

Ganbina

putting indigenous students on the path to job success

Why bother with school, let alone a career ambition, if nobody you know works?

Established a decade ago, the Ganbina project addresses this problem of generational unemployment in Victoria's Goulburn Valley region where the indigenous unemployment rate is almost 80 per cent – 16 times higher than non-indigenous rates – even though there are plenty of jobs available.

Education is vital to opening career opportunities. Yet retention rates for indigenous students are one-half to one-third of regional and Victorian averages to Year 12. Worse, almost half of indigenous students (43 per cent) leave school after primary school or in very early secondary school.

Motivating indigenous students to stay at school and then go on to seek a better future is at the core of Ganbina's mission, something that is encapsulated in its name – an aboriginal word meaning 'arise'. It works from the ground up to improve the economic and social well-being of local indigenous people. Ganbina's vision is not simply to improve their life opportunities. Rather, it wants them to have the same life opportunities as those of the non-indigenous community. Ultimately, Ganbina wants to see indigenous people share equitably in the local economy within two generations.

To this end, the organisation encourages the area's young people to contribute to the community as best they can and instils in the broader indigenous community strong economic, employment and training values.

Ganbina is able to facilitate this outcome through a unique and powerful network it has developed over the past 10 years with more than 60 businesses in

the Shepparton area. As well as working as a consultant to the local indigenous community, Ganbina is a direct service provider.

Its major programs include:

- *Jobs 4U2*: seeks to address low school retention rates of indigenous young people by intervening in the early years of high school and providing transitions to employment for older students. The program exposes students to what they can achieve in the job market and provides them with the chance to transfer to employment through industry links. Those continuing to years 11 and 12 move on to the 'Ladders to Success' component of the project which aims to identify career paths through full-time jobs in skilled or professional areas.
- *Koori Youth Leaders Program*: focuses on developing the next generation of indigenous leaders to build on the important groundwork of existing leaders. The 10-month program introduces selected senior high school students to various styles of leadership, governance, indigenous and broader community issues.
- *Drivers Program*: provides much-needed education and support for gaining drivers licenses in an area where 28 per cent of indigenous court cases are related to driving offences.
- *Awards*: recognises success in education, training and employment for young indigenous people aged up to 25.
- *Scholarships*: offers scholarships for education-related expenses for primary, secondary and tertiary indigenous students.
- *my Moola*: teaches indigenous young people and adults from Shepparton and Mooroopna how to get ahead financially. This 10-week money management course is run in partnership with First Nations and ANZ Bank.

WHY SVA BACKS GANBINA

Ganbina's inspirational leadership is one of the main reasons SVA is now behind it. The organisation's chief executive, Adrian Appo, has been instrumental in motivating thousands of indigenous people of the Shepparton area to improve their circumstances. Under his watch, Ganbina has evolved into an efficient and well-targeted non-profit group that is making a real difference in local indigenous and non-indigenous communities alike.

Ganbina is a strong growth organisation with a proven track record in helping locals make the transition from education to work experience and into meaningful employment. That pathway is important for economic opportunity in the area and personal significance for individuals. And the good news is that its best-practice programs may be rolled out in other indigenous communities.

GROWTH

SVA began working with Ganbina in 2005, appointing a portfolio manager to help support its organisational development. Since then, Ganbina has adopted SVA's performance and reporting framework across all of its program areas. SVA has also supported Ganbina with an independent financial management audit, financial and other management training, mentoring and funding.

When it first started, Ganbina worked with just 25 students in two schools. Over time, the organisation has expanded the reach of its programs into all of the area's five local public schools.

Since 2006, Ganbina has seen a more-than 30 per cent increase in take-up rates in its programs. About 120 people aged up to 25 were expected to access Ganbina offerings in 2007, with 84 receiving intensive support. Fifty-two students were enrolled in the Jobs 4U2 program, an increase of almost 60 per cent on the previous year's intake. Of an additional 32 who were seeking employment mentoring, 94 per cent were either studying or at least in part-time work. Of those who graduated from the Jobs 4U2 program in 2006, 86 per cent re-enrolled in school or progressed to employment.

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Ganbina's success is apparent. Against the general trend in indigenous school retention, numbers are actually climbing in schools where the organisation has operated. In the years since SVA became involved with Ganbina, Shepparton schools have seen an increase in the retention rate of their indigenous students from 23 per cent to 33 per cent.

In the five years to June 2007, Ganbina directly assisted 152 indigenous jobseekers find full-time or part-time positions in the private sector in areas such as human resources, management finance and trade. Seventy-three of those were full-time, and with 88 per cent being for a period of greater than six months.

Organisationally, its ability to access non-government funding through SVA has enabled Ganbina to design its programs in response to the need of the area's young people, rather than conforming to the criteria required to attract for government funding.

WHAT'S AHEAD

Ganbina is currently trialling a financial literacy program and is developing further programs in information technology, cultural and environmental preservation and wealth creation. It also achieved a 25 per cent increase in its take-up rate by students in 2007. Enrolments in Ganbina projects are anticipated to double over the next two years to 250 students.

Within the next five years, Ganbina hopes to maintain its 80 per cent success rate across all of its programs. That means at least 80 per cent of participants in major programs will be in education, training or employment. The longer term goals are to increase school retention rates and employment to at least match the wider local community and to support program replication into new communities. Investment in staff development and training will also continue.