

The employment opportunities in regional Indigenous Communities

1. REGIONAL AREAS DO NOT NECESSARILY SHARE THE SAME EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Different employment opportunities exist within different regional areas. Points of difference which will have an impact on employment opportunities include the:
 - education attainment level of school leavers
 - numeracy/literacy levels of jobseekers
 - general health and wellbeing issues within the community
 - prevalence of drug, alcohol and dysfunctional family issues within the community
 - geographic location and economic influences
 - economic opportunities within the area
 - labour market within the area
 - existing Indigenous and Mainstream networks within the area (Echuca and Shepparton, for example, have vast networks which are based on mutual respect, co-operation and have made a significant contribution to economic development.)
 - whether the area is within declared Economic Circumstances (EC) boundaries

Central Victorian Group Training Company Limited (CVGT) believes that any enquiry into the regional opportunities for Indigenous Communities must take these differences into consideration.

2. OPPORTUNITIES

- Most regional Victorian areas within which CVGT operates offer the Indigenous Community opportunities for employment within the following generic areas: tourism, specialised personal services including health and green collar industry
 - Tourism - cultural tours and experiences along the Mighty Murray River. *Australia has many opportunities available through Indigenous tourism & the competitive local tourism market. CVGT believes we can achieve even more if the indigenous tourism industry & the mainstream tourism industry can work together to achieve outcomes for both sectors. Including Indigenous training and employment opportunities in any development of tourism enterprise is important as was evident during the Sydney Olympics and Para Olympics.*
 - Green Collar industries – this offers a unique and culturally appropriate opportunity for the Indigenous Community to participate in business in a real and meaningful way, while still maintaining their cultural heritage and caring for country. *Future opportunities in green collar industry and alternative energy cannot be underestimated. This is culturally appropriate employment for Indigenous Australians which could be supported by funding for pre apprenticeships that are in line with the needs of a related organisation.*
 - Culturally personal services including health This is based on enabling Aboriginal communities to take responsibility for their own health, education and finances and the delivery of the services that suit the needs of their communities.

- *While there are many advantages in this model, some people in the Indigenous community are demonstrating a preference to ONLY work in Indigenous-specific workplaces. The disadvantages of this for the Indigenous Communities include:*

- *reduction of employment opportunities*
- *inexperience in the mainstream workplace and the different standards and processes*
- *difficulties when making a transition into Mainstream service provision*
- *encourages a “them and us” philosophy*
- *reduces the opportunity for Mainstream services to improve their services to and cultural understanding of Indigenous Australians.*

A solution would be for the government to support a Pilot Program based on the Group Training Scheme that ensures education and training is holistic and encapsulates both (all) cultures. An example of this is in the health and community services industry. A Group Training Organisation would employ an Apprentice and host the apprentice out to two employers – the Golden Valley Health and Community Services (mainstream) and Rumbalara (a specialist Indigenous provider). Hence on-the-job training would involve experience in mainstream and specialist Indigenous organisations.

A program of “Tasters” could be created with other mainstream employers. This would involve local employers whose passion and support for the program would be acknowledged through an Incentive payment. The program would rotate a jobseeker through four or five participating employers for a given time, “sampling” a variety of career options. The Taster Program would have a full time supervisor and Mentoring would be an important component of the program. At the end of the Program, the participant would be offered a full time or School based Australian Apprenticeship.

- Within the Sunraysia ESA and Mid Murray ESA there are specific economic opportunities for Indigenous communities within the mining sector which is supported through incentives, accommodation assistance and the Indigenous community.
 - Mining – the minerals industry is the largest private sector employer of Indigenous people, with five per cent of its direct workforce identifying as Indigenous.¹ There are more than 120 different careers in mining with short, medium and long term opportunities ranging from entry-level, semi-skilled trades and skilled jobs available throughout all stages of the mining process including mine closure and site rehabilitation. Additionally, an opportunity exists working for subcontractors who serve the mining industry. Whilst there have been successes in recruiting and retaining local Indigenous employees, the minerals industry realises that there are barriers for many Indigenous people that prevent them taking up employment, and which industry cannot tackle alone.²

¹ From the Minerals Council of Australia - website
http://www.minerals.org.au/environment/memorandum_of_understanding

² Ibid

- Within the Bendigo and Geelong ESA there are economic opportunities for Indigenous communities within all sectors, providing the jobseeker has basic numeracy and literacy skills and is supported and mentored throughout the commencement and initial stages of employment.

Regarding employment opportunities for Indigenous communities CVGT believes that:

- *the more support there is from the Indigenous community, the more the success of the Initiative.*
- *the future predictions of increased unemployment will mean that many from the Indigenous Community will be amongst the first to experience retrenchment and a reduction in employment opportunities. Additional funding for training programs, virtual workplace experiences and social enterprise is critical to ensure the Indigenous community does not lose confidence and that individuals continue to have the skills and attributes for participation in the workforce.*

3. STRATEGIES FOR UTILISING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- *Preferential hiring practices for Indigenous workers. At times, employers need to be directed to have a more collaborative approach to recruitment and utilise the specialist advice and services of employment service providers from Job Network and STEP-ERS, rather than work in isolation.*
- *Training, educational and apprenticeship opportunities for Indigenous workers. CVGT has had personal experience in successful programs that involve working closely with employers to meet their demands and the provision of mentoring, skills development programs, on-the-job work experience, and long-term employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians. We have found that the Apprenticeship is a model of training that Aboriginal people find particularly suited to their learning styles. CVGT emphasises the importance of ensuring all training delivery is tailored to meet the learning styles of individuals.*

We recommend the continuation of funding for a Program that includes:

- *information about employment opportunities to Aboriginal communities and organisations which includes:*
 - *enhancing linkages to the Aboriginal labour force;*
 - *promoting employment, retention and career development opportunities for Aboriginal people;*
 - *identifying potential business development initiatives;*
 - *developing an action plan laying out both short and long term employment strategies.*
- *4 weeks pre work training/work experience for participants*
- *“Taster” opportunities where participants can experience a variety of trades and discover their attributes and passion*
- *Additional culturally sensitive training aimed at helping Indigenous job seekers by enhancing self-esteem and self-management skills;*
- *A Steering Committee to monitor progress*
- *The involvement of parents and the wider community*
- *A mentor program which has, where possible, an additional mentor from the Indigenous community.*
- *Ongoing support and cultural training for the employer and workers in the workplace when requested*

	<p style="text-align: center;">- <i>Documented employer commitment of ongoing employment after 12 months traineeship.</i></p> <p><i>The concept has the potential to bridge cultural gaps whilst providing eligible applicants with the necessary support and guidance with which to choose the most appropriate career pathway, secure positions with employers and/or successfully complete their apprenticeship/traineeship or general employment program.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Indigenous Employment Strategies (IESs) within all workplaces CVGT is concerned that this may, at times, lead to tokenism. The success of individual IESs is dependent on the sincere and honest application by individual employers. We recommend government funded programs that are delivered by providers who work in collaboration with the Indigenous community to deliver a Mentor Program that will provide advice to employers and encourage and retain Indigenous employees. This would be based on the Group Training Model but would provide support for all new Indigenous employees, their employer and the people in their workplace, not just Australian Apprentices.</i> • <i>Continuation of funded programs such as the Indigenous Youth Employment Consultant Whilst there are many excellent outcomes from this program, the success rate would be greater if there were incentives for participants' active involvement and for the Indigenous Community's support of the program</i> • <i>Flexibility in regards to expectations. CVGT's experience is that milestones are not always reached and KPIs are not always met within given timeframes when working with the Indigenous Community. With a more flexible approach and contracted programs of not less than three years, , providers can ensure they meet the desired outcome without losing the support of the Indigenous community.</i> • <i>Providing Indigenous Tourism Cadetship or Traineeships which enable new workers to gain experience in top organisations and get paid while they learn. CVGT believes that employer mentoring / mentoring and pastoral care for the trainee is critical to the success of this strategy.</i>
<p>The enterprise opportunities in regional Indigenous Communities</p>	<p>What Indigenous communities need is support with due processes needed to initiate an enterprise. <i>CVGT believes that Indigenous enterprises will be more successful if there is mentoring and support with viability studies, business planning, employability strategies, risk analysis and mitigation strategies and so forth.</i></p> <p>Following this, Indigenous communities need long term funding, training, mentoring and support to start and be successful with enterprises. The goal is to come up with a framework that includes elements of both the social welfare model and the purely entrepreneurial model. Individual businesses, family businesses and community owned enterprise are all ways of achieving these goals. Even though social enterprises will still deliver some positive social outcomes, the aim of social enterprise is to become commercially viable.</p> <p>Microloans with low interest which let small businesses get started and help to set up the basic enterprise without expecting any profits in the medium term are one way to meet these needs. They should, however, also include human capital development.</p>

Enterprise opportunities that exist for Indigenous Australians in regional Victoria and strategies that will improve enterprise opportunities include:

1. Utilisation of transferrable skills gained through participation in mining. Following mine closures, Indigenous Australians can use these skills to support their own construction, catering, and trucking businesses, resulting in increased employment opportunities within communities. Westpac is involved at the board level as well as on the ground at Cape York, with an extensive skills transfer program. They have one full-time project manager, three twelve-month fellowships and around 50 employees seconded to the Cape for one month each year. This is an excellent model that can be replicated or adapted to meet the labour market throughout regional Australia.

2. Tourism as part of the whole experience, not separate from mainstream tourism.

a) Indigenous tourism enterprises are in most situations likely to be micro businesses. Micro businesses, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, have relatively high failure rates so it is important to undertake substantial planning to avoid failure. To increase the likelihood of success, CVGT recommends:

- Funded business training and mentoring which includes input from the Elders, the local Council and other key stakeholders
- funding for networking opportunities such as The Australian Indigenous Tourism Conference (AITC) 2009³ which is an excellent forum for those with a common interest in Indigenous Tourism to meet and form new partnerships.

b) Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism requires innovative multi-stakeholder strategies for sustainable community development, and should engage Indigenous peoples as business leaders and environmental stewards in the sustainable growth of the tourism sector.

3. Social enterprises undertaken in partnership with local Government.

CVGT suggests putting a contract out to tender which concentrates on sustainable communities / positive futures. The contract would be based on the Green Corps model and would:

- involve a partnership between local government, a training provider, an employment support service and the Indigenous community.
- include participant payment and training.
- ensure all Projects are for the wider community,
- have Projects that are strongly aligned to the environment, culturally appropriate and tourism focussed,
- at all times, have the objective of enhancing the skills, confidence

³ AITC 2009 will address the key issues and needs that impact on Indigenous Tourism in Australia and the opportunities that exist for culturally authentic Indigenous tourism product, especially in the development; employment and training of Indigenous people which have a positive social and economic return to Australia and in particular regional Australia.

- and opportunities for the participation of Indigenous Australians.
- Include, as a component of the training, career and transition support for all participants.

Projects may include gravesite restoration, water harvesting which would support the participants' establishment of civic centre gardens or vegetable patches for the Elders.

3. Entrepreneurial Identification Programs

This would include:

- Identification of those in the Indigenous Community who display the characteristics of entrepreneurship and family enterprise. This could be based on the Chutzpah Initiative which gives maverick young people the vehicle to discover, develop and achieve their entrepreneurial talent, passions and potential through enterprise.
- Case studies of successful Indigenous entrepreneurs and examples of Indigenous owned and managed enterprises that capture their economic and enterprise impact, their success factors and their advice to other Indigenous people contemplating the enterprise option.
- Business Hubs - developing business plans and training existing or aspiring indigenous entrepreneurs

A brief introduction to CVGT Employment and Training Specialists

CVGT Employment and Training Specialists **25 years of fostering opportunity in our community**

Central Victorian Group Training Company Limited (trading as CVGT Employment and Training Specialists) is a not for profit unlisted public company which began operating in 1983 and now has 25 years experience in employment and training related services. The Board of Directors is made up of business and community professionals who are responsible for strategic direction and corporate governance.

The core business for CVGT Employment and Training Specialists (CVGT) is improving the lives of unemployed Australians by the establishment of career pathways which are enhanced by education, training, personal support and professional development programs. CVGT employs in excess of 810 staff⁴. Annually, CVGT facilitates employment placement for over 3,500 customers and provides or monitors training for a further 2,000.

CVGT's Head Office is the regional city of Bendigo, Victoria. CVGT offices extend across 23 locations in regional Victoria, metropolitan Melbourne, regional NSW, metropolitan Sydney and Tasmania.

CVGT has had extensive experience in working with the contractual obligations of both Federal and State funding and service agreements. Currently, CVGT is managing twenty Federal and State Contracts that include: Member of STEP-ERS Provider Panel, Job Network, Work for the Dole, Green Corps, Job Placement Services, Disability Employment Network, Youth Pathways and Harvest Labour. Additionally we are a Registered Training Organisation, Group Training Organisation and Australian Apprenticeship Centre.

⁴ This includes over 260 internal staff members and Australian Apprentices employed under the Group Training Scheme.