

Beacon Launch in Melbourne
11am, ANZ Pavilion, Arts Centre,
St Kilda Road, Southbank

Peter Kirby - Managing Director and CEO, CSR Limited
Friday 30 August 2002

Thank you, and I am delighted to be with you all this morning.

In Australia today, there are almost 1.4 million young people aged 15 to 19. Over the next few years, they are going to be looking for jobs.

My 19-year-old son and his friends will be among them. Jobs for young people is an issue that I am passionate about. In Australia today, there are over 130,000 young people, aged 15 to 19, looking for work.

It is a very difficult time for most young people. More than 27% of Australians, aged 18 to 24, suffer from mental health disorders such as anxiety, or substance abuse.

If we do not take action when our children are leaving school, then we may lose them forever. The longer someone is unemployed the less likely that they will find work.

It's a question of the high road versus the low road. The low road is a hands off approach to our young people: Leaving kids who need help, to fend for themselves in a competitive and difficult world. *Not* helping them overcome the barriers that can be so overwhelming.

The high road is encouraging kids to develop effective work habits, to access the opportunities for higher education and career development, and to develop a role for themselves that both encourages self esteem and contributes to society. This is what Beacon is all about.

Beacon is finding ways to overcome barriers and bridge that transition for young people....to help them take the high road. I hope that the Beacon program in Victoria, which starts here today, is as successful as it has been in other parts of Australia.

We at CSR were impressed that there wasn't a cast of thousands at Beacon. It is an efficient organisation that works hard to keep costs low.

It offers self help - NOT subsidies. Ownership remains within the community because that is where the true benefits lie. And Beacon offers businesses like CSR a chance to be closely involved in this process.

CSR is Australia's second oldest company. We started in sugar 146 years ago, but are now one of the largest building materials groups in the world, with two-thirds of our earnings coming from the United States.

My company - and I know I speak for a great many of CSR's people when I say this - believes very strongly in what Beacon stands for....real, sustainable jobs for young people.

CSR has a long history of encouraging young people and helping them get started in their careers. For many years we had one of the most successful cadetship programs in Australia.

Our US subsidiary Rinker Materials Corporation has developed a unique school mentoring system in Florida. 25% of Rinker's employees in the Sand Mine Group put in at least an hour a week for each child, in one-on-one mentoring and tutoring.

Over 100 children are involved in the six local schools they have *adopted* in Central Florida. The rest of the Rinker team have contact with the schoolchildren during site visits.

This is boosting the student's skills and their feeling of self-worth - encouraging them not to drop out of school. And it is helping prepare them for life and work after school.

There are many ways the business community can help bridge the gap between education and employment: trainee and apprenticeships, offering employee time for mentoring and other activities, participation in company training programs, and educating kids about local industry.

And of course we can support groups like Beacon who are working with communities to ensure jobs are developed – and that young people are encouraged to go on and develop the skills they need through further education.

Beacon has impressed a lot of people. Prime Minister Howard, former Opposition leader Kim Beazley, Queensland Premier Peter Beattie, and the Northern Territory Chief Minister Clare Martin are among them.

But it is support from people like you - who can influence others and progress Beacon's work on a wider scale – that is critical to Beacon's success.

We at CSR – like the other Beacon sponsors – (Komatsu, Sinclair Knight Merz, Stanwell Corporation and the Ian Potter Foundation) - are very proud and honoured to be part of this process. I would urge you to join us.

Thank you.