

Empowering Mining Communities: The Importance of Local Business Hubs for Skills Development

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ABSTRACT

The Apeketon Business Hub (ABH), Lihir, Papua New Guinea, emerged in 2019 through a partnership between Australian Business Volunteers (ABV) and Lihir Gold Limited (LGL), a subsidiary of Newcrest Mining Ltd. This development was driven by a shared vision, for the Lihirian mine to give back to the local community and strengthen the economy's resilience post-mine.

At its core, the business hub serves as the epicentre of ABV's operations in the region. A drop-in resource centre which provides the community with mentoring and consulting services, and access to a range of impactful workshops facilitated by ABV's local staff and skilled volunteers. These workshops are focused on local Lihirians, but open to the entire community, including LGL employees who are majority Lihirian. We design and continually refine ABH support programs and offerings driven by community priorities, building trust through long-term relationships and working side-by-side on real-time challenges.

We offer three core programs targeted to different levels of the community, from individuals and families to start-ups and large corporations and landowner groups. There is significant demand for the support services provided by ABV, with over 350 Lihirians participating in our workshops over the 2023 calendar year.

One of the hub's core offerings is the Family Money Management Program (FMMP), which addresses crucial challenges faced by Lihir households, particularly in terms of financial resilience after mining activities. The program takes a comprehensive approach, assisting families in long-term planning and developing skills to effectively manage the income they derive from their employment at LGL and other enterprises. Significantly, the program also addresses financial stress, a factor often associated with domestic violence. By empowering women and promoting joint financial decision-making, FMMP fosters a culture of savings and improved financial management, ultimately enhancing economic resilience within the community.