

# inside small business

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## Meet the makers

Ten artisans showcasing the unique produce of Australia

Getting Indigenous youngsters into business

Expert tips on managing small-business cashflow

The campaign to reboot Sydney's Chinatown

# Putting Indigenous youths on the path to their career dreams

The not-for-profit organisation collaborates with various entities to provide Aboriginal children the tools they need to finish school and find the employment they want.

**TIM LADHAMS**  
Editor, *ISB*

**A**nthony Cavanagh is the CEO of Ganbina, a not-for-profit school-to-work transition program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youths. With many young Indigenous people dropping out of school early due to poverty, Anthony developed programs that provide the education and skills to help Indigenous youths not only gain work but also a better future. After talking to Anthony, we meet a couple of the young people Ganbina has helped, to find out what they are doing today.

**Inside Small Business: What do you see as the biggest roadblock to young Indigenous people having the opportunity to forge successful entrepreneurial or corporate careers?**

**Anthony Cavanagh:** I think most of those opportunities will start with education and the level of education that the young person has, including what their aspirations are. Whether it's working for themselves, starting a business or whatever, they've got an idea about what it is they want to develop further and I'm a firm believer that education is the main foundation.

**ISB: How does Ganbina specifically go about addressing these issues?**

**AC:** Ganbina has a suite of programs targeted at the endgame, which is gaining employment. We spend a lot of time helping young people through the education system and into further training – university or TAFE – and then



Anthony Cavanagh

## PEOPLE & HR

building experience and knowledge around where their aspirations lie, where they're heading in their life. Whether that's a business of their own or working for somebody else, qualifications, skills and experience are really important.

We have an Employment Academy made up of a range of modules that are specifically targeted around what you need to know for work – things such as getting a tax file number, bank accounts, registering businesses, and then further training around industrial relations, resumes, job applications and mock interviews. The program runs over 12 weeks, and it's delivered in a group setting at Ganbina's head office in Shepparton, [Victoria].

There are many Aboriginal youths who don't have a tax file number or bank account, and some don't have birth certificates. There are a number of reasons why Aboriginal people don't have birth certificates – forms weren't filled out at the time of birth or coming from single-parent homes – so it's not just a matter of going down to the birth, deaths and marriages office and filling out a form and getting a birth certificate within a couple of weeks. A lot of processes in life, such as opening a bank account, require documentation to prove your identity. And a lot of Aboriginal people have not got birth certificates. And that makes it very difficult to get a tax file number, open a bank account, or get a Medicare card.

**ISB: I imagine that without those essential documents, a lot of employers couldn't hire Aboriginal people?**

**AC:** Absolutely. Registration for the Ganbina program happens in the early part of the case-management process, where we collect that documentation. We ask young people, or the parents, whether they've got birth certificates and bank accounts, tax file numbers, those sorts of things. And if they haven't, then we set about helping that young person get that documentation. The key documents are a bank account, passport, driver's licence and tax file number.

Mobility is also one of the biggest issues in regional towns. Shepparton's about two-and-a-quarter hours north-east of Melbourne. It has limited rail

services, limited bus services, and to get around town and from one side of town to the other, we're talking about a circumference of about 20 kilometres. So, having a licence and a motor vehicle is crucial for getting to work, university or school. So, Ganbina has a driving program, which helps Aboriginal kids get their licence. We know that 120 hours of pre-driver training is required, and you need to prove that the young person's done these hours in driver training, and then there are costs associated with getting driving lessons, booking your driving test and paying for the licence itself. Through our scholarship program, we provide financial support for young people to pay for some of the costs involved in getting their licences.

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**ISB: Partnerships and collaborations have been a real integral part of the model. Could you just talk about who your key partners and collaborators are, and how they empower young Indigenous people to reach their goals?**

**AC:** Yes, Ganbina has a lot of partners – philanthropic, corporate, employment, education and training organisations, families and community – so the stakeholder breadth is quite wide. Working together with Ganbina, they all provide an enormous network to support the young person to get to where they're going with their aspirations, which is getting into career jobs. But along the way, the education sector is really important. And at-home family support is really important as well. While Ganbina

has many kinds of supporters, we couldn't do what we're doing without the support and funding from our philanthropic and corporate partners, foundations and trusts. They have really been instrumental in us being able to provide the services that we have for the last 25 years.

We're not government-funded either, we had some seed funding as an employment program 20-odd years ago, but in the last 15 years, we've been funded solely by the philanthropic and corporate partners. Our philanthropic partners fund most of our program, and our corporate partners provide us with a lot of pro bono support, which saves us a lot of money in relation to evaluations of our programs and producing reports. It all helps us to be able to deliver our services financially.

**ISB: What result is the program achieving in terms of getting young people educated and into employment?**

**AC:** For the time I've been here, at least in the last 10 years, 98 to 99 per cent of our kids are completing their year within the program. Whether that's in the education, employment or training program, that's a very high rate. Our Year 12 graduation rate for the last eight years has been at 90 per cent. And that's a very high rate as well. We're finding that through the education system, a lot of kids are starting in the system at 5 and 6 and then going all the way through to Year 12.

We now have two-in-three of our kids going on to university or TAFE. Three-in-four are going into employment. So, we're creating a pathway into employment, full-time work and real careers post leaving school or post university.

**ISB: And, finally, how do you see Ganbina developing in the next couple of years?**

**AC:** It's very exciting. There is a lot of interest in our program and work and not only nationally, but also internationally. There has been interest from the New Zealand Government and universities in Canada. On a more local level, community organisations in New South Wales and Queensland are interested in what we do. And we've had a couple of programs running in Queensland for the last three years, which is very exciting. ▶

## PEOPLE & HR

**Chloe Jones and Ameer Henningsen are two of the young people who have been through the Ganbina program. Here are their stories:**

Chloe, at 21 years old, is passionate about Aboriginal culture, community and art, and has combined these in her career. While she was completing her secondary education, she undertook work in various types of roles, including in retail, factory work, administration and customer service. After graduating from Mooroopna Secondary College in Shepparton, she undertook vocational education and training business studies and launched her own online business, Dungala Creations, where she sells her own artworks, along with a range of ceramics and homewares.

Chloe also works at Kaiela Arts Shepparton, where she runs cultural and arts sessions. She secured this role after volunteering her time and doing contracted work to run workshops and other cultural activities.

Chloe volunteers with The Healing Foundation and she is a mentor to teenage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls at Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative. Chloe was also selected to participate in Ganbina's Youth Leadership Program, which she says gave her a huge boost.

"Ganbina has given me incredible opportunities," Chloe says. "If it wasn't for them, there's no way I'd be where I am today." This year, Chloe hopes to study at university in Melbourne and complete an undergraduate degree in Indigenous and cultural studies, as well as marketing and communications. Her career dream is to one day open her own art gallery.



Chloe Jones



Ameer Henningsen

Ameer never thought she would work in a law firm. She didn't really enjoy learning and all she could think of while she was at school was that she wanted to get out. However, she joined Ganbina when she was in Year 7 and, with the encouragement of her mum, she finished school. She now works at Dawes & Vary Riordan lawyers in Shepparton as a legal assistant, has completed a Certificate II and III in business administration, and is currently studying an Associate Degree in Law (paralegal studies), with her sights set on becoming a law clerk.

The first person in her family to go on to tertiary education, Ameer has recently stepped up in her role as a legal assistant and is handling residential conveyancing files and acting on behalf of clients with a supervising lawyer. She has also moved into a new role as an assistant in the commercial and leasing side of law, which she describes as an interesting area she hasn't worked in before. Ameer also arranges all of the charity events her firm conducts throughout the year and has joined the Sister Program, which is arranged through the Lighthouse Group. This program provides one-on-one mentoring for students who attend Greater Shepparton Secondary College.

Ameer feels Ganbina inspires Aboriginal youths to better themselves and provides a system to guide them along the way with steady, constant support. "I feel like they (Ganbina) help with pretty much everything, they are always there. I am doing things today that I would never have imagined," Ameer says. ■