

## AFV2009 – case study on GEADep - DRAFT

### **Driving better outcomes for Indigenous youth**

Having a driver's licence has made a big difference to Corey Jack. Like any 19-year-old he is delighted to have the freedom to visit his mates, go to the shops or head for the beach.

It has also helped Corey get to and from his job as a vegetable packer at a processing factory on the outskirts of Bairnsdale. He often starts work at 2am and having a car is vital to being on time.

"It's changed my life heaps," says Corey, one of the many successes to emerge from the Gippsland East Aboriginal Driver Education Program (GEADep). "You can get up and go whenever you like and not have to worry about asking for lifts all the time."

It's a similar story in Lake Tyers where 21-year-old Tiffany Tregonning, another GEADep graduate, is experiencing the freedom of having her licence. This is particularly welcome in Lake Tyers, a relatively remote Indigenous community 43km beyond Lakes Entrance, the nearest service centre.

"The best thing has been having more independence for myself," says Tiffany. It also means she can support her working mother by driving to Bairnsdale each fortnight for the supermarket shopping and assist with childcare for her younger brother.

A further positive is that Tiffany, like Corey, is seen as a role model by relatives and peers who have been inspired to go for their Learners and Probationary licences.

Since it was established three years ago, more than 300 people have taken part in the Aboriginal Driver Education Program. It has helped 138 people onto their L-plates, 82 achieve their probationary licence and 11 their medium rigid licence.

In turn, this has led to 42 people finding jobs, 61 enrolling for further education at East Gippsland TAFE and 7 training as mentors to assist others through the program.

A related outcome of this project is that over 100 have been assisted to obtain their identification through accessing birth certificates, registering births for the first time and other official identification, the lack of which had been a barrier to obtaining their drivers licences.

GEADep was researched and developed by the Gippsland East Let's GET Connected initiative, funded under the Victorian Government's Transport Connections Program. It is a multi-faceted program which aims to open up pathways for Indigenous people in Gippsland East to get around, connect with community, employment, education and other essential services through providing a culturally sensitive and appropriate driver education program. The program supports include literacy and numeracy training through TAFE providers; car ownership education; assisting participants to gain their ID; and to obtain 120 hours through VicRoads L2Ps Program.

Mission Australia was selected by local indigenous services as the lead agency to deliver the program and to work closely in partnership with Let's GET Connected,

East Gippsland and Wellington Shires and indigenous services. More than 30 government and non government agencies, community organisations and the education and transport sectors are or have been involved in the development and implementation of this project. Additional funding has come from a variety of sources, including ExxonMobil, shire councils, Let's GET Connected, VicRoads, Mission Australia, Fleet Partners and the RACV which has helped pay the way for more than 300 participants to obtain their Learners, Drivers and Endorsed licences.

The program was formally established in 2007 following consultation and research undertaken by the Let's GET Connected project who were also able to successfully engage a partnership with Mission Australia, Indigenous support services, health agencies, the police, state and commonwealth departments, legal services and community groups throughout the region.

Unlicensed driving, lack of personal identification, unroadworthy vehicles and a lack of education and support were seen as serious social mobility issues and road safety problems with the Indigenous community at that time. As a result, GEADep has a strong emphasis on ensuring that the Indigenous community are able to access everyday activities and programs which the majority of the population take for granted such as driver training, road safety, access to vehicles, literacy and numeracy support, ID support, mentoring, advocacy and opening up channels to further education and employment opportunities.

Overall, this program is definitely driving better outcomes for Indigenous youth and their families in East Gippsland. As Corey Jack's mother Eileen says: "It gives them more confidence. They're not waiting around for 'mum' all the time now so it's good for everyone."