



## Community recycling with the Gould League

**Project name:** *Creating Community Recycling through Enterprising Schools*  
**Lead organisation:** *Gould League of Victoria Inc.*

In the past two years, around 300 charity recycling bins have been removed from collection sites in Victoria. The impact on the state's triple bottom line has been severe – \$1 million lost to charities, 50 full-time jobs gone and 1500 tonnes of material dumped as landfill.

'...a school-based, student-run alternative recycling enterprise program.'

The [Gould League](#) of Victoria, a leading environmental education organisation, is using EL21 funding to do something about the situation. Five schools in Melbourne have been selected to pilot enterprising community recycling ventures at their schools, starting in first term 2006.

### School-based recycling solutions

The dumping of hard waste, green waste and general rubbish at collection sites has forced charities to close many sites down, leading to a loss in revenue needed to deliver important social services.

The Gould League, sparked by an approach from Victoria-based bin distributor and collector FM Recycling, saw a potential alternative – getting schools to act as strategic community sites for collecting donated goods. The result is a school-based and student-run alternative recycling enterprise program.

Bernadette Shanahan is the Gould League's Project Officer for *Creating Community Recycling through Enterprising Schools*. 'Our project is about encouraging students to develop innovative solutions to a real community problem,' she says. 'They'll get the experience of creating and operating a small business within the safety net of support provided by project partners and the school.'

'We have five quite different schools on board, widely dispersed across greater Melbourne – public and private, socioeconomically and culturally varied – so it'll be fascinating to see the different kinds of business models they come up with.'

### From research to evaluation

With a given that the school will be the collection point – since it's a hub of community activity and it's more possible to restrict unwanted vehicle access to it – students will research, plan and implement their project over the course of 2006.

Their research will identify the types of goods that could be collected, the partners and supporters who might provide materials, advice or in-kind support, and possible markets for resale.

Students will then develop a system for collecting and storing the goods. They'll create promotional and marketing campaigns to raise awareness in the community, pursue sources of sponsorship/support and develop processes for maintaining and sustaining the service.

They can do this in and out of the classroom in different ways – some might do it as a discrete project in a small group, others will integrate their activities into a range of subjects across the wider curriculum.

Students will also be involved in evaluating the project. Already, the Gould League has engaged a consortium experienced in teaching, behaviour change and sustainability/waste education to do the evaluation and publish journal articles and case studies.

## Variations on a theme

Bernadette Shanahan believes there are many possible variations on how the pilot projects may evolve.

'For example, schools may choose to restrict access to parents and friends or trusted community members to deter the dumpers,' she says. 'They may invite businesses and community organisations to donate unwanted goods way beyond old clothes and bric-a-brac. It's really a question of vision and viability.'

*'It's really a question of vision and viability.'*

'There might be different sales models, too. Each venture would have the potential to earn income through selling some goods to the collection business – by arrangement with the charity who owns the bin, of course. They might choose to give all profits to charity. They might discover new markets, like having a mobile phone or computer recycling theme day, for example.'

'Whatever the case, students will "own" their enterprises, with backing from partners for teaching and learning resources and mentoring,' Bernadette says. 'They'll learn about leadership, planning, marketing, communication, budgeting and working as a team, and all from a social justice perspective.'

## Partners and their inputs

The Gould League, with a proven track record in developing and delivering environmental education programs, is well equipped to manage the project and develop tools and resource material for students and professional development for teachers.

FM Recycling and VISY Recycling are the Gould League's principal partners. FM Recycling will provide bins to the pilot schools, collect them and distribute the contents.

Both companies will supply financial and in-kind support to the project, and executives from both will offer business mentoring support to students.

## The story so far

The Gould League invited 252 schools to express interest in the pilot project. From the replies, five schools were chosen on the basis of the varied possibilities they offered and their willingness to try something different. The schools are Cleeland

Secondary College in Dandenong, St Monica's College in Epping, Koo Wee Rup Secondary College, Wantirna College and Kambrya College in Berwick.

A suite of resources is now available for students and teachers, including a toolkit of proformas, guides to simplified business tools and other aids to student planning. One school is developing a DVD for use at forums to inspire students, explain the issues and define roles and contributions students can make.

The Gould League will deliver teacher professional development sessions early in 2006. A portion of the Gould website will be dedicated to support both teachers and students, and a media campaign will promote the project far and wide.

A series of forums over the life of the project will allow students to present their ideas and achievements on a wider stage, and will bring in guest speakers from charities and business leaders to offer ideas and advice.



### More information

Bernadette Shanahan, Project Officer,  
Gould League of Victoria Inc.

Ph: (03) 9532 0909

email: [bernadettes@gould.edu.au](mailto:bernadettes@gould.edu.au)

*This version current at 2 March 2006*