan.

Some of the online interviews of the YES scheme alumni show that it’s clear that the participants learnt some pretty vital life skills and attitudes that went far beyond basic number crunching.

Those skills included having a **vision** for their product or service and having the **passion** to bring it to fruition. And they’ve included the importance of working hard, working as a team, being prepared to take advice and being prepared to take a risk.

Many of these are skills and attitudes are transferable and are just as important when you’re working in a not-for-profit organisation, the public sector and in commerce.

As the Young Enterprise Trust celebrates 30 years since its flagship Young Enterprise Scheme was rolled out across the country, I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved—from the sponsors who’ve supported the scheme, to the mentors who volunteered to help young people with their

business ideas, to the teachers and schools that saw the opportunity and got in behind the programme. Most of all, I want to thank the alumni.

In conclusion, I mentioned that I wanted to say why enterprise education is important to our country's future. Put simply, it is because it enables young New Zealanders to grab innovation, enterprise, giving things a go and taking a risk as the basis for success. Thirty years on the YES alumni are making a real difference. Through their vision, passion and hard work they are making New Zealand a better place to live in—a place where talented young Kiwis can, and want to live, and where New Zealanders can create business opportunities.

Kia ora huihui tātou katoa.