



**MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT  
EMBARGOED UNTIL Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009**

## **Back to School for Australia's biggest celebration of public education**

Well-known Australians, including Lisa Wilkinson, Adam Cooney and Matthew Mitcham, will be among hundreds of people taking part in Back to School 2009 – a nationwide campaign throughout May, which celebrates the incredible role public schools play in Australia's success. People from all walks of life will go back to school to tell their stories and provide students with positive role models. Now in its eighth year, Back to School is a campaign by Education Foundation, a division of The Foundation for Young Australians, in partnership with Coles.

Many people instrumental to Australia's success were educated in public schools, including the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and the Minister for Education, Julia Gillard. Today, public schools educate nearly 66% of young people in Australia and make up around 70% of all schools\*.

Adam Smith, CEO at The Foundation for Young Australians, says, "Great public schools are vital to building Australia's future prosperity and productivity. They teach and care for all young people and are at the heart of our communities. Students and teachers love hearing from people who went to their school and role models can help young people gain insight into their own purpose, passion and pathway in life."

In support of Back to School 2009, a diverse group of recognised Australians along with Coles employees across the country will return to their former public schools in May to take part in a variety of events, workshops and presentations. Back to School 2009 role models include; **Lisa Wilkinson in NSW**, co-host of the Nine Network's TODAY Show; **Adam Cooney in SA**, AFL player with the Western Bulldogs and 2008 Brownlow medal-winner; **Matthew Mitcham in Qld**, Olympic diver and gold medal-winner; **Homa Forotan in Qld**, Young Queenslander of the Year 2008; **David Wirrpanda in Vic**, AFL player with the West Coast Eagles and Director of the David Wirrpanda Foundation; and **Shannon McGuire in WA**, finalist on Australia's Next Top Model.

Back to School is supported by education departments in all Australian states and territories and coincides with State Education Weeks. **For more information on Back to School or to request a free school's pack visit: [www.backtoschool.org.au](http://www.backtoschool.org.au).**

**Ends**

Education Foundation is a division of The Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) – a dynamic, independent, not-for-profit organisation. FYA's mission is to empower young Australians to be successful learners and creative, active and valued citizens.

As one of Australia's largest employers, Coles is committed to helping its customers and employees make a real difference to the communities in which they live.

*\* Ref: Schools Australia 2008, Australian Bureau of Statistics, March 2009.*

**For more information on Back to School events or media enquiries please contact:**

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