



Australian
Rural Leadership
Foundation

Agribusiness

**AUSTRALIAN AGRIBUSINESS
LEADERSHIP PROGRAM**

10 Years of Cultivating Courage, Connection and Change



AALP 2017, Victoria

Agriculture is a terrific industry that does amazing stuff, but we can be poor at telling our story. The Australian Agribusiness Leadership Program helps grow confident leaders who can step up and speak on behalf of our sector"

– Paul Luxton, Syngenta



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Lands where we meet, work and live. We recognise the enduring spiritual connection, and we honour the sacredness of the Land. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future and the deep-seated wisdom they hold. We solemnly remind ourselves that this Land has always been, and will always be, Aboriginal Land.



AALP 2022, Canberra

Contents

From the Chief Executive	4
Executive summary	5
Methodology for this report	6
Looking back: The history of the program	7
Program reach	8
A partnership approach on many levels	10
Sponsor case study	12
The impact so far	14
Leadership in many forms	16
Beyond the workplace: Personal impact	17
Leadership that's bigger than one person	18
Looking ahead: A future vision	19
Appendix 1: Alumni	20
Appendix 2: Participant case study	24

From the Chief Executive

Ten years ago, we set out to fill a gap.

While collaboration was growing within parts of Australia's farm sector, the broader agribusiness value chain remained siloed. At the same time many agribusiness organisations needed people to step into roles and spaces that required a different approach to leadership. Leadership development often focused on technical skills or commercial acumen, but we knew something else was needed. An opportunity for people to connect, think critically and lead both within organisations and across boundaries.

That's how the Australian Agribusiness Leadership Program (AALP) began. A first-of-its-kind initiative bringing together people from every part of the agribusiness chain in shared experiences. It was never just about the individual. It was about strengthening the whole system through relationships, insight and influence.

Since then, the program has built enduring cross-sector networks. It has helped people step into leadership, not through title, but through action, working across organisations, industries and perspectives to make progress on the challenges that matter.

A number of organisations have been with us for all of those years. They saw the value of investing in something different, leadership that equips people to work with complexity, navigate change, and support others to do the same.

That approach matters more than ever. Australia is a proud export nation, but we are operating in a shifting global landscape. Supply chains are under pressure. Consumer expectations are evolving. And decisions made far beyond our borders ripple through every part of our sector. The opportunity now is to deepen our leadership capacity across the value chain to strengthen connections, embrace non-linear thinking and work in ways that are resilient, responsive and grounded in shared purpose.

To everyone who has been part of this 10-year journey - thank you. You have helped shape a program that continues to grow, challenge and lead alongside Australian agribusiness. And we look forward to what's next.



Matt Linnegar

Chief Executive

Australian Rural Leadership Foundation



AALP 2019, Tasmania

Executive summary

Over the past decade, the Australian Agribusiness Leadership Program (AALP) has supported people across rural, regional and remote Australia to lead with authenticity, awareness and action. The program has offered space for reflection, connection and transformation, unlocking the kind of leadership that lives beyond job titles and thrives within the industry.

This report draws on the voices of program alumni, facilitators and partners, and offers a thematic snapshot of the impact made. From interviews with participants, four powerful themes emerge:

1. transformational leadership development,
2. deep and lasting connections,
3. significance of immersive learning, and
4. adapting to industry transformation.

Many course participants arrive feeling stretched thin. They are juggling demanding roles, expectations and personal sacrifices. AALP gives them permission to pause. The immersive, supportive setting allows people to reflect, reset and reimagine their future. For some, it is a turning point. For others, a lifeline.

Leadership is redefined; not as command or control, but as the ability to connect, support and grow with others. Participants speak about the value of mentoring, listening deeply and making space for different perspectives. In doing so, they discover that the most enduring leadership is relational, not positional.

AALP provides a platform for growth. With tools, time and thoughtful facilitation. Participants find the courage to take the next step, whether that means stepping into a leadership role, switching sectors or backing themselves in a new role, changing leadership practice in their organisation or backing themselves in a new venture. Confidence grows not just from skills, but from being seen and supported.

Cohort bonds become a lasting source of peer support for many, offering strength during uncertainty and decision-making. Where those bonds don't form, participants reflect on missed opportunity. The lesson is clear: Leadership thrives in connection, and networks need tending long after the program ends.

As we mark 10 years of AALP, this report recognises the impact that investing in people has, not just for their careers, but for their communities, industries and sectors. It celebrates leadership that is practical, courageous and grounded in place. And it invites us to continue building pathways for people across rural, regional and remote Australia to grow, connect and lead.



AALP 2018, Grampians, Victoria

Methodology for this report

To find out how effective the AALP has been over 10 years, we asked those who did the course. We applied an interpretive phenomenological analysis of semi-structured interviews held with 11 AALP alumni.

We wanted to explore various aspects of leadership as seen by this group of individuals. They work in a variety of settings, industries, contexts and places. They were sent an email with an invitation to participate in the interviews at a time suitable to them. The list of questions was included in the invitation. We asked them about the challenges and opportunities, the enduring learnings from their program participation, and the connections they hold with other alumni, peers and sponsors.

The responses also provide insights into the graduates' everyday leadership. Their responses are woven through this report. The name of the person providing the quote is accompanied by their sponsor. The participant quotes are their own, they are not representative views of their sponsor, unless interviewees were invited to speak on behalf of an organisation. Below is the list of participants and the questions.

Interviewee	Program graduate	Sponsor
Terrie Morgan	2018	Hassad Australia
Simon Thurbin	2018	Westpac Banking Corporation
Ryan Robinson	2019	Elders Limited
Dionne Walsh	2017	NT Department of Primary Industries, Fisheries and Mines
Andrew Kidd	2019	Westpac Banking Corporation
Dave Keetsch	2021	Nufarm Australia Limited
Heather McKimm	2022	Australian Eggs Limited
Anna Playfair-Hannay	2021	Woolworths Limited
Joe Briggs	2023	Cotton Australia Limited
Brett Hoffman	2023	Syngenta
Wayne Collier	2021	LiveCorp

Interview questions

- > Tell us a bit about when you participated in the AALP (year, stage of career, sponsor)? What is your most vivid memory from your program participation?
- > How has the program influenced your leadership?
- > What impact has program participation had on you and your career?
- > Have you started mentoring colleagues or have you changed leadership roles following the program?
- > Would you be interested in attending an international agribusiness-focused program if offered by the ARLF. Why/ why not?
- > When you think about future iterations of the program, what do you think are its critical ingredients?
- > What do you feel the challenges and opportunities are for agribusinesses in the coming 10 years?
- > After the program, have you connected with other cohort participants? Was that to ask guidance or advice, was it work-related at all? How can we best foster the connections across the ARLF's agribusiness alumni network?

Between February and April 2025, we connected with participants to hear their reflections. Some conversations took place via video calls. Others were shared in person during a marketing activity at the EvokeAG conference in Meanjin (Brisbane) in March. A few participants responded by recording their answers to our questions in their own time.

Next, we layered in insights from past stories and case studies to add depth and breadth to the themes that emerged from the interviews.

This process helped us see patterns more clearly and build a richer picture. We have included a previous case study as an example alongside this report.

Finally, we spoke with two sponsor representatives to hear their reflections. They shared insights on the program's success, why they continue to invest, and the impact they have seen, not just for individual participants, but for their business and the wider agribusiness sector.

Looking back: The history of the program

Spearheaded by ARLF CE Matt Linnegar, the program emerged from a vision to bring together diverse leaders across the agribusiness value chain – banking, services, processing, production – all to foster strategic thinking, personal leadership, collaboration and sector-wide connectivity.

“There were a number of leadership opportunities in the broader agribusiness sector, but none bringing together people from diverse places and backgrounds and exposing them to one shared experience,”

Matt Linnegar, Chief Executive, ARLF

At its inception, the program filled a critical need: while companies offered internal training and development, there was no national program that cut across organisations and jurisdictions to promote self-leadership, behavioural intelligence and system-wide awareness. The program gives leaders from different organisations a chance to lift their field of vision beyond their own organisation and create networks across those organisational boundaries.

Early support came from Syngenta, Westpac, Elders, and Consolidated Pastoral Company, with CEOs of these organisations recognising the value of ARLF’s experiential, challenge-based leadership development model.

The aim of the program has kept steady it is designed to equip leaders in the agribusiness sector with the skills, practices and mindset needed to drive transformational change. The goal is to foster innovation, resilience and ethics within cohorts of individuals practising ethical and sustainable leadership in the agricultural sector. Over time, the program became embedded in these companies’ internal leadership pathways.

“I had a girl who I thought was incredible, but she didn’t have any agricultural experience... and I was like, I’m not sure. But then I thought—actually no, trust your gut. She’s got the gap in the team you need. She’s still with us. She’s incredible.”

– Anna Playfair-Hannay, Woolworths

PROGRAM EVOLUTION

While the foundational principles of AALP remain intact (personal development, trust-building and strategic leadership), the program has evolved in depth and sophistication over the past decade. Recent years have seen improvements in experiential elements, such as immersive placements in third-party agribusinesses, even among competitors, highlighting sector trust and respect for the program’s integrity. A varied pool of facilitators, all with their own unique styles and backgrounds, have further aligned the program with broader ARLF leadership philosophies

KEY FEATURES OF THE PROGRAM

- > **Experiential learning:** A hallmark of AALP is its immersive-learning element, which typically involves real life challenges posed to individuals and groups typically involves real-life challenges posed to individuals and groups, which invites them to activate leadership in a psychologically safe environment. Participants build self-awareness, trust and strategic reflection within and across participant groups.
- > **Cross-sectoral collaboration:** Participants gain exposure beyond their own organisational “bubble”, allowing them to connect and collaborate across different areas of the agribusiness industry.
- > **Organisational integration:** Many companies have had a number of staff complete the program (some over 20), creating a shared language and culture of leadership within those organisations.
- > **Sector influence:** The program has helped deepen networks and soft skills across agribusiness, with a growing recognition of the importance of leadership and people-focused development.

(for example, complexity leadership, collective leadership, vertical development) and strengthened the design and delivery of the program.

PARTNER AND ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

Early on, we engaged industry partners. They worked closely, sharing progress updates, mid-point reflections and personal participant insights with CEOs. Although some of these practices have since faded, they contributed to strong early buy-in. Feedback from partners has helped refine program content, especially to better support leadership in diverse teams and changing workplace dynamics. Alumni have continued to influence the sector, with some cross-sector engagement and subsequent initiatives born directly from program interactions. For example, Dionne stepped away from government to establish her own consulting business focused on land management and rural sustainability, offering leadership, science, and facilitation services in northern Australia. Her work now supports improved decision-making and capacity-building in remote and Indigenous-led land sectors.

Program reach

While the program remains on the east coast of Australia it has taken place in seven separate regions.

A conservative estimate of the total investment made by **42 industry sponsors** in collective leadership across Australia amounts to approximately **\$2.3 MILLION**.

SESSION LOCATIONS 2016–2024

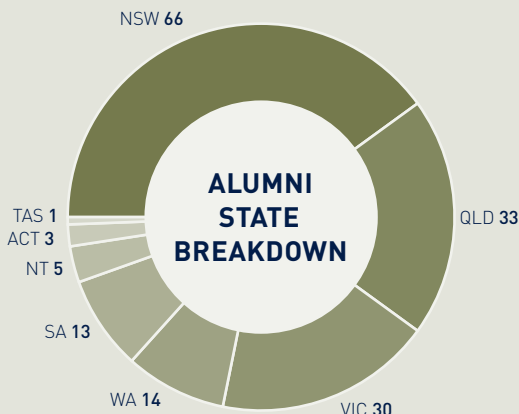
	Session 1	Session 2
2016	Melbourne/East Gippsland VIC	Sydney NSW
2017	Melbourne/East Gippsland VIC	Sydney NSW
2018	Melbourne/Grampians VIC	Sydney NSW
2019	Launceston/Regional TAS	Orange NSW
2020	Tweed Heads/Uki Northern NSW	Orange NSW
2021	Wee Jasper NSW/Canberra ACT	Orange NSW
2022	Canberra ACT	Orange NSW
2023	Canberra ACT	Orange NSW
2024	Canberra ACT	Orange NSW



The first session of the 2025 program in its 10th year has taken place in Canberra, with a second session being held in Toowoomba (QLD).

PROGRAM NUMBERS

168 GRADUATES
109 MALE
59 FEMALE



ALUMNI 2016–2024

In total, nine cohorts and 42 distinct funding partners have contributed to the success of AALP.





AALP 2017, Sydney

A partnership approach on many levels

The program could not have been the success it is today without a broad range of partners. This includes the generous funders as well as facilitators, who each bring their own background and style into the delivery and design.

A critical element of the program is the integration of industry and local businesses, not just in the design, but throughout the delivery and graduation. Their involvement ensures the program stays grounded in real-world relevance. The complex challenges presented to participants for project work are often directly applicable to industry and partners, creating mutual value.

The integration ensures participants get a greater appreciation and understanding of the broader sector, its individual elements and the role each individual and organisation plays, and how to best advocate for the industry. Bolstering a sustainable agribusiness sector and addressing regulatory requirements require a holistic, industry-wide, approach. This integration builds stronger connections, ensures lasting impact, and helps participants apply their leadership in ways that matter beyond the program.

The delivery of the program, from the outdoor components to other key elements, has relied on the incredible support of partner organisations and facilitators.

Catherine Marriott



Having facilitated the AALP for five years now (I started facilitating the program with Lockie McDonald before partnering with Elizabeth), I understand one of the greatest gifts you can offer someone is the opportunity to shape their own learning, rather than prescribing what or how they should learn. The power of experiential leadership development lies in active participation, followed by reflection on behaviours, outcomes and the impact on others.

As facilitators of the AALP, our role is to provide the guide rails—to support participants in seeing themselves clearly and making intentional choices that advance their leadership. The strength of the program lies in its thoughtful design, the ebb and flow of challenge and release, and the art of asking well-timed, purposeful questions. I love working with AALP because the transformation we witness in people over time is genuinely inspiring.

One of my most memorable moments was with a vibrant, generous man from the cotton industry. He gave so much to everyone around him, but through AALP he realised the importance of filling his own cup first. As a result, he's regained his health and now leads with greater impact and longevity—both in the cotton sector and across rural Australia.

It's been incredible to watch—and he did it himself. We simply provided a platform and an invitation: to reflect, to assess what's working and what's not, and to envision a new way forward. He accepted that invitation, and the credit is entirely his.

What makes our facilitators extraordinary is their ability to adapt to what is in the room and respond in the moment. They create cultural and psychological safety that gives the group agency, rather than directing or doing the work for them. Their presence enables challenge, reflection and growth, bringing out the best in individuals and the collective. These include:

- > Outback Initiatives
- > Outward Bound
- > Environmental Capital

In partnering with outdoor providers, we created a sandpit for experiential learning and immersive experience.

Over the years, the program has continued to be delivered by multiple facilitators. They have guided the development and changes in design of the course.

Two of the facilitators, Catherine Marriott and Elizabeth Brennan, who have delivered the program in partnership since 2023, reflected on the program.

Elizabeth Brennan



The AALP is such a unique opportunity for people from across the sector to take time out their respective businesses and explore what's possible – for themselves, for their employers, for their supply chains, for the industry, for regional communities.

The Australian agribusiness sector can otherwise understandably be quite competitive in the nature, but the AALP gives participants time and space to consider what wicked challenges they can address not just individually but collectively.

Having been a facilitator for the AALP for three years, I have witnessed numerous lightbulb moments for participants who realise that many of the challenges that they grapple with are the same as others from similar and sometimes even competing businesses, and that tackling them together makes for a much more sustainable outcome.

I love creating learning spaces that invite participants to listen beyond bias, contribute beyond what's comfortable and imagine beyond the sectoral silos that limit our collective ability to act. I am excited about the next decade of AALP and how we are creating an expansive network of leaders who are committed to collective and collaborative action.

FUNDING PARTNERS BY GRADUATES FUNDED (as at 31 December 2024)

This visual represents the number of funders and participants funded. It illustrates the variety in industries and sectors contributing to the program. The size of the circles illustrates how long funding partners have been involved with the program (larger circles indicating longer engagement).



Sponsor case study

Two of our long-standing sponsors – NuFarm Australia and Syngenta Australia – have a commitment to fostering leadership within the agribusiness sector.

Peter O’Keeffe, Commercial General Manager at NuFarm, emphasises the unique value of the program. After two decades of witnessing leadership training programs come and go, he regards AALP as exceptional.

“We see this as the pinnacle of our leadership development. It’s the Rolls-Royce of leadership programs.”

He observes that participants return with a heightened sense of self-awareness and a stronger belief in their leadership potential, willing to take on responsibility. Initially, NuFarm’s sponsorship focus was geared towards participants in sales and marketing roles. However, the company has broadened its involvement over time, recognising the program’s strategic value by extending AALP access across the organisation’s talent pool a move that supports sector leadership and business alignment.

“People come back more confident, more self-aware, and they know they’ve got something to offer—not just inside the business, but across the sector.”

The result has been the development of staff who are more engaged, innovative and forward-thinking. The ripple effect that creates is noticeable across the business. Graduates who share what they’ve learned with peers and teams, reinforcing a strong internal leadership culture.

“It becomes viral. The feedback mindset spreads throughout the organisation, not just with those who’ve done the program.”

NuFarm graduates have contributed to a stronger organisational culture and better business outcomes, like talent retention, feedback mindset, employees stepping into senior roles and creating leadership pipelines. Sponsoring participation in AALP has proven to be more than an act of goodwill—it has become a strategic move that builds internal leadership capability and reinforces NuFarm’s role as a leader in supporting the future of Australian agriculture.

“Years later, they’re still saying it’s the best thing they’ve done. That’s why we keep investing—year after year.”

Peter states that upon realising the program was so good, NuFarm made a decision to expand their investment by sponsoring customers, something he describes as both strategic and generous. “If our customers are more successful, that’s good for Nufarm too.” The company has now sponsored participants from partners including Ag & Vet and Western AG, broadening the program’s reach and impact.

For Syngenta Australia, sponsorship of the AALP is about much more than individual development. It’s about cultivating open-minded, resilient leaders who are ready to thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected agribusiness sector.

Carinne McRae, Head of Human Resources (Australia and New Zealand), believes the partnership with the ARLF delivers lasting value, not just for Syngenta, but for the broader agribusiness sector. “The fact that it’s targeted towards leaders within the agribusiness industry, that’s just gold,” she says.

As a previous program participant herself, Carinne has observed that the success of AALP depends as much on the mindset of participants as it does on the program itself. Those who embrace the discomfort and enter with curiosity tend to grow significantly. Those who resist the unknown tend to miss out.

“For those people who go into it with an open mind and want to be curious about themselves... I’ve seen definite growth. I’ve seen a greater vulnerability when they come out and more curiosity about what they could do differently.”

This reinforces Syngenta’s careful approach to participant selection. Carinne highlights that leadership readiness isn’t just about seniority, it’s about self-awareness, reflection, and the willingness to give and receive feedback.

“We look for people who are willing to grow. Willing to take feedback on board. If they’re not open to that, it’s not the right investment, for them or for us.”

One of Syngenta's goals is to ensure participants are supported to activate what they have learned upon returning to work. Carinne encourages participants to debrief with their managers, share feedback received, and prioritise areas for development.

"You can't change everything. But coming back with clarity on your priorities—what you want to explore further, how you'll apply it—that's where the program becomes sustainable."

A standout feature of AALP, according to Carinne, is the opportunity it provides for professionals from across the agribusiness supply chain to connect. For those in office-based or corporate roles, the program offers rare exposure to the full breadth of the sector. "It was a really good opportunity for me to interact with people from all areas of the industry and all across Australia.

You don't often get that chance in day-to-day work." This diversity is crucial as the industry faces major challenges—regulatory complexity, innovation pressures, sustainability, and evolving global markets. For Carinne, a resilient and inclusive workforce will be key to navigating these shifts.

Involvement in the AALP is part of Syngenta's effort to develop its people and tackle the challenge of attracting people into the business that reflect the spectrum of diversity within the broader community.

"We have a very strong focus on leadership at Syngenta, and the beauty of working with the ARLF is the networking opportunity; to plug into a much greater resource,"

– David van Ryswyk, Managing Director, Syngenta ANZ



AALP 2021, Orange, NSW

The impact so far

To mark the 10-year milestone of the AALP, we invited alumni to reflect on their leadership journeys, program experiences and life after the course. This thematic analysis draws on 11 in-depth interviews, capturing personal and professional growth, key moments of transformation, and insights into what to either keep, grow or let go as the program evolves.

PROGRAM DESIGN INSIGHTS

As participants reflect on their AALP experience, many speak passionately about the program's design, particularly the balance between structure and flexibility that allows insights to emerge naturally. A recurring theme is the value of the immersive residential component. Stepping away from the demands of daily life, both physically and mentally, is often described as a catalyst for deeper connection, learning and self-awareness.

"Disconnecting from the world, being in each other's pockets for a week—it was invaluable. You learn about others, but more importantly, about yourself."

– Dave Keetch, NuFarm

"I know the immersive experience has changed over the years, but for me, it was one of the most powerful aspects. That space to reflect and observe others closely was critical."

– Dionne Walsh, NT Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries & Mines

Another key element is the program's emphasis on experiential learning. Rather than traditional classroom instruction, participants are challenged to work through ambiguity and stress in real time. For some, this includes confronting high-pressure tasks. For others, it means stepping into unfamiliar leadership roles within the group. These experiences create the conditions for both vulnerability and resilience — qualities participants carry forward in their leadership.

Projects are also an integral part of the AALP structure. They offer a bridge between reflection and action. For some, the project reinforces key insights and leads to direct outcomes in their workplace or community. For others, it sparks broader thinking and new possibilities.

"We had to work on a science communication project, which felt intangible at the time. But now, it's shaping the way I frame sustainability and innovation in my current role."

– Dave Keetch, NuFarm

"Our cohort didn't follow through with our project after the program, which was a bit disappointing. But even the ideation process was valuable—it got us thinking collaboratively."

– Dionne Walsh, NT Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries & Mines

Some alumni suggest the projects could align more closely with real-world challenges they are facing. They also see value in showcasing the projects, including online, to highlight the program's outcomes and inspire future cohorts.

What alumni affirm most strongly is that it's the blend of pressure-testing, peer learning, personal reflection and applied action through projects that makes the AALP unique. It's not just a leadership program, it's a personal crucible. As the program continues to evolve, keeping the integrity of these core design elements is essential to preserving its transformative impact.

IMMERSIVE AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The first program week is consistently described as confronting, emotional and transformative. Activities, sleep deprivation, physical challenges and outdoor learning test participants and lead to deep personal insights.

"Thrown into the wilderness... taught me a lot about myself."

– Simon Thurbin, Westpac

"They were trying to take you out of your comfort zone... it was a very highly effective week."

– Ryan Robinson, Elders

FEEDBACK AND SELF-AWARENESS TOOLS

Receiving structured peer feedback and engaging with tools like DISC profiling¹ are consistently highlighted as rare opportunities to build emotional intelligence and reflect on personal leadership style.

"Helped me fine-tune my emotional intelligence... I now listen more, reflect more."

– Andrew Kidd, Westpac

"I remember getting feedback from someone who I didn't expect to notice me. It hit me right in the chest, in a good way. It made me want to show up better for my team."

– Joe Briggs, Cotton Australia

COHORT DYNAMICS AND NETWORKING

One of the program's greatest strengths is the deep peer connections it fosters. For many participants, these relationships provide vital emotional support during the program's most intense moments, and grow into lasting professional networks. The immersive environment builds trust, encourages vulnerability, and creates a foundation of mutual respect that continues well beyond graduation.

"We still have a WhatsApp group going and check in on each other. The networking is massive."

– Brett Hoffman, Syngenta

"I recently reached out to someone from my cohort about a decision I was making. Something they said six years ago stayed with me."

– Terrie Morgan, Hassad Australia

"I did the program with two others from NuFarm. It's great being able to pick up the phone and get advice—there's a shared understanding there."

– Dave Keetch, NuFarm

"We scooted everywhere. I never thought a scooter would be a leadership tool, but it turns out riding them together broke down barriers instantly."

– Joe Briggs, Cotton Australia

GREATER SELF-AWARENESS AND REFLECTION

One of the most widely reported outcomes is increased self-awareness. Participants gain insight into their own tendencies under pressure, better understand what drives others, and learn to pause and reflect before acting.

"It taught me how to be comfortable being uncomfortable."

– Andrew Kidd, Westpac

"I learned to slow down and reflect... that wasn't happening before."

– Ryan Robinson, Elders

"Helped me understand what drives other people."

– Simon Thurbin, Westpac

"The course made me more self-aware and intentional. Now I focus on developing my people, not just the work."

– Wayne Collier, LiveCorp

CONFIDENCE TO STEP INTO LEADERSHIP

The program helps participants identify their strengths, articulate their leadership style and step into more senior roles with confidence. It encourages self-awareness and clarity of purpose, which participants often credit as key to making intentional career moves. Many also develop the confidence to influence beyond their formal role, within their organisations, industries and communities.

"Eased the transition to CEO-level leadership."

– Wayne Collier, LiveCorp

"What got me the job was being able to describe how I lead in difficult situations."

– Ryan Robinson, Elders

"Before AALP, I thought you had to have the title to be a leader. Turns out, you just need the courage to step up when it matters."

– Joe Briggs, Cotton Australia



AALP 2019, Tasmania

1. DISC profiling is a behavioural assessment that identifies an individual's dominant work and communication style—Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, or Conscientiousness—to support stronger leadership, collaboration, and team dynamics.

Leadership in many forms

The pathway for many of the participants of the program did not follow a certain trajectory. Participants spoke of their expectations when stepping into the program, being conscious of the reasons why they were tapped on the shoulder and that there was sponsorship behind their participation.

Funders may have had expectations, too. However, the participants said leadership took them in very different directions, mainly driven by recognising that their strengths and skills could be applied in many ways and different contexts.

FROM TECHNICAL OPERATOR TO LEADER

Many alumni transitioned from hands-on technical roles into more strategic, people-focused positions, often citing the program as a catalyst. They say they are paying it forward and sharing insights, tips and tricks.

"I was a scientist before the program—now I'm a program director managing stakeholders across systems. It completely reshaped how I see my strengths."

– Dave Keetch, NuFarm

"Helping others shift from being technical operators to understanding how they can lead. That's the kind of leadership I try to model now. It's about showing people their influence goes beyond just doing the job well."

– Brett Hoffman, Syngenta



AALP 2024, Orange, NSW

Beyond the workplace: Personal impact

Some program graduates made dramatic career changes following the program, using it as a springboard to find positions better aligned with their purpose and values.

"I left the NT Government and started my own business... the best thing I could've done."

– **Dionne Walsh**, NT Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries & Mines

"My experience changed how I handle risk, and that's led to different business decisions—some of which surprised even me."

– **Simon Thurbin**, Westpac

"My career hasn't gone where I thought it would—but I've made more impact than ever."

– **Terrie Morgan**, Hassad Australia

The extensive impact of the program also came to the fore in other areas of life. Participants reflected on the effect the program had on how they approached life beyond work, with greater empathy, resilience, and connection.

"Life got crazy with three kids... but I draw on what I learned to navigate it."

– **Dave Keetch**, NuFarm

"I mentor younger women now, just informally... people reach out."

– **Terrie Morgan**, Hassad Australia

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND VOLUNTEERISM

Several alumni took on new roles in advocacy, community organising and board positions, applying leadership beyond their day jobs.

"You don't need to be a CEO to influence Agri... I've found other ways to lead."

– **Terrie Morgan**, Hassad Australia

Wayne Collier reflected on how AALP reinforced the importance of collective leadership within rural and regional communities. For Wayne, leadership is not just about organisational outcomes but about sustaining the broader agricultural ecosystem through resilient, connected networks.

"Leadership is about building people up intentionally—not just focusing on the work in front of you. It's about helping others grow, even if their next step takes them outside your organisation."

– **Wayne Collier**, LiveCorp

Wayne's experience highlights the ripple effect that strong leadership can have, contributing to a thriving, interconnected rural sector where leaders mentor, develop and empower others to drive positive change across communities.

COHORT NETWORK

The cohort experience is not always uniform, but it's universally meaningful. From lifelong friendships to trusted collaborators, the peer learning component is one of AALP's most valued aspects.

"Ben and I didn't know each other before AALP. Now, he's someone I work with daily and trust completely. That wouldn't have happened without the program."

– **Anna Playfair-Hannay**, Woolworths



AALP 2023, Canberra

Leadership that's bigger than one person

A defining insight from AALP alumni reflections is that leadership is no longer seen as a solo endeavour. Instead, the program fostered a shift from operating as isolated professionals to being part of a connected, values-driven network that stretches across organisations, regions and roles.

Participants repeatedly describe how the program brings together people from across the agribusiness sector, sometimes even from competing companies, and enables them to work together, challenge each other and ultimately build momentum for change.

For some, the emotional impact of that shift comes as a surprise. Dionne Walsh, who spent years working remotely and independently, recalls the intensity of being placed in a highly immersive team environment. "I work remotely by myself all the time... yet I found myself really quite emotional," she says. "I remember saying to the group that they'd seen me cry more than any of my colleagues in 20 years." Despite being physically and mentally capable of the outdoor challenges, it is the human connection and reflection that strikes her most deeply, prompting a years-long journey that eventually led her to leave her government role and start her own consulting business. In her words: "The program was a big catalyst for making that happen."

For others, the network remains a living, breathing source of support. "We've got a new starter... and I've been helping her think beyond being a good technical operator—towards influence and leadership," says Brett Hoffman, reflecting on how lessons from the program ripple outward into team development. He's not alone. Terrie Morgan notes that people now regularly reach out to her for guidance. "I've done a dozen informal mentoring catch-ups, mostly with younger women, it's become part of how I lead," she says.

What's striking is how the program brings together people from similar sectors but with diverse mindsets. As Dave Keetch reflects: "Everyone had different leadership styles, different communication styles... and that was invaluable." That diversity, and the opportunity to navigate it in a shared learning environment, is what many say makes the program so powerful. It doesn't just teach leadership, it models the kind of collaborative, cross-boundary work that has real impact.

In some cases, participants describes reconnecting years later at industry events or conferences. Ryan Robinson recounts a moment at a Hancock Agriculture event in Tamworth. "We were at an event on Sunday night... and literally ran into one of the guys on our program." The man, once a station manager for CPC, was then working with Hancock. Their brief reunion sparked fond memories of their program, including seeing snow fall during a drought in Orange, a moment that left a lasting impression on the group. While their connection hasn't been constant, the encounter reminds Ryan how widespread and quietly influential the AALP network has become.

Together, these stories reveal a shift in mindset - leadership is no longer about standing out alone, it's about standing together, lifting others and navigating complexity with a mix of curiosity, courage and collaboration. That's the real legacy of the AALP: a web of people across agribusiness, each leading change in their own way, definitely not in isolation.



AALP 2024, Canberra

Looking ahead: A future vision

The AALP has built a strong foundation in developing confident, capable leaders. Looking ahead, its future lies in strengthening alumni networks, embracing greater diversity of thought and preparing participants to lead across a changing agricultural landscape.

By combining its proven focus on immersive learning and self-awareness with new approaches to innovation and community leadership, the program will continue to grow leaders who can meet the challenges and opportunities shaping the future of agribusiness.

We envision a future where AALP:

- > Deepens sector coordination and cross-organisational collaboration,
- > Becomes a model for tackling complex, systemic challenges in agribusiness,
- > Bridges rural-urban divides through leadership practices that engage broader audiences,
- > Expands into **international agribusiness leadership**, targeting more senior managers and fostering global connections.

As AALP moves into its next decade, the reflections from alumni point to several opportunities for strengthening the program's impact and relevance. There is growing interest in integrating contemporary themes such as digital innovation, ethical leadership, climate adaptation, and sustainability more explicitly into the curriculum. Participants also suggest more structured post-program engagement to maintain momentum and deepen the alumni network, either through mentorships, follow-up sessions or project showcases. Several note the potential of an international component, which could expose participants to global agricultural systems and expand their perspectives. Others call for more visible impact reporting and storytelling from past alumni projects to demonstrate long-term value to funders and participants alike. Alumni affirm that the blend of pressure-testing, peer learning, personal reflection and applied action through projects is what makes AALP unique.

Looking ahead, Peter O'Keeffe from NuFarm sees leadership and advocacy as critical for the future.

"We need smart, switched-on, polished advocates. Not just for companies, but for the entire agriculture industry."

He points to a current gap in sector-wide leadership pipelines, particularly when it comes to growers.

"There's a whole group of capable people out there who don't even realise they're the ones we need. We have to find them and give them opportunities like this program."

One insight Carinne McRae from Syngenta believes deserves greater focus in leadership development is the changing demographic of the agribusiness workforce. She notes that the sector is now working across multiple generations, each with different communication styles, learning needs, and perspectives.

"This is the first time we've had five generations working at the same time. They've all got very different perspectives. We need to adapt our ways of working to manage and respect that."

She sees AALP as a key contributor to this generational leadership transition, helping participants bridge divides and lead with empathy. "The young folk can learn from those who've been in the industry all their lives, and vice versa. We need inclusive leaders who are open to both."

Carinne also raised a concern shared by other sponsors: that some participants hesitate to commit to the program due to the time required away from work. In a post-COVID environment where even in-person meetings can be difficult to coordinate, securing two weeks out for development can feel like a stretch. She sees internal alumni as crucial to sustaining interest and building confidence among future participants.

"People who've done the program are often the best advocates. When others hear what they gained from it, they realise it's worth the investment."

For Syngenta, AALP remains a key tool for recognising and growing leadership talent. Carinne emphasises the importance of selecting the right people, those who are open, willing, and ready to be challenged. But she's also confident that for the right participants, the impact is lasting.

"It's such a valuable program. You just have to send the right people—and they'll come back changed."

Peter O'Keeffe remains one of AALP's most vocal supporters. For Nufarm, AALP has delivered real value, both in developing internal talent and in strengthening external partnerships. As he puts it:

"I'm glad we took the plunge. I have no plans to stop. It's the best thing we do in leadership development."

Appendix 1: Alumni

Name	AALP cohort	Sponsor
Olivia Agar	2024	Nutrien
Nicholas Amos	2023	Kalyx Australia
Anthony Armstrong	2021	Nufarm Australia Limited
Pat Arzenti	2019	Nufarm Australia Limited
Maxine Austin	2016	Westpac Banking Corporation
Holly Baker	2022	Auctions Plus
Scott Balsillie	2022	Cotton Australia Limited
Travis Bates	2023	NBN
Stephen Bitter	2021	Syngenta
Ross Bloore	2017	Syngenta
Shane Bodiam	2016	Hassad Australia
Katina Bowie	2023	NBN
Jasmine Boxsell	2021	Consolidated Pastoral Company
Lachlan Boyd	2021	Elders Limited
Lucy Brennan	2020	Cotton Australia Limited
Joseph Briggs	2023	Cotton Australia Limited
Mila Bristow	2018	NT Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade
Rudolph Brits	2024	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Jamie Brogan	2020	Elders Limited
Glen Brooker	2019	Consolidated Pastoral Company
Todd Brown	2016	Elders Limited
Bryan Buchanan	2016	Syngenta
William Bulo	2018	Consolidated Pastoral Company
Matthew Callinan	2019	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Sumara Campbell	2022	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Jacqueline Cannon	2017	Consolidated Pastoral Company
Amy Carrigan	2024	Nufarm Australia Limited
Paul Channon	2017	CBH Group
Rebecca Chilton-Matthews	2022	Nufarm Australia Limited
Drew Christian	2016	GrainGrowers Limited
Wayne Collier	2021	LiveCorp
Leonie Cooper	2016	NT Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines
Sean Cornish	2021	Viridis Ag
Peter Cunningham	2022	Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation
Naomi Dallenogare	2023	Elders Limited
William Denholm	2023	ANZ Bank
Charlene Donovan	2024	NBN
Kylie Douglas	2022	ANZ Bank
Christopher Drew	2018	Nufarm Australia Limited
Colby Ede	2023	Nutrien
Nicholas Ennis	2023	Lawson Grains
Matthew Ericsson	2017	Elders Limited

Name	AALP cohort	Sponsor
Greg Erkkila	2019	Canegrowers
Timothy Evans	2024	Nufarm Australia Limited
Naomi Evans	2023	NBN
Damon Ferguson	2021	Nutrien
Joe Finch	2023	Fletcher International Export Pty Ltd
Jack Fitzgerald	2024	Suncorp
Clark Forbes	2017	Sunpork Fresh Foods
Nicole Fosteris	2024	NBN
Jennifer Galloway	2024	AgriFutures
Ken Garner	2016	Bega Cheese Australia
Sam Gaston	2017	Westpac Banking Corporation
Paul Gianniotis	2022	Proway Livestock Equipment
Andrew Gibson	2016	Elders Limited
Scott Glasser	2017	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Katherine Gordon	2023	Westpac Banking Corporation
Gemma Gordon	2021	ARLF Staff Scholarship
Megan Goss	2018	Elders Limited
David Goudie	2022	goFARM
Benjamin Graystone	2021	Suncorp
Alexander Greetham	2023	Nufarm Australia Limited
James Griffiths	2019	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Michael Hall	2016	Elders Limited
David Hammond	2024	Westpac Banking Corporation
Andrew Hannaford	2022	Suncorp
Robert Hardie	2023	NBN
Alexandra Hart	2023	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Robyn Heap	2022	Lawson Grains
Cameron Heath	2023	Westpac Banking Corporation
Jonathon Hewitt	2017	Elders Limited
Grant Higgs	2024	NBN
Brett Hofman	2023	Syngenta
Peter Holmes	2021	Syngenta
Kent Horrocks	2024	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
James Hotten	2019	Syngenta
Nolan Hunter	2018	Westpac Banking Corporation
Nils Jacobson	2023	Lawson Grains
Kevin Jenkinson	2023	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Pip Job	2018	NSW Department of Primary Industries
Peter Johnson	2016	PGG Wrightson Seeds
Sion Jones	2017	NSW Department of Primary Industries
David Keetch	2021	Nufarm Australia Limited
Nicole Kerr	2022	Australian Export Grains Innovation Centre
Deborah Kerr	2017	Australian Pork Limited
Andrew Kidd	2019	Westpac Banking Corporation

Name	AALP cohort	Sponsor
Grayson Killen	2017	Syngenta
Belinda Kilner	2020	Elders Limited
Joann Kong	2022	Nufarm Australia Limited
Emma Lambeth	2023	Cotton Australia Limited
Emma Lambeth	2023	Cotton Seed Distributors Ltd
Chloe & Mitchell Lollback	2023	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Jessica Loughland	2023	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Ben Lucas	2020	Woolworths Limited
Nicholas Macartney	2022	Westpac Banking Corporation
Bill MacDonald	2019	Canegrowers
Joanne Macdonald	2019	Canegrowers
Lauren Marchant	2023	Elders Limited
Joseph Masters	2019	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Heather McKimm	2022	Australian Eggs Limited
Guy McMullen	2016	NSW Department of Primary Industries
Carinne McRae	2019	Syngenta
Daniel Meacham	2018	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Karena Milios	2022	Elders Limited
Steven Monson	2024	Woolworths Limited
Ethan Mooney	2020	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Terrie Morgan	2018	Hassad Australia
Thomas Mugford	2024	Nutrien
Daniel Mullan	2020	Intergrain
Evie Murdoch	2020	KPMG Australia
Tamsyn Murray	2023	Australian Eggs Limited
Tania Nathanielsz	2024	Nufarm Australia Limited
Lloyd Neilson	2017	National Australia Bank
Troy Nixon	2021	KPMG Australia
Bruce Nixon	2023	Nufarm Australia Limited
Lucy Noble	2024	Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd
Jarrad Norrish	2018	Nufarm Australia Limited
Matt O'Dea	2018	National Australia Bank
Ciaran O'Gorman	2017	Auctions Plus
Andrew O'Kane	2022	Consolidated Pastoral Company
Georgina Pengilly	2022	NSW Department of Primary Industries
Leisa Perfect	2018	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Anna Playfair-Hannay	2021	Woolworths Limited
Will Porter	2020	Nufarm Australia Limited
Dion Potter	2018	Syngenta
Anita Ratcliffe	2020	Westpac Banking Corporation
Nick Rinaudo	2023	Nufarm Australia Limited
Karen Roberts	2016	NSW Department of Primary Industries
Andrew Robertson	2019	Australian Pork Limited
Ryan Robinson	2019	Elders Limited

Name	AALP cohort	Sponsor
Ngaire Roughley	2023	Nutrien
Dave Rumbold	2019	Nufarm Australia Limited
Tim Salter	2016	Elders Limited
Reannan Schultz	2024	Nufarm Australia Limited
Jeremy Scott	2023	Consolidated Pastoral Company
Mark Scott	2020	NSW Stud Merino Breeders Association
Thomas Shaw	2023	Nutrien
Bradley Siddans	2017	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Andrew Simpson	2020	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Sanjeeta Singh	2019	Elders Limited
Mark Slatter	2021	Nufarm Australia Limited
Michael Smith	2022	Nufarm Australia Limited
Daniel Smith	2022	Westpac Banking Corporation
Greg Smith	2022	Nufarm Australia Limited
Nicola Smith	2024	Syngenta
Todd Stewart	2022	Nutrien
Adam Stone	2018	Elders Limited
Timothy Sutton	2024	Australian Eggs Limited
Anna Sutton	2018	Syngenta
Blake Taylor	2019	NT Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade
Sarah Taylor	2018	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Renee Teys	2017	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Simon Thurbin	2018	Westpac Banking Corporation
Jonathon Toll	2024	Fletcher International Export Pty Ltd
Melissa Trengove	2023	Nufarm Australia Limited
Angela Wakeman	2023	AgriFutures
Anthony Wallace	2022	Nutrien
Dionne Walsh	2017	NT Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines
Daniel Walsh	2024	Australian Meat Processor Corporation Ltd
Emily Wandel	2021	ANZ Bank
Jock Warriner	2016	Consolidated Pastoral Company
Louise Waters	2024	AgriFutures
Devin Watson	2018	Consolidated Pastoral Company
Benjamin Weber	2024	ANZ Bank
Bryce Wenham	2018	Queensland Sugar Limited
Matthew West	2024	Nufarm Australia Limited
Samuel Whiting	2022	Elders Limited
Jane Winter-Irving	2023	Nufarm Australia Limited
Malcolm Wood	2016	Syngenta

Appendix 2: Participant case study

Reannan Schultz: The gift of feedback and confidence



When Reannan Schultz joined the AALP in 2024, she had no idea how profoundly it would change her understanding of leadership, feedback and self-confidence.

Growing up between her family's farm in Pittsworth and competitive sports fields, Reannan was no stranger to feedback. Yet it was through the AALP's reflective learning model that she came to see feedback not as criticism, but as a gift that drives growth. This shift in mindset has transformed the way she interacts with colleagues at NuFarm Australia, where she works as a Business Development Manager, and how she sees herself as a leader.

LEARNING TO LEAD DIFFERENTLY

Over two intensive weeks, Reannan faced challenges that pushed her far beyond her comfort zone. She stepped into leadership roles within her cohort, learned to embrace feedback and saw the value of diverse perspectives in problem-solving.

Before the program, Reannan was hesitant to speak up unless she had a perfect solution. AALP taught her the power of contributing even partial ideas, recognising that the smallest spark can ignite powerful innovations.

"The biggest thing I gained is my bolstered confidence. I'm much more comfortable speaking up and presenting my ideas."

Through self-reflection and facilitated activities, she uncovered her leadership signature: uplifting those who are less likely to speak. Today, she listens more intentionally, shares ideas without fear and encourages others to find their voice too.

"Leadership is not about me...it's about making the people around me feel comfortable having their voices heard."

THE IMPACT OF SELF-AWARENESS

One of the most profound elements of Reannan's AALP experience was developing a deeper sense of self-awareness. Initially sceptical of the time set aside for reflection, she quickly realised that looking inward was the foundation for outward impact.

"Now I know it's important to strive and reflect, but to always start with self."

This newfound self-awareness is shaping the way she approaches work and life. Reannan now moves through fast-paced environments with more calm, compassion and courage, equipped to lead beyond traditional titles and structures.

A FOUNDATION FOR GROWTH

Reannan's AALP experience reframed her understanding of leadership. She now sees leadership not as a position, but as a way of being, one grounded in self-belief, listening and lifting others. Armed with a new network, deepened insight and the courage to share her ideas, Reannan is poised to continue her leadership journey, creating impact within her organisation and the broader agribusiness sector.

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Australian Rural Leadership Foundation

3/24 Napier Close
Deakin ACT 2600

(02) 6281-0680
info@rural-leaders.org.au

rural-leaders.org.au

