

# Goulburn Murray

## Speeches, secondees, and cross-sectoral commitment for reform



### Background

Since 2009, the annual Dungala Kaiela Oration has celebrated Indigenous cultural identity, created a shared vision for Goulburn Murray, and built bridges to promote social and economic development. Co-hosted by the Kaiela Institute and the University of Melbourne, each year a prominent speaker addresses themes of climate change, culture, economics and regional development, health and society, and legal issues.

The event was the idea of Yorta Yorta Elder Paul Briggs, and has proved his and the wider community's ability to leverage support from a range of collaborators. Speakers have included high profile Indigenous, corporate, government, and academic figures: including Noel Pearson, Melbourne University Vice-Chancellor Professor Glyn Davis AC, former Western Australia Premier Dr Carmen Lawrence, Westpac CEO Brian Hartzer, Wesfarmers CEO Richard Goyder, KPMG National Chairman and Reconciliation Australia board member Peter Nash. Each year it attracts a larger and higher level audience that includes key allies for Indigenous-led reform, and addresses issues vital to the region – such as jobs and employment.

Given its calibre and year-on-year growth, the Oration requires strong planning and management. This is an area where Jawun's support – in the form of secondees' professional capacity – has been sought. And Jawun builds Executive Visits around the Oration, to facilitate important corporate, philanthropic, and government connections.

### Approach

In all, seven secondees have worked at Kaiela Institute to support the Oration. They worked on event planning, budgeting, sponsorship, and media coordination, while also leaving behind systems and capacity for this to be run by Kaiela staff in future. They helped the Oration evolve: now, with the support of secondees, it is accompanied by a dinner, breakfast, or roundtable talk to advance solutions around Indigenous-led development priorities.

To date, over 40 senior corporate and government executives have been to Goulburn Murray on Jawun Executive Visits designed to foster Indigenous leaders' connections with corporate Australia; or as one Indigenous CEO put it, "with the big end of town". Given the capacity of the region's leaders to draw on cross-sectoral networks, these have been incredibly important to the region's development and reform initiatives, most notably its long-running drive to increase Indigenous employment.

An early connection supported by Jawun was with Wesfarmers, at the same time as Goulburn Murray leaders were prioritising Indigenous employment as a priority. This was based on the results of a community survey, and on statistics showing Indigenous unemployment rate to be around 80% - despite job availability and Indigenous employment organisations.

Jawun facilitated a visit to Shepparton by Wesfarmers CEO Richard Goyder and other executives, who met community representatives and local store managers to understand the context and challenges. As a result they agreed that, Wesfarmers, the largest employer in the country, would support Indigenous job placements at Shepparton branches of Kmart, Coles, Target, Officeworks, Bunnings and other high street businesses. Jawun, meanwhile, hired BCG project manager Alan Tudge (now member of the House of Representatives) to design a pilot 'employment broker' that would leverage its trusted ties with corporate and community partners to facilitate these and other job placements. This broker saw Jawun bring together local Indigenous organisations supporting work readiness, training and retention: including Kaiela Institute, Ganbina, The Academy of Sport Health and Education (ASHE), and Rumbalara Football and Netball Club. Jawun also secured \$230,000 in government funding, and deployed a series of secondees to run the broker.

From mid-2010 to end 2011, 53 Indigenous job placements were made in Goulburn Murray through the pilot employment broker, with an 86% retention rate (six times the national average). Wesfarmers retailers hired 44 new Indigenous staff.

The 2010 Oration was given by Richard Goyder, who used the potential success of the broker to inspire the cross-sectoral audience to support Indigenous-led solutions:

*"None of us have the answers, neither business, government, nor Wesfarmers, but Wesfarmers believes that it can at least facilitate the solutions. And in my opinion, the Goulburn Valley has shown through what it has tried and what it's achieved, that it does have the answers."*

In March 2013 the employment broker became the Shepparton Employment Partnership, a community owned venture supported by funding from Wesfarmers and the Victorian Government. Woolworths came on board, Wesfarmers continued to fund the program, and Jawun secondees supported it throughout. Today it is aligned with the region's Empowered Communities agenda, facilitated through backbone organisation Kaiela Institute and implemented by Rumbalara Football and Netball Club. It remains a key topic of discussion at the Oration and its associated events.

## **Outcomes**

The Dungala Kaiela Oration has grown in size and exposure. Partly as a result of secondee efforts to secure strong coverage of the event, positive tributes in the mainstream media have highlighted the success of the region's platform for cultural recognition and socioeconomic advancement through partnerships. Professor Ian Anderson, University of Melbourne Fellow and Deputy Secretary in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, explained the Oration's power to deliver results for an Indigenous-led agenda:

*"I'd go as far as to say that through the agency of these orations, the financial health of the Goulburn Valley and the region's capacity and potential for future economic prosperity has been enhanced and strengthened."*

The employment program continues to deliver results. Seven local employers signed an employment accord in 2016, with 33 more due to join by 2018. They have set a target for Indigenous employment parity (3%), using lessons from the program's operation since 2010.

## **Next Steps**

The Oration's ambitious and futuristic character is tribute to a region that, home of the Yorta Yorta people, has produced great leaders and vital development initiatives. It continues to be a vehicle for achieving this through partnerships, and is gaining new momentum with Empowered Communities. This agenda integrates employment and economic prosperity in a larger vision where Indigenous-led development occurs within a renegotiated partnership with Government based on joint decision making – a challenge fit for Goulburn Murray and its leaders.