

# Leadership begins with culture



ganbina

**Ganbina's Youth Leadership group wrapped up their Cairns tour not in a classroom, but with their feet in the sand, facing the ocean. Over five powerful days, they immersed themselves in deep cultural exchange and witnessed leadership in its truest form grounded, respectful, and real.**

**A beachside Welcome to Country ceremony led by Traditional Owners, where fire crackled and bare feet touched the earth. This moment of connection reminded every participant that leadership begins with humility, respect, and a profound connection to land and people.**

**As we move through August, we reflect on these experiences not just as memories, but as guiding lessons. You could see the leaders of our future not only in what they said, but in how they showed up — **through conversations, reflections, and the way they carried each other forward.****

## The Power of cultural connection

At Ganbina, we believe that keeping young people connected to culture is not only important it's transformational. When young people are grounded in their culture, they walk through life with purpose, confidence and pride. Culture is more than tradition, it's a living, breathing part of identity that fosters belonging and resilience in the face of adversity.

This year's Cairns Leadership Tour highlighted the incredible power of cultural connection. From ancient Dreamtime stories shared at Mossman Gorge to conversations with inspiring Indigenous leaders at Balkanu, our students were reminded that their heritage is a source of strength and wisdom.

In a world that can often disconnect us from who we are, we need more opportunities like this, where young people are not only seen but heard, honoured, and given space to lead. It's not just about looking back; it's about carrying culture forward with pride and responsibility. That's how we create future leaders who know where they come from and where they're headed.



**Anthony Cavanagh, CEO**

## Exchange that builds bridges

Culture is a bridge. The Cairns Youth Leadership Tour proved that when young people engage in cultural exchange, they open their minds, deepen their empathy, and strengthen their leadership capacity. These experiences create space for reflection, respect and responsibility. They allow young people to connect not only with their own heritage, but with others in meaningful and transformative ways.

Whether students were learning from a Marine Biologist about reef conservation or sipping bush tea after a Dreamtime Walk, each moment was an invitation to see culture not as history but as living story. Our role is to ensure these stories continue to be shared, owned and built upon by our next generation.

Cultural exchange fosters pride, resilience and leadership. It reminds our young people that their roots matter, and that their voices can shape the future. By embedding these values into our leadership program, we're ensuring the impact of Cairns lasts far beyond the trip, it becomes a part of who our students are and how they lead.



**Jean Miller-Fowler, General Manager**

# What Leadership Looked Like



## **Exploring Fitzroy Island with marine biologists and traditional owners**

snorkelling, reef ecology and learning about environmental impact and our responsibility to care for country

## **Meeting with Balkanu**

hearing firsthand how leadership, reform and community strength walk hand in hand

## **Learning through ceremony at Mossman Gorge**

bush tea and damper, Dreamtime stories, guided walks and cultural teachings from Elders

## **Understanding conservation at Hartley's Crocodile Adventures**

## **Experiencing Aboriginal identity through art at Citizens Gateway and in community spaces**

**Experiences are not just memories,  
they are guiding lessons**

“ Fitzroy Island was like a dream come true, wish we stayed longer. ”

“ Mossman Gorge is **AMAZING**. Have as much fun as possible. ”

“ Wish there was more than 5 days as it was wonderful and an amazing escape from winter. ”

“ The reef tour and cultural guiding/ walks were **very good** to see and learn about. ”

“ The beach session was **very relaxing** and a good way to end the trip. ”

“ It was **really interesting** learning about Baulkanu and their progress with land conservation. ”

“ Going to Fitzroy Island was a **really good experience**, especially being able to see the reef, fish and a turtle while on the glass bottom boat and snorkeling. ”

“ This trip was a very good experience as I was **more closer with my culture** than I was before along with understanding and learning about the Indigenous people from Cairns. ”



**Experiences are not just memories,  
they are guiding lessons**





# OUR PURPOSE

To empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Goulburn Valley region aged between 5 - 25 years to reach their full individual potential through self-determination and meaningful engagement in education, training, enterprise and employment programs. We hope to also migrate these programs and key learnings to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for implementation on a wider scale.



# OUR VISION

Within two generations,  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander peoples have  
cultural, economic and  
social equality and are  
empowered to live, love,  
learn and leave a legacy.



# Our Values

## EQUITY

We support and empower our young people to achieve cultural, economic and social equality based on their individual needs.



## CULTURE

We demonstrate a deep respect for our culture and work to embed it into our programs.



## INTEGRITY

We act in honesty, fairness and trustworthiness. We consistently work to a high-level moral code and take responsibility for our actions. "Say what we mean, mean what we say."



## PROFESSIONAL

We commit to a high standard of work and conduct ourselves in a professional manner. We work to continually improve our knowledge and skills and cultivate professionalism in our program participants.



## FAMILY

We value the role family plays in the success of our young people and respect their deep connections.



## COMMITMENT

We are dedicated to supporting our young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve success and work to instill in the value of commitment.



## PASSION

We're passionate about what we do, why we do it and who we do it with.



## RESPECT

We treat everyone with dignity and respect through our word and actions.



## NON-PARTISAN

We aim to remain neutral, impartial and carry out business without bias.



# Some things **for us** **all to reflect on**

The importance of listening  
to stories, to land, to Elders  
and leading with that wisdom

How a simple moment  
on the beach turned into  
a leadership milestone

How carrying culture  
forward makes for stronger,  
more grounded leaders

Why cultural protocol  
deepens responsibility

## On the radar

### September

Friday 19th	Primary Accelerated Learning Program Celebration
Sunday 21st - 26th	Youth Leadership Program <i>New Zealand trip</i>
Wednesday 24th	Youth Achievement Awards <i>Applications Open</i>

### October

Friday 17th	Youth Achievement Awards <i>Applications Close</i>
Thursday 23rd - 24th	Youth Achievement Awards <i>Winners Notified</i>
Tuesday 28th - 29th	Youth Achievement Awards <i>Photos</i>

### November

Friday 14th	Youth Achievement Awards <i>Dinner Presentation</i>
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**Ganbina is proud  
to stand beside  
young people  
who now know  
that to lead,  
you must first  
connect. And that  
true leadership  
begins not with  
words, but with  
ceremony, Country  
and community.**

## Follow Us

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