

Becoming Visionary Leaders

Address at the Investiture of Student Leaders –Maryborough Education Centre

9 April 2008

About Leadership

Leadership is critical to the quality of community life which we enjoy. It is also critical to the future sustainability of our communities.

Leadership is a capability we can grow in and develop, Leadership is also fun and rewarding. Importantly its where we as individuals can make a difference and making a difference is one of the most rewarding things we can do.

One of the great things about our own time which was not traditionally the case is that we recognise that young people as well as older people can make a real leadership contribution in our community and society. Certainly age and experience can bring wisdom but youth can bring fresh ideas, energy and welcome challenges to conventional assumptions on how we need to do things.

In essence we all can contribute as leaders. The best balance is when we work together across traditional group and age boundaries and unite behind new visions of what we need to achieve. We can then commit to support and reinforce each other in how we achieve these goals and make them happen. In the process we can and should have some real fun. Leadership is something to be enjoyed.

The Importance of Contribution

Before we commit to being leaders we need to agree to contribute. The success of communities and organisations including our own Maryborough Education Centre depend on the level of contribution each of its members makes. The more we put in terms of our energy, efforts and commitment the more that community or organisation benefits and the better it can meet the needs of its members. Its like a jug of water –if we keep replenishing it we can pour out more but if we don't keep topping it up it runs out.

As student leaders you are placed in a special position where the contribution you make will make a real difference to the Centre. In addition what you do will be an example to other students. You will be role models. If you actively get involved in the range of activities of the Centre you will help it to fulfill its objective

to be a top education and school provider and meet a range of needs for all students.

Communities function in the same way. Those who actively contribute to community life makes the difference of a great community to live in. There are so many organisations, clubs and societies to choose from covering so many areas of our life. All seek members who want to contribute and make a difference and all have leadership possibilities.

As a regional community we have fewer residents and less income than a metropolitan community. We also have many lifestyle benefits. What this does mean is that each of us needs to volunteer and make things happen. In this way we provide the quality of community life we all enjoy.

The commitment to life long learning and education

One thing we all need to contribute to is a make a commitment to life long learning and education. This is a key concern of the Central Goldfields Shire Council. We live in a changing world where an increasing premium is being placed on employability –continual skills and job readiness in continually changing employment. Statistics from the University of Ballarat show an alarming trend of young men especially in our region not continuing with any education and training after year 12. This will create real limitations for them in later years. It also limits the opportunities of our regional communities to be economically sustainable.

Employability means we all take personal leadership of our own need for life long learning and the constant need to acquire new skills, learning and knowledge.

We can all be leaders and champions of life long learning and enthuse and motivate our friends and families to continually learn.

Visionary Leadership

Enthusing and motivating others is at the core of what we mean when we talk about visionary leadership.

Over time notions of what makes good leaders has changed. Fifty years ago leadership style was based on command and control models. Leaders were respected for their abilities to give orders which would not be challenged. Schools were run also on this model. The cane and the strap were used to ensure discipline and compliance.

During the 60ies and 70ies there was a greater focus on participation and democratic style. In schools and universities these changes and transition

created some problems but new structures like Student Representative Committees emerged with new important roles.

More recently the role and importance of leaders in our institutions has been reinforced. Leadership has taken on a new key focus. Leaders are valued for their ability to see future needs for their organisation and to articulate those as a vision. They are expected to walk the talk and motivate members of the importance of this vision and what is needed to be done to achieve it. Critically leaders are expected to motivate others to get involved and provide them with the direction and motivation for them to work hard and succeed. If mistakes are made they should be learning lessons for the future rather than an opportunity to punish. This is what we mean by visionary leadership.

So how can you as student leaders be visionary leaders? Very simply –by helping other students understand what we strive for at the MEC; to motivate them to succeed; to understand why they need to study hard and contribute to school life; to help them to understand that this is only one step to a commitment to life long learning; to help students who have problems and make mistakes and help them to learn from the mistakes and move forward; and importantly in the way you live and contribute in the Centre and the community to be role models for others who need that encouragement and motivation.

Each one of you can be visionary leaders. If you take up this challenge you will make a difference to the Centre and the community. I hope you do take up the challenge. If you do I know you will have fun, develop some real skills and have the great satisfaction of making a difference.

Chris Meddows-Taylor
Mayor
Central Goldfields Shire
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