

Evaluation of the Ganbina Jobs4U2 program 2020-2022

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Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation, who are the Traditional Owners of the land on which Centre for Social Impact Swinburne is located in Melbourne's east and outer-east, and pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We are honoured to recognise our connection to Wurundjeri Country, history, culture, and spirituality through these locations, and strive to ensure that we operate in a manner that respects and honours the Elders and Ancestors of these lands. We also respectfully acknowledge Swinburne's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students, alumni, partners and visitors.

We also acknowledge and respect the Traditional Owners of lands across Australia, their Elders, Ancestors, cultures, and heritage, and recognise the continuing sovereignties of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations.

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REPORT SUMMARY

I knew they were always there for me (Stakeholder 4 / Graduate).

Introduction

Ganbina takes a long-term approach to addressing social, economic and health disadvantage in the Aboriginal population, with a particular focus on increasing engagement with education, completion of mainstream secondary education, and the increased participation of Aboriginal young people in post-school education and training and/or employment. In 2022, almost half (44%) of Ganbina's 346 participants had been in the program for five years or more, with 11% having been participants for 10 years or more. Almost three quarters (71%) had been Ganbina participants for 3 years or more. Overall, this speaks to the successful engagement of participants over time and the provision of long-term support and development across multiple year levels and program activities.

This research project was commissioned by Ganbina to evaluate the 'Jobs4U2' program in the Shepparton region for the three year period 2020 to 2022. The evaluation explores the outcomes for participants (with a significant focus on those aged 13 to 25 years), and the factors that contribute to or hinder those outcomes from a range of perspectives.

The years under review (2020-2022) were those of unprecedented events affecting the Shepparton region including the COVID-19 pandemic, major floods, and the opening of the large regional secondary college. During this time, Ganbina adapted and innovated its activities to best support its participants, including:

1. Provision of financial and material support to aid learning and wellbeing
2. Virtual delivery of activities (Leadership Summit, tutoring, support)
3. Provision of additional activities: virtual drop-in lounge for participants, e-newsletters.

All the kids got support with desks if they needed it, pens, school equipment that they needed (Staff 6 / Graduate).

So out of that Relief Fund, that's where we stepped out of our 'lane' because there was a community emergency and our families needed our help. Our families called upon us to help because that's where they felt safe (Staff 2).

4. Ongoing contact with Ganbina participants and families

They [Ganbina staff] kept up the fortnightly contact, even if it was over Zoom or a phone call (Staff 6 / Graduate).

Outcome highlights

88% of Ganbina participants felt **more valued and respected** since working with Ganbina

I've met about 20-odd people who I probably would never have spoken to otherwise. ... Ganbina tries to help us interact with all those other students in the Leadership Program (Student 3).

82% of Ganbina participants felt Ganbina helped with **school attendance**.

There were students in high school that were very open in saying that if it wasn't for Ganbina they wouldn't be at school anymore (Staff 1).

79% of Ganbina participants felt that they had more **self-confidence** since working with Ganbina.

I can see a massive difference in my daughter and her growth. ... She's just come such a long way. She was a really shy person ...And now, she stands tall and strong (Family 1).

78% of Ganbina participants felt they had more **career knowledge/plans**.

74% of Ganbina participants felt that Ganbina had helped them **connect with culture and community**.

Being a part of Ganbina they make you feel a part of your Aboriginal culture, which is really good (Staff 6 / Graduate).

One that really stands out for me is ...[Ganbina has] supported a connection to culture as well. They go off on their camps and they're experiencing outdoor activities and cultural tours over at our traditional lands, it's things like that. They're vital to people's wellbeing in the Koorie community (Family 1).

63% of Ganbina participants reported positive change in **leadership skills**.

50% of Ganbina participants said Ganbina had helped with completing school, TAFE or training.

I think we have kids who would not have got through Year 12. And probably they are the first one in their family that had ever done so, and in some instances it started a pattern for all the kids who go through and get through Year 12 (Stakeholder 5).

Program ingredients that contribute to outcomes

1. Wrap, around individualised support
You don't come across that kind of support very often... They genuinely understand [daughter's] challenges ... it's one thing to do check-in but they make that extra effort to be really present - a real present part of her life (Family 1).
2. Longevity of support
One of the biggest things would be the support that they received from primary right through to high school, right through to the age of 25. That doesn't happen anywhere else. So I think Ganbina is very, very unique, or extremely unique in that that support is offered throughout the journey for that person (Stakeholder 1).
3. Career and employment focused
Those crucial years after high school is where we are probably a really good support because we can support you with interviews and looking into jobs, and making sure that you're on the right path of something that you want to enjoy (Staff 6 / Graduate).
4. Relational approach
I think just knowing the staff so well, so you trusted them ... it was just the people, the people that offered that sort of personalised support just by being there, listening to you, having conversations ... So I think it's the support that you get from the staff at Ganbina. Always checking in on us. You could tell they really cared as well (Stakeholder 4 / Graduate).
The culture here is just really welcoming and suited to my family needs (Family 1).
They've got a really good rapport with the high school, the Greater Shepparton Secondary College...to be able to go into school - like the school's not necessarily welcome to a lot of outside organisations. So clearly they have a good rapport with them (Family 1).
5. Buy-in, expectations and accountability
The other key part of the program is making the parents committed to the participant's program. It's that buy-in I think is really the difference (Staff 4).
6. Professionalism and high standards
the vision and drive - and that filters down to the staff which filters through to the participants. And the professionalism - I think that's

probably one of the keys of why it's been so successful for so long (Stakeholder 7).

Considerations and Opportunities

Considerations

Not all potential outcomes can be achieved despite high quality delivery of a valued program. Outcomes attainment can be thwarted by ongoing personal, program, organisational or structural factors. Informants identified the following challenges affecting the program:

- COVID – mental health and social isolation
- The disruption as schools merged into one 'Super School' (Greater Shepparton Secondary College)
- Ganbina organisational factors – recruiting staff, ongoing engagement with technology
- Ganbina relationships with schools – occasional disruption of positive relationships and gaining access to students on site
- Personal factors affecting participants – physical and mental health, motivation of students, transport and finance.

Opportunities

I definitely think it has achieved what it set out to do, it just needs to do it for more people (Stakeholder 1)

While the program was highly regarded, there are opportunities for enhancement that fall within the continuous improvement cycle of the program.

1. Continue to update some program areas;
2. Continue to embed technological improvements;
3. Continue to promote Ganbina programs;
4. Build further connections between program participants and extend supports;
5. Continue to develop partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

Research overview

This research project was commissioned by Ganbina to evaluate the 'Jobs4U2' program in the Shepparton region for the three year period 2020 to 2022. The evaluation explores the outcomes for participants (with a significant focus on those aged 13 to 25 years), and the factors that contribute to or hinder those outcomes from a range of perspectives.

The period under review coincides with the onset and duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ganbina reviewed and adjusted its operations during this time. While it is not the primary purpose of this evaluation to focus on these adjustments, they are part of the consideration of 'what works' in this period.

Ganbina has a commitment to ongoing evaluation of program outcomes and impacts and this evaluation builds on previous evaluation and impact assessments conducted by Social Ventures Australia (SVA) (2020, 2016, 2014, 2010) and by PWC's Indigenous Consulting (2015 and 2016).

Background

Ganbina has been operating since 1997 with a vision 'to see, within two generations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have cultural, economic and social equality and become empowered to live, love, learn and leave a legacy' (SVA, 2020, p.3).

Through a suite of programs, Ganbina works to 'ensure that young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are motivated to obtain the education, life skills and training they need to enable them to make a successful transition from school or tertiary education into meaningful, long-term employment' (SVA, 2020, p.7). Ganbina offers a range of programs relating to education and careers; financial and life skills; and networking and awards – together comprising ten elements/activities. The programs are divided into three major program areas:

- Jobs Education (5-18 years)
- Jobs Training (16-25 years)
- Jobs Employment (15+ years),

and include a range of activities. A primary focus of much of Ganbina's work is to support successful participation and engagement in mainstream education and training. This clear focus is often referred to as Ganbina's 'lane', differentiating them from other support services and alternative education programs.

We're an alternative model in many, many ways, but we live and work in the community. We're working with the community by value adding... This is our core. This is our lane. We're here. We want to be the experts and the carers in this space ... I'm sure there are no organisations in Australia that provide a continuity of education and mentoring support for 21 consecutive years (Staff 2).

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

The approach adopted for this evaluation is consistent with evaluation design principles of realist evaluation (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) and place-based evaluation (Dart, 2019). The frame of focus is on questions of 'what happened', 'what works and for whom', 'in what contexts,' and 'how'.

This evaluation uses a mixed methods approach and is designed to complement program data by capturing a deep understanding of program benefits, challenges and design ingredients through surveys and interviews of a range of groups.

Interviews

Table 1, below, outlines the number and role of participants interviewed for the evaluation. A total of 20 individuals were interviewed between April and June 2023. This data was analysed to identify key themes relating to effective program ingredients, outcomes and areas for improvement or change.

Table 1: Role and number of interviewees

Ganbina student	3
Ganbina staff member	8
Stakeholder (educator, community leader)*	7
Stakeholder (family member / parent)*	4

*Note that some interviewees held multiple roles.

Some interviewees had more than one role, for example, 2 staff members interviewed had also attended the Ganbina program when they were students, as had one stakeholder. One stakeholder had younger relatives attending the program. One of the parent interviewees was also a stakeholder at the

time of the interview. These complexities reflect the demographics of Indigenous connections and of small regional settings, where many people wear multiple hats, i.e., they have many intersecting roles in their community.

Stakeholder interviews

Ganbina works closely with a range of key stakeholders who are well positioned to comment on perceived outcomes of the Ganbina programs as well as the factors contributing to these. CSI worked with Ganbina to select a small set of key stakeholders to interview, including representatives from:

- local schools and Education Department
- education and training providers
- community groups
- family members
- graduates of Ganbina.

A total of 9 individual stakeholders were interviewed for this evaluation.

This included separate interviews conducted with 3 parents of 7 students enrolled in the Ganbina program (with children ranging between 9 and 16 years of age), and an additional family member.

Staff interviews

A total of 8 staff were interviewed, comprising nearly all staff involved in the delivery and administrative support of the Shepparton region. Staff interviews focused on outcomes of Ganbina programs, as well as the factors contributing to or hindering these. Given the 2020-2022 period was one of adaptation due to COVID-19, interviews also considered the nature and value of these adaptations, and whether any should be sustained in the period beyond COVID.

Young people (student participants) and parent interviews

A total of 3 interviews were conducted with students enrolled in the Ganbina program. All students were around 16 years of age.

Survey

Participant outcomes survey (CSOT survey)

A Ganbina Jobs4U2 Participant Outcomes survey was developed in both a paper-based and online format and completed by 51 student participants. Ganbina participants aged 14 years and over were invited to complete the survey, with the assistance of staff if desired. The survey was distributed by staff as part of scheduled participant check-ins. Participants were asked to reflect on their experience of the program between 2020 and 2022 via a short series of questions related to: outcomes (what's changed for people in life areas); what people liked and didn't like about the program; challenges to achieving change (outcomes); service improvements; and three demographic questions.

The Community Services Outcomes Tree (CSOT) – a framework of 12 domains and related outcomes for capturing the outcomes individuals experience as a result of community services – was used as the outcomes framework for this survey (<https://communityservicesoutcomestree.com>).

CSI Swinburne staff worked in collaboration with Ganbina staff to determine the outcomes and questions that were used in this survey. Ten outcome questions were included in the survey (Table 2) corresponding to 4 of the 12 CSOT domains. These outcomes areas correlate to participant outcomes identified in Ganbina's Theory of Change (see Figure 2 in the following section).

Table 2: Selected outcomes for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Survey question	Outcome	Domain
1. Since working with Ganbina, do you have more self-confidence ?	Personal development and living skills	Learning, skills and development
2. Did Ganbina help you to get your driver's licence ?		
3. Did Ganbina help with your school attendance ?	Attending education/training	
4. Did Ganbina help you to complete school, TAFE course, or training ?	Achieving learning outcomes and qualifications	
5. Did Ganbina help you to gain employment ?	Gain employment	Employment
6. Did Ganbina help you to get or complete work experience ?	Relevant work experience	
7. Since working with Ganbina, do you have more career knowledge/plans ?	Career planning / knowledge	
8. Did Ganbina help to connect you with culture and community ?	Connection to culture	

9. Since working with Ganbina, do you feel more valued and respected for who you are?	Feeling valued and belonging	Social inclusion
10. Since working with Ganbina, do you have more leadership skills ?	Leadership, contribution and advocacy	Choice and empowerment

Open-text response questions were analysed thematically – key themes were identified across the responses to a question and are presented in this report through selected quotes.

Review of program and organisation documents

Ganbina has collected data throughout the period, such as demographic data related to participants, attendance and completion data, and some outcomes data, which was provided in de-identified form to researchers. In addition, Ganbina provided organisational documents and reports.

Ethics

This project obtained ethics approval from Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC).

Limitations

This evaluation draws on data from a relatively small set of interviewees and so saturation of ideas and views has not been reached – this means that commentary cannot be considered to be representative. Additionally, while the long-term nature of Ganbina’s programs has particular value, it means it is difficult for informants and participants to confine their commentary to an assessment of only the past three years (2020-2022), making it difficult to accurately ascertain if their comments are specific to this period. Interviews were conducted online or by phone. Unfortunately, internet connections were not always stable so the quality of the audio recording and associated transcription was sometimes compromised.

However, a significant strength of this research is the inclusion of 51 Ganbina participant viewpoints through the mechanism of the survey. While commentary was often limited, the larger number provided an opportunity for themes to emerge even from sparse comments.

THE JOBS4U2 PROGRAM MODEL

Ganbina takes a long-term approach to addressing social, economic and health disadvantage in the Aboriginal population, with a particular focus on increasing engagement with education, completion of mainstream secondary education, and the increased participation of Aboriginal young people in post-school education and training and/or employment. Alongside these goals, Ganbina aims to build the leadership capacity and activity of Aboriginal young people. Figure 1, from a previous evaluation (SVA, 2020) articulates the Jobs4U2 Theory of Change.

Figure 1: Ganbina Theory of Change (SVA, 2020, p.8)



The Ganbina Jobs4U2 program includes 10 program elements:

1. Jobs Education
2. Jobs Training
3. Jobs Employment
4. Industry Tours Program
5. Scholarships
6. Leadership Training
7. Corporate Futures Program
8. Driver Skills Program

9. Youth Achievement Awards

10. Accelerated Learning Program.

Program areas are intended to be cumulative (i.e. individuals can undertake multiple program areas over time or at the same time) but can also be discrete (that is, individuals may only participate in one area). A staff member provides a useful example of the way participants engage with different program elements:

The primary school kids can also access the Accelerated Learning Program, which is like the inhouse tutoring program. Then they go on to the Education Program which is Year 7 to Year 12, and in that time they can also access the Driver's Program to get their Learners and go onto their P's. And when they get to Year 10, they can join the Youth Leadership Program which goes for three years - Years 10, 11 and 12. And then there's also the tutoring that they can access when they're at high school. And then the Training and Employment one is from post-secondary right up to the age of 25. And there's the Training and Higher Education part - but that's if they go on to full time training either at TAFE or Uni. Financial support - they help with accommodation and transport and education. The scope for financial support is a little bit broader - it's not just buying books or paying for tuition - it's also for the living expenses if they've had to relocate from home (Staff 1).

According to program data (ending 2022), almost half (44%) of Ganbina participants had been in the program for five years or more, with 11% having been participants for 10 years or more. Almost three quarters (71%) had been Ganbina participants for 3 years or more. Overall, this speaks to the successful engagement of participants over time and the provision of long-term support and development across multiple year levels and program activities.

Table 3 describes the support activities delivered by Ganbina in each program area.

Table 3: Overview of Ganbina Jobs4U2 program design and activities of support

Program	Age cohort	Activities of support															
		Individual client plan	Fortnightly mentoring	Liaise parents and school	Financial assistance	TFN	Proof of Aboriginality	Driver training/preparation	Industry tours	Careers Expo or networking	Focus on Careers pathways and	Careers/jobs mentoring	Assist job/training applications	Interview prep	Post job support	Employer liaison	Leadership training
1. Jobs Education	School yr 7-12	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓ (Yrs 7-9)	✓ (Expo Yrs 10-12)							
2. Jobs Training	Age 15-25	✓	✓			✓	✓				✓						
3. Jobs Employment	Age 15-25 (employed or job seeker)	✓	✓			✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4. Industry Tours Program	Yr 9								✓								
5. Scholarships	All school yr levels				✓ (education expenses)												
6. Leadership Training	School yr 10-12	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓		✓				✓
7. Corporate Futures Program	Studying or employed									✓ (networking)	✓	✓					
8. Driver Skills Program					✓ (L permit and licence)			✓									
9. Youth Achievement Awards	In secondary ed, f/t training, f/t employment																
10. Accelerated Learning Program	All yr levels				✓ (tutoring)												

Ganbina supports around 350-400 young people each year across the school year levels and beyond into post-secondary education, training and employment. Numbers reduced slightly over the COVID-19 pandemic years 2020-2022.

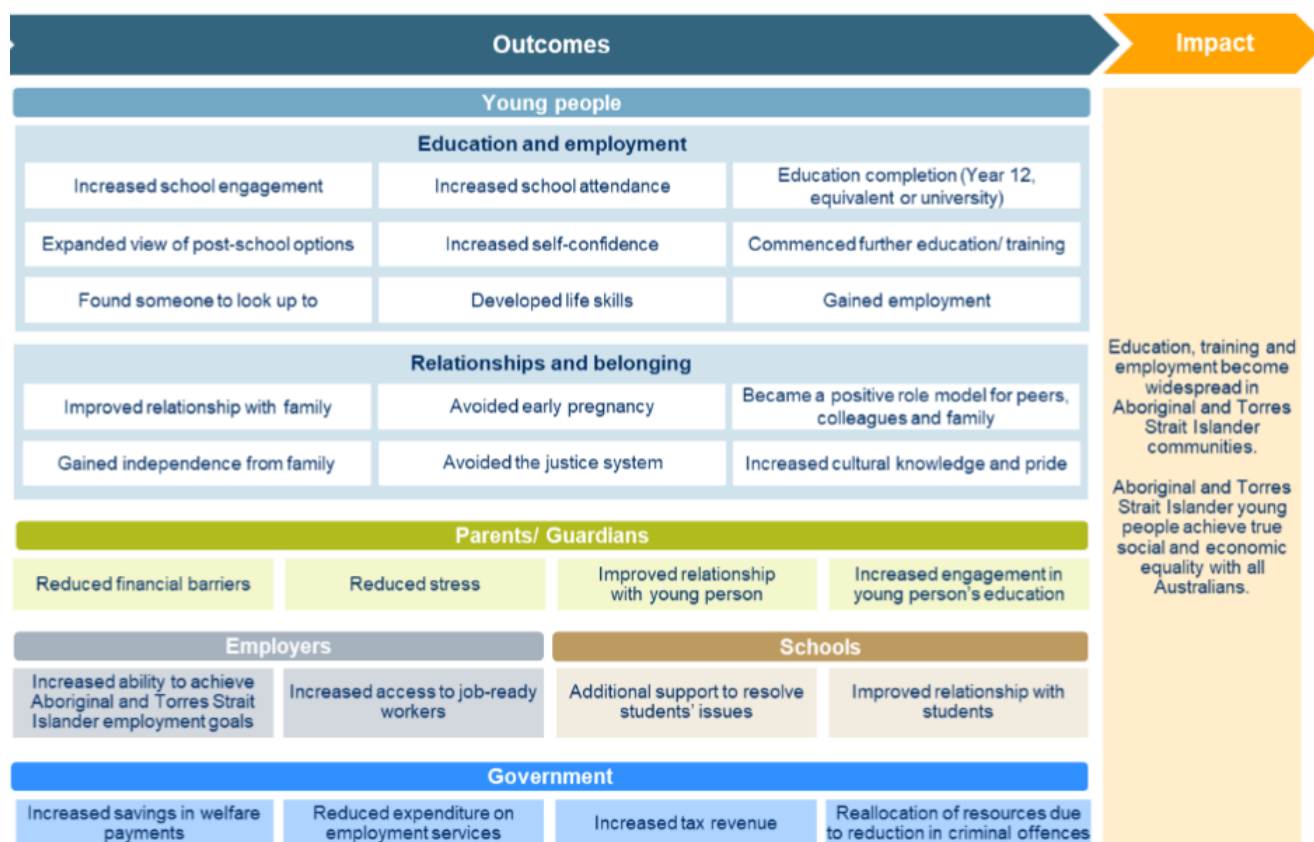
Table 4: Ganbina participant characteristics (source: program data)

Year level	2020	2021	2022
Employment	52	36	28
University	13	7	8
Certificate or Diploma	2	1	3
Yr 12 VCE	4	6	6
Yr 12 VCAL	2	10	10
Yr 11	27	14	16
Yr 10	20	18	31
Yr 9	24	27	34
Yr 8	31	27	34
Yr 7	29	28	38
Primary	190	172	138
Total	394	346	346
Active client gender			
Male	178 (45%)	162 (47%)	168 (49%)
Female	216 (55%)	184 (53%)	178 (51%)
Active client age			
Under 12	168 (43%)	144 (42%)	117 (34%)
12-16	107 (27%)	111 (32%)	129 (37%)
16-21	81 (21%)	67 (19%)	83 (24%)
21+	38 (10%)	24 (7%)	17 (5%)
Total	394	346	346

Past evidence of success of the model

A key element of Ganbina's program design is the long-term delivery of a relatively stable program of activities in order to effect generational change. This means that successive evaluations can build a picture of outcomes attainment and how this tracks over time (though specific indices may vary). Outcomes have been identified for each stakeholder group as shown in the diagram below.

Figure 2: Theory of Change -outcomes of stakeholders (SVA, 2020, p.9)



Data analysed by successive evaluators to date shows that Ganbina has achieved positive outcomes across a range of areas for Ganbina participants (young people), as described in the table below.

Table 5: Findings from past evaluations

Impact Areas	Year of Evaluation focus (Author)	Findings
Education	2011 - 2014 (PWC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Year 12 completion rates (up to 100%) High retention rates (95% and over) Complement mainstream education programs Build positive and symbolic profile of Aboriginal culture in schools
	2009-2019 (SVA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher Year 9 - 12 retention rate (63%) than national Indigenous population (59%) 94% completion rate of Year 12 students (2016-2019)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher Year 12 or equivalent completion rate than Shepparton Indigenous population
Careers Training	2011 - 2014 (PWC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personalised approach and individualised career plan
Employment	2011 - 2014 (PWC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship with businesses and employers as success factors Employers likely to employ Ganbina student
	2009-2019 (SVA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher rate of employment compared with Shepparton Indigenous population
Life Skills	2011 - 2014 (PWC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical and useful initiatives remove barriers
Leadership	2011 - 2014 (PWC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ganbina students seen to demonstrate leadership and influence siblings
Culture	2011 - 2014 (PWC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for cultural connection strengthening pride

Data from PWC, 2016 and SVA, 2020.

Past evidence of key ingredients of the Ganbina model

Prior evaluations have also identified some of the unique model elements that contribute to outcomes. These have been defined by PWC (2016) and SVA (2016, 2020) as:

1. Indigenous community led organisation utilising a 'hand up' not 'hand out' approach.
2. Ganbina tackles three major areas: education, training, employment (PWC, 2016) with a focus on keeping youth in mainstream education (SVA, 2016, 2020).
3. Striving for excellence and celebrating success (SVA, 2016, 2020) and recognising success through an annual award ceremony (PWC, 2016).
4. Working in partnership with the local community (SVA, 2016, 2020) through the involvement of the wider community, local businesses, and schools (PWC, 2016).
5. Taking a long-term view (SVA, 2016, 2020) and accepting participants from primary school through to tertiary studies and employment (PWC, 2016).
6. Providing guidance, personalised planning and involving participants' families with a low participant to staff member ratio of 83:1 (PWC, 2016).
7. Engaging multiple funding partners (PWC, 2016).
8. Equipping participants with life skills, leadership training, driver skills (PWC, 2016).
9. Practical and hands on (SVA, 2020).
10. Voluntary participation (SVA, 2020).

Both PWC (2016) and SVA (2016) assessed Ganbina's model as being consistent with the practice literature in relation to Indigenous education and school to work transition.

Adaptations to model during COVID

The period of this evaluation spans the years of the COVID-19 epidemic (2020-2022). Ganbina program and public documents report the changed environment that necessitated program changes during this period. At the onset of COVID-19, students moved rapidly to a schooling-from-home mode as schools closed and remote learning was instituted. This coincided with the first year of delivery of the secondary education from the region's new 'super' school, Greater Shepparton Secondary College (GSSC), an amalgamation of four schools in the region. This added a level of disruption and change to students as they changed schools and commenced in a much larger school environment. Interviews with staff highlighted the adaptations and challenges.

So, we were working in an uncertain world, because we're a certainty organisation where we make a commitment, a promise - that's what you get and you probably get more than that. So all of a sudden we found ourselves in a very uncomfortable situation. In the early days - in March 2020 - we were closing the doors. What are we doing? And we sat down and mapped it out - what do we look like through this pandemic? And then that became 6 months, 12 months... So for the first time in our history our Leadership Program provided a fair bit of uncertainty because parts of that program needed to be cancelled and delivered in a different way. And we did pick up a different delivery model across the organisation because we couldn't go on site at schools. So, we weren't able to have the regular contact face-to-face that we'd normally had. So there were those sort of impacts (Staff 2).

During that period of time [COVID] we moved to online registrations. Prior to that - because the Support Officers are working directly with the families and the participants - it was important to have that face-to-face interaction and connect. Families would usually have to come into the office and complete the forms and do their interviews and whatever else. But like everyone during the lockdown periods we had to move, and quite quickly, to an online format. For the families that couldn't access the internet to do it online, I would go into the office and

collect things. If they were able to get forms to the office and just slip it under the door I'd go down and grab it and do it that way as well (Staff 1).

The COVID years obviously didn't help - the home schooling and being unable to physically see them [the students] on site. We've lost the continuity because of COVID. In the COVID years, the Leadership Program suffered a lot because we couldn't take the kids away and we couldn't have the face-to-face sessions with them...So we had to reorganise pretty much at an instant, you know, within a couple of weeks. So all of a sudden these kids who are on their journey in a three year program and, well, we can't go away next month now (Staff 1).

Alongside the changes associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, a range of issues were identified that were affecting Ganbina participants including:

- moving to the new 'super' school;
- remote learning;
- a lack of physical and social connection;
- financial hardships;
- impact on physical and mental health; and
- impact on capacity to learn (Ganbina Partner Update, December 2020).

In response to this unique set of circumstances, Ganbina reported that all program activities migrated to online delivery (including a Virtual Youth Achievements Awards Ceremony) and introduced a new range of additional support initiatives tailored to needs. These are summarised below.

COVID Relief Fund and material support

The COVID Relief Fund was made available to cover the cost of equipment and services for remote learning.

All the kids got support with desks if they needed it, pens, school equipment that they needed (Staff 6 / Graduate).

We were doing Officeworks deliveries - the staff would be like, 'Oh, we've got Jack Smith's printer. Let's drive it around to his house, put it on the verandah, knock on the door and walk off'. We created a Relief Fund, taken out of our pool funding, and then we rolled that over into the second year because obviously

people still needed stuff. And basically we had no criteria on that - we didn't have any framework. If people needed something that cost \$500, we would buy it - whether that was [electronic] Tablets, in some cases paying for Internet access... So, we absolutely swung to whatever the need was. Our community was in dire need. We're all in the same boat together. How can we ensure that Johnny at home has got all of the learning material he needs? So we provided this financial help. We had staff knocking on doors. We had staff delivering stuff that we would pick up and collect. So out of that Relief Fund, that's where we stepped out of our 'lane' because there was a community emergency and our families needed our help. Our families called upon us to help because that's where they felt safe (Staff 2).

Over the COVID times that became 'Oh well, it's too hard for me because I don't have a desk'. 'Alright, well, what if we got you a desk. Is that going to improve the situation?' So yeah, we pivoted a lot in that time (Staff 4).

One mum I sat on the phone with for three hours one day. I would just reach out and be able to support them - the conversations and stepping them through things or working out what essentials they might have needed and stuff like that. So that was how we implemented the support - we helped people get iPads, laptops, printers, desks, stationary. You know, there might have been one or two pens within the house and there's five or six of them, as well as mum and dad trying to remote work (Staff 3 / Graduate).

Ganbina not only provided material resources to assist young people with their education but also worked to help their families with food and other personal supplies.

Shepparton got so bad that you couldn't even order food online. It wasn't going to come for a week. The team knew their families well so were able to work out their needs from the conversations...One of the families had a baby in the house. We don't support babies on the program, but she couldn't get hold of formula and she couldn't get hold of nappies. So we had standard packs, just for families that we knew wouldn't ask for help. So maybe just do a standard pack for their meat, fruit, vegetable or whatever during that full isolation [period] (Staff 4).

Virtual delivery of program and additional activities

Staff rapidly pivoted to organise activities to be delivered online.

We actually done it virtually - we've done a virtual Youth Leadership Summit where we've done a different number of topics around like goals, goal setting and values. You know - getting them [students] to identify who they are and stuff like that. So myself, my manager and the employment consultant at the time, we delivered the program virtually. Even in the mornings I went to the bakery, got some rolls, snack box, some fruit and some lollies and bagged it up and dropped it off to their house every morning. So that was a four-day summit (Staff 3 / Graduate).

We had a Zoom set up. We'd send through the times and obviously you're still being very mindful of the kids being on the screen all day having to do their class and knowing how draining it was for them. So sometimes it was just a general catch up or check in, or different interactive engagement games (Staff 3 / Graduate).

Contact with participants, and with families, was maintained throughout the period, with technology aiding this.

They [Ganbina staff] kept up the fortnightly contact, even if it was over Zoom or a phone call. I know that it was definitely hard for them (Staff 6 / Graduate).

I think we were able to pivot and help the families understand that we had to deliver it remotely - there's no access to facilities. So I think the pivoting and reaching out to the family – there were still high levels of engagement with the family even though we weren't at the school (Staff 4).

During that period – two and a half years of COVID and then the floods. And we were able to deliver the program virtually. So we were able to remote work - the families loved the support with the phone calls and check-ins (Staff 3 / Graduate).

Other innovations during this period included a virtual drop-in lounge (for participants to stay in touch with peers and staff), and e-newsletters for participants and families (offering advice on how to study remotely, manage health and wellbeing).

Staff acknowledged the challenges and recognised that – as with all services during this time – significant changes and compromises had to be made. In many instances it was felt that COVID did have a detrimental impact on service provision and outcomes, while also recognising that the ongoing – mainly virtual - support was a necessary service that had a positive influence during difficult times.

Just coming out of that COVID period - I think we're still recovering a bit. We did a lot of virtual stuff. We still completed all our sessions with the Leadership Program and for the Education Program. We do Industry Tours and Careers Nights for them. We still delivered everything - we just had to do it differently. So a lot of that was virtual - it just sometimes doesn't impact the same way as what you do when it's face-to-face unfortunately. They organised what needed to happen - pretty much for us to work from home...So it was really challenging times for staff, let alone the students and their families. Parents had to become teachers. We kept up a lot of phone contact in communications with the families. But we didn't wanna be overbearing because they were having so many phone calls from schools and department and everything (Staff 5).

RESULTS

The above summary of the Jobs4U2 program provides the context for program delivery between the period 2020-2022. Below, the evaluation data is presented to explore what outcomes were achieved across this period for participants, what barriers or challenges impacted the program and its outcomes, and what were the core ingredients of program effectiveness in this period.

Outcomes for young people's participation in Jobs4U2.

Outcomes of Ganbina's Jobs4U2 program over 2020-2022 were assessed based on the CSOT survey with Ganbina participants and interviews with staff and stakeholders. The CSOT survey was undertaken by 51 Ganbina participants and addressed 9 outcomes from 4 domains. Interviews were undertaken with 21 Ganbina participants, staff and a range of stakeholders. Interviewees address a range of issues related to Ganbina with a key focus on outcomes, including outcomes also covered in the CSOT survey and some additional outcome areas.

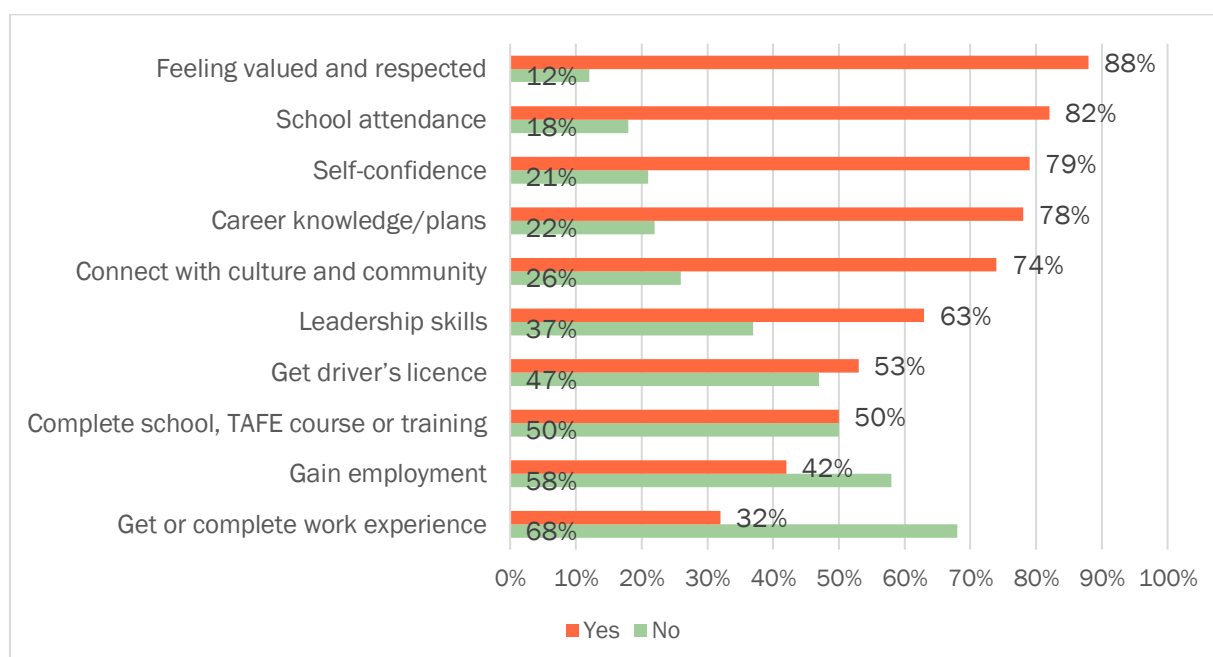
For the survey, young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were asked, 'What has changed in your life because of Ganbina'? Respondents were asked to consider a range of life areas and whether Ganbina had helped achieve change based on a scale ranging from:

- Yes
- No
- This was already good, no support needed
- Not relevant to me.

'Positive' change / outcomes have been determined based on 'yes' responses, while 'no' responses are used to represent a negative or no change outcome. Percentages have been calculated based on the combined 'yes/no' response (i.e. 'no support needed' and 'not relevant to me' have been omitted from this calculation).

The figure below (Figure 3) reports outcomes results from the CSOT.

Figure 3: Percentage of respondents who reported Ganbina had helped them achieve change in life areas



Overall, results were positive from the surveying of Ganbina participants with more people experiencing positive change rather than no change across 8 of the 10 items. This was further supported with interview material from staff and stakeholders.

Outcome areas are discussed below.

Feeling valued/respected and belonging

The most positive response was 'do you feel more **valued and respected**' with 88% identifying positive change since working with Ganbina, with only two people feeling this was not relevant to them, and three feeling this was already good and needed no change.

In interviews, respondents identified the value of connecting and bonding with peers – that Ganbina provided valuable opportunities to make friendships with people beyond their immediate networks:

Over that three-year period [2020-2022] we did a camp near Eildon. We took all three levels together on a camp, which was the first. They'd never actually crossed paths or engaged together - some in Year 10, one in Year 12. And then they were able to build a bond. And then even at school because of that trip they

said they started to hang around with each other or they'd make sure they'd say hello and go and check in on each other (Staff 3 / Graduate).

It teaches the kids to network. We've got the Catholic Education system, we've got the independent schools. So other kids that the kids might not necessarily catch up with. They might go to the Greater Shepparton College, but you also have secondary colleges all around the Goulbourn area. So there are other young people involved on the Leadership Program - so you're networking and you're connecting. There's strength in that area (Stakeholder 3 / Family 4).

I really liked the Industry one, I think that's what it's called, because we've got all the other schools together. And there was a girl from there that I knew from my primary school. So it was actually really good to see her again. And then we became really good friends (Student 1).

I've met about 20-odd people who I probably would never have spoken to otherwise. ... Ganbina tries to help us interact with all those other students in the Leadership Program (Student 3).

One of the things that kids have said in the past on many occasions is that they've enjoyed meeting other kids from other schools, in other families and mobs and that sort of thing...One of the purposes of the program was to bring kids together and from different schools (Staff 2).

Attending education/training

'Help with your **school attendance**' also received a highly positive response in the survey with 82% identifying positive change with help from Ganbina. However nearly half of all respondents (23 people) felt that their school attendance was already good and needed no help from Ganbina (and therefore did not rate their progress in regard to school attendance). In part, this may be due to previous participation in Ganbina prior to the three year period in focus here (2020-2022), where participants may have already been supported to develop strong school attendance patterns. The value of support that students receive from Ganbina was recognised by interviewees who identified that as a result students both attended and remained committed to their education.

Look, the offering of assistance with licences and just the supports with their studies - and uniform if need be. Just those needs - those really key things that people struggle with and need assistance with to keep them feeling proud, going

to school and to keep them happy - knowing that their children are going to school because they've got the right shoes and the right jumper. Those sorts of things - whereas those parents probably wouldn't have had that. I've just seen so many lives change as a result - you know families that have been sadly faced with family violence and related incidents and have had to leave their homes and things like that. Ganbina still help those students, you know - it was just amazing. And I think the feel for those families and for those students really made them feel really special, even though they couldn't be at school at that time. And that they were still supported and was still able to have access to their school work because of Ganbina (Stakeholder 1).

If I'm out at the school and I see - we'll say his name's Andrew - If I see he needs shoes or anything like that, I'll talk with Andrew and say, 'How are you're going? I know your shoes are a bit wear and tear there - Do you need some help or support?' That's where we go back to the office and then I'd just make a phone call home and just [say] 'look I Just wanted to let you know you got this much money still left. I seen Andrew at school today, so he might say that he's seen me today. We spoke about this, this and this, but I did notice he might need some new shoes. Did you need help with that?' It's just that in the past, I've seen kids being kicked out of classes because they haven't got the right jumper on and stuff like that (Staff 5).

When I was there, there were students in high school that were very open in saying that if it wasn't for Ganbina they wouldn't be at school anymore because it was like a positive network around them. Because maybe they didn't get that support in the home in encouraging them to stay in school, whereas the Project Officers did provide them with that encouragement to stay in school and saw it as an important part of them being able to move through to the next step (Staff 1).

Completing school, TAFE course, or training

This assistance with school attendance was also recognised in relation to completing secondary education with staff and stakeholders (including those working in education) recognising the value of Ganbina's support.

We have big success in education with increase in staying on and completing school (Staff 6 / Graduate).

I found them over the years to be exceptionally helpful and they're putting their resources into kids. And that's really what education is all about - giving them opportunities. And I have certain first-hand knowledge of those I don't think would ever go through Year 12 without that support both financially and emotionally...There's no question in my mind that's the case...I think we have kids who would not have got through Year 12. And probably they are the first one in their family that had ever done so, and in some instances it started a pattern for all the kids who go through and get through Year 12 (Stakeholder 5).

The value of Ganbina was also recognised through holding young people to high standards and providing them educational support through tutoring programs.

The kids from Ganbina hold themselves to a higher standard when at school. I know a kid - his grades were slipping a little bit. His family were taking some time off to go on a holiday and he was like, 'I have to make sure my attendance is up because if I don't I'm not allowed to be on Ganbina'. So they knew that you had to keep your attendance up, you had to keep your grades up to be a part of Ganbina and I think that was like a reward (Stakeholder 7).

They did a term of English and then a term of Maths [tutoring through Ganbina]. She really enjoyed that. That helped her a lot, particularly when we came out of COVID. ... so they supported the girls that way...I know that if I need to call them and say, 'I need some help' they would definitely assist me (Stakeholder 6 / Family 3).

Achieving success at secondary level also provided further educational opportunities:

There was a girl that I worked with. She finished Year 12 last year and she only signed up to Ganbina in Year 12, 'cause she was new to the area. She had no cultural connections, so it was a little bit difficult for her. But when she had that connection something changed with her at school. She just came right out of her shell. She took on leadership roles, she was speaking at assemblies and that type of stuff. She went to their [Ganbina's] Careers Night last year and she made connections to a university and then from that she went to the university. Monash Uni had a camp – an overnight type thing and after that - and that's it. She got into the Uni she wanted to go to. And that was from connections that she made from Careers Night and the camp and all that type of stuff. That was really special (Family 1).

Interviewees valued the support Ganbina provided to transition participants from school into further study.

I think that what Ganbina do really great is those networks and having a lot of those networks and giving kids the opportunity to see that there's a wide range of things you can do after school and you're not limited to just being in Shepparton. And also offering that support if they do move -they're really heavily involved when the kids transition to university in Melbourne because we know how they need that, moving away from your family (Stakeholder 7).

As a participant, they were a huge help, a huge support. Particularly being one of the first to go to university in my family, it was nice to have the team that I could rely on and they could answer all the questions for me. Even if they didn't have the answers themselves, they always had the right contact to go to and to ask those questions. For me it was a very daunting time trying to figure out what it is that I wanted to do while staying engaged in high school and all the other things that were happening in my life. It was really nice to have that reliability. I knew they were always there for me. They also helped me get my first job at Coles as a checkout chick. Yeah, just general support in every sense (Stakeholder 4 / Graduate).

The Education Program works very well in the schools... undoubtedly it's where we have our largest amount of participants as well through the secondary school years. It's more about continuing to focus on moving them through to employment and training once they finish (Staff 4).

She's just started her first year of Uni after having a year off school. She was supported through the Education Program. She also participated in the youth Leadership Program. She suffered from anxiety, and I remember having a conversation with her and saying that the Leadership Program pushed her to be able to do things that she would never have thought she'd be able to do because of her anxiety. It was a lot for her to finish Year 12. She knew that she would have to have a gap year. ...She got through. She did it and I've heard that she's started Uni this year. So she stayed true to what she said she was going to do. She needed to have that gap year just to reposition herself - and then she's gone on to Uni. She's relocated to Melbourne too, and that's a massive thing for her personally. I was talking to her mum. I asked how she was going. She said, 'She's like a different person. She's had that time. She's been supported. Anxiety's not an issue anymore - she's been able to push through and build up resilience' (Staff 1).

Only a small number of survey respondents felt that the outcome of completing school or training was relevant to them over the past three years (as many may not have been at this stage of education). Of those who answered this question, half (50%) felt that Ganbina had helped them achieve outcomes in this area. Given the timeframe, for those who felt they had not achieved outcomes, this is likely to be at least partly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Personal development and living skills

The survey asked two questions related to the outcome area of **personal development and living skills**. These related to 'self-confidence' and assistance with getting a driver's licence. 79% of respondents (answering Yes or No) felt that they had more **self-confidence** since working with Ganbina. Six people felt this was already good and therefore had needed no help from Ganbina and two felt it not relevant to them.

Interviewees identified a range of personal development and living skills outcomes: confidence, motivation and the expanding of life possibilities were dominant themes.

And that's the thing - when we're interviewing or taking applications we're not going 'are you a leader? Yep, you're a leader. Tick the box. Let's put you on the program'. It's always the ones [that talk about] 'I'm unsure, I'm a little bit nervous, and I've never been on a plane before, and I don't really know other people' [that go on the Leadership Program]. By the end of the three years [Leadership Program] they're like these very confident young people. I don't think without that experience they would have gotten to that level (Staff 3 / Graduate).

They come from being so shy Year 10 to Year 12 and they're graduating the Leadership Program. They MC Awards Night and stuff like that and then they're up there making speeches about their whole journey of the Leadership Program. I think that's just amazing when they wouldn't do public speaking right back at the start (Staff 5).

Given that my daughter has such anxiety, she's kind of disengaged from sports and other community. I guess I was looking for something - a little niche for her that she would really get a lot out of and enjoy. So we spoke about the Leadership Program the year before she was able to apply. We had lots of aims - whether she would fit the criteria for the program. I know you have to have 80% in attendance at school and other things like that - she has to agree to be part of the leadership. But I was really interested in it because I wanted her to build self-confidence and such skills that stay with you for life - values and beliefs. So I felt like this program

could give her life skills... Like I can see a massive difference in my daughter and her growth. I can't say that it's just from perfect parenting. You know what I mean? We intentionally put supports in place for her to build her capacity - her own skills and development. She's just come such a long way. She was a really shy person who would go to community events, and she'd hide behind me because she didn't wanna have conversations with people she didn't know very well. And now, she stands tall and strong, right beside me to engage and stuff. So I do see a massive difference in my daughter (Family 1).

The Leadership Program - just the fact that it's helped me build a bit more self confidence and public speaking. The fact that they've taken us out on trips and engaged us further in the community. Last year we ended up going to the Gold Coast and this year we will be heading to New Zealand. Definitely an opportunity I wouldn't have thought about going on (Student 3).

Well, one family that I know had two children go through the program over time. And they're lucky enough to go over to New Zealand, but at different year levels. One of them wants to look for employment over in New Zealand and live there when they're a bit older. You know, things like that- Ganbina are opening the world to them. In that sense they're just amazing. I know a couple of students - their mums were telling me that they wanted to go to Trinity College. I think they had a visit to Trinity College at some point in time - they talked about the students that were there and that people looked real professional. They probably wouldn't get that from any school around here in Shepparton - so you know that was a positive. So already thinking of those sorts of things while they're still at school and in their younger years - they can move on later in life - that their minds are open to more than what they've ever imagined hearing around this area. And the programs that they've got in place are just really meaningful, really meaningful (Stakeholder 1).

Another example is probably the Sydney trip that they did last year. She got there with the Leadership group and they did workshops in Sydney - it was an experience that I don't know if I would have provided for it. And they've got Cairns and New Zealand this year - we're going through the process of getting her passport. And her dad's never had a passport in his life. So even moving past the experiences of her own parents because of the Leadership group (Family 1).

I just think their excursions and everything that they have - the visits to Uni's and even being able to go overseas to New Zealand, and all those things that have

been offered and been available for students - these students would never ever in their lives have been able to experience if it wasn't for Ganbina...It's mind-blowing and as I'll just keep saying, 'I just wish it was able to be offered to more people' (Stakeholder 1).

The kids that have done our program, that are doing our program - the encouragement that they see in themselves. This status within themselves as a community member is very uplifting to see - we don't always have this mindset that we can be the scientist or the doctor. Their aspirations are just so bright (Staff 8).

I love it when they - so they sort of put themselves down - you're going through goals and they don't have any goals. And then you sort of chat to them about where their career goals are or the clothes that they really enjoy and what they're really good at... And then they list all these goals and they're just so shocked with themselves that they've got something to look forward to or a goal to achieve (Staff 6 / Graduate).

Ganbina offers assistance with obtaining a **driver's licence** involving not only lessons, but support with related documents and financial support.

We also help them with the Driver's Program as well. When they're 15 1/2, we start encouraging them to start reading the Learner's book and making sure they got their birth certificates to be able to go get their licence. And then once they book in for their Ls, we reimburse them the money back and then they get 5 free driving lessons with a proper instructor (Staff 5).

53% of respondents (9 people) identified that Ganbina had assisted them with obtaining their driver's licence. The assistance with getting their driver's licence was recognised by participants in interviews, and contributed to increased confidence and independence for the future.

I got my P's [Probationary licence] through Ganbina, which was really good (Staff 6 / Graduate).

It's definitely been them gaining employment or getting their L's [Learners' driving permit] or P's [Probationary licence]. So I've had two of my Year 12's get their P's which has been good and yeah it's been realizing that there's more to after school of where they wanna go (Staff 6 / Graduate).

I also really liked the driving lessons because I don't have, like, a lot of confidence. So that definitely helped me feel better driving. [The trainer], she was really nice (Student 1).

Being assisted with getting a **tax file number, birth certificate and passport** were also highly valued as these important documents opened up life possibilities.

I worked with a girl last year that couldn't get hold of her birth certificate. But the flow on effect was can't get a Medicare card, can't get enough pieces of identification together to get a house to move in to, to get themselves a job. So, we worked all that out with that individual and the birth certificate was life changing. So, we help them with those sorts of things 'cause you know sometimes parents don't have them. That's actually a really key part of the program I feel - making sure that they've got all those things that will lend themselves to being able to get a job, a house...anything that improves their employment opportunities we're happy to help with (Staff 4).

I do a little bit of the mentoring as well. So I'll go out to the schools and catch up with them. You know, trying to help build their resume, tax file numbers, birth certificates - and also we assist with gaining their passports as well (Staff 3 / Graduate).

They had this opportunity to go on a school camp - actually they're going to Indonesia. But the family haven't done the passports, can't find the birth certificate. We can help with that. We're constantly talking to them about what we can assist with and the reasons for it (Staff 4).

Career planning/knowledge

The survey asked Ganbina participants if they felt they had more **career knowledge/plans** since working with Ganbina. 78% indicated they did. This was further evident in interviews where people spoke of the value of employment excursions and assistance with completing resumes.

There's definitely job readiness involved. They've [Ganbina] helped her [Ganbina participant] create her own resume and encouraged her and supported her to apply for jobs. She's just gotten to that stage where she's really motivated to find some casual work and make her own money. She's actually really excited about that...It's definitely been a very supportive process (Family 1).

Helping with resumes, beyond what parents may be comfortable/confident doing: Doing the resume for her - like that took a load off me [as a parent] because I don't know how to write a first resume. Ganbina was like, 'we can do this, this and this' (Stakeholder 6 / Family 3).

Young people particularly valued the Careers Nights and Industry Tours, wanting to have more of these included in the program.

Connection to culture and community

For 74% of survey respondents, Ganbina had helped them **connect with culture and community**, with seven people feeling this was already good so they did not need help from Ganbina. Only one person felt this was not relevant to them. Interviews expanded further on the value of Ganbina in connecting participants with their culture and community.

It's identity of themselves, their bloodlines and stuff like that. Like talking about who they are, where they're from, where their Aboriginality comes from and how much they knew about it or didn't know about it – we just start the journey for them. Many start the Leadership Program not knowing really who they were or couldn't even pronounce their mob's name properly ... So you would do sessions like 'your bloodline' - they had to work out where they were from. Some of them didn't know. So some aren't just from around Shepparton - a lot of them aren't from there, they're from out of town. They could be Wurundjeri, they could be this and that. So it's about if they know where they're from, whereabouts to find it on the map and stuff like that as well - who they are as people. A lot don't know where their mobs are or how to pronounce it. Or how to even find them (Staff 5).

One that really stands out for me is she's made connections with kids her own age that she might not have connected with prior to the Leadership group - and supported a connection to culture as well. They go off on their camps and they're experiencing outdoor activities and cultural tours over at our traditional lands, it's things like that. They're vital to people's wellbeing in the Koorie community. And it's nice to know that Black organisations prioritise that for our kids as well because it isn't just a parent responsibility. It is community - we all know the saying 'It takes a village to raise a child'. It's who's in that village that's important (Family 1).

One staff member reflected on her past experience of being a Ganbina participant and how she drew on that in talking about the value of cultural connection to participants.

I met a lot of my long-term friends through Ganbina from being in the program with them as well. Going through school and you're [Year] 7, you don't know many people. Then you meet other people within your community and stuff. It was really good, especially being a light skin-coloured indigenous person. It was pretty hard,

but that's what I like to say to people - that being a part of Ganbina they make you feel a part of your Aboriginal culture, which is really good (Staff 6 / Graduate).

Leadership, contribution and advocacy

Almost two thirds (63%) of survey respondents reported positive change in **leadership skills** with Ganbina's help, while 6 people did not need help in this area, and one felt this was not relevant to them. In interviews, respondents spoke of the value and importance of those who had undertaken Ganbina programs in becoming role models and mentors. The discussion of these outcomes necessarily spans a longer period of time than the three year focus of this evaluation, given the lengthy period over which participants go on to make contributions.

Some kids have completed the program and go on to work for Ganbina – become role models and mentor to younger Indigenous kids. Also it is intergenerational with parents who have done the program and now their kids do it... Supporting one person has a flow on effect – others see the benefit (i.e. getting employment and being able to buy things). Others then want the support and opportunity... Young people succeeding through Ganbina then become role models for others (Staff 6 / Graduate).

Ganbina and their programs has the ripple effect for our entire community because it establishes leaders. Then the young people in our community see those leaders, see that it's a possibility. The classic saying 'if you can't see it, you can't be it'. I think that Ganbina embodies that whole process through their years of working with young people, building them up, and they become leaders, mentors, role models - and then that cycle ripple effect (Stakeholder 4 / Graduate).

The leadership traits [of the Leadership Program] - they knew how to be leaders within their communities and that someone's always looking up to them. It could be a little sibling, like one of their siblings - someone like that is always watching... And sometimes you're a leader without you even realizing you are one (Staff 5).

They have a big, big role in themselves - they might be the first to go to school, they may be the first to go to university. So all of these 'first' of anything... you want respectable community members, it's uplifting for the community. And just changing the narrative of community about the negativity - our kids can be anything they want to be if they put their minds to it (Staff 8).

I feel like she's almost setting, that kind of expectation for her younger siblings as well. You know, like coming to meet on weekends here with the Leadership group - and she's got a bag packed and she's going on a camp and they're like, 'why aren't we going too?'. So, [sibling], who is off to high school next year, one of her goals is to eventually join the Leadership group because she's seen her sister do that (Family 1).

In community to have more of our people educated and upskilled - I think there's the ripple effects in community. We all look up to each other. And whether we like to admit it or not, everybody is a leader and there's always somebody else looking up to you or whoever else. And you have somebody you want to aspire to be like. Whether they like to admit it or not, kids have leadership skills just literally by being at school and doing well. I think that that's something really positive for the community. I know with their [Ganbina] Awards Nights, it's massive for some of the families; for their kid to get up on stage and win an award 'cause you know some of our kids might not be winning the awards at school...But for the families to be invited to have a really, really nice event, a sit down dinner, and community members are there. And just to see their kid achieve that (Stakeholder 7).

If you've got kids that are feeling supported in school and they're staying in school, and they're being encouraged to achieve things that they may not necessarily have thought that they could, that benefits everyone. It doesn't just benefit them, it benefits their peers, it benefits their families. It means that they're becoming role models for the younger kids coming through, their younger siblings, other kids at school that may not be participating in the program. If they're supported to pick up part-time work and then go on to further training, it means that as a society and a community you're going to get skilled people and people that have got an inbuilt work ethic. It also shifts perceptions too, changes mindsets, because if you've got these little, young Aboriginal kids that are participating in employment and training, and going on to do great things, people's unconscious bias are getting changed aren't they (Staff 1).

One parent interviewee has spoken at Ganbina leadership events and appreciated that, as a single mother, she could bring her kids along whom she felt really benefitted from the experience in being able to see role models among the older students:

I've spoken twice at their Year 10 Leadership Program dinners. I was able to bring my daughter to the first one and then with the second one I spoke at I was able to bring both my girls. I think it's good for them to come, because then my children

get different experiences from talking, being part of the conversation, but also listening to the conversation that those Year 10's have. They can get ideas from that, but also be inspired and see what the kids are doing out there (Stakeholder 6 / Family 3).

Gaining employment

Only around half of survey respondents answered the question about whether Ganbina had helped them attain employment, whereas 18 people felt this was not relevant, and a further 6 felt it was already good with no support needed. Of those who found this relevant, 42% felt that Ganbina had helped them gain employment.

Interviewees discussed positive outcomes over this period in relation to employment, linked to the connections and support provided by Ganbina.

With a couple of our Industry Tours, I had two or three of my clients apply at where we went and they got the job. So it's moments like that that really get you thinking 'this is what we're here for - like you just got a job'. That's amazing (Staff 6 / Graduate).

I got a job at KFC so that also helped boost my confidence. I was 15 and it took about couple months for me to say, 'Fine, I'll do it', because I was like, 'No, I'm not doing it' - I was just too shy and I just couldn't do it. And Mum just pushed me - 'Apply, it would be good for you'. And Ganbina also helped with my resume and stuff to make sure I could get the job (Student 1).

A lot of young people have found work through them [Ganbina] - like McDonald's and Kmart and those sort of places. Ganbina have a network system there that help the kids to do resumes and inform them how to dress and time management - all that type of stuff. So they're doing a big role that really we don't have in community from an Aboriginal point of view (Stakeholder 3 / Family 4).

So just those little things - teaching all those little habits they learn in part time work. About budgeting, time management - how do I time manage my schoolwork with my KFC job for example. And a lot of employers take a lot of the kids that do have expertise in McDonald's and KFC and Coles because they've been time managing certain shifts at certain times of the day or week (Staff 8).

I know that the Project Officers encourage them to reach out to look for part time work while they're still at school. There were other kids that said to me that if it

wasn't for them [Ganbina], they wouldn't have even thought to do that. Once they get a taste for earning a little bit of money they can see the benefits of that, and also learning new skills. I just think that it opens up opportunities and it starts conversations with other First Nations people that they may not necessarily be having at home (Staff 1).

I've got a nephew who was a participant of Ganbina. He didn't quite finish Year 12, but they [Ganbina] supported him to get into the workforce. He took up a traineeship in the trades industry. And the outcome of that was he was awarded student of the year. So it was massive for him and his experience...He made connections and established a career of his own with the support of Ganbina. And the fact that he came out, you know, on top and was awarded for being in the workforce, independently on his own, and taken ownership of his own traineeship, is a story that I'm happy to share (Family 1).

You know one of my staff members actually went through Ganbina through all her years at school. And she walked out of high school straight into a job. I took her on straight away because of the powerful opportunities that she got while she was at Ganbina. The Leadership Programs and all of those sorts of things have made her into the young lady that she's today. ... And I'm really happy about that because she's a very respectful young lady that will go far in in life. You know, it's hard to explain - to be honest they just do so much (Stakeholder 1).

Overall, the ongoing work between Ganbina, employers and the wider community was deemed to be responsible for more positive relationships between them.

Barriers broken down between Indigenous people and employers, businesses, corporations – Ganbina's reputation (their social capital) is such that these employers trust the value of a Ganbina kid (Staff 6 / Graduate).

Get or complete work experience

Less than half of survey respondents felt that this was an area relevant to them and answered the outcomes question. Of those who did, 32% felt they had a positive outcome in completing work experience, supported by Ganbina. Seven people felt that this area was already good and didn't need support from Ganbina. Most of the qualitative commentary, from surveys and interviews with Ganbina participants, focused on the value of Industry Tours and Careers Nights. Given the COVID context of the past three years, opportunities for actual work experience were significantly reduced during this period.

Key ingredients of Ganbina and the Jobs 4U2 program

The following section reports on the key ingredients to ensure the success of Ganbina’s Jobs4U2 program.

In identifying the key ingredients of the program, Ganbina participants completed a question on the CSOT survey which asked, ‘What was the best aspect about the program and how it was run?’. All responses were analysed by identifying the key themes that were communicated. This data was combined with the interview data, where interviewees were asked about the key ingredients or elements of the program that contributed to its success.

Six key ingredients were identified (Figure 4) that largely echo those identified in previous evaluations and in Ganbina’s intentional program design.

Figure 4: Ganbina’s key ingredients



Wrap around, individualised support

Sixteen survey respondents identified support as the best aspect of Ganbina. Interview respondents elaborated further and discussed various forms of support, some material, but also less tangible forms which enabled educational focus and continuance. The support is focused on

each individual participant and encompasses all elements that contribute to educational and employment success. In particular, staff described an individualised, case management approach.

The model itself is targeted at kids. Within the communities there a lot of single parent families, there's a lot of kids living with grandparents, a handful of kids are living in care. So it's really across different sorts of family units. This needs to be understood. Our model is focused on the young person themselves. We don't case manage families - the fact that they're involved is because they choose to be. So, we offer an extension of support and advice around the child depending on what that child needs and how old they are. So if they're after guidance we'll offer that - not all the time, but we will offer that in our lane. And if it's outside of our lane, we will refer them to other services - if it's housing or there are things going on at home. We will do our job in a in a caring sense, and a legal sense, and a cultural safety sense, of being a referral organisation. But essentially, primarily, our care is for the young people from ages 5 to 25. When we talk strictly about it, the client is the young person, not the family (Staff 2).

So basically we [Ganbina staff] just meet with them [Ganbina participant]. We do a beginning of year self-assessment, see how they just feel about life in general. And then we build a client plan about some goals for the year. ... it allows us to just elicit a bit more information about what some of the barriers might be and to find out why kids aren't going into classes or attending school and things like that. We work with them especially over those years. We try and establish what they might be interested in in relation to careers. And just doing things like making sure they have a bank account for when they're ready to look for part time work and things like that (Staff 4).

It's really about individual help and the case management model itself is exactly that. You have your case manager and they will help you with whatever your needs are. And the other thing too, with Aboriginal people in communities, is that not all of them are going to want to or perform best in a sort of a shared environment (Staff 2).

Ganbina is something outside school which shows an interest in them [Ganbina participants], who has knowledge and other financial support from time to time - but also other supports which enable them to concentrate on their studies (Stakeholder 5).

The continuity of support is evident in the work Ganbina do with students who are disengaging, working closely with schools and families to identify concerns, advocate for the students and help them re-engage. This involves a deep understanding of each individual's context and an individualised response.

If there's a child disengaging from school, back when I was a Project Officer, I would e-mail the Koorie support people - within the schools. And then I'd contact the KESO [Koorie Education Support Officer] - so the KESO is for disengaged students. We'd find out why these students are disconnecting from school and work out what the best plan is for that child. Unfortunately, some of them KESOs will just pass them off onto alternative settings which isn't really good. Sometimes it's just a quick fix, band-aid approach, whereas we at Ganbina we contact the families and find out what's going on at home. I don't believe in a naughty child. I believe that there's always something behind why they're acting up. So that's why we introduced our tutoring program and stuff like that for disengaged students. Sometimes it can be that they're just not understanding the work, so they choose to just be the class clown or just not turn up to school. So we put all that kind of stuff in place with proper tutors as well for secondary school... It's a side tutoring program and it gives them something like 15 to 20 tutoring sessions for free with a proper tutor... We don't promise something we can't deliver and we always make sure we find out what's going on with that individual. Like if there's something going on at home, if there's something going on in school - it could be just that a teacher and a child clash. It just doesn't work. It's no one's fault - just doesn't work. It's about, can we change their classes or do something like that? (Staff 5).

But with the ones that are disengaging or showing signs of personal issues, that's when we would contact their KESO [Koorie Education Support Officer] at the school - each child will have a support person that they go to... So what we would do is just chat to them and let them know the child is slipping through this class or disengaging and not coming to school a lot. You'd sort of chat to them and say to them, 'what can we do to get them back in?' And that's when they would do a meeting with the parent/guardian: We're [Ganbina] here to support - what can we do to get you back into school?' It might be changing around their timetable. It might be doing one day at home. But you would definitely keep an eye on those kids (Staff 6 / Graduate).

Attendance is a big issue just across the board. For our kids here, we try and address that or try and say you, know, what the issue is. Sometimes it is a teaching style or they don't have friends or they got forced to do a subject - the school's forced them into picking that and they're like, 'I didn't want to do that, you know, and I actually don't need that for my career pathway'. So there's conversations where we can go to their SSG [Student Support Group] meetings - and have those conversations, and support the parents or the families to be able to make that decision as well. So another part of our role is supporting and advocating for the kids and the families.... Sometimes we can just sit there and listen to get a better understanding and even just build that rapport with the families and for the kids, to show our face and be there. Sometimes they probably think 'Oh Ganbina - what do we need to talk about now?', or things like that. But where it counts as well is those SSG [Student Support Group] or other kind of support meetings for the kids that we can be involved in...There's a lot of families out there that might not be able to articulate themselves or have the confidence to speak up where they need to or understand what's going on. So they kind of do rely on us for that support (Staff 3 / Graduate).

But we make it our business to make sure that the staff know what's going on for each of those families. So even when staff leave - Ganbina staff - I feel like that corporate knowledge is retained and we're able to move our clients around fairly efficiently between all of us when we need to. I think we do a good job of capturing what's actually going on for the child so if we need to go meet with teachers and things like that, we do get involved and see if there's anything that we can do to contribute to better outcomes (Staff 4).

If we weren't providing support services to those kids and those families we would have an avalanche of kids leaving school because some of them are staying in school because of the support that we offer - that gives them confidence to keep going. We're having regular contact every couple of weeks and we're talking to the kids and we have relationships with the families. We're able to provide that safety net. And yeah, not 100% of these kids, but most of these kids get through a year of schooling year after year [as a result of Ganbina]. So, the individual focus - that's what works. I do know that the model that we run is fairly successful (Staff 2).

Parents and previous participants both described a sense of comfort and security through the reliable support received and the positive effect it had on them.

Let's ring the girls at Ganbina and see what they say - you know you're going to get the answers from them... Just makes life so easy - it's a sense of security (Family 2).

One family member remembered how when the family decided to remove their child from school, the first thing they did was gain support/advice from Ganbina:

[We] picked her up from school and drove her straight to Ganbina (Family 2).

The level, length and type of support was thought to be valuable and rare:

You don't come across that kind of support very often... They genuinely understand [daughter's] challenges with her anxiety. You know, it's one thing to do check-in but they make that extra effort to be really present - a real present part of her life (Family 1).

It was just having that continued constant in my life, which was really nice... So I just think that reliable sense of support - wrap around support as well - which I think is really important (Stakeholder 4 / Graduate).

Just knowing that they're there as an option or as help, it's been really, really good (Student 2).

Support for students' education also includes a degree of financial support which can be crucial in ensuring school attendance and ensuring students don't fall behind due to an inability to afford various essentials.

So with our program, we have a budget for the kids as well. So from Year 7 to 9, there's a \$300.00 budget that can be used with anything school-related - whatever it takes to support that child through their schooling to keep them at school and to keep them focused. We all know if they haven't got the right shoes they get picked on which stops them from going to school, or they haven't got their books - they get embarrassed because everyone else has got all their stuff but they haven't. From Year 9 to 12 is \$550 so they can use that for anything school related. And our primary school program gets \$200. We don't hand out the money - they need to come to us with the receipts and so forth and we'll reimburse them. But we don't reimburse the full amount. We make the families be accountable for 25% of the cost so then they know that they've had to contribute as well. It's not just Ganbina handing out money (Staff 5).

I think a bit of financial support regarding school or education 'cause nowadays a lot of things are done by technology and kids can get left behind if they don't have

an iPad or a laptop. So, creating those conversations around, 'OK, the school said you can rent it for this much so how do we go about that?' (Staff 8).

Ganbina participants valued a supportive communication mechanism that was available to them outside of parents/family:

It's good for us because if we just need help they're always here for us...it's good just to have their phone numbers. Now that we're older they can text us and ask how things are. It's good (Student 1).

Longevity of support across whole journey

One of the key aspects of the support provided is its longevity as support is offered from primary school through to the completion of secondary education and beyond into employment or further study. Respondents noted long-term support for their children, and that they had been 'signed up in primary school and were still engaging now, years later, at the conclusion of their high schooling' (Family 1). One family member discussed that her child had been a Ganbina participant for 14 years.

One of the biggest things would be the support that they received from primary right through to high school, right through to the age of 25. That doesn't happen anywhere else. So I think Ganbina is very, very unique, or extremely unique in that support is offered throughout the journey for that person (Stakeholder 1).

Just supporting and having a worker support you through from foundation all the way up until you're 25 years old is pretty unique ... To be supported all the way through your education is something pretty special. Even after you finish school - and we find a lot of kids that get to Year 12 and they think they don't need to be in the program anymore - they finish school, but they don't realise that there's another element to this...If they leave school early and they do some training, study at TAFE or something, that support is still there if they need it (Stakeholder 7).

But the thing is you want something that's long-term - not where you kind of come in for a term, do a little bit of work and then come back out. That's not ideal for the children (Stakeholder 6 / Family 3).

Ganbina provides unique support in primary school including financial support and tutoring for particular subjects, while support in secondary school shifts to additionally consider employment.

In primary school they sign up for financial assistance and we contact them four times a year, sometimes more. And we have an in-house tutoring program as well which runs in terms 2 and 3 normally for eight weeks in each term - one doing English, one doing Maths. And what we find is kids who probably aren't doing that great at primary school or struggling with spectrum issues and things like that, when they come in here they love coming. They like the environment. They feel culturally connected to the place and it's a little bit of a professional environment (Staff 4).

To support Aboriginal students and ensure they have access to education - that they have everything that they need to get through school. From starting from primary school where it could be just making sure that they have a jumper, then once they get a little bit older, you need a little bit more - you need stationary and those type of things just to have access for Aboriginal kids to be in education and have all the things that everyone else has (Stakeholder 7).

When they get to secondary school and Year 7 then they'll have someone who comes and sees them fortnightly (Staff 4).

So from Year 7 to 8, it's just about making sure that they're settled into school. They're happy with everything, they're not getting bullied, there's no problems or that they're just not getting on with teachers. They understand the work so we can get on top of it. Year 9 and 10 is about really focusing on what they want to do when they hit Year 11 and 12 because they're the main years that they need to be working and really focusing on their education. Year 9 in Shepparton is the year that they say is make or break (Staff 5).

Career and employment focused

Ganbina participants and other stakeholders valued the strong focus on young people's future in terms of their careers and employment.

So the program is focusing on transition. So, in the primary school to high school, high school to training or employment careers - careers, jobs and all that sort of things. The transition stuff works really well (Staff 2).

The major elements are supporting kids to fully participate in education, and as they get older further training and then eventual employment (Staff 1).

Jobs4U2 which is an employment focused model, but when you apply the 80/20 rule, we spend most of the time supporting the kids through education on their way to employment. Once they get to 13, 14, 15 years of age everything starts to open up - learning how to drive, Leadership Program prospects and opportunities, but then they get to 16 and they get into the part-time work. So once a kid turns 16, the case managers will work with the Employment and Training Projects Officer at getting those kids into work. Now, some of those kids don't want to work. They're not confident enough. So we work on building their confidence. But we know the value of getting any kid into work as soon as you can - to start building and getting those life experiences, customer service and all that sort of thing. And we're talking about Coles, and Bunnings, and Officeworks, and McDonalds, and all those sorts of jobs. It puts them in great stead for the rest of their lives. And then we get the kids who go to Uni that need to work to support their Uni studies. And so we've been very good at that. We have really strong relationships in Melbourne with a number of employers that a number of our Uni kids have gone to, and which has supported their employment on the way through Uni (Staff 2).

It definitely is when they gain employment especially if they're going through high school and getting after-school employment. We hold our Industry Tours for Year 7, 8 and 9's. Year 7- 8 is more about cultural awareness and their community and stuff. But Year 9 is workplaces and how they run behind the scenes - and getting them really thinking that they're turning 15 soon and they are eligible to go for a job. So we add a couple of our Industry Tours (Staff 6 / Graduate).

Industry tours and Career Nights were identified as both enjoyable and valuable by survey respondents (Ganbina participants). Interviewees identified the value of Careers Nights as an opportunity to engage with a range of employers and consider various options that may be available to young people – including part-time work possibilities.

And then we have our Careers Night which is happening next week - that's for our Year 10, 11 and 12. So we have stallholders come, we have universities, we have local employers, people around the Shepparton and wider area. So, McDonald's, Kmart and organisations like that (Staff 5).

For the Careers Night, we do that independently so that everyone - from all the Aboriginal kids from all the schools who are on our program - can come to it. So they come together as a group. We do it in Shepparton and we just reach out to all the universities and employers and ask them to come and do an exhibition

specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and create opportunities. And it's absolutely fantastic (Staff 4).

We do have a lot of that industry engagement - Kmart is one of our partnerships as well. We introduced Bunnings last year, which was one of my Industry Tours. It's great because we're now building a friendship with them. We have our Careers Night as well for our Years 10s, 11s and 12s ... This is their chance to have a one-on-one - like a careers day out for the high schools. But ours is more solely focused on the fact that they can bring a support person with them. They can chat to universities one-on-one. They can chat to local employers. We have a lot of exhibitors come down from Melbourne and have a stallholder thing. So that's where we sort of build our partnerships with them and get the kids aware of like all the other options that are out there. And then it's good for us when we wanna do our Industry Tours because having that partnership is just great to have (Staff 6 / Graduate).

Industry Tours enhanced the value of Careers Nights by providing opportunities to experience and understand a variety of working environments, expanding the horizons and sense of possibility for young people.

We do a lot of stuff in the background – including our Leadership [Program], our Education Program, our Industry Tours and Careers [Nights]. So Year 7 and 8 - we've taken them to places like the courthouse or Goulburn Valley Health. It's about planting the seed of employment. We never think it's ever too early to plant that seed about what they wanna do as a career - without them even thinking about it. So we take them to these locations for them to talk about all the different jobs within the organisation - but we do some hands on fun stuff as well that they don't realise they're learning stuff while we're taking them to places like this. When we first took them to the courthouse, we had some parents said, 'Why are you taking Aboriginal kids to a courthouse? And it was 'We wanna show them what's in the courthouse - to all the career opportunities within there'. There's so much stuff in a courthouse. Just because they're Aboriginal doesn't mean that they can't achieve to work in these places and be a person on the other side that can help and support our mob if they're going through situations. They get to look at the Koorie courtroom and an Elder comes in and says about what they expect from the community about what's good behaviour, what's not good behaviour. We had police officers. We had the administration part - how they do the records and all that. At Goulburn Valley Health we went into every department and they got to use different machinery like the X-ray machine (Staff 5).

And then in Year 9 we have another Industry Tour. But with our Year 9's, because they're at that stage of after-school employment, we take them to places like Kmart and Coles to show them the different career pathways within them places. While we're there, they do a walk around the whole store - they show them behind the scenes what happens there; what do they talk about at interviews; what they look for at interviews; how to dress for an interview; how to apply for a job there;, and any other questions that they may have. Then they show them all the different places that they could work at their age in their store - because a lot of them think that they're just gonna be on the checkouts and they get a bit nervous and scared about that (Staff 5).

Parts of the Leadership Program too, added to participants' understanding of career journeys.

Definitely our partners and our funders that we meet with and hearing the knowledge or their experience and journeys that they've been through...it's just that exposure and their experience for the kids that helps them along their journey (Staff 3 / Graduate).

Central to Ganbina's program is providing individualised support to a young person on their pathway towards employment. This is inherent in all activities and was singled out in interviews.

Those crucial years after high school is where we are probably a really good support because we can support you with interviews and looking into jobs, and making sure that you're on the right path of something that you want to enjoy (Staff 6 / Graduate).

The Employment Program too - I think if you just got someone to be a bit of a sounding board or a mentoring type of role and just setting up interview skills and how to prepare for an interview. What does the job look like? This is what it involves. So the Employment Program is great (Staff 8).

I know I've had a request from parents like 'can you come to this meeting? On the pay slip it says a different amount - she's done this many hours and she's recorded it in her notes but they're only paying her for this'. ... We do have an Employment Program Coordinator, so that person can direct them in the right direction and - not give them words to say but prompt them to get a bit of preparation - 'OK, when I meet with them, this is what I wanna address. These are my issues. How are we gonna resolve this?' So we do try and support in that way. Our end goal is employment for our kids - whether they complete school or go on to further training but with a goal that they end up with employment after that (Staff 3 / Graduate).

Two people commented on the changing nature of the job market during and post COVID, noting that Ganbina participants had been well set up to take advantage of jobs available due to labour shortages.

Currently labour shortages have offered new job opportunities for many (Staff 6 / Graduate).

We were so tight for staff in essential services, including food and supermarkets, that lots of them [Ganbina participants] actually got work (Staff 4).

Relational approach

Fundamental to the program design and its effectiveness is the relational approach between staff and Ganbina participants and families. Both interviewees and Ganbina participants (in interviews and surveys) discussed the value of having close relationships, where the individual felt 'known' by the staff.

So it feels good to like kind of know that you [as a participant] know them [Ganbina staff] rather than just, like, a different person (Student 2).

I think just knowing the staff so well, so you trusted them ... it was just the people, the people that offered that sort of personalised support just by being there, listening to you, having conversations ... So I think it's the support that you get from the staff at Ganbina. Always checking in on us. You could tell they really cared as well (Stakeholder 4 / Graduate).

Close connection with the staff, that's the main thing (Student 3).

Respondents commented on how the rapport/relationship was the key factor in enabling engagement and therefore outcomes.

Well, I'll just say this about my granddaughter - she had really bad anxiety and stress issues and I know her Ganbina worker was constantly keeping in touch with her. ... It's because of that connection - of constantly connecting that she was comfortable enough to go [on an overseas leadership trip]. Otherwise she would not have went (Stakeholder 3 / Family 4).

Having staff that have an understanding of the trials that some of these kids go through - the personal experience and being successful ourselves has enabled them to be role models. It's probably helped a lot having the right people. And some of them [Ganbina staff] have been very young, to be honest - not long out of

school themselves, but that was probably a good thing in being able to relate (Stakeholder 5).

Relationships with families has also been identified as a key to successful support.

They are like a second family. I don't think I would have liked to navigate teenage girls without them. They actually care enough to get to know you as a family unit (Family 2).

The culture here is just really welcoming and suited to my family needs (Family 1).

And the constant check-ins with her [Ganbina participant] - having those conversations about where she wants to go with her next steps. I know I wouldn't have that - my daughter wouldn't be as forthcoming [with me]. So they [Ganbina] are like the middle-man between me and my own daughter. So then I'll be like 'Oh, I didn't know she wanted to do that' (Stakeholder 6 / Family 3).

The staff have, in the main, based on my experience, very good relationships with most of the families. ... the continuity of developing the relationship with the family is important to the overall success of the work we do (Staff 2).

Relationships not only included young people and their families but extended to other key stakeholders such as educators and community. Ganbina staff leverage relationships with schools to ensure the best outcomes for participants.

I think it's got to do with the relationship with the schools. It's got to do with building those relationships with the parents (Staff 4).

They've got a really good rapport with the high school, the Greater Shepparton Secondary College...to be able to go into school - like the school's not necessarily welcome to a lot of outside organisations. So clearly they have a good rapport with them (Family 1).

Well, I think their engagement with the Super School [Greater Shepparton Secondary College] is really quite strong compared to other agencies that are here. I know with that Super School - I think they have like 2700 students there and like 250 to 300 of them are First Nation students, so everyone wants to get in there. Everyone wants to get in there, do a program - tick box. But the thing is you want something that's long-term - not where you kind of come in for a term, do a little bit of work and then come back out. That's not ideal for the children (Stakeholder 6 / Family 3).

Similarly, Ganbina has strong relationships with Indigenous community.

So that's a bit about going into communities, community engagement, community consultation - talking to the appropriate people which is generally [traditional] owners or language groups, then talking to the general community who ask for it - you know, having a meeting or a presentation on 'this is Ganbina, this is what Ganbina is, and this is what we offer' (Staff 8).

Developing partnerships with other organisations that support our Koorie Community - that's essential. You can't be in an isolated group, it won't work... I think the thing that really makes it work is the connection that the team have with community. You've got to be connected to community for things to work. That's the most important thing (Stakeholder 3 / Family 4).

And we've got a team that has a number of members in it that are quite connected to community. So they're respected (Staff 4).

Their reputation precedes though and I think because they've been around for so long, they've obviously built up that good reputation in community. And I think they're so engaging with just not the student, but with the whole family. So you know, 'if Mum's right, well, I'm gonna be right with it because my mum said they're that good'. ... and that's with a lot of Aboriginal programs - that if they do right by the community then other people talk. I'm gonna tell five people and then those people will tell five more people (Stakeholder 6 / Family 3).

When you have community events and community engagement it's so important to put yourself out there and be established and trusted and engaged. If you don't prioritise engagement then you don't have a very good understanding of the community (Family 1).

They are very transparent with their engagement and they're very impartial, whereas Shepparton is generally known as operating in silos - particularly when it comes to community organisations. But they're impartial so they'll go to whoever whenever, regardless of what's going on, because their main focus is the education needs of the children (Stakeholder 6 / Family 3).

Buy-in, expectations and mutual accountability

Interviewees attested to the clarity of expectations and mutual accountability between Ganbina as a program and participants. While Ganbina offered long-term support this was accompanied by the expectation that young people would meet standards of participation, and families would

share responsibility for financially supporting young people's education and journey to employment.

It's not a hand out thing, it's a hand up. And so that's why families pay half. It's not just free. You don't get everything free. You pay half, we'll pay half (Stakeholder 2).

The other key part of the program is making the parents committed to the participant's program. It's that buy-in I think is really the difference because we don't hand out money. There's a commitment from the family and the participant to demonstrate their commitment to what they're doing in it. It creates the longevity I feel - helping them understand that we believe that this is not gonna be just like some financial assistance and then you move on your merry way - that we genuinely care about your progress (Staff 4).

For me I think it is a very clear shared responsibility. When kids sign up to participate in one of the Ganbina programs, it's not a matter of doing everything for them. It's about teaching them to become competent and able to do it for themselves. Build the skills themselves. That, to me, is the powerful thing. They're not just going to be handed everything, they have to meet them halfway. If you want the support of the Education Project Support Officers, you have to make sure that you're at school. If you want that financial support we're not going to pay 100% of it, we're only going to pay 75% and you have to pay 25% to show that you've got some skin in the game. I think that that is huge because if - and this is not just for First Nations people but anyone that's come from a disadvantaged background, if you do 100% of everything for them all the time, in a way you're enabling that cycle of disadvantage because you're not giving them the skills to be able to do things for themselves (Staff 1).

The program is voluntary and requires participants to nominate for inclusion. The flip side of this voluntary participation, from the point of view of interviewees, is that Ganbina has to also be accountable for results and ensure the program is something young people and families will invest their time and energy in.

It's a hand up program, it's not a hand out. So just because they're Aboriginal kids they don't need to be a part of our program. They need to want to be a part of it and want to make a change. We let them know right up front, the families and the participants, what we expect from them and what they can expect from us, and that they're obligated to meet with us every fortnight. So whether that be a face-to-face or over the phone or something, we work with them every fortnight to work

through whatever is going on for that particular child at that time. But we make the families be accountable as well. So we always contact the families - and it's not just the kids we work with - it's the whole family as well (Staff 5).

It's a voluntary program, as you know. So, you're not dangling a carrot to say 'If you go to school, I'll give you this'. It's more about 'what are you gonna do?' (Staff 8).

The program is voluntary so there has to be something in it for young people to engage and commit. Ganbina makes people's lives better (Staff 6 / Graduate).

There was one person that come in and said, 'Oh, I've got court next week and I need to do something to look good for court'. And we were like 'Well, no, this is our process' -you've got to register, and we'll go through the client process. And they were like 'Oh that's too much effort and that's too much time'. So, then they didn't bother to come back and engage with us. There are expectations on our end and obviously our cohort of families and kids and participants meet them every year and understand them (Staff 3 / Graduate).

Ultimately, the level of 'buy in' by participants and family members corresponds with outcomes achieved.

We've had a really good relationship with the parents, so the more they put in, the more they get out of it as well. Because then we can help the kids a lot more - if they're not taking our phone calls or responding to our messages and things like that, of course you get less benefit from the program. But if their engagement is high, I feel like even in them talking to us about something that's happening we will be like, 'Well, we can help with that' (Staff 4).

Professionalism and high standards

One of the keys to Ganbina's success is its reputation of professionalism along with the quality of leadership and consistent high standards in its methods and practices.

The thing is for Ganbina, we do what we say we're gonna do (Staff 4).

The schools have had a lot of respect for us - I think reputationally the brand sticks up at the schools as well (Staff 4).

I think they [Ganbina] keep to the methodology, they keep it the same. They don't change - don't chop and change. 'This is what we do. This is how we do it. We do

need those kids' reports every term and we'll follow them up till we get them. We do want papers to show that families are Indigenous'. You know that they'll follow through. They are a professional organisation - I know it's hard with workers chopping and changing, but they'll do it. They're for families, but in a professional way. So they're bringing the standard up (Stakeholder 2).

The leadership since I've been here ... has been nothing but amazing. Just the vision and drive - and that filters down to the staff which filters through to the participants. And the professionalism - I think that's probably one of the keys of why it's been so successful for so long. And everything has a purpose. You're not just doing it to tick a box for a kid - there's actually a reason behind everything (Stakeholder 7).

Ganbina do a really good job at highlighting everybody's achievements. They do the Youth Achievement Awards - they present the youth leadership participants with gifts and really encourage them to push themselves outside of their comfort zone. They do a really good job of encouraging them to do more things - then they also acknowledge it when they achieve something (Staff 1).

Considerations – factors affecting outcomes

Not all potential outcomes can be achieved despite high quality delivery of a valued program. Outcomes attainment can be thwarted by ongoing personal, program, organisational or structural factors. Below are some key challenges that prevented or affected participants from achieving the changes that they wanted from the Ganbina program in 2020-2022.

General factors: COVID, floods and the new 'super' School

The years 2020-2022 were an unprecedented time with three big changes for the region: COVID-19, floods and the opening of the new 'Super' School:

It was a fairly big shift that happened [schools merging] and I think from memory they merged together in the first COVID year. ... So, in 2019, 2020, they all started on the one campus in February, and in March COVID hit. And then the floods hit... late last year [2022] (Staff 2).

COVID

The key challenge during this period was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has significant impacts.

- Impact on the mental health of many community members, particularly young people.
 - *Now, after COVID [comes] mental health, a lot more kids have gone through stress and anxiety. You know, just last year there were ten suicides in the Shepparton area, and a big majority of them were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids. And it affected a lot of the kids in the schools and it's particularly in the secondary area. There's a lot of trauma (Stakeholder 3 / Family 4).*
- Impact on social isolation – as a consequent effect of lockdowns and removal of face-to-face programs.
 - *Remote learning was the biggest issue, I had trouble with isolation and feeling disconnected (Student-survey).*
- Impact on the development and maintenance of connection between staff and participants. While staff were able to move to a virtual environment they felt they ‘work better when it's face-to-face and not just over the phone’ (Staff 5), though they still managed to maintain high levels of contact.
- Long term impact on motivation and engagement. With young people coping with many societal changes and the impact of COVID in their lives, it has been difficult to find the focus and energy for leadership and other activities.
 - *...post COVID too, it's been a crazy time - the level of engagement is like it's starting to peak again, but we're sort of at an all-time low. So, there's obviously a number of other factors that come into play that make it difficult to try and build up leaders when there's all these other sort of social things that are happening in there. Trying to deal with that. So that in itself is just a huge, huge challenge (Stakeholder 4 / Graduate).*

Commencement of Greater Shepparton Secondary College

As discussed earlier, for Ganbina participants, school closures and work from home directives were compounded by the merger of four high schools in the Shepparton area into one Super School, the Greater Shepparton Secondary College, during this time period. This caused a range of disruptions.

- Disruptions for students

- *Then going to a brand new school, the Greater Shepparton Secondary College... The challenges for them [students] were just sort of getting them to think positive and push through (Staff 3 / Graduate).*
- Transition to alternative schools or moving to different regions and schools. Some stakeholders suggested that some students transitioned out from the Greater Shepparton College into alternative school settings due to a desire not to attend the new school and to a lack of other government schools within the area.
 - *Some families have relocated out to the country, you know, well out to the extended towns so their kids can go to different schools. So, ... if you don't wanna go to that one government school, GSSC [Greater Shepparton Secondary College], then there's no other options. So that's also where the alternative settings have come into play as well (Staff 3 / Graduate).*
- Disruptions to established professional relationships and processes between Ganbina and secondary schools.
 - *that transition from 2021 to 2022 was so big at that school - that definitely was something we really struggled to do at the beginning...because we couldn't get in the school to help anyway. They were very focused on core business only, saying 'No, we don't want anyone in here'. And so we weren't in the school for quite some time, which made that difficult. But I feel that's improved this year (Staff 4).*

Program delivery factors

There was a range of factors affecting program delivery in this period – these included internal organisational, and intra-organisational factors.

Internal organisational factors

Program delivery can be affected by organizational factors. Factors that were identified by interviewees included:

- Filling staff vacancies/ maintaining a full complement of staff
- New modes of delivery: supporting the rapid change from face-to-face delivery to online delivery with appropriate technology

- Considering use of technology to aid other administrative processes such as registration/ enrolment while maintaining the importance of building relationships face to face
 - *I think Ganbina need to start pushing forward with technology and stuff. I do think that a lot of our registration periods and that have been not lacking per se in getting people to come in, but I think it's been harder. You know, floods, COVID, everything like that. A lot of people don't wanna come into a store anymore, whereas lately everyone's been fine with doing it online. So, I think we're just lacking in sort of changing - but not changing too much at a time because you don't want families who have been with us for a long time to, you know, not enjoy what we do. And I think, why are we getting them to come in is because we wanna start to build that one-on-one relationship from the get-go (Staff 3 / Graduate).*

Inter-organisational and community factors

The work of Ganbina is affected by factors that sit beyond Ganbina and with other organisations or community. These include:

- Maintenance of strong relationships with education providers.

During this period, some relationships were challenged, particularly with the advent of the new Super School and new staff. There is opportunity to further strengthen these and build understanding of Ganbina's role and activities with schools.

- *There's a couple [of schools] that we don't feel that we have that support and I think it is down to the fact that they may not completely understand what we do and why we do it (Staff 3 / Graduate).*
- *[Some schools are] a bit nervous with Ganbina around because they're sort of not sure what we're doing and because we work for that child and we find out, like we talk with the families and staff. It's about making sure we 'stay in our lane' and make people be accountable for what their jobs are. Sometimes they think that we're overstepping. Do you know what I mean? We do get comments thrown at us like 'we're coming in and thinking we can run the show', which we clearly can't. But that's why we make sure that everyone's across the order of what we're doing (Staff 5).*
- Practical and logistical issues such as access to school buildings.

- *There was one certain school that [Ganbina] hadn't been out to for a whole year because we couldn't get on to the support person out there to organise it (Staff 3 / Graduate).*
- Commitment to meeting community accountability mechanisms within Aboriginal organisations.

In a small number of cases, undertaking the necessary vetting of eligibility for the Ganbina program (i.e. proof of Aboriginality), as required within Aboriginal community, caused difficulties for individuals who struggled to access suitable documentation. This issue can be compounded if the family originates from another community or have members from the Stolen Generation. The timing of proof of Aboriginality paperwork can also be problematic for families, particularly in the primary school cohort, where it is needed early in the year. While providing this documentation causes problems for a small number of families, it is understood as a necessary accountability mechanism by community.

- *For families to get their proof of Aboriginality and [while] Ganbina [staff are] good in helping, but sometimes it's very difficult to get that. So that's a challenge for Ganbina because if the kids, if the families don't have it because they're from another area and they've gotta get papers from that community, that's difficult for them ...It is a very lengthy process. It can take months and months (Stakeholder 2).*

Factors affecting outcomes for individuals

There were a range of factors affecting outcomes for individual Ganbina participants. This was evident in both interviews and responses to the CSOT survey (completed by young people enrolled with Ganbina).

Personal factors

Personal factors included physical or mental health issues, family issues or lack of motivation. Mental health issues included anxiety, depression, or experiences of crisis and trauma. 'Personal situation' (challenges) was identified as by far the most significant challenge by survey respondents (27 people, 79%).

- Health and motivation

Sixteen survey respondents provided further information focusing on health issues and motivation as key challenges affecting their outcomes:

- *Handling my anxiety and depression (Student-survey).*
 - *I had physical health [issues] that Ganbina was very understanding with (Student-survey).*
 - *No challenges, just had no motivation (Student-survey).*
 - *Probably motivation (Student-survey).*
 - *Staying on task and staying motivated (Student-survey).*
- Lack of family / community support
For some students, a lack of interest, or family disengagement prevented young people from engaging or benefiting from the program. Lack of family/community support was identified by 12% of survey respondents.
 - *[The family] they have that support system there [in Ganbina]. They have their resources and I think too it comes back to, you know, whether that parent wants to engage and that child wants to engage and it comes back to, you can bring a horse to drink but can't make it drink. So that would probably be a barrier with them. Like they could probably see where kids are slipping up, but they [Ganbina] might not be able to engage with that parent because [the parents] they don't want to. So you know that opportunity's lost then with that child, but it's not from Ganbina from lack of trying (Stakeholder 6 / Family 3).*
 - Lack of school attendance.
In other families, while the family may be keen for support, lack of school attendance is already well entrenched and difficult to shift.
 - *There are some families that are like, 'We want our child to be with you'. And then the expectation there is, 'we can barely get them off to school'. So, we take on all those environments (Staff 2).*

Practical/logistical factors: transport, finance and computer/internet access

Individuals also experienced practical challenges to engagement and outcomes.

- Transport issues

This included transport issues such as a lack of public transport, lack of driver's licence, lack of access to a car and the cost of transport. Transport issues were identified by 26% of survey respondents.

- Learner driver issues

- *One of the biggest barriers that we're hearing from a lot of students is 'I don't have a licence'. Yeah, things like that. 'I've never had the money to be able to go and, you know, get them or, you know, study for one. I haven't had the support to study for the test' or you know, all those sorts of things. But they [can] get all that [from] Ganbina (Stakeholder 1).*

The requirement that learner driver's have 120 hours of supervised driving time is a challenge for many Ganbina students, particularly those that are seeking to transition into a trades-based employment role.

- *They might be the only ones in their family that have their licence, so that's another problem that we have - how they've gotta do the 120 hours. So, if they don't have cars at home or their parents don't, I think that's one of our challenges at the moment - just getting their hours up (Staff 5).*

- Lack of financial stability

This was identified by 24% of survey respondents and might be due to low family income, financial issues, large family size or other reasons. For some Ganbina students, one method for addressing the financial issues was to engage in employment. However, shift-work related employment, in particular, created additional challenges for students in the program. While a good work ethic is valued, it can create a tension with the goal of school attendance and completion, especially when some employers put pressure on students to accept work rosters that are too heavy.

- *Especially with employment, that if they're of the age and then you know they are getting smashed by, you know, they're getting on the roster and they're getting heaps of shifts and they enjoy that. But then once [they] turn 17, it drops because they're more expensive to pay. So, they get less shifts. So, then their mindset changes like 'OK, yep I'll prioritise what I need to prioritise' [i.e. study], whereas in Year 9 or Year 10, we know that they're like, 'I wanna work. I want that money' (Staff 3 / Graduate).*
- *[In terms of] the decision just to kind of drop their shifts or as time goes on, just because they are a little bit more expensive [for the employer to pay], but I'm like, 'how do you build up their confidence around that as*

well too and how do you maintain their work ethic?' Or there's another flip side where there's been workplaces that take advantage of that... [the student is] not like getting home until 11:30pm, you know, not winding down till one (am), then trying to get up [in the morning]: 'I don't wanna go to school. I'm too tired'. Yeah, there's a bit of a flip side to it as well. When there are kids with a good work ethic, but they get taken advantage of [and their school work suffers] (Staff 3 / Graduate).

- **Computers and online learning**

Lack of access to, or difficulties using computers or the internet, particularly during the years of this evaluation when remote learning was often in place, was problematic for 24% of survey respondents who also noted the challenges of remote learning during COVID and the lockdown:

- *Online learning, draining - not enough time for studying online (Student-survey).*
- *Virtual learning during lockdown (Student-survey).*
- *Not being face-to-face learning, became difficult to learn (Student-survey).*
- *There's a huge barrier in community, and especially in regards to students having access to laptops and things like that for studies, especially for students studying online. And of course, if there's not the room for the student to be put onto Ganbina, to be involved in their program, well then that creates a bit of an issue (Stakeholder 1).*

Additional factors

One other barrier is that of gender. Historically, the program has supported more girls than boys, though program data shows this has evened out in 2022. Additionally, while Ganbina continues to hold a commitment to gender balance among staff in student-facing roles, due to a range of factors staffing is currently predominantly female. One staff felt that this may be reflective of local norms in the community:

Even encouraging our boys to apply for Uni and continue that [is difficult] because it is a lot easier, well, you know, there's a lot of opportunities around apprenticeships and traineeships (Staff 3 / Graduate).

Survey respondents also noted inadequate help and support from other services (35%) and not enough contact with program staff/services (18%) which reflects the challenges of service and program provision during COVID.

Opportunities related to continuous improvement

Overall, throughout the data, the Ganbina program and approach was strongly endorsed and shown to yield the targeted outcomes. Interviewees and survey respondents were asked to consider areas for further program improvement or refinement, including the continuance of any strategies adopted during the COVID-19 period. This data identified a small number of areas for continuous improvement, whilst retaining the model stability and core features which were valued by informants. Opportunities included the need to:

- continue to update some program areas;
- continue implementing technological improvements;
- continue the promotion of Ganbina programs;
- build further connections between program participants and extend supports;
- continue to develop partnerships;

along with other program improvements. These are discussed below.

Continue to update some program areas

Some interviewees noted opportunities to further update the program and its resources as part of ongoing continuous improvement. In many, if not all, areas, these activities are already underway.

- Update for currency
 - *[In some areas] our resources are from the start of the program. So, we're like, let's move with the times and review those as well ... Whether we change the program structure or the resources to ensure that they get the best out of it. There were some years where the younger siblings and their older sibling were doing the same activity from 7-8 years ago. So we probably need to update and refresh our resources (Staff 3 / Graduate).*
 - *Just making sure that all our materials are up to date and reflect current career possibilities and education pathways and things like that (Staff 4).*
- Update to maintain quality and excellence
 - *Other little things could probably just have a bit of revamping. I think revamping is a good word only because you know if you're in something*

for so long you just get used to what you do, not what you can't do, so to speak. So just challenge yourself - how does this get better? (Staff 8).

Where changes do need to be made to enhance the program, those subtle changes can be made while still adhering to the overall methodology, practice and philosophy that guides the program.

- Update delivery or attendance patterns
 - *When I first started, I made a couple of changes in regards to weekend activities because that was a concern as well: kids were missing out on sports or picking sports over the program. So if they didn't participate in two sessions [at Ganbina], then they'll actually be removed from the program. But the change is that they can't be limited - let's work out another way. You know sports is a good social thing, but also a physical and mental benefit for our kids. Wags will not go to school, but you see them kids an hour before training... They're committed to something, so we try not to disadvantage them from being on our program and getting that support and the benefit, but then also being able to socialise, play sports and do what they love (Staff 3 / Graduate).*
 - *I made some changes when I first come on board - the timeframes for the kids back when it first happened, when it first went into this three-year program, the windows were all three-hour windows. So they come here at 4:30 and they're here two to three hours and then they leave. And I was like, 'that's so unrealistic'. We get the kids in now and our timeframe's an hour ... we now try and make it as engaging and practical as possible (Staff 3 / Graduate).*

These kind of suggested changes aim to maximise engagement while maintaining the Ganbina core approach.

Continue to implement technological improvements

Continual improvement was evident in suggestions about the use of technology and the opportunity it would provide to limit the amount of paperwork young people and families have to complete, with several participants suggesting 'not so much paperwork' or naming paperwork as a barrier to outcomes (5 participants identified this on their surveys). However, interviewees also highlighted the tension between embracing new technologies, to aid communication and make administration easier for all, while maintaining the value of face-to-face contact which builds relationships and deep understanding between staff and participants.

- Using technology for engagement, administration and delivery
 - *We just need to be more technologically advanced in how we engage with our people. ...what we can do better is making it easier for them to register with us, especially if they've been with us a long time (Staff 4).*
 - *I think we're in the process now of looking at being digitised. We need to get on to technology otherwise we're going to get left behind. And we can't do the second phase of our 50 year project if we don't become digitised (Staff 8).*

- Using technology for self-assessments

Young people frequently complete self-assessments and this is one area that was identified as an opportunity for less paperwork and the chance for more digital options.

- *I reckon there's always room to grow and move and change different stuff, so we definitely need to move with the times. We are in the process of looking at paperwork and how we deliver stuff like our self-assessments (Staff 5).*
- *There's certain things like our self-assessments that I believe that should just be an online thing with the kids. Even if we took out our laptops with them (Staff 6 / Graduate).*

Students also sought ways to reduce paper-work.

- *Just to try and reduce the amount of paperwork that they get us to fill out. I feel like it should be more on the experience of doing it, instead of making us fill out some paperwork about it (Student 3).*

Also using technology to more easily aggregate and analyse this data is an area to expand further into.

- *it needs to be worked out that we actually get something from it [the self assessments] to know how our kids are going instead of just filling out some paper (Staff 6 / Graduate).*

- Using technology to overcome obstacles of distance or need for physical presence.

The use of technology also provides opportunity for some families to engage in a way that overcomes the barrier of distance and time that is required when relying on program participants to come into the office (for registration or costs reimbursements). One stakeholder noted difficulties of some families in accessing transport or in finding time outside of working hours to attend the Ganbina office.

Continue the promotion of Ganbina

Some interviewees felt that Ganbina would benefit more from increased promotion so as to expand their work and engage more people in the community. This included being able to support those disadvantaged young people that are 'falling through the cracks'.

Key opportunities are:

- Further promote the message of what Ganbina does
 - *And I think one of the things that needs to be spelt out loud and clear in the community is exactly what they [Ganbina] do. I just don't think Ganbina promote themselves enough, to be honest, for being such a great organisation. I really feel they need to get out there and promote themselves a bit more and promote their partnerships (Stakeholder 1).*
- Further clarify eligibility and that all Koorie families are informed
 - *I don't really know much about like what their reach is like - is this open for every single community? So I guess ensuring that they reached all Koorie families in their area would be something that I would encourage them to be mindful of (Family 1).*
- Expand Ganbina's reach/size
 - *I just wish it [Ganbina] were bigger than what it is. I really do. There's so many students that go through that span in life - there's that key point in life where we have to really grab them and really support them throughout their journey. But sadly it's only those ones that are supported through Ganbina that get that assistance and then in dribs and drabs for everybody else. But if Ganbina were much bigger than what they are, and really that key driving force for Aboriginal students, there'd be a lot of happy people and community...I definitely think it has achieved what it set out to do, it just needs to do it for more people - but obviously that only comes with funding (Stakeholder 1).*
 - *I think it would be great to be able to upscale, but the issue with that is not having the people to be able to provide the same level of support. I think there's a huge need out there but I understand why they cap it. One, for the funds. But two, because you need to be able to have the resources as well as the people to be able to provide that level of support (Staff 1).*

- Expand reach to particular cohorts including young people who have left school, young people in primary school and young people in other residential settings.
 - *A lot of our kids don't realise that they can get support when they're finished school. A lot of them think it's just Ganbina in high school. I like to let them know that ... you have all these years after high-school, whereas through high school you have their support, but after high school is when you may not know what you wanna do (Staff 6 / Graduate).*
 - *The only thing that I would say is greater engagement with the primary school cohort. They [Ganbina] do a lot more with the secondary school kids, but what we're finding is that the kids are disengaging [from school] at a younger age (Staff 1).*
 - *I think we missed the mark a little bit sometimes with kids in alternative settings. What about kids in alternative home settings like foster care or something like that? (Stakeholder 7).*
- Continue to ensure that Ganbina has a presence in the community.
 - *[Aboriginal Ganbina staff] need to be involved in local meetings, particularly when it concerns the community (Stakeholder 3 / family 4).*

Building connections and extending supports

Several interviewees highlighted a desire to expand the opportunities for Ganbina participants to come together and connect with one another as peers with aligned values and aspirations. Opportunities might encompass current participants and the building of an alumni.

- *It would be nice to have more opportunities to come together. Maybe more opportunities to connect would be great and coming together in person as well. Maybe just more opportunities to come together just to get together and celebrate each other, not just because we have to complete this form or we have this meeting or whatever. More opportunities to come together - maybe a large space where it becomes a community lounge. That would be amazing for it to be like a hub space where you can come in and use it and connect - like what we have at the university. I feel like that would be awesome if they had a huge sort of student lounge with funding and support - that would be incredible for them (Stakeholder 4 / Graduate).*

- *Just looking at great opportunities to connect the kids. At the moment, the only interaction that they get with other kids in the program is if they sign up to do the Accelerated Learning Program. But that's only open to a small number of kids. I think there's 200 scholarships that are handed out but there's only spaces for 20 kids on the Accelerated Learning Program....There could be different things that could be done to connect kids. It wouldn't have to be as regular as the high school kids, but I think just looking for opportunities to connect with them - even if it was once a term, or once a semester - like they might do something at the start of the year. Get the families together or something - 'come and meet your Ganbina Project Officers'. And then maybe they could do a community barbecue for NAIDOC week where it's just an opportunity for the kids to get together. Because if there's only two kids in one school that are Ganbina participants, they only know two people that are doing it. Whereas if they're connecting with other, like five other schools that have got two kids or three kids, it just gives them greater opportunities to network (Staff 1).*

Additionally, in feedback on the program provided via surveys, Ganbina participants made multiple requests for increasing activities available as well as levels of support. These included:

- *Do more nights like the Career's Night (Student participant).*
- *Could offer more opportunities to connect with country (Student participant).*
- *Staff to visit more (Student participant).*
- *Come in more days a week into school (Student participant).*
- *Help more often (Student participant).*
- *Reach out through other ways (Student participant).*

Continue to develop partnerships

A couple of interviewees identified the need to ensure working with partners was expanded and formalised, noting that this has been impacted by staff vacancies with some relationships on hold during that period.

- *If I were to leave, there's sort of no other connection at the university - we [the University] have a few other stakeholders that we work with where there's a proper partnership set up with continued interactions throughout the year with their participants and their students, whereas Ganbina, we don't have that just yet. So it is sort of random -the only annual interaction we [the University] have with their participants is the Career Expo which is awesome. We do that every year. But then that's it. And I know that they share our information which is amazing. They pass on any events or updates that we might have on our end, but I think it would be really nice to get a few more formalized interactions throughout the year just to continue that relationship and build on that relationship. It would be nice to have a few more opportunities to interact and connect (Stakeholder 4 / Graduate).*
- *They [Ganbina] have existing relationships with some key employers though I suppose that could be built up a little bit too. The issue with that is that they've had a fair bit of staff turnover in that role - the Training and Employment Project Officer. Whereas when there was someone in there more permanently, they were able to get around, meet and reach out to explore where the opportunities are for some of these kids coming through (Staff 1).*

Program improvements

Mention was made in interviews about the potential to continue to improve specific program aspects – suggestions were offered for the Leadership Program, Education Program and to connect to support in relation to Learner drivers. It should be noted that, in the main, these suggestions are early thoughts from staff who are identifying challenges and articulating possible solutions that would need further discussion, development and alignment with Ganbina’s model, if adopted.

Opportunities for the Leadership Program

- Engaging young people earlier as young people disengage from school prior to Year 10..
 - *If I was to pick something, I would probably be doing more with the Leadership Program. I know they have Year 10, but generally we lose our kids in Year 9. I think we have to engage them there so that when they*

come into Year 7, they've got that to look forward to in Year 9. In Year 10 you've lost them by then if you haven't engaged with them in Year 9 (Stakeholder 6 / Family 3).

- A more condensed model, possibly with different components at different year levels across an increased range of years,
 - *Three-year Leadership Program - from the kid's point of view three years is a long time. So, we are firmly looking at a condensed model and trialing that next year (Staff 2).*
 - *But with the review for next year, I think we're looking at leadership traits and styles. We're wanting to implement that within the Melbourne and Sydney trip with Leadership Victoria delivering a day (Staff 3 / Graduate).*
- Consider the requirements around weekend activities or integration with sports/sport leadership
 - *I know that impacts on the Leadership Program because some of the activities are on weekends. And you know, the kids play sport on weekends. Well, you play sport till you're 20 and then you might not be playing sport. And what are you then doing for the next 50 years of your life? So some of the kids - especially girls - understand that, whereas the boys want to play AFL. Also, you know, the community involvement stuff around playing sport is very important so we're looking at our Leadership Program which is under review. So we are looking at a different make up of that program - and it's in response to the COVID period. And if you're looking at the data, you can see that the numbers have dropped off. So it's made us look at things a bit differently (Staff 2).*

Opportunities for the Education Program

- Continue to deepen relationships with GSSC to maximise information sharing.
 - *We've got the big school now with all four public schools converted into one. So, we've got access now to their campus and stuff like that. So we can see everything that's going on with that child now, whereas beforehand, like within the last two years, we didn't have access to that. So we only gained access to that last year. So I think that is already growing our program in another direction - we are across the board and we can get on top of stuff a bit earlier than when the kids are letting us*

know or the families are letting us know. We can see a lot more and deal with stuff as we see it (Staff 5).

- Continue to focus on Year 7 transition to support early connection within the larger school environment.
 - *There's opportunity for us to do that Year 7 [students] transition a lot better. This year, 2023, we did make that a bit of a focus - Year 7's at school. We went to their Indigenous Orientation Day so that they at least, you know, clapped eyes on us at the school so they knew that we'd be working with them going forward (Staff 4).*
- Consider ways to increase access to tutoring support for secondary students.
 - *We were hoping to try for secondary college to do what we do with our primary school kids - to try and have some tutors within Ganbina. Hire some tutors that can help and support our kids instead of them having to compete at a tutoring center with appointments and stuff like that. We'd have our own for all our participants, if they wanted to, for help and support (Staff 5).*

Opportunities to support Learner Drivers

A range of barriers to driving and licencing were previously identified, leading to a need to consider how to address these. Ganbina's focus is on qualified driving instruction and financial support, whereas there may be a need to link to other community supports or services to address the issues of attainment of driving hours, through access to supports such as volunteer driving supervisors.

- *I think with our Driver's Program, it'd be good if we had volunteers to do more hours with kids - there's temptation of driving without a licence. So we support them with getting it, we support them with driving lessons. But then after that, what happens if they can't get all their hours up?. You know they can never get to the next part like we can (Staff 5).*

CONCLUSION

The Ganbina Jobs4U2 program has been successively evaluated with consistent evidence of outcomes related to its program goals. Over the years 2020-2022, despite the context of COVID-19, floods and major changes to the local education system, Ganbina continued to provide consistent support to participants and their families. Participants reported a high level of outcomes, particularly in relation to building a sense of being valued and respected, attending school and having increased self-confidence. These are significant achievements when participants also reported barriers to outcomes related to COVID-19, including mental and physical health challenges and social isolation. It appears that Ganbina's unique program design, that focuses on individualised, long-term support through a strongly relational approach, acted as a safeguard for participants and families, with relationships and engagement well established prior to the onset of COVID for many participants.

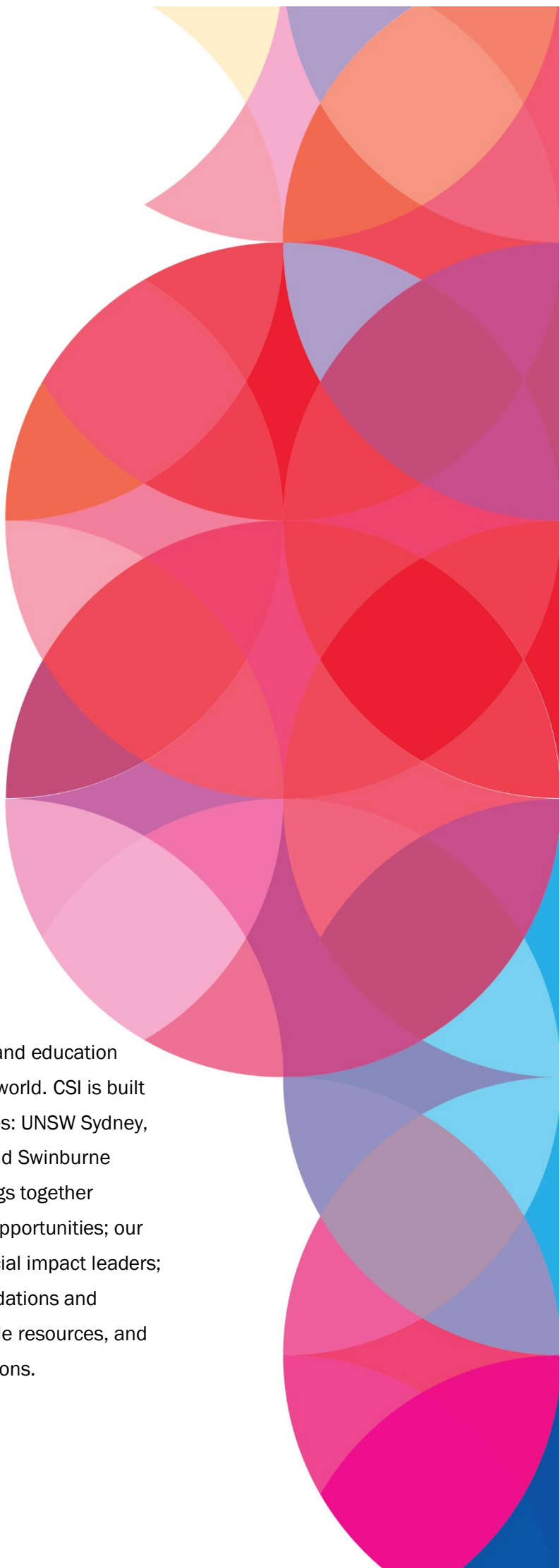
However, COVID and its impacts, along with those of the floods, are just some elements of a changed world going forward. For the future, a key tension lies in appropriately adapting Ganbina's programs to meet the new context and maintaining the continuity of approach over a long period of time. There is some emerging discussion among informants, too, that Ganbina's aim of generational change is starting to emerge as Ganbina is now supporting second generation students (that is, children of former Ganbina participants). In itself, this too, potentially starts to shift the nature of the supports required by a new cohort of program participants and their parents (program graduates). The individualised nature of the program means that there is opportunity to offer a highly nuanced set of supports within a broad program framework which can allow appropriate delivery to a range of cohorts with different needs.

The advent of the new Greater Shepparton Secondary College also poses new challenges for students and calls for adapted supports, particularly in supporting the transition to Year 7. This new large school environment might also reinforce calls from participants to build in greater opportunities for social connection among participants and across year levels and schools.

The Ganbina program is unique in its focus across key developmental periods from primary school through secondary school, further education and training and employment. This evaluation focused on young people 14-25 years, and there is opportunity to more deeply investigate the needs and experiences of different age cohorts and year levels.

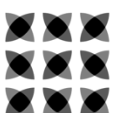
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