

# North Geelong youth jobs program sets global benchmarks

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A WORK skills program for unemployed youth in Geelong's northern suburbs has been lauded as one of the best of its kind in the world.

It was achieving the equal highest graduate employment rate of the The Alcoa Foundation's 10 Global Internship Programs throughout the world, said senior program manager Emil Levy.

The program, administered by Northern Futures, involves workforce readiness development, paid internships with

local businesses, career planning and placement assistance.

Mr Levy, who works for the Institute of International Education and oversees the program from the US, told more than 100 community and business leaders at a breakfast in Fyansford that the Geelong program had achieved a 70 per cent graduate employment rate since starting a year ago — 23 per cent higher than the global average.

Fifteen people were now employed full-time. "Strategic partnerships in the community is something that makes the Northern Futures program

unique and of the 10 NGOs we work with it has roots that reach deepest into the community," Mr Levy said.

"Having individual mentors for each intern has also been very helpful.

"They have someone to go to for support not only during the program, but also staying with them post-internship for three to 12 months. Some people, especially if they have been unemployed for a long time, might digress, and having that relationship can catch you.

"For those who haven't finished the program, it's sometimes a case of them just not

being ready, or things happening that are out of their control.

"If a person has spent the majority of their life not believing they can succeed, sometimes it can take a couple of years to make good progress and Northern Futures are working with those people and maintaining the relationship so that they can get them back on track."

Community engagement in Geelong had extended to educating companies about the causes and effects of poverty.

"Without that knowledge, the employers are not able to fully understand what they are

getting into and this approach is something I will recommend to all our partners," he said.

Addressing a forum after last week's breakfast, presenter Nairn Walker — an expert in the Bridges out of Poverty educational model — said employers and the wider community needed to recognise the specific challenges facing people living in generational poverty.

"For someone who comes from generational poverty and has been conditioned to think about the here and now, living day to day and always in survival mindset, the situation is very different," she said.



The Alcoa Foundation's Emil Levy at the recent conference.