



Australian  
**Rural Leadership**  
Foundation

ARLP

# COURSE 30

PARTICIPANT DIRECTORY 2023-24



### **Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which we meet, work and live and recognise that this land has always been and will always be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land.

The ARLP is a unique 15-month program which runs across Australia and the Asia-Pacific for leaders serving rural, regional and remote Australia, from a range of backgrounds, industries and communities.

The program provides experiences to develop leadership capabilities; the application of understanding self and others; ethics, values and social responsibility; and opportunities to engage with industry, community and region. The ARLP broadens perspectives and connects participants with an extensive, supportive alumni network.

The program develops leadership so people act beyond themselves, work with others, and facilitate change in their organisations, sectors, and communities. The 30th cohort of the ARLP convenes 29 leaders from the furthest reaches of Australia to challenge themselves to serve their communities, industries and organisations for the greater good of rural, regional and remote Australia.

**29**

**LEADERS**

FROM ACROSS  
RURAL, REGIONAL  
AND REMOTE  
AUSTRALIA

**15**

**MONTHS**

LEADERSHIP  
PROGRAM

**4**

**SESSIONS**

OVER 48 DAYS

More information about the ARLF leadership approach can be found at  
[rural-leaders.org.au](http://rural-leaders.org.au)

**COURSE 30**

# MEET THE AUSTRALIAN RURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

## COURSE 30 COHORT

### Kirsten Abernethy OCEAN GROVE, VIC

*Women in Seafood Australasia, Executive Officer*

Scholarship funded by **Fisheries Research and Development Corporation** // [frdc.com.au](http://frdc.com.au)

With a strong belief in equality, Kirsten thrives in her job as executive officer of Women in Seafood Australasia (WISA) – supporting and representing women in a male dominated industry. The women she works with inspire and challenge her daily. The ocean is a cornerstone for Kirsten, who has worked in the fishing and aquaculture industry for almost 20 years in Australia, and in the United Kingdom and the Pacific. She enjoys working from home at her coastal base, walking along the wide open beach with the family (including the dogs), and getting out to sea with her partner who works as an abalone diver.



### Katherine Balding AUSTINMER, NSW

*Baiada Poultry Pty Ltd, General Manager Technical, Nutrition and Milling*

Scholarship funded by **AgriFutures Australia** // [agrifutures.com.au](http://agrifutures.com.au)

Katherine is a General Manager at Baiada Poultry, and has over 20 years' industry experience. Her role spans nutrition; feed milling; procurement strategy; research and development; chemistry and microbiology laboratories; veterinary health; regulations; business development and quality assurance across the whole supply chain. Katherine's background and experience in the poultry sector drives her passion for agriculture and commitment to her industry. She is a chair of the Agrifutures Chicken Meat Advisory Panel and has previously held panel member positions for industry bodies including Poultry Hub Australia, and the NSW Meat Industry Consultative Council.



## Iris Billy WARRABER ISLAND, QLD

*Torres Strait Regional Authority, Member*

Scholarship funded by **Torres Strait Regional Authority** // [tsra.gov.au](https://tsra.gov.au)

Iris is a Torres Strait Islander and dedicated advocate for her community, and in 2021 she was elected the TSRA Member for Warraber. She has a strong commitment to social justice, economic development, employment, training and promoting small business. Iris is an active volunteer and community representative, working with the Torres Strait Island Regional Education Council; the Mura Kosker Sorority Inc; the Community Justice Group; Social Justice and Interagency Services; and the Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service. Iris was one of the first participants in the Foundation's Torres Strait Women's Leadership program. She is determined to lead for positive change in her community and beyond.



## Eileen Breen GIRRAWEE, NT

*NTEX Pty Ltd, Business Development Manager*

Scholarship funded by the **Tim Fairfax Family Foundation** // [tfff.org.au](https://tfff.org.au)

Eileen is a nature-loving business strategist who works in her family's Darwin-based civil construction and demolition business, NTEX, where she focuses on circular economy strategy. In 2023, Eileen was named the NT AgriFutures Rural Woman of the Year; recognising her project, 'SustainAbility', which supports rural and regional businesses to develop and implement sustainable initiatives. A wife and proud mum to two adult sons, Eileen believes that all businesses can be a force for good, no matter what size or industry they occupy. In her spare time, she loves getting into the outdoors, travelling to new and inspiring places and climbing the odd mountain along the way.



## Ellen Childs ALBURY, NSW

*New Edge Microbials, Chief Financial Officer*

Scholarship funded by **New Edge Microbials** // [microbials.com.au](https://microbials.com.au)

Ellen is the CFO of New Edge Microbials, an Australian-owned developer and producer of biological products for agriculture, based in Albury. She grew up on a farm near Goolgowi in the NSW Riverina where she gained a deep appreciation for the resilience and hard work of families in farming businesses. While completing a Bachelor of Business at the University of Technology Sydney, Ellen commenced a cadetship with a firm specialising in agribusiness and rural family succession planning. She then worked within the agribusiness division to support farming families with their financial needs. Ellen is a sports fan and foodie who enjoys regional life with her two loud, boisterous kelpies.



## Dr Julia Cornwell McKean BAROOGA, NSW

*T One P Enterprises Pty Ltd, Managing Director*

Scholarship funded by **Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care** // [health.gov.au](https://health.gov.au)

Julia provides professional advisory services and training to government organisations, not-for-profits and universities as part of her business. The busy Barooga-local juggles a range of roles in her quest to have a positive impact across the region. Julia serves on five governing bodies and seven subcommittees, including as a Commissioner for the Victorian Building Authority, Director of Goulburn Valley Health and Councillor at Berrigan Shire Council. Julia is a dedicated swimmer, keeping life in balance clocking up laps at the local pool. She is married, and chihuahuas Rafa and Teddy keep her company in the office. Julia also specialises in musicology, and holds an Honours, Masters and Doctorate.



## Matthew Dorney THE GAP, QLD

*Greenstock, New Business Account Manager*

Scholarship funded by **Woolworths Ltd** // [woolworths.com.au](https://woolworths.com.au)

Matthew lives with his wife, son and daughter in Brisbane where he is the New Business Account Manager for Woolworths' red meat division, Greenstock. His industry experience both in Australia and overseas has included roles with Meat Standards Australia and with JBS Australia, selling Australian beef and lamb to the Middle East and south east Asia. Matthew's upbringing on a property in the NSW Hunter Valley cemented his interest in farming. After an ag exchange on a Montana cropping property in the US, he completed a Bachelor of Rural Science at UNE. Matthew has worked in mining, cropping and animal health, but his passion lies in having a positive impact on Australia's red meat industry.



## Kathleen Ettlin FOREST, TAS

*West and North West Regional Jobs Hub, Researcher*

Scholarship funded by **Telstra Corporation** // [telstra.com.au](https://telstra.com.au)

Kate works as a researcher on workforce development across the West and North West of Tasmania. Workforce and regional development are the areas she is most passionate about in her professional life. Outside of work, Kate enjoys tackling mountain bike trails on an e-bike, walking her dog on the remote beaches where she lives, looking after her cows and chooks and planning her next trip somewhere. She is excited to hone her leadership and personal development through the ARLP.





## Joshua Fielding PAGE, ACT

*Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, Senior Research Portfolio Manager*

Scholarship funded by **Fisheries Research and Development Corporation** // [frdc.com.au](http://frdc.com.au)

Joshua is passionate about his work with the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation in the nexus between research, management and industry. It's the natural extension of an early interest in fishing and the fishing industry, fostered by his upbringing on the east coast of Tasmania where he spent lots of time on or in the water. At university, Joshua completed a science degree with Honours in Marine Science. He spent four years with the Australian Fisheries Management Authority in Canberra, followed by a stint on a Tasmanian salmon farm. Joshua's partner, their two young kids (and dog) enjoy spending time together, especially at the coast.



## Skye Fruean FRESHWATER, QLD

*Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Principal Veterinarian Officer*

Scholarship funded by **Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry** // [agriculture.gov.au](http://agriculture.gov.au)

Skye works for the Australian Government, leading a team of veterinarians delivering science-based policies to manage biosecurity risks associated with the import and export of live ruminants and their genetic material. Through her work with the Department she has also supported biosecurity capacity development in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste and led the Animal Health Surveillance Program of the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy. In her early career Skye worked in Victoria with a focus on dairy medicine; in Samoa with a not-for-profit clinic and in rural New Zealand as an applied epidemiologist. Her interest in animals stems strongly from growing up on a sheep and beef farm on South Australia's Kangaroo Island.



## Katrina (Kate) Gofton TONGANAH, TAS

*Riverdale Dairies Pty Ltd, Director/Owner*

Scholarship funded by **Dairy Australia** // [dairyaustralia.com.au](http://dairyaustralia.com.au)

Until recently, Kate was the Chair of DairyTas – a regional team of national industry body, Dairy Australia. She is also a board member of Primary Employers Tasmania. She and her husband Rodney own and operate a dairy farm in north-east Tasmania. Kate is a fully qualified accountant, applying her skills within her family's own dairy farming business. Kate and her husband have four children and in her spare time, she enjoys playing golf and riding her e-bike. She's thrilled to embark on the ARLP experience and make new connections with others working to have a positive impact on rural Australia.



## Lynese Hari YARRABAH, QLD

*Wuchopperen Health Services, Manager – Youth and Family Services*

Scholarship funded by **Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care** // [health.gov.au](https://health.gov.au)

Lynese works with young people and families through Wuchopperen Health Services, a not-for-profit Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation. She is a proud Gunggandji woman from Yarrabah Aboriginal Community in Far North Queensland, who loves spending time with family and reconnecting to country. She sees the ARLP as an opportunity to broaden her horizons and build on her leadership skills, abilities, and capabilities to grow and develop into an established leader in her community. Lynese wants to inspire and support those around her to fulfil their leadership potential, and provide a greater understanding of the attributes of a leader and the many ways there are to make a difference.



## Paul Harmer PENOLA, SA

*Mt Gambier North Primary School, Principal*

Scholarship co-funded by **ARLF Alumni** and **H V McKay Charitable Trust** // [hvmckaytrust.org.au](https://hvmckaytrust.org.au)

Paul is a teacher and educational leader who for over 20 years has lived and worked in rural and regional South Australia. His passion for rural education was sparked at university when he switched from banking and finance to take a teaching degree. His first teaching post in the Flinders Ranges exposed him to the disparity between metropolitan and rural education, which has driven his efforts to improve outcomes for country kids. Paul is passionate about improving the lives of young people, and is involved in local community organisations, including cricket, football, ambulance, community drama and golf clubs.



## Amanda Jones SCOTTS HEAD, NSW

*APM, Registered Nurse and Residential Aged Care Assessor*

Scholarship funded by **Australian and NSW Governments** under the **Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund**

Amanda specialises in education and assessment in the aged care industry with a focus on overall holistic wellbeing. She is a health professional with over 30 years' experience as a registered nurse, vocational trainer and assessor, manager and massage and Reiki therapist. Amanda takes every opportunity to support her local community and is a strong believer in the power of connection, communication, mindfulness and positive thinking. She is passionate about learning from those around her and applies a growth mindset to the ways she is able to mentor and inspire others. Amanda connects with family, friends and nature through sunsets and sunrises, swimming, beach walks, yoga and meditation.





## Sallie Jones WARRAGUL, VIC

*Gippsland Jersey, Co-founding Director*

Scholarship funded by **Gardiner Dairy Foundation** // [gardinerfoundation.com.au](http://gardinerfoundation.com.au)

Sallie is the co-founder of Gippsland Jersey, an independent, farmer-owned premium milk brand that ensures farmers are paid a fair price for their milk. She grew up on a dairy farm in Lakes Entrance in East Gippsland; milking cows and making and selling ice cream. After a stint working in PR in Melbourne, Sallie returned home where she started a milk brand with her dad, and had her three children. When Sallie's father tragically suicided, this shock was closely followed by the collapse of the milk price. In the midst of industry crisis and personal pain, Sallie co-founded Gippsland Jersey as a vehicle to produce exceptional milk sustainably, support struggling farmers, and break down mental health stigma.



## Simon Kensit COMET, QLD

*Australian Agricultural Company (AACo), Feedlot Manager*

Scholarship funded by **Australian Lot Feeders' Association** // [feedlots.com.au](http://feedlots.com.au)

Simon works for AACo as the Manager of Goonoo Feedlot, located just south of Comet in Queensland's Central Highlands Region. His years of experience in the red meat industry have taken him throughout Australia and overseas, working right across the supply chain. He grew up on a family sheep and cattle property in southern NSW and completed a Bachelor of Agriculture Science with Honours from the University of Sydney, majoring in agronomy and animal production. He has a passion for animals, working with people and driving efficiencies both on-farm and throughout the food supply chain.



## Edwin Kosgey BROOME, WA

*Far North Community Services, Disability Services Manager*

Scholarship funded by **Prime Super** // [primesuper.com.au](http://primesuper.com.au)

Edwin works as a Disability Services Manager for Far North Community Services from his home in Broome, WA. His role includes service provision in remote and very remote areas of the Kimberley region; building capacity for non-regularly Aboriginal Corporations to be registered providers; and implementing support programs that are value and community based, person-centred and culturally appropriate. Edwin was raised in Nairobi, and he worked in Kenya and Tanzania as an internal auditor before relocating to Australia in 2013 to pursue postgraduate studies in Human Resource Management. Edwin regularly travels to Perth where both his fiancé and sister work and study. He balances work and family life with swimming, basketball, and camping.



## Henry Lavender CARROLL, NSW

*Carroll Cotton Co, Logistics Officer*

Scholarship funded by

**Cotton Research & Development Corporation // [crdc.com.au](http://crdc.com.au)**

**Australian Food and Fibre // [australianfoodandfibre.com.au](http://australianfoodandfibre.com.au)**

**Cotton Research and Development Corporation // [crdc.com.au](http://crdc.com.au)**

Henry lives and works at the Carroll Cotton gin, east of Tamworth, where he is the Logistics Officer for Carroll Cotton Co. Henry grew up near Gunnedah on a broadacre cattle farming and cropping operation that had a strong focus on irrigated cotton and wheat. Henry is deeply connected to the cotton industry and feels fortunate to be working for a company that has a positive impact on the farmers and families of the community that he's grown up in. Outside of work, you'll find him on local golf courses with mates or fishing at the Namoi River just down the road.



## Clive Liebmann ALICE SPRINGS, NT

*Tangentyere Council, Youth and Community Safety Coordinator*

Scholarship funded by the **Tim Fairfax Family Foundation // [tfff.org.au](http://tfff.org.au)**

Clive has worked in community development in a remote Indigenous community in the Tanami region of the Northern Territory. More recently he has been based in Alice Springs working in youth and community safety. Clive was informally mentored by a community development practitioner who had completed the ARLP, and he is committed to paying it forward through his own Program experience. Clive lived in the Tanami region as a child, and has enjoyed reconnecting with life in central Australia in his professional capacity. He has previously lived in Holland, Spain, and Mexico, and he completed a Bachelor of Arts while abroad. Clive's prior work included running an English as a Second Language business in Melbourne. He enjoys music, film, and being active.



## Jennifer Medway GUNNING, NSW

*Penrose Pastoral Co, Owner*

Scholarship funded by **Australian Wool Innovation Ltd // [wool.com](http://wool.com)**

Jennifer is a fifth-generation farmer from Gunning. With her husband and three children, she runs a commercial merino sheep enterprise that is committed to new technologies and management practices.

She also works for the National Farmers' Federation managing the Regional Tech Hub. Jennifer graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Agricultural Economics (Hons) and has worked with the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry as well as AgriFutures Australia. She is the former Deputy Chair of MerinoLink Pty Ltd and is an executive member of several local community groups in the Upper Lachlan region. Jennifer was awarded the 2021 Lambition Award for Industry Leadership, and is passionate about the profitability and sustainability of Australian agriculture and regional communities.



## Colette Newton GERALDTON, WA

*Co-Operative Bulk Handling, General Manager*

Scholarship funded by the **CBH Group** // [cbh.com.au](http://cbh.com.au)

Colette works for CBH Group as an area manager within the operations division of the business, near Geraldton in WA. She also works as a fitness instructor at the local gym – juggling a busy schedule of work, exercise and the sporting commitments of her three children. Colette enjoys being active, taking long walks with the family dog, camping with her husband and kids and embarking on adventures. With an outgoing and honest communication style, Colette is looking forward to enhancing her leadership skills through the ARLP.



## Jennifer Smith TAMBO CROSSING, VIC

*Smith Graziers and Gippsland Agricultural Group, Farm Owner Operator/General Manager*

Scholarship funded by **John B Foundation**

Jennifer is a cattle and sheep farmer and a wife and mother, committed to her East Gippsland community and agricultural industry. With her family and team, Jen is building a sustainable farming enterprise that supports those who work in the business and community, without compromising the future capacity of the land or those that farm it. Through her work with Gippsland Agricultural Group, Jen is tackling some of the social, economic, and environmental challenges facing agriculture in her region. Jen understands the power of genuine connection, and can often be found at the community hall, on the school committee, or at the CFA shed, working to make regional communities vibrant, active, and safe.



## Lorraine Soloman UMAGICO, QLD

*Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council (NPARC), Community Services Supervisory*

Scholarship funded by **National Indigenous Australians Agency** // [niaa.gov.au](http://niaa.gov.au)

Lorraine is a proud Gudang-Yadhaykenu woman who works as the Community Services Supervisor with the NPARC. She lives in Umagico, one of three Aboriginal communities in the Northern Peninsula Area, amongst two Island communities; Bamaga and Seisia. Lorraine, through the ARLP, looks forward to engaging with rural leaders from across Australia. She aims to enhance her leadership as an Indigenous woman having an impact in rural and remote parts of Australia through her role with local government, and in her workplace and community. Lorraine embraces personal growth that will enhance her ability to advocate for her people and contribute more to her community and the Northern Peninsula Area.



## Natalie Sommerville ANDREWS, SA

*Windjara Ag, Managing Director*

Scholarship funded by **National Indigenous Australians Agency** // [niaa.gov.au](http://niaa.gov.au)

Natalie lives on Ngadjuri Country in South Australia's Mid North where she, her husband and two children manage their farming business, Windjara Ag. Here they have spent almost 20 years connecting with local traditional owners. Nat is passionate about influencing positive change in rural Australia around innovation, inclusivity, and diversity. Through her father, Nat is connected to Wagadagam clan of Mabuyag of the Torres Strait Islands, and this provides a cultural lens in all she does. Nat mentors Aboriginal students in local schools, and volunteers with boards including with the National Farmers' Federation, Australian Women in Agriculture, SA, Ag Excellence Alliance, Landcare Australia First Nations Landcare Working Group, and the local NAIDOC committee.



## Jennifer Stanton STOKES BAY, SA

*WD & JM Stanton Agriculture Kangaroo Island, Owner/Project Officer*

Scholarship funded by **Grains Research and Development Corporation** // [grdc.com.au](http://grdc.com.au)

Jennifer is an agronomist, mother to three girls and farms grain and cattle at Stokes Bay on Kangaroo Island in South Australia. She grew up on a mixed farm near Crystal Brook in the state's Mid North before completing a Bachelor of Agricultural Science at Adelaide University. Alongside her work as a research agronomist and project officer for Agriculture KI, she's also a board member with the South Australia No Till Farmers Association. Jenny has held previous roles on the Grain Research and Development Corporation grower network for the high rainfall zone, and the KI Landscape Board. She's fascinated by all-things soil and the interplay between soil, plant, animal and human health.



## Katie Unipan TOOWOOMBA, QLD

*Inland Rail, Stakeholder Engagement Lead*

Scholarship funded by **Australian Rail Track Corporation** // [artc.com.au](http://artc.com.au)

Katie is the Stakeholder Engagement Lead for the Border to Gowrie project of Inland Rail, delivered through the Australian Rail Track Corporation. Katie's role sees her working hard to connect this nation-building rail project to the communities that it impacts. She is a passionate communication professional whose career has taken her throughout regional Queensland and NSW. Katie is currently based in Toowoomba, and has held roles across local and state government, tourism, environment, arts, major events and private consulting. She is a mother of two girls and believes that building the resilience and vibrancy of all regional communities is a vital step in creating the communities her girls will call home into the future.



## Jacob Welch MANSFIELD, QLD

*Teys Australia Pty Ltd, Group Environment Manager*

Scholarship funded by **Australian Meat Processor Corporation** // [ampc.com.au](https://ampc.com.au)

Jacob is the Group Environmental Manager for Teys Australia, managing meat processing facilities and feedlots on the East Coast. He was born and raised in the NSW Riverina and has worked much of his life in the red meat industry. After completing studies in Environmental Management and Ecology, he moved to Brisbane where he began his career specialising in the environmental field, workplace health and safety and capital project delivery. Jacob is passionate about technology, innovation, efficiency, and sustainability. Outside of work, he enjoys lifelong learning, the outdoors and staying active.



## Steve Wilkins BRISBANE, QLD

*Aminya Pastoral and Poolhurst Aviation, General Manager*

Scholarship funded by **Meat and Livestock Australia** // [mla.com.au](https://mla.com.au)

Steve is the General Manager of Aminya Pastoral owned by a Brisbane-based family. He has a passion for regenerative agriculture, and is working to ensure that the business will be a large-scale leader in this area. He's also committed to staff development and the ongoing need to support those pursuing a career in agriculture. Steve's upbringing in the NSW New England region inspired him to pursue a career in agriculture. He jackarooed at Warren, studied Farm Management at Orange Agricultural College, and has since worked on properties in south-west NSW and the border region of Queensland. His wife, Emily, works in Agricultural Marketing, and together they have three teenage daughters.



## Jacqueline Wilson-Smith EERWAH VALE, QLD

*Sustainable Innovation Co., Strategic Facilitator*

Scholarship funded by **AgriFutures Australia** // [agrifutures.com.au](https://agrifutures.com.au)

Formerly a marketer and innovation strategist for multi-national agrifood and drinks companies, Jacqueline is now an independent director and facilitator focused on the agrifood sector and regional communities. Jacqueline founded the Sustainable Innovation Company in 2019, offering facilitation services to help teams, communities and organisations collaborate better and deliver impact faster. She was the Queensland AgriFutures Rural Woman of the Year in 2017. Jacqueline is passionate about connecting people, dots and ideas, and finds satisfaction in working hard with others to achieve meaningful goals. She lives with her husband and three teenagers on a hinterland property on the Queensland Sunshine Coast, where she finds joy being part of the Noosa 'Endless Summer' Ladies Longboard Surfing Club.



# THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

We would like to thank our generous partners for their commitment to and investment in building leadership capability for rural, regional and remote Australia.

## ARLP30 Scholarships Funders



ARLF Alumni



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[rural-leaders.org.au](http://rural-leaders.org.au)

