



Australian  
**Rural Leadership**  
Foundation



2024-25 ANNUAL  
REPORT



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 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.



Matthew Simms from Djiriba Waagura during a smoking ceremony on the Australian Rural Leadership Program 31.

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Australian Rural Leadership  
Foundation Limited  
ABN 80 056 874 787

|                          |                                                            |
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## ABOUT ARLF

**The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF) is a national leadership hub for rural, regional and remote Australia. Since 1992, the ARLF has supported more than 5,000 people to grow their leadership through immersive programs, workshops and networks grounded in place, community and purpose.**

We create space for people to lead where they are, with what they have, and for the future they want to shape. Leadership is not defined by position. It is about action across communities, industries and sectors.

Our work builds capacity, connection and courage. We deliver place-based and national programs, support First Nations leadership guided by self-determination, and offer experiential learning that challenges people to lead with integrity, navigate complexity and back their own potential. Alongside this, we support organisations and groups leading through transition and change.

ARLF is also home to a growing leadership knowledge centre, impact research and a national network that activates leadership after programs end.

We are a not-for-profit, attracting diverse investment and offering scalable leadership services and partnerships across government, philanthropy and business.

We do not just deliver programs – we measure leadership’s ripple effects and increasingly seek use insights to contribute to policy, investment and practice.

At ARLF, we walk alongside people and places through their leadership journey sometimes guiding, sometimes learning, always focused on building systems that support lasting leadership. Our goal is to strengthen regional resilience and adaptability, deepen social cohesion and advance self-determination, wherever leadership is needed most.



## OUR VISION

Thriving rural, regional and remote communities.

## OUR PURPOSE

To develop and exercise leadership for positive impact.

## OUR APPROACH

We develop leadership so people act beyond themselves, work with others, and facilitate change. We do this by offering participants challenging, hands-on learning experiences and the opportunity for reflection.

## OUR VALUES

- » **Respect** and engage with First Nation's cultural knowledge.
- » **Engage** with a diversity of views, perceptions, backgrounds and cultures.
- » **Challenge** entrenched ideas.
- » **Foster** collaboration and act beyond self.
- » **Pursue** lifelong learning.



# ABOUT THIS REPORT

## Strategic priorities we report on

Our strategic priorities serve as the foundation of everything we do. These priorities guide our efforts to foster leadership across rural, regional and remote Australia, and ensure we're making a meaningful impact.

Here's what each of our strategic priorities means for ARLF's work and the communities and industries we serve:



### Extend high-quality leadership development opportunities for more people in more places

Our goal is to ensure that leadership opportunities reach the people, communities, industries and sectors across the country that need them most. This means expanding our programs to include participants from diverse demographics, ensuring we reflect the full range of experiences, perspectives and voices that make up rural, regional and remote Australia. By focusing on areas and groups that have historically been underserved, we aim to equip the next generation of leaders with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive and create lasting impact in their communities.



### Collaborate with purpose aligned organisations, investors and people

Collaboration is at the heart of effective leadership. We are committed to partnering with organisations, investors and individuals who share our vision for a thriving rural, regional and remote Australia. By working with those who are purpose aligned, we can pool resources, knowledge and networks to create a greater collective impact and deliver more sustainable leadership outcomes



### Activate leadership networks to facilitate change in organisations, sectors and communities

The strength of our work lies in the leadership networks we build. These networks are a powerful tool for driving change within organisations, sectors and communities. Through such networks, we aim to empower leaders to collaborate, share knowledge and take collective action on the challenges and opportunities they face. Together, we can amplify the impact of leadership and create lasting change.





### Ensure the ARLF is capable and sustainable

Sustainability is key to ensuring that we can continue to deliver high-quality leadership development into the future. We are focused on building a strong, capable organisation that is well positioned to grow and adapt in a changing world. This involves prudent financial management, investing in our team, and continuously improving our processes to ensure the ARLF remains resilient and effective in achieving its mission.



### Contribute to the creation of knowledge to improve the practice of leadership development

As leaders in the field of leadership development, it is our responsibility to contribute to the body of knowledge that informs and enhances best practices. We are committed to research, evaluation and innovation that not only improves our own programs but also benefits the broader leadership development community. By sharing our insights and learning from others, we can collectively elevate the practice of leadership development across Australia



### Understand our impact in more depth

To ensure we're making a meaningful difference, it's essential that we understand our impact at a deeper level. This means continuously evaluating the outcomes of our programs, listening to feedback from participants, and measuring the long-term effects of our work on individuals, organisations and communities. With this understanding, we can refine our approaches, maximise our effectiveness, and ensure that we're creating real, positive change.

## THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The 2024-25 year has been one of transition and change for the ARLF. As facilitators of change processes, we are enacting our own leadership and seeking to become more comfortable with complexity and a shifting context. While there are always challenges and setbacks, the ARLF continues to have significant impact for rural, regional and remote Australia.

The current year has brought to a close the strategic direction set by the board in 2020. No strategy can be static in a changing world, and we have continued to adapt along the way. However, if we look back to what we set out to do over this period, we can be proud of what we have achieved. Some highlights include:

- » Emerging from the COVID period in stronger shape built from a foundation of adaptation, calculated risk, experimentation and development of new ways of thinking and working.
- » Reshaping and improving our suite of programs to be more contemporary whilst maintaining the elements that set us apart including a strong experiential learning base.
- » Broadening and deepening our impact through our place-based work with a strong foundation in regional agency and adaptability. We have gone from no presence in 2020 to being active in over 140 regions by June 2025.
- » Reshaping our team and our own ways of working to meet these changing needs.
- » Growing our network, including alumni and those who have been part of workshops, from under 2,000 to almost 5,000 leaders across rural, regional and remote Australia.

The 2024-25 year saw some consolidation within the ARLF against this backdrop of growth and increased impact. There is no doubt that our operating environment as a for-purpose organisation has been challenging on multiple fronts.

Despite this, we remain optimistic about our future and the continued role ARLF can play in serving rural, regional and remote Australia.

### A trusted partner for rural, regional and remote Australia

The ARLF's 33-year history as an independent organisation with a national footprint and sole focus on rural, regional and remote Australia is testimony to the trust and partnerships we have built over time. In addition to our suite of national programs, the work of the ARLF as a trusted intermediary to a host of regional communities across the country has expanded significantly over the past five years. With the cessation of some of this work, our efforts over the year have been focused on our Future Drought Fund supported work.

The FDF drought program is a joint effort between the ARLF, the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. It has already supported thousands of participants to build local capacity and lead collaborative, community-led solutions to the challenges of drought and climate resilience.

The second stage of our work under the Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative directly engaged 2,300 participants, a drought ready learning and connection platform of over 1,400 people and a national mentoring network involving 83 relationships.

In recognition of the importance of our work across drought-impacted communities, an independent evaluation of our work from the following.

Leadership development should be embedded in national and state-level resilience strategies, not treated as a peripheral or optional activity. The evaluation observed that leadership development builds critical adaptive capacity and social capital necessary for strengthening community resilience. These outcomes directly contribute to national priorities around disaster preparedness, climate adaptation and regional development.

Actions:

- » Integrate leadership initiatives within resilience programs, such as the RDRPs.
- » Position community leadership as a core enabler in resilience planning and frameworks.
- » Allocate sustained funding to support long-term leadership capability.

We have also launched stage three of our FDF work in June 2025 where the ARLF, together with long-time partner the FRRR, will continue to deliver locally tailored leadership programs and community projects across the country.

### Working with the ARLF network in new ways

Two initiatives highlight the changing way the ARLF is working with our network to make progress and affect change for rural, regional and remote Australia.



The Creative Industries Leadership Action Initiative, a partnership between ARLF and Regional Arts Australia (RAA), illustrates how creativity is driving solutions to issues like economic hardship, social isolation, and environmental recovery.

In 2024, 30 participants from sectors such as agriculture, health, education, and the creative industries came together in Canberra for a roundtable event. The discussions revealed that creative projects are already generating jobs, revitalising economies, and building community resilience. However, these contributions are often overlooked in policy frameworks and as the sector remains reliant on grant funding, this causes friction for long-term sustainability. We have continued to work with RAA to pursue outcomes from this unique collaboration.

In mid-2024, the ARLF joined with long-term partner Telstra, to reimagine how the ARLF network can contribute to challenges and opportunities facing regional Australia. The Telstra Regional Council draws on the ARLF network and provides strategic advice and guidance on opportunities and challenges affecting regional and remote Australians more broadly, beyond connectivity. Members contribute regional, rural and remote perspectives, and offer recommendations to help inform Telstra's role in servicing regional Australia.

### A new take on fundraising to support leadership

The ARLF is a for-purpose organisation and registered charity. While for many years we did not seek to actively leverage this charitable status for fundraising, we took a decision a number of years ago to develop fundraising capability and initiatives, believing this was an essential part of a healthy sustainable organisation. This year has seen three incredible initiatives emerge in support of our purpose.

One was the launch of the Bruce Simpson Rural Scholarship Fund (BSRSF) – an incredible perpetual fund established by Bruce's family as a lasting legacy to support the participation of a leader with a deep connection to the service of community and the rural sector to take part in the Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP). Together with the Simpson family and a supportive network of friends, the ARLF has embarked on an ambitious initiative to raise \$2 million to support the BSRSF and is well on the way with almost half this amount raised by the end of June 2025.

Another example is the Territory Connect Scholarship, driven by ARLP alum Donna Digby. Donna, along with a committed group of supporters, is once again taking on the Larapinta Trail to raise funds for a leader from the Northern Territory to take part in the program.

The third initiative is the Matilda Ferguson Scholarship for our TRAIL program, named in honour of our former colleague and friend. The scholarship will support two young women from North-Western New South Wales to participate in the 2026 TRAIL program. The scholarships aim to enable access to personal and community leadership development for young women who demonstrate commitment, potential and connection to their region.

### Growth from the centre

Much of our growth and diversification has been in response to the changing needs of rural, regional and remote Australians, their industries, organisations and communities. These needs including greater agency, self-determination, economic diversity, access to services and social cohesion. We will continue to innovate and reshape our work, partnerships and offerings to respond to these changing needs.

Our core values, purpose and key elements such as our experiential learning principles will not change. Programs such as our flagship ARLP,

Australian Agribusiness Leadership Program, Milparanga and TRAIL hold a unique place in the Australian leadership development landscape, and we will continue to adapt and improve these programs to remain contemporary.

In 2024-25 we also commenced work with our First Nations alumni to support a pathway towards greater self-determination and genuine partnership. We are at the early stages and are moving towards a future where co-creating decisions, embedding cultural protocols, and investing in structures that reflect First Nations knowledge systems, priorities, and leadership become part of the future of the ARLF.

We thank all staff, directors, community of practice members, partners, sponsors, alumni, network members and supporters for the year that was and your contributions towards a thriving rural, regional and remote Australia.



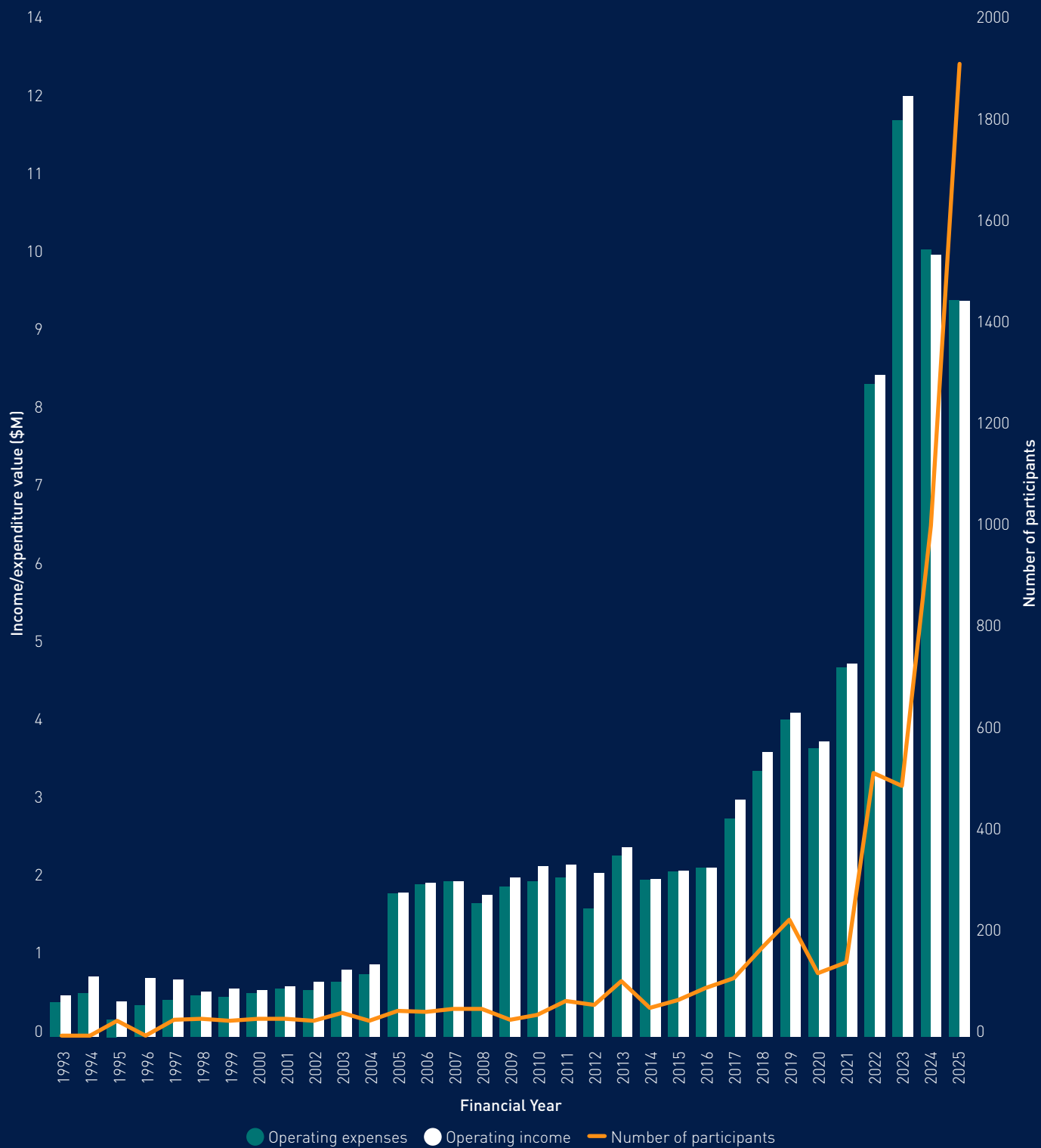
**Rick Sawers**  
Chair



**Matt Linnegar**  
Chief Executive

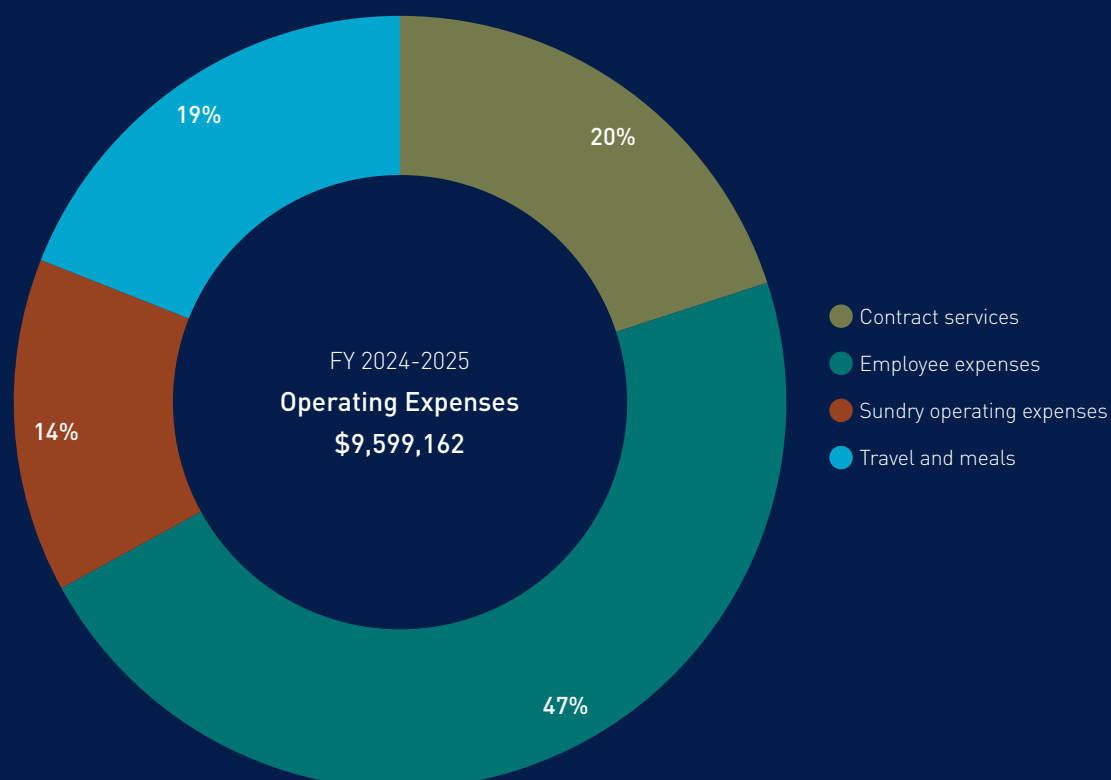
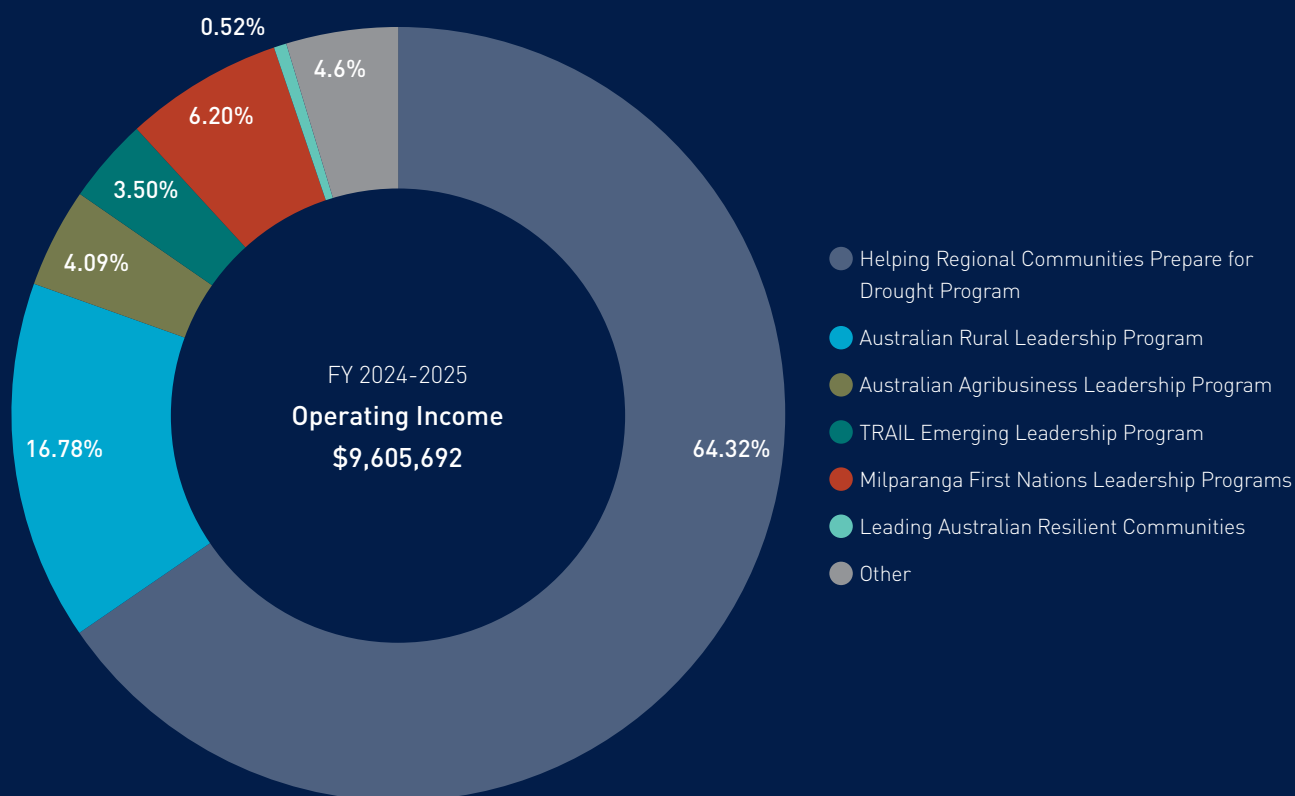
# FINANCIAL YEAR IN REVIEW

## Operating income, expenditure and number of participants





## Income breakdown by program



# Leadership development for more people in more places



## Network member lifetime metrics since 1992

5,333  
participants

3,150  
program alumni

175  
program cohorts

147  
workshops

13%  
identify as  
Aboriginal or  
Torres Strait  
Islander

### Participant footprint

- Leadership Program
- Workshop

- Major Cities
- Inner Regional
- Outer Regional
- Remote
- Very Remote

## Annual metrics at a glance (2024/25)

103  
workshops

12

leadership  
program  
cohorts

226

leadership  
program  
participants

162

new alumni

1,783

workshop  
participants

75%

female

18%

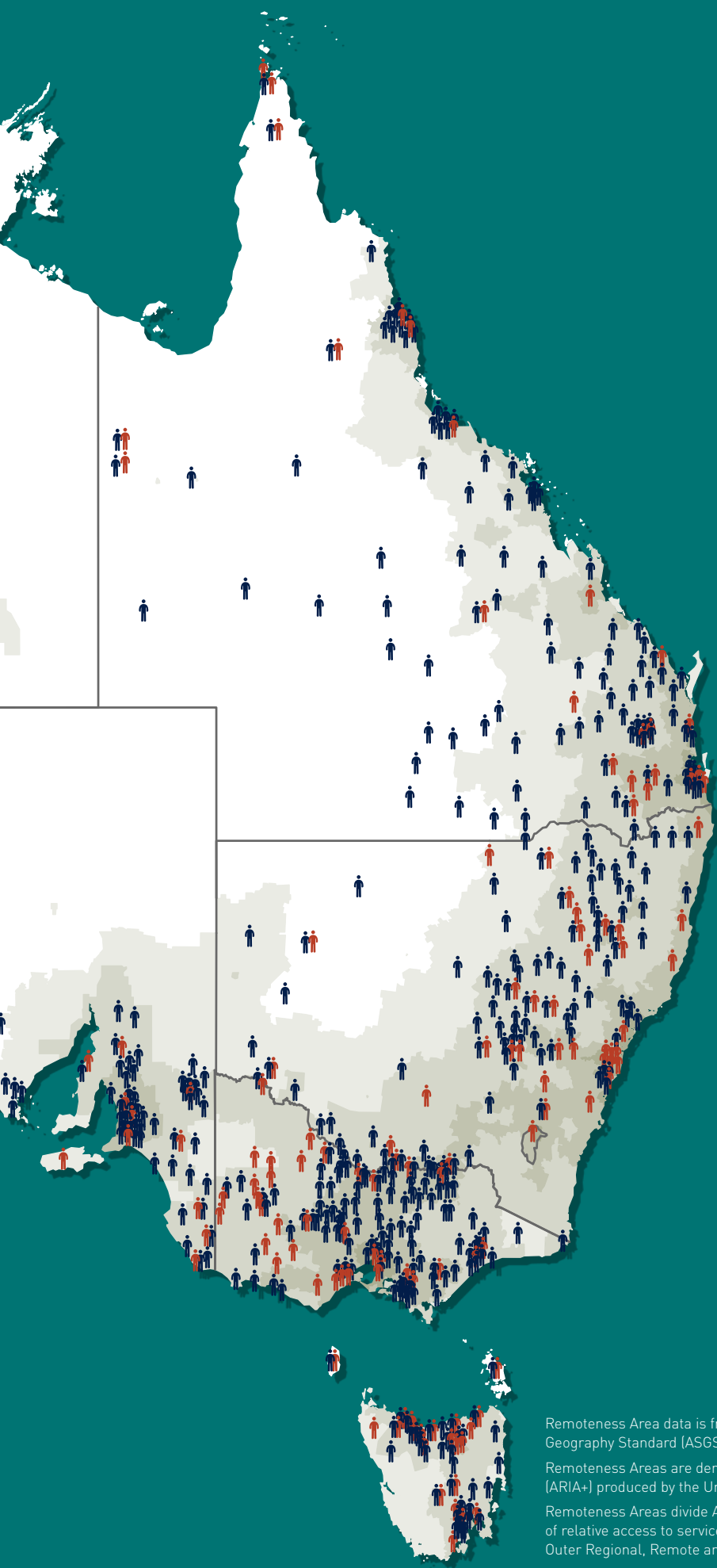
male

0.5%

other gender  
identities

9%

participants  
identify as First  
Nations



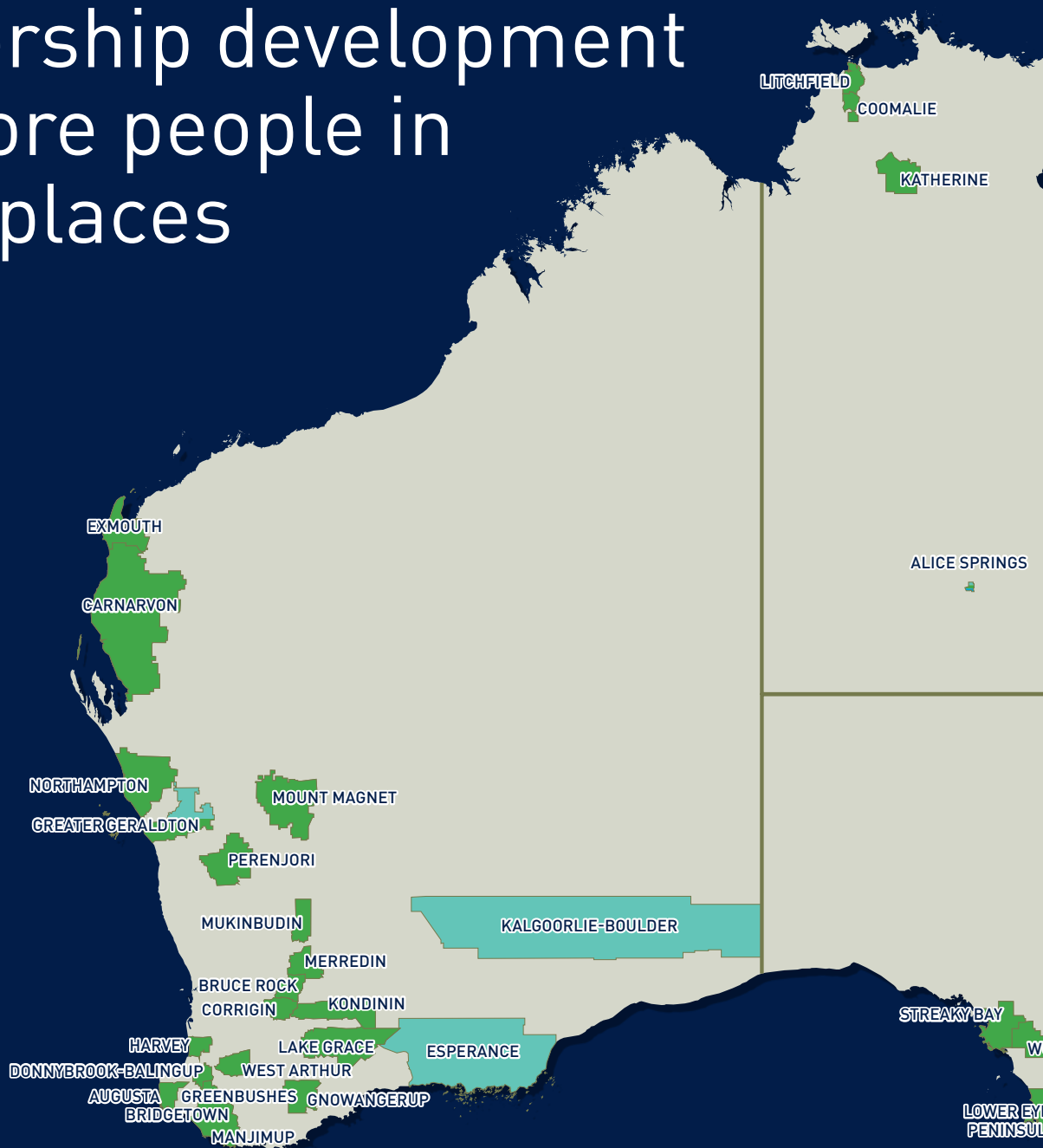
Remoteness Area data is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3 released 20/07/2021.

Remoteness Areas are derived from the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia Plus (ARIA+) produced by the University of Adelaide.

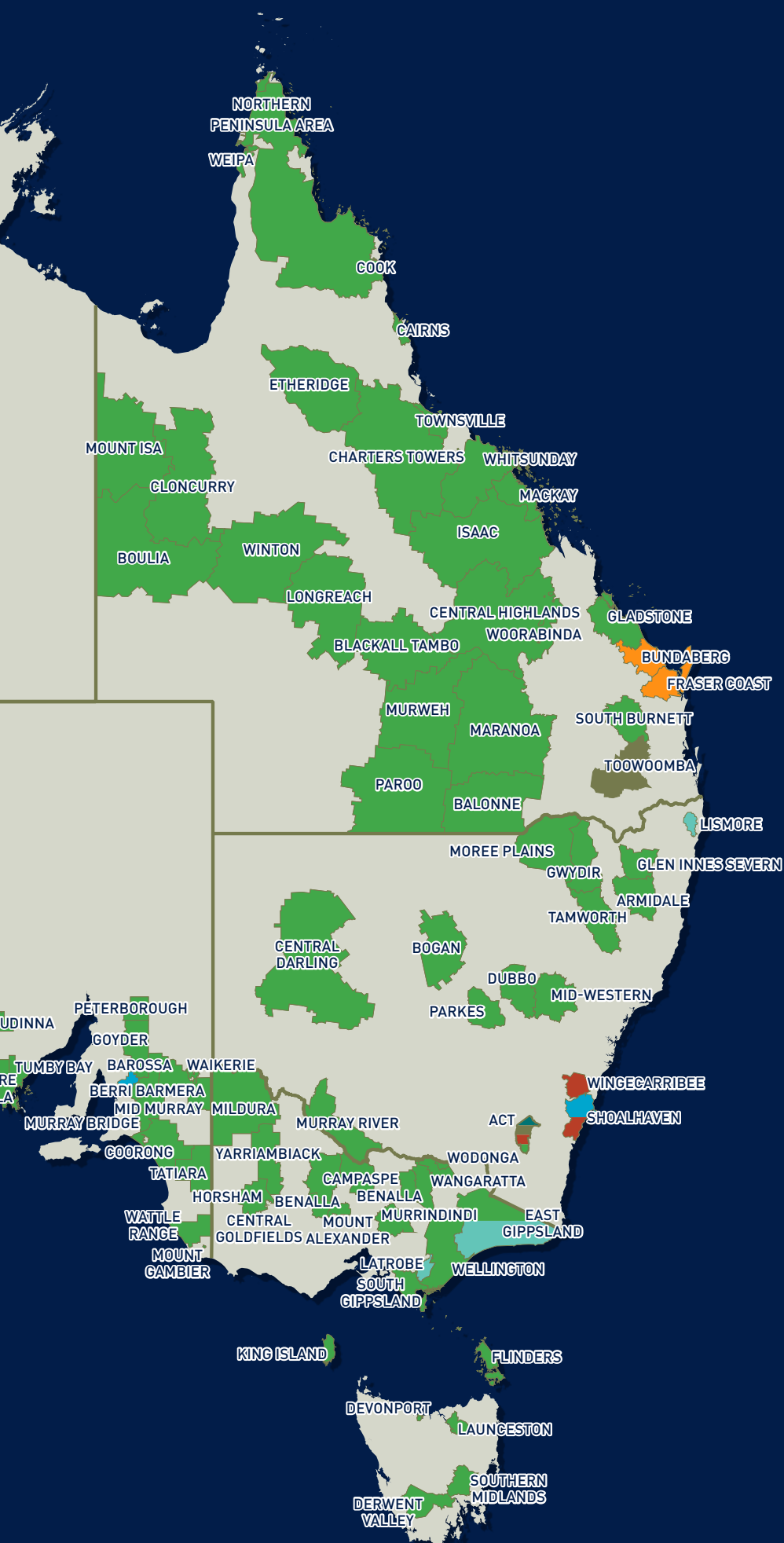
Remoteness Areas divide Australia into five classes of remoteness on the basis of a measure of relative access to services. The five remoteness classes are: Major Cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote.



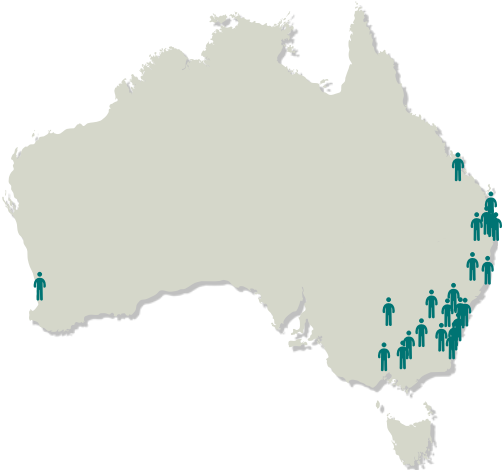
# Leadership development for more people in more places



- Australian Agribusiness Leadership Program
- Australian Rural Leadership Program
- Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative
- Leading Australian Resilient Communities
- Milparanga Leadership Program
- Social Shift Changemaker Workshop
- TRAIL Emerging Leaders Program



# OUR PEOPLE



## Our Community of Practice

Over six years, our Community of Practice has evolved into a strategic and operational partner. Members actively expand leadership networks, offer insights, support high-demand periods and drive innovation in leadership development methodologies.

The community champions inclusion, particularly First Nations perspectives, while contributing to alumni engagement, program visibility and commercial opportunities. Members are selected for their demonstrated commitment to leadership development, voluntary contributions and values alignment.



Briony Arnold



Susan Benedyka



Elizabeth Brennan



Stephen Brown



Benny Callaghan



Steve Colman



Richard Dent



Michelle Deshong



Russell Fisher



Ananth Gopal



Scott Gorringe



Karim Haddad



Tom Henderson



Alana Johnson



Craig Jones



Tanya Lehmann



Catherine Marriott



Paul Ryan



Adam Smith



Jen Wressell



## Network engagement

20

virtual events for cohorts

|                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>19 July 2024</b><br>How to have Difficult Conversations 101<br><i>Hosted by Leah Mether</i>                       |
| <b>6 August 2024</b><br>Introduction to Leadership Circles                                                           |
| <b>16 August 2024</b><br>Community Engagement 101 – <i>Hosted by Ali Mudford</i>                                     |
| <b>27 September 2024</b><br>Fire Preparation – <i>Hosted by Vivienne Thomson</i>                                     |
| <b>31 October 2024</b><br>Stop Waiting for the Calvalry<br><i>Hosted by Peter Kenyon</i>                             |
| <b>7 November 2024</b><br>Community Café                                                                             |
| <b>12 November 2024</b><br>Supporting Rural Leaders Wellbeing to Thrive<br><i>Hosted by Cynthia Mahony</i>           |
| <b>5 December 2024</b><br>Community Café                                                                             |
| <b>12 December 2024</b><br>What does a Resilient Community Look Like?<br><i>Hosted by Kelly Barnes</i>               |
| <b>3 February 2025</b><br>Resilience or Infinity Cycle – <i>Hosted by Paul Ryan</i>                                  |
| <b>5 February 2025</b><br>Community Café                                                                             |
| <b>21 February 2025</b><br>Reframing Problems to Opportunities<br><i>Hosted by Trudi Ryan</i>                        |
| <b>6 March 2025</b><br>Community Café                                                                                |
| <b>21 March 2025</b><br>Thinking Outside the Box – <i>Hosted by Tanya Stevenson</i>                                  |
| <b>3 April 2025</b><br>Community Café                                                                                |
| <b>16 April 2025</b><br>When Community Takes the Reins<br><i>Hosted by Renee Kins, Sabrina Davis &amp; Kim Kunde</i> |
| <b>1 May 2025</b><br>Community Café                                                                                  |
| <b>22 May 2025</b><br>Rethinking Rural and Economic Development<br><i>Hosted by Kalair McArthur</i>                  |
| <b>5 June 2025</b><br>Community Café                                                                                 |
| <b>20 June 2025</b><br>Positive Intergenerational Transitions<br><i>Hosted by Ali Mudford</i>                        |

22

face-to-face events

|                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>16 July 2024</b><br>Alumni Gathering, Darwin NT                                               |
| <b>11 September 2024</b><br>ARLP C30 Graduation, Alice Springs NT                                |
| <b>23 October 2024</b><br>Alumni Gathering, Melbourne VIC                                        |
| <b>6 November 2024</b><br>First Nations Alumni Gathering, Brisbane QLD                           |
| <b>12 November 2024</b><br>Alumni Gathering, Sydney NSW                                          |
| <b>14 November 2024</b><br>Alumni Gathering, Toowoomba QLD                                       |
| <b>18 November 2024</b><br>Milparanga Emerging Leadership Program Graduation, Cairns QLD         |
| <b>13 December 2024</b><br>Alumni Gathering, Geraldton WA                                        |
| <b>19 February 2025</b><br>evokeAG Alumni Breakfast, Brisbane QLD                                |
| <b>24 February 2025</b><br>Alumni Gathering, Hobart TAS                                          |
| <b>5 March 2025</b><br>Alumni Gathering, Dubbo NSW                                               |
| <b>20 March 2025</b><br>Meet the Maker (collaboration with Tasmanian Leaders Inc), Penguin TAS   |
| <b>10 April 2025</b><br>Alumni Community Event (aligning with ARLP C31), Kapunda SA              |
| <b>10 April 2025</b><br>Alumni Gathering, Castlemaine VIC                                        |
| <b>7 May 2025</b><br>Shape Your Energy Future Alumni Gathering, Toowoomba QLD                    |
| <b>8 May 2025</b><br>AALP Graduation, Toowoomba QLD                                              |
| <b>9 May 2025</b><br>Milparanga Established Leadership Program Graduation, Canberra ACT          |
| <b>29 May 2025</b><br>TRAIL Emerging Leaders Program Graduation, QLD                             |
| <b>5 June 2025</b><br>Meet the Makers (Collaboration with Tasmanian Leaders Inc), Launceston TAS |
| <b>12 June 2025</b><br>Alumni Gathering, Katherine NT                                            |
| <b>14 June 2025</b><br>Alumni Gathering, Darwin NT                                               |
| <b>25 June 2025</b><br>National Changemaker Gathering, Cairns QLD                                |

2

webinars

|                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>15 October 2024</b><br>When Everybody Leads<br><i>Hosted by the Kansas Leadership Centre</i> |
| <b>14 November 2024</b><br>How can we transform communities by putting youth at the centre?     |

CASE STUDY

# GOING AGAINST THE GRAIN TO IMAGINE A BETTER FUTURE

*Gamilaraay* man Jacob Birch isn't just working on launching a new agribusiness, he's envisioning a different world. It's this vision that enabled him to join Australian Rural Leadership Foundation's TRAIL Emerging Leaders Program, a cross-sector, challenge-based 7-day leadership program designed to support and develop emerging leaders in rural, regional and remote Australia.

"For us, it's about a long-term vision of having Indigenous communities owning and managing land. It's about being actively involved in a holistic agriculture system that produces good environmental, social and cultural outcomes," says the Sunshine Coast-based entrepreneur, academic and 2024 TRAIL Emerging Leaders Program participant.

His research into native grains while studying at Southern Cross University led him to create Yaamarra & Yarral, a profit-for-purpose social enterprise focused on putting native, ancient and heritage grains back on the menu in Australia.

His aim to replace processed white flour with a highly nutritious stoneground flour made from a native grain called *ganalay* addresses several challenges his community faces. High in protein, calcium and many other essential micronutrients, having access to bread baked with *ganalay* could improve the health outcomes of his community. But it doesn't end there. Native grasses also provide environmental benefits such as carbon sequestration and soil remediation. Then there's the economic, social and cultural impacts associated with running an enterprise focused on a plant that holds much cultural significance for the *Gamilaraay* people.

As Australian farmers work on adapting to the challenges presented by climate change, Jacob is turning to ancient knowledge to recreate robust food systems that support and promote ecological biodiversity while helping to meet the nutritional needs of the community.

"Our whole agriculture system relies on having a stable environment and weather patterns. If we keep destabilising it, agriculture won't exist anymore," he says.



Jacob Birch alongside sponsors from Agrifutures, Angela Wakeman and Jen Galloway.

## Getting out of the echo chamber

Whether it's making breakfast or building a raft, the experiential nature of the TRAIL program's activities encourages everyone to work together to secure a good outcome. During these hands-on, challenge-based activities Jacob observed varying communication styles and approaches to problem-solving.

"The program has given me a good foundation to be able to work with different people as I was able to observe a variety of leadership styles and see how people operate in different situations," he says.

The AgriFutures scholarship recipient sees one of the key benefits of participating in the TRAIL program was connecting with people vastly different to himself, including farmers working in intensive industries like cotton and cattle production.

"It was good to get exposure to a diverse cohort of people from across Australia working in different agricultural sectors," says Jacob, who reflects that the program highlighted no matter your cultural background or what industry you work in, we all share similar motivations, aspirations, hopes, dreams and fears.

"With my work, you can get in a bit of an echo chamber. You're talking to the same people who all get it, especially online. You're not really out there interacting with different people, so all you're hearing is positive reinforcement from people in the same headspace," Jacob shares.

Networking opportunities also presented themselves as the participants got to know each other during the week-long program. Meeting a Queensland farmer who grows millet for soil remediation purposes proved to be serendipitous. Jacob is now hoping to collaborate with the millet farmer to develop a new market for the nutritious, climate-resilient grain that is a staple in Asia and Africa yet is commonly sold as birdseed in Australia.

"It seems like a really promising connection. It's just amazing to meet somebody who has this product and possibly hasn't considered its potential. I'd say that connecting, sharing and opening up new opportunities for each other has been really beneficial," says Jacob.

### Planting seeds for the future

2024 is shaping up to be a big year for Jacob, who is about to begin a PhD at the University of Queensland. His strong commitment to rebuilding traditional food systems and promoting food sovereignty for the *Gamilaraay people* has also been recognised with a fellowship from the Churchill Trust. As a part of the fellowship, he'll soon spend two months in North America connecting with First Nations communities to learn more about the harvesting of a culturally important wild rice called *manoomin*.

"They're about 50 years ahead of us, so there's lots of lessons to be learned from them," he says.

Many entrepreneurs dream of taking their venture nationally or globally, but Jacob doesn't have an aggressive scale-up strategy or aspirations of hitting hypergrowth. Instead, he's interested in operating an enterprise where success is measured by a 'quadruple bottom line' of economic, environmental, social and cultural impacts.

Being guided by four main principles he calls the 'Four Rs' (reciprocity, relationality, respect and responsibility) means a top-down leadership approach is out and collective decision-making informed by community consultation is in.

"I'm thinking about how I can do this for my Mob and shift that paradigm there. And if it works there, then it's a model for others to follow. But it's not for us to tell anybody else what to do as sovereign peoples. It's up to each language group or clan to determine what they want to see happen on their homelands and within their communities," Jacob explains.



This approach may be a bit of a headscratcher for anyone with a traditional business mindset, but Jacob believes a holistic model incorporating agriculture, conservation, health, culture and community will secure a better future for not only his people, but all of us.

"This is about decentralising the food and agriculture systems, so people in communities are taking control, participating, leading and ultimately, benefitting from it."



## COLLABORATING WITH PURPOSE-ALIGNED ORGANISATIONS, INVESTORS AND PEOPLE

**This past year has reinforced that strong relationships and careful stewardship are the foundation of the ARLF's work. In an increasingly tight financial environment, every dollar entrusted to us by our partners, across government, corporate, and philanthropy, carries dual responsibilities.**

On the one hand, there is the immediate and visible investment in programs and services that build leadership capability and strengthen communities and industries in rural, regional and remote Australia. On the other hand, there is less visible but equally critical investment in the organisational capacity, systems, and people that enable this work to thrive. Holding this tension is part of our role, and we are grateful for all our partners' funding and otherwise who navigate this with us.

### Celebrating enduring and emerging

The ARLF has some organisations that for three decades have demonstrated their commitment to rural regional and remote Australia through their investment in leadership development. It is the resounding phrase of our founders that rings true, 'no amount of infrastructure will change our communities.... the people do'. As we increasingly understand the pressures felt by many businesses, we are grateful not just for the enduring partners....it is those who are new and recently joined us that we celebrate as well, they include Indigenous Marathon Foundation, Horticulture Innovation Australia, the Australian Government Department of Social Services, Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre and the Victorian Government Department of Jobs, Skills, Industries and Regions. Together, these relationships not only sustain us but also inspire us to stretch further.

We wrapped up significant projects funded by the Australian Government Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants Program and Boundless Earth, both of which strengthened community resilience in the face of disaster and transition, this work as central to ARLF's purpose as it is to the regions we serve. Knowing we contribute to a vast ecosystem of organisations enabling this work, we felt great pleasure and privilege working with organisations such as the Foundation for Rural

and Regional Renewal, Bega Shire Council and the Queensland Conservation Council in bringing this work to life.

Our renewed partnership with the Torres Strait Regional Authority marked another milestone: supporting the longest-standing place-based leadership investment in our history. With 170 alumni now across the islands, the ripple effects of this partnership continue to shape change for communities and culture.

### Deepening regional presence

Time spent in Northern Australia deepened our ties with alumni and highlighted again that this region is underserved in terms of people-capability investment. We remain committed to amplifying local voices and ensuring more equitable access to leadership opportunities in the north.

Through the Future Drought Fund's Helping Regional Communities for Drought Initiative, our reach into regions has never been stronger. This engagement is not only with leaders on the ground but also with Regional Development Australia committees, local governments, and other critical regional bodies, ensuring the ARLF is seen as a trusted partner in building capacity for the long term.

We also evolved our engagement model to include community connectors, team members in rural, regional and remote Australia who serve as bridges between the ARLF and the regions. This ensures our work continues to respond to local needs while building capability where it matters most.

### Strategic partnerships and new initiatives

Strengthened government relations remain a priority, as does our push for organisational sponsorship that underwrites long-term sustainability.

This year, our partnership with Telstra took a major step forward with the creation of the Telstra Regional Council. Initiated, brokered and facilitated by the ARLF, 85% of its members are alumni, leaders deeply grounded in their local communities and bringing real-world regional insight into the national conversation on connectivity.

This is a powerful demonstration of alumni-led influence, lived experience shaping decision-making and the collective impact of our network in action.

The role of creative arts in our communities and industries is recognised, so it was great to partner with Regional Arts Australia to deliver the first of its kind leadership action initiative. This gathering convened arts leaders and ARLF alumni from diverse sectors to broaden the innovation and application of arts and its roles in regions, amplifying the value we know to be true; that learning from across sectoral boundaries is essential for progress.

Our presence at the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference displayed the ARLF's impact in regions nationwide, with a poster presentation capturing the breadth and depth of our reach. This was one of many events, with others including the Developing Northern Australia Conference and Evoke Ag.

Walking alongside First Nations leaders

Perhaps most importantly, the year marked a deepening commitment to walk differently alongside First Nations leaders and communities. Building from last year's conversation series facilitated by community of practice member Briony Arnold, we continued this journey with gatherings in Meanjin and online forums with alumni. This affirmed the ARLF's role in leadership development and challenged us to take further steps in creating the enabling conditions for self-determination.

This calls us to review our governance and to ensure decision-making structures are fit for purpose. It is the right thing to do, and it is work we undertake with humility and determination. Of note, we thank community of practice member and Fellow, Michelle Deshong, for her carriage and persistence of this work with us.

## Looking ahead

As the ARLF proposes a new structure for the future, one thing remains clear: relationships and stewardship will continue to be our compass. They are the threads that hold us together through transition, enabling us to deliver impact, strengthen communities, and honour the trust of our partners.

To all who have walked with us this year, longstanding and new - thank you. Your support enables leadership to flourish across Australia's regions, ensuring resilience and opportunity in times of both challenge and change.



**Philippa Woodhill**  
*Director Partnerships*



## SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING PARTNERS

### **Agriculture Victoria (VIC Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions)**

- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32

### **AgriFutures Australia**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32
- » AALP 2025
- » TRAIL 2025

### **ANZ Bank**

- » AALP 2025

### **Australian Eggs**

- » AALP 2025
- » TRAIL 2025

### **Australian Food and Fibre**

- » ARLP 30

### **Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32

### **Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31

### **Australian Live Export Council**

- » TRAIL 2025

### **Australian Lot Feeders Association**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » AALP 2025

### **Australian Meat Processor Corporation**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32
- » AALP 2025

### **Australian Rail Track Corporation**

- » ARLP 30

### **Australian Wool Innovation Ltd**

- » ARLP 30

### **Consolidated Pastoral Company**

- » AALP 2025

### **Cooperative Bulk Handling Ltd (CBH Group)**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32
- » TRAIL 2025

### **Cotton Australia Limited**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32

### **Cotton Research and Development Corporation**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32
- » TRAIL 2025

### **Dairy Australia**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32

### **Elders**

- » AALP 2025

### **Fisheries Research and Development Corporation**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32

### **Fletcher International Exports Pty Ltd**

- » ARLP 31
- » AALP 2025

### **Gardiner Dairy Foundation**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32

### **GOFARM**

- » TRAIL 2025

### **Grains Research and Development Corporation**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32

### **H V McKay Charitable Trust**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31

### **John B. Foundation**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32



**Meat & Livestock Australia**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32

**National Indigenous Australians Agency**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32

**New Edge Microbials**

- » ARLP 30

**NSW Government Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development**

- » ARLP 30

**Nufarm Australia Limited**

- » AALP 2025

**Nutrien Ag Solutions**

- » AALP 2025

**Pakaderinga Pastoral**

- » TRAIL 2025

**People First Bank Foundation (Weis Community Fund)**

- » ARLP 31

**Prime Super**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32

**Syngenta**

- » AALP 2025
- » TRAIL 2025

**Telstra Corporation**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32

**Thyne Reid Foundation**

- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32

**Tim Fairfax Family Foundation**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32

**Torres Strait Regional Authority**

- » ARLP 30
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32
- » TRAIL 2025

**Westpac Banking Corporation**

- » AALP 2025

**Whyalla Beef Pty Ltd**

- » TRAIL 2025

**Woolworths Limited**

- » AALP 2025
- » ARLP 31
- » ARLP 32

## Program funding and delivery partners

|                                                                       | FUNDING PARTNER                                                                                                                                                   | DELIVERY PARTNER                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Australian Government Future Drought Fund</li> </ul>                                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal</li> <li>» National Farmers Federation</li> <li>» Local community organisations in program regions</li> </ul> |
| <b>Milparanga</b>                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» National Indigenous Australians Agency</li> <li>» Parks Australia</li> <li>» Torres Strait Regional Authority</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>The Social Shift – Changemaker Workshops in the Hinkler Region</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Hervey Bay Neighbourhood Centre</li> <li>» Australian Government Department of Social Services</li> </ul>                |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Indigenous Marathon Project</b>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Indigenous Marathon Foundation</li> </ul>                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                              |

## CASE STUDY

## RURAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND SUPPORTS GENERATIONS OF RURAL LEADERS TO COME

**When Deniliquin-based leader, Bruce Simpson, died suddenly following an anaphylactic reaction in February 2024, a great void was left within his family, his Riverina community, and throughout the many fields that benefited from his representative and advocacy work.**

Bruce was a graduate of Course 7 of the Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP) and shared this life-changing experience alongside our own CEO, Matt Linnegar, almost 25 years ago.

### A remarkable vision

Bruce's family – wife Shandra, son Charlie, daughter Lucy, and siblings Julie, James and John – are still coming to terms with their loss. However, they have developed a remarkable vision to honour Bruce and ensure that his legacy of leadership and service continues.

Bruce's family, in collaboration with the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF), aim to create a fund of \$2 million-plus to be known as the Bruce Simpson Rural Scholarship Fund, for the purpose of establishing an annual Bruce Simpson Rural Scholarship in perpetuity. The scholarship will honour the extraordinary contribution of Bruce during his lifetime to the rural communities of the New South Wales Riverina and nearby districts and the impact of his advocacy, leadership and passion for agriculture in Australia and beyond.

Family members of Bruce have seeded the fund, with an extraordinarily generous contribution. Bruce's twin brother, John, likens the fundraising effort that lies ahead to climbing Mount Everest.

"Raising the first million dollars will be a bit like reaching Everest 'base camp.' Raising the second million will be more akin to tackling the summit at 8,849 metres. We will require all the support we can muster."



Bruce Simpson on his family property near Deniliquin in Southern NSW.

### A legacy for a lifetime

ARLF CEO, Matt Linnegar, says the opportunity to establish a scholarship in perpetuity is an exceptional and important aim.

"The creation of a self-sustaining fund is of huge importance to Bruce's family, and to the ARLF. The enormous potential of the fund to support a committed leader – with full scope to match with the best candidate – is exciting. These scholarships afford an invaluable opportunity for diverse people to access a world-class leadership development opportunity."

Bruce's children, Charlie and Lucy, along with John, will have hands-on involvement each year in the selection of applicants to the Bruce Simpson Rural Scholarship, which will support "a promising individual working in agriculture and related sectors" to undertake the ARLP.

### An unquantifiable loss

In the tributes and reflections written and shared about Bruce, a remarkable and consistent language recurs:

Generous. Dependable. Calm. Cheerful. Magnanimous. Wise. Kind. Fair. Honest. Direct. Compassionate.

With a keen sense of justice and a wonderful spirit and sense of humour, Bruce has provided leadership in numerous areas, many of them highly challenging and complex. As the Chair of Murray River Irrigation Ltd. Bruce was known for his patience, fairness and steady leadership in water management and politics.

An estimated 1,000 people gathered on the banks of the Edward River to honour Bruce at his memorial – a testament to the impact of his work as an agronomist, primary producer, board member, community advocate, mentor, beloved family member and friend.

## Rural Australia chose Bruce

It is easy to forget that Bruce's childhood and schooling took place in Melbourne, as he wasted no time following the inexorable pull of agriculture, rural life, and the broad horizons and open expanses of the Deniliquin region. As a young man, he worked for enormous pastoral holdings, before starting out on his own property and establishing an agribusiness consultancy.

"The ARLP happened for Bruce at the age 41 or so," recalls John Simpson. "It was a trigger point for him – for the understanding that he had a great deal to give to rural Australia. He always had that motivation to be active beyond the farm gate and be involved in whatever was happening in the community, and it opened his awareness of having an impact on regional and national issues too. He never put himself above anyone else. With the opportunity and right environment to use his skills, he would. John reflects.

"What drew us to aligning this initiative to the ARLF is that they have the know-how of building future leaders in this country. It is absolutely critical that we do this work to connect all of Australia with the issues

affecting rural areas. We want to equip people with the skills, confidence and ability to represent not just themselves, but their communities. Instilling leadership skills is vitally important to bring about change," he says.

For Shandra Simpson, the Bruce Simpson Rural Scholarship represents the heart of her husband's legacy.

"He was a very generous person with his time, and very motivating. I knew a lot of the younger generation who would come to Bruce for advice... For our son, Charlie, I know he is missing that: Bruce wouldn't tell him what to do, he'd just listen and give him ideas and support to make his own decisions.

"Bruce always put himself in positions where he kept learning. He knew you never stop learning," Shandra says.

"For future scholarship recipients, I just hope they grow from their ARLP experience like Bruce grew from his and embrace that learning."

Scan the QR code to find out more.



The Simpson family gathering in Deniliquin for the Bruce Simpson Scholarship Fundraiser launch in 2025.





## ENSURING WE ARE CAPABLE AND SUSTAINABLE

The 2024–2025 financial year marked a turning point in the history of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation. It was the single most successful year for fundraising since our establishment in 1992. For the first time, more than \$1 million was raised in a single year. Even more importantly, support came not only from our alumni network but also from a growing number of first-time donors across the wider community.

This historic achievement reflects the power of rural, regional and remote Australia when people come together with generosity and purpose.

### The Bruce Simpson Rural Scholarship Fund

At the heart of this year's success was the establishment of the Bruce Simpson Rural Scholarship Fund. Created by John Simpson AM in memory of his brother Bruce, the fund honours Bruce's legacy as a farmer and leader committed to rural Australia.

The Fund has already raised almost half of its \$2 million goal to establish a perpetual scholarship for the Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP). This means that each year, forever, a new rural leader will be supported to take part in our flagship program. The first Bruce Simpson Rural Scholarship will be awarded for ARLP33.

The impact of this fund goes far beyond the dollars raised. It has inspired communities across the country to take action, creating momentum that continues to build.

### Community fundraising

This year also saw an extraordinary wave of community-led fundraising efforts, with four separate initiatives generating significant support for ARLF scholarships.

Three of these were connected to the Bruce Simpson Rural Scholarship Fund:

- » Lach MacKinnon competed in the gruelling Mongol Derby, raising more than \$31,000.
- » Michael Powell's goal to swim the North Channel between Ireland and Scotland, raised over \$12,500.
- » Graham Smith, a former ARLF staff member, cycled from Canberra to Hobart, raising funds along the way and stopping in Deniliquin for the launch of the Bruce Simpson Rural Scholarship Fund.

Each of these efforts not only raised vital funds but also carried Bruce's story across Australia and the world, inspiring others to contribute.

The fourth initiative came from Donna Digby, an ARLP alumna who set out with a group of walkers on the Larapinta Trail to successfully raise funds for a Territory Connect scholarship for ARLP32. Her Leadership on Larapinta Walk captured the imagination of many, adding to the spirit of generosity that defined the year. Donna has already committed to a second fundraising walk in 2025.

These community champions demonstrated the power of individual initiative and collective support. Together, they turned personal challenges into opportunities that will open doors for future leaders.





## Remembering Matilda

In February 2024, the ARLF community was deeply saddened by the sudden passing of our former colleague and friend, Matilda Ferguson. In response, alumni, staff and supporters came together through the Remembering Matilda Campaign.

This outpouring of love and generosity raised enough funds to create two scholarships for the TRAIL Emerging Leaders Program. These scholarships will be awarded in 2026 to two young women from North Western New South Wales, the region where Matilda lived and worked.

The scholarships honour her deep connection to the land and rural Australia, ensuring her legacy continues through young leaders who share that bond.

## Philanthropic partnerships

Alongside this record year of community fundraising, we acknowledge the steadfast support of our philanthropic partners. Their trust and commitment have carried us through many years, and this year was no exception.

We thank the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation, John B. Foundation, Thyne Reid Foundation, HV McKay Charitable Trust and the People First Bank Foundation. Their loyal support has helped sustain the ARLF's programs, extending leadership opportunities to rural Australians who might otherwise miss out.

Philanthropy at this scale is not just financial. It is a powerful endorsement of the belief that rural, regional and remote communities can thrive when leadership is supported and developed.

## Looking ahead

The past year has shown what is possible when philanthropy, community and alumni unite behind rural leadership. The challenge now is to keep that energy alive and growing.

In the year ahead, we will focus on building deeper connections with new donors, supporting community fundraisers to keep creating opportunities, and working with our philanthropic partners to ensure leadership opportunities remain accessible to people in rural, regional and remote Australia, today and for generations to come.



**Vivienne Johnson**  
*Philanthropy Manager*

## THANK YOU TO DONORS

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation in 2024–2025. Your generosity has made this an historic year for fundraising and will open new pathways for leadership across rural, regional and remote Australia.

### A

Anonymous (9)  
J Abbott  
B Abercrombie  
W Agar  
J Agar  
Agrimax P/L  
J Alley  
S Allwright  
Amburla Nominees  
L Anderson  
B Anderson  
C Anderson  
P Andrew  
A Anthony  
S Archer  
B & J Armstrong  
S Armstrong  
N Armytage  
Ashby Family  
B & H Atkinson  
Avenel Partnership

### B

Ella B  
T Bailey  
J Baldwin  
B Barlow  
S Barlow  
D Barrie  
Trudi Bartlett  
R Bartmanovich  
D Barton  
S Benedyka  
L Berg  
F Best  
Billyandco P/L  
M Bishop  
Bluedust NT  
J Bond  
David Bowden  
S Bowman  
N Boxsell  
B Boyd  
A Bradfield  
S Branson Dalwood  
J Bray  
A Brayley  
Anne & Jo Breadmore  
E Breen

J Broad  
Keith & Louise Brodie  
A Brook  
T Broom  
C Brown  
K Bruton  
A Bull  
G Bulloch  
M Burgess  
Tony & Janine Burgess  
Ian Burnett  
H & R Burnham  
G Burston  
N Butler  
C Buzzacott  
A Byron

### C

K Camp  
A Campbell  
J & I Campbell  
M Canny  
C Capel  
P Capell  
S Capper  
T Carmody  
M Carmody  
Anna Carr  
A Carroll  
S Carroll-Germech  
Sally Catt  
T Chaffey  
Z Chambers  
M Champness  
B & T Chartres  
M Chartres  
C Chicken  
M Clark  
Ian Clarke  
B Clifford  
B Cole  
M Collins  
K Colman  
T Colwell  
E Cook  
B Coote  
S Cordner  
R Cornish  
P Cribb  
H Crisp

L Crowther  
H Cudmore  
I Curley  
M Curnow  
H Custance  
A Cutler  
**D**  
J Dane  
J Daniels  
M Davies  
K Davison  
Druitt Earthworks  
J de Fegely  
James de Jersey  
J De Jong  
C Delahunty  
Delmore Downs  
B Denyer  
D Digby  
L Doody  
H Downey  
A Driver  
C Driver  
A DuBourg  
W Dunbar  
P Dunbar  
T Dunkley  
F Dunlop

### E

S Eastoe  
Elders (Alice Springs)  
A Elliott  
K Elston  
Richard Evison

### F

R Farmer  
R Farran  
J & J Fast  
G and W Fellows  
A Ferguson  
Tim Ferraro  
K Fisher  
Fletcher International  
Exports P/L  
M Forbes  
T Fordham  
N Fordham  
J Foster

R Franklin  
J Fraser  
D Fraser AM  
D Freeman  
J Fuller  
**G**  
S Gall  
J Gallagher  
L Garrett  
C Geiger  
K Gibson  
Gidleigh Foundation  
Gillespie Family  
Foundation  
K Good  
K Goodfellow  
G Gordon  
C Gordon  
S Gorringer  
E Gorter  
L Goulding  
T Grant  
K Greenwood  
S Griffen  
F Grimwade  
A Grummett  
R Grutzner  
L Gunton

### H

R Hadler  
R Haggerty  
Hamilton Wealth  
Partners  
L Hand  
D Hanson  
S Hanson  
A Hargreaves  
M Harkness  
R Harnett  
V Harper  
N Harris  
P Harrison  
A Harrison  
Hatfield Pastoral  
J Hartwig  
T Hatty  
J Haughton  
L Hawthorne  
Thomas Hyams AM

J & P Heath  
J & R Hehir  
J Henderson  
D Henderson  
L Henderson  
H Heness  
M Hensley  
Hermiston Ag  
Enterprises  
B Hewitt  
K Hill  
G Holden  
T Homfray  
S Howell  
C Hudson  
A Hughes  
F Humphris  
HV Ag P/L  
Tony Hyams AM

### J

Jada Grazing  
Partnership  
Jandra Pastoral Co  
T Janssen-Timmers  
L Jeffers  
A Johnson  
V Johnson  
K Johnson  
E Gunnar Jonsson  
Tony Joubert  
David Jupp

### K

C Keane  
J Keech  
G Kelly  
A Kerby  
Robyn Kerr  
N Khaissi  
L and J Killen  
W Killen  
J Kincaid  
J King  
B Kirkwood  
W Kitchen  
S Knowles  
D & A Koop  
R & J Koop  
M Korff

## L

A Lamb  
W Lang  
C Lavender  
A Leamy  
J Leask  
C & B Leigo  
S Leigo  
R Levy  
J Lillie  
M Linnegar  
K Litchfield  
B & P Lloyd  
M Lollback  
C Lollback  
J Lorenzen  
Eloise Love  
L Lukin

## M

E Macauley  
Alex & Jo Mackinnon  
H Mackinnon  
M MacLeod  
Lachlan McCaw  
B Maher  
N Mahony  
P Mannion  
J Mapleson  
S March  
L Martin  
E Martin  
C Maughan  
C May  
DGR May Investments  
N Mayne  
A McCall  
N McDonagh  
J McKee  
M David McKnight  
A McLean  
M McMahan  
M McPherson  
C Mead  
L Mentha  
D & R Merrin  
J Milne  
S Milner  
Mindful Innovation  
Action  
Milparinka Heritage &  
Tourism Association  
J Mitchell  
P Mitchell  
H Mitchell  
J & S Mob  
M Modderman

C Modderman  
Annie & Rob Moodie  
L Morphet  
D Morris  
M Mosely  
C & M Muldoon  
J Muller  
T Muller

## N

B & R Neal  
N Newell  
J Newton  
T Neylan  
G Nicoll  
G Nicolson  
P Nielsen  
R Nielsen  
N Nijssen  
North Bundy Pastoral  
Company  
M Norton  
**O**  
J O'Halloran  
L O'Brien  
M O'Brien  
P Ockenden  
Off The Track Training  
W Otter  
D Overton

## P

B Parker  
S Parker  
D & S Parrish  
JHW Paterson & Son  
JLT Pastoral P/L  
B Paton  
J Payne  
T Payne  
A Perry  
P Phillips  
M Phillips  
E Pillow  
L Polkinghorne  
Denise Poole  
A Powell  
Michael Powell  
G Price  
J Prince  
P Pullos

## R

M & T Rak  
Ramsay Investments  
P/L  
T Rich  
L Rich

G Richards  
M Richards  
Michael Richards  
E Roberts  
B Roberts  
M & J Roberts  
D Robertson  
Roberts Trading P/L  
S Robinson  
C Robinson  
M Rofe  
S Roper  
L Rosemann  
L Ross  
L Rosser  
WLB Rural Contracting  
L Ryan

## S

Sandover Pastoral  
Company  
A Sapolu  
R Sawers  
P Schuurs  
M Schuurs  
F Scott  
R Sefton AM  
B Setnicar  
J & S Shaw  
J Shin  
C Shiroyama  
K Short  
J & C Simpson  
S Simpson  
W Simpson  
J Simpson  
B & P Sindel  
D & S Sleigh  
R Sleigh  
P & R Sloane  
J Small  
D Smart  
G Smith  
N Smith  
P & G Smith  
P & L Snowden  
G Snowden  
G Somerset  
Sorrento Physiotherapy  
Z Spurdle  
Mike & Jo Stephens  
Cam Stewart & Steph  
Reeves  
L Stock  
N Stocks  
R Stokes  
M Stomps

R Stone  
Storage King (Wagga)  
A Strachan  
N Sutherland

## T

M Taylor  
I Taylor  
M Taylor  
R Taylor  
E Thomas  
Tidey Family  
T & S Trescowthick  
Melanie Trethowan  
Tribus Advisory  
P Trigge  
A Trock  
Judith Troeth  
D Truccolo  
C Tuck

## V

A Van de Weijer  
K Van de Weijer  
A van Vugt  
V Verheggen  
R Verrall  
R Vines  
W Visser  
R Vlachos  
K Vogels  
F Vogels  
T Vogels  
J Vogels  
S Vogels

## W

C Walker  
V Walker  
M Waller  
I Wallis  
D Walsh  
N Walsh  
Peter Walton  
S & K Warby  
S Ward  
G Warne  
Watson Family  
M Watson  
J Watts  
M Webb  
C Weller  
P Weller  
G Westaway  
S Whan  
A Whitbourn  
C White  
H White

Sarah Whitten  
The Whittles  
Michelle Wickson  
J Wilkinson  
D & X Williamson  
Charitable Fund  
K Winchester  
J Wingad  
L Winten  
A & S Withers  
A and D Wood  
P Woodhill  
Woodpark Poll Merinos  
J Worner

## Y

The Yanko Grazing  
Company P/L  
R Young

## Z

LK & BJ Zanker  
M Zerner  
A Zerner  
A Zerner  
J Zerner  
R Zerner  
K Zerner

## Trusts and Foundations

Gillespie Family  
Foundation  
Finkel Foundation  
H V McKay Charitable  
Trust  
John B. Foundation  
Mutual Trust  
Foundation  
Omnia Acqua  
People First Bank  
Foundation (Weis  
Community Fund)  
Thyne Reid Foundation  
The Morgans  
Foundation  
Tim Fairfax Family  
Foundation



## BUILDING CAPABILITY THROUGH SYSTEMS

**ARLF's delivery footprint and volume of leadership activities in financial year ending 30 June was the busiest in the history of the organisation with a total for the year of 1964 participants with sessions delivered in 108 towns across the nation.**

Delivery of support services to ensure this work is done smoothly and safely comes down to a hard working Corporate Services team of keyboard warriors, or roadies if you will, who also spend considerable time on the road. We thank you, not just for the work, but also the good spirit and enjoyment demonstrated in your efforts.

This year the Corporate Services team collaborated with internal and external stakeholders to review and improve our; Governance, Human Resources, IT, stakeholder management and Project Management systems and processes. This work is not glamorous but ensures the ARLF machine hums along smoothly, mitigates risk and critically ensures the safety of staff, partners and participants often in remote settings.

The underlying principle was to exploit the growth in recent years and to embed increased technical, commercial systems and processes and critically ensure they were people centred. We also collaborated with the rest of the staff to continue to build a great working culture across the organisation.

It was the second consecutive financial year refining our project management methodology without which it would be difficult to deliver our leadership programs and events at scale. The customer management system continues to significantly increase our capability and capacity in the management of our business development pipeline, marketing campaigns, data management and leadership program participant management. It has been effective in supporting our data management and security. In tandem we continue to mature our cybersecurity framework to support ARLF to mitigate cyber risks.

With much of our workforce working remotely, we instigated a series of face-to-face and online initiatives that help build and maintain our team members welfare and a thriving, healthy working culture. Living our values and our culture continues to propel the organisation forward in our united sense of purpose for the greater good.



**Lockie McDonald**  
*Corporate Services  
Director*

Caption







CASE STUDY

# POWERING UP A COMMUNITY-LED ENERGY TRANSITION

**“There needs to be space to allow people not necessarily to be right or wrong, but just to actually speak what they’re feeling and thinking. And I think the program was really powerful from that perspective.”**

**Kirstie Schumacher,**  
*South Burnett Regional Council*

Across Queensland’s Western Downs and South Burnett, the shift from coal to renewables is reshaping landscapes, livelihoods and community identities. Home to the Tarong and Kogan Creek power stations and a growing mix of gas, solar and wind farms, the region is recognised as a key location in the State Government’s Energy Road Map.

Amid both opportunity and uncertainty, the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF) and Queensland Conservation Council (QCC) recognised a need for local people to lead this transition so it can be fair, enduring and community driven.

Funded by Boundless Earth, the pilot Shape Your Energy Future (ShEF) program brought together twenty-one participants from agriculture, local government, environmental groups, not-for-profits and the energy sector. In early 2024, they gathered for a five-day residential workshop in the Bunya Mountains, followed by six online facilitated-learning sessions. These focused on:

- » Leadership impact: Growing participants’ confidence and ability to lead across personal, professional and community contexts.
- » Community resilience: Increasing local capacity to adapt and respond to energy transition challenges.
- » Broadening reach and capacity: Applying learning to expand organisational and regional engagement.
- » Collaboration and alliances: Building partnerships and collective action.
- » Building relationships: Deepening trust, respect and connection between participants.
- » Conflict resolution and social cohesion: Strengthening skills to manage differences and maintain community harmony.



ShEF facilitators Benny Callaghan and Philippa Woodhill on program.

Throughout the program, participants learned to navigate complexity, work across different viewpoints and turn shared purpose into action. Seven community projects took shape, including a regional benefit-sharing fund, an energy transition roadshow, and a landholder mentoring network. These collaborations have since secured \$400,000 in Queensland Government funding through Western Downs Futures to progress community-led energy initiatives such as:

- » An energy transition roadshow for the region
- » A landholder mentoring program
- » End-of-life recycling research into renewable infrastructure
- » A formalised landholder tender process

In the months since, graduates have influenced decision-making across councils, companies and community groups. They have built confidence to convene conversations, advocate for fairness and ensure renewable development benefits local people.

“The most valuable thing I got out of the ShEF program was the connections I made. I was able to grow my network, so I now know who to approach to get what I need. Knowing who to call – that’s huge. The sharing of knowledge and connections was huge. I was able to share what I knew with other participants and connect them with other people that could help them in the future too.” said Adrian Story, local landholder and program graduate.



Participants also reported stronger collaboration, empathy and practical skills in facilitation, engagement and problem-solving. A post program evaluation of participants also showed increased trust, new partnerships and growing momentum for community-first approaches to the energy transition.

Powerlink Community Relations Advisor and fellow graduate, Bec Coffey, continues to see the benefit of her involvement in the program and her ability to engage with local stakeholders. "ShEF highlighted the importance of not only considering the whole community - which is absolutely vital - but also making sure that we're providing support to our landholders, who are directly impacted and are on the ground making tough decisions every day", she said.

At its heart, ShEF is about people learning to work together through change. It shows that when communities connect, listen and lead with care, the energy transition becomes a story of shared progress rather than division.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the program.



Top: Adrian Story, Bec Coffey and Kylie Bourne

Bottom: Graduating participants and facilitators of the Shape your Energy Future program in 2024.





## CONTRIBUTING TO THE CREATION OF KNOWLEDGE TO IMPROVE THE PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

This year has been one of extraordinary achievement for our learning team, marked by the collective efforts of our facilitators, partners and participants across rural, regional and remote Australia. The Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP) continued to grow and evolve, with the graduation of Course 31 in Alice Springs, the progress of Course 32, and preparations for Course 33, which will expand internationally into Indonesia to strengthen regional trade and geopolitical understanding.

The Milparanga Leadership Program, supported through renewed NIAA funding, celebrated the graduation of emerging and established First Nations leaders, continuing to foster a strong and connected network of Indigenous leadership. Our TRAIL Emerging Leaders Program welcomed participants from across multiple industries, delivering outstanding participant satisfaction and nurturing the next generation of adaptive leaders. The Australian Agribusiness Leadership Program once again stood out as the only national program of its kind, bringing together leaders from across the agribusiness supply chain to collaborate on shared challenges and opportunities.

Beyond individual programs, our reach into communities has been significant. Through the Future Drought Fund initiatives, we delivered leadership development across 35 regions, equipping local leaders with tools for resilience, collaboration and long-term adaptation. More than 2,000 participants engaged in 125 Changemaker Workshops across 31 regions, culminating in the inaugural National Changemaker Gathering in Cairns, which connected 50 changemakers from every corner of the country and laid the foundations for a vibrant national network. Regional leadership programs in Dubbo, Horsham and Launceston further built the skills, confidence and commitment of local leaders to create meaningful change in their communities.

This year also saw innovation and collaboration flourish. The community of practice continued to grow, fostering peer-to-peer learning and enhancing the quality of facilitation across the organisation. Planning is now



well underway for the 2025 Leadership Development Summit in Canberra, which will bring together national and international voices to explore the theme Tension, Turf and Terrain. We also expanded the reach of our Changemaker Workshops through the Social Shift program, further embedding leadership capacity in Bundaberg and Hervey Bay. These achievements are a testament to the passion, expertise and commitment of our team and facilitators, whose work continues to empower communities, strengthen networks, and shape the future of leadership in Australia.



**Andrea Hogg**  
*Learning Director*

## OUR BOARD

### Current board members



#### Richard (Rick) Sawers

Rick is from Alexandra, Victoria, and now resides in Melbourne. He joined the Board of Directors in March 2016. Rick has over 45 years of experience as a senior executive with several large Australian listed corporations and worked extensively in international locations in financial services, markets, trade, strategy and risk management. In addition, Rick, is an experienced company director, contributing high standards of corporate governance and extensive strategy formulation and execution experience. Rick is currently Chair of Fund 2 market holdings (a private company operating in small business lending) and a committee member of the Audit and Risk committee at APRA. His previous roles include Executive Chair of Great Western Bancorporation (USA), Chair of the Australian Financial Markets Association, Deputy Chair of Export Finance Australia (formerly EFIC), and Executive Director of Clydesdale Bank PLC, (now Virgin Money UK).



#### Marjorie (Margaux) Beauchamp FAICD

Margaux Beauchamp is a seasoned corporate, capital and value advisor with more than 40 years of experience. Her particular expertise is in advising on food and agribusiness divestments, acquisitions, IPOs, takeovers, and takeover defence mandates. Margaux leads BDO Brisbane's Food and Agribusiness Sector Group.

Margaux is the Chair, CPC Group Holdings Pty Ltd, a leading Australian managed, UK owned Agribusiness with strong ESG values. CPC owns and operates a portfolio of nine station aggregations in Australia and two feedlots in Indonesia. Across more than 3.2m hectares of land, the CPC team care for more than 300,000 head of cattle and produce a diverse range of crops. Margaux is also a Non-Executive Director, Benfer Holdings Pty Ltd, the holding company for Darwalla group of companies. Darwalla is Queensland's largest chicken producer and owns 50% of the chicken processor Golden Cockerel. She was raised on a cattle station in Far Western Queensland and maintains a private investment in the beef industry, spending considerable time each year in regional Australia.

Margaux holds a Bachelor of Agricultural Economics (Honours) from the University of New England and a Master of Commerce from the University of Queensland. She is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a member of the Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand.



#### The Hon. Niall Blair

The Hon. Niall Blair is an ESG specialist with more than twenty-five years' experience across government and the private sector, specialising in risk management, food and fibre production systems, circular economy solutions and sustainability.

Mr Blair is an accomplished Chairperson and non-executive director with demonstrated financial accountability and corporate governance experience and a strong background in workplace safety, quality and environmental management systems development and auditing.

He currently serves on the boards of Cotton Regional Development Corporation (CRDC), NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT), and Murrumbidgee Irrigation. Prior to this, Mr Blair represented Charles Sturt University as a Professor of Food Sustainability.

Mr Blair has also served as a senior member of the NSW Parliament for nine years. During his tenure he was appointed NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Water, Forestry, Lands, Trade and Industry and Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council.

Mr Blair holds a Master of Occupational Health and Safety and a Bachelor of Horticultural Science, is an Adjunct Professor at Charles Sturt University and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company of Directors.



### Sally Dalwood

With over twenty-four years of diverse experience in diplomatic, military, government, political, not-for-profit, and corporate sectors, Sally Branson Dalwood is a seasoned public affairs specialist and brings this lens to the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF).

Sally grew up on a mixed family farm at Colbinabbin, in central Victoria, and has an enduring connection to the community. She worked in rural and regional community development at the beginning of her career, and a signifying element of her political career was focused on rural and regional advocacy. Sally is a graduate of ARLP 12.

Sally excels in reputation and crisis management, leadership planning, and strategy, overseeing public affairs programs for significant scale and geopolitical projects. Her expertise includes managing crises for renowned Australian and international brands and high-profile individuals. While also running a consulting business supporting organisations in effective corporate relations, Sally is a regular media contributor, providing expert analysis on news and current affairs.



### Melissa Fletcher

Melissa is a Kamilaroi woman from Moree now residing in Dubbo in New South Wales and a graduate of Course 18 of the Australian Rural Leadership Program.

She is the CEO of Fletcher International Exports Pty LTD, a private 100 per cent Australian family-owned and operated agribusiness, employing over 1400 people in regional Australia. Fletcher International Exports is one of Australia's largest sheep and lamb meat exporters with two major export processing facilities with the capacity to process of over four million head per year situated in Dubbo NSW and Narrikup WA. Fletcher International Exports is also Australia's largest raw wool harvester and has large interests in farms for cotton, wool, grain, pulse production, lamb/ sheep breeding, and lamb feeding operations, and has a logistics business with four trains that operate four services per week between Dubbo and Port Botany and exports to 90 countries.

Melissa has a Diploma of Meat Management and a Graduate Certificate in Rural Leadership. She is also the owner of an events business - Smoked Garage - in Brisbane, is owner/CEO of Fletchers Big Boomerang Logistics and a part owner of Native Secrets.

Melissa is a board director of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation and the Chair of Australian Meat Processors Corporation (AMPC).

In 2023 Melissa served on an Expert Advisory Panel for First Nations Women's Economic Prosperity Strategy for NSW Treasury and is currently serving on NSW Government Aboriginal Business Taskforce.

Melissa has previously served as a Director of the Albany Port Authority, General Manager of Fletcher International, Western Australia and as an Indigenous Liaison at St Patricks Senior College in Mackay, Queensland.



### John Maher

John is a leading Australian agribusiness Chair, Director and Senior Adviser with over 30 years of successful board and business leadership experience across several publicly listed and private companies. He has proven success developing and leading teams to generate superior organisational performance and growth while applying a strategic focus and capability in financial discipline and capital allocation; innovation, strategic planning and execution; governance, sustainability and risk; safety and people systems; M&A, negotiation and equity markets. He also has extensive experience in international agricultural trade and Indigenous engagement and business.

John is a strong advocate for Australian agribusiness, international agricultural trade and regional & remote communities, being awarded Sydney University's Alumni Outstanding Achievement Award for services to these causes. He continues to contribute as a Chair of Autism Awareness Australia, a Director of Sydney University's Faculty of Science Advisory Board and as a Director of ARLF.

Presently John serves as Chair of North Australian Pastoral Company (NAPCo), one of Australia's largest land and cattle owners. He is also a Director on the Boards of GrainCorp Ltd, GO.FARM



Australia Pty Ltd, New Zealand Merino Company Ltd, NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust and a Senior Advisor to the Muir Group Pty Ltd, Australia's largest independent supplier of farm inputs & advice.

Previous roles include long-term Managing Director and Chief Executive of the ASX listed rural services company, Ruralco Holdings Ltd (ASX: RHL) for nine years. During this time Ruralco expanded to become a major Australian agribusiness being Australia's fastest growing and one of the highest returning companies in the sector, diversifying its products and increasing its geographic platform to service 100,000 customers through a national, multi-channel network of 2250 people and 540 locations. John led the successful development and implementation of organic and M&A strategies as well as disciplined capital allocation to exponentially grow revenue, profit and enterprise value while strengthening the company's balance sheet. He also served as Chair of the Board of the Group's larger subsidiaries.

Prior to Ruralco, John was a Senior Group Executive at Wesfarmers Ltd (ASX: WES) for 10 years and AWB Ltd (ASX: AWB) for two years where he led the \$5 billion Landmark (now Nutrien Ag Solutions) rural services business to then record profit and return on capital levels during a major integration programme.

Most recently John was Group CEO of the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) overseeing the management and improvement of \$3 billion of assets, including 2.5 million hectares of land for agricultural (14 pastoral properties) and tourism (including the iconic Ayres Rock Resort) purposes. During this time, he led a major company transformation significantly improving key performance outcomes for Indigenous Australians and the organisation's financial and ESG position. He also led the establishment of the Indigenous Land and Sea Future Fund and was the Executive Chair/Director of the ILSC's subsidiary companies.

He has previously served on a number of boards and industry organisations including Wesfarmers Landmark Ltd, Landmark Operations Ltd, AWN Food and Fibre Holdings Pty Ltd, Regional Livestock Exchanges (RLX), Australian Live Export Corporation, AuctionPlus, AgFarm, the Australian Agriculture Blueprint Advisory Committee, RegenCo Natural Capital Ltd, Plant Protein CRC Bid and has Chaired a Federal Ministerial Advisory Committee.

John has an honours degree in Agricultural Science from Sydney University, an EMBA from AGSM (University of NSW), completed the Advanced Management Program at INSEAD Business School in France, studied global agribusiness at Harvard Business School, is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management.

### Mena Waller



Mena grew up in Central Queensland and has cultural connections to Walman Yawuru People in north-west Kimberly, Western Australia. She now resides in Brisbane and is the Chief Operating Officer for the Queensland Cancer Council. Her previous roles include Queensland Director of 54 reasons, Australia's leading child rights organisation making an impact by working with kids and their carers to develop, be safe, connected and heard.

Mena has worked remotely in First Nation communities, across state-wide health policy and programs, and in national practice development. She brings a passion for people-centred, sustainable, and collaborative approaches to systems change.

Mena is an alum of Milparanga and the Australian Rural Leadership Program 26. She holds qualifications in business and communications, community development, and education.



# Directors' Report

The Directors of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited (ARLF) present their report for the financial year ended 30 June 2025.

The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF) purpose is to develop leadership for positive impact. Our vision is thriving rural, regional, and remote communities. Thriving communities need leadership. Since 1992 we've believed this to be critical to our nation's success. As of the 30 June 2025 there have been 5334 participants our leadership activities (i.e. alumni and workshop participants).

We develop leadership so people act beyond themselves, work with others, and facilitate change in their organisations, sectors, and communities. We do this by offering participants a series of challenging hands-on learning experiences and the opportunity for reflection.

As an independent organisation our work relies on the support of government, business, philanthropy, and the community. One of our core values is to respect and engage with First Nations cultures and knowledge. Our staff and ARLF Associates collaborate with other organisations to design and deliver our programs.

Our team is based across the nation.

The ARLF is the only leadership development organisation that has a national footprint with a focus in rural, regional and remote Australia.

## Principal activities

During the 2025 financial year, the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation focused on;

**1. Developing and delivering leadership programs and facilitating place-based initiatives** that support leadership practice in regional, rural, and remote Australia. This year the ARLF had a total of 1964 participants who attended our activities in 105 Local Government Areas across the nation, which included;

- Australian Rural Leadership Program
- Milparanga Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Programs, including: - Milparanga Emerging - Milparanga Established
- TRAIL Emerging Leaders Program
- Australian Agribusiness Leadership Program including the tenth anniversary of this program.
- Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative Phase 2;
  - 93 Changemakers Workshops,
  - 1 x National Changemaker Gathering,
  - 1 x Emerging Leadership Program,
  - 1 x Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought TRAIL,
  - 3 x Community Leadership Programs
- Creative Industries Leadership Action Initiative in partnership with Regional Arts Australia
- Tailored client-specific leadership programs for various groups and industries
- Ongoing engagement and support of the ARLF's leadership network, which includes graduates and members.

In addition, we continued to invest significant resources to foster, initiate, and demonstrate leadership in action. This includes supporting local cohorts of alumni and participants as they collaborate to address regional issues.

## 2. First Nations Governance

First Nations ARLF Alumni embarked on a project outlining a pathway to greater self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in relation to ARLF programs and the governance of the organisation.

First Nations Alumni also emphasised the important value of strong relationships between First Nations and non-First Nations participants in other programs, enhancing social cohesion, collaboration with, and recognition of First Nations people and the diversity of living cultures across regional, rural and remote Australia.



## Directors' Report

### 3. ARLF Strategic Plan 2025-2030

The ARLF Strategic Plan 2022-2025 concluded on 30 June 2025. Inspired and driven by this strategic plan over the last five years the ARLF and our partners have:

- Delivered more leadership opportunities to more people (now delivers across 135 regions generating nationwide profile and impact);
- Become a trusted Government delivery partner responding to national crisis's such as the Black Summer Bushfire, cyclones and mitigating the impacts of drought;
- Significantly grown our corporate and philanthropic partnerships;
- Active ARLF alumni in communities, Government and businesses, from the mighty Torres Strait Islands in the North East to the tip of Augusta in the nations South West. Each is equipped for collective action and influence, in a collaborative effort to make Regional Rural and Remote Australia a better place to work, live and play.

Earlier this year ARLF engaged with our stakeholders to formulate a new strategic plan for 2025-2030. A significant pillar to emerge in the new strategic plan is the establishment of National Leadership Hub.

#### Strategic Plan 2025-2030

ARLF's Strategic Plan provides direction by outlining immediate, short-term and future priorities.

**Vision:** Thriving rural, regional and remote communities

**Purpose:** We challenge and activate people to drive bold, collective action for rural, regional and remote Australia.

**Approach:** We are a hub for leadership in rural, regional and remote Australia. We deliver on our purpose by offering participants challenging, hands-on learning experiences and the opportunity for reflection.

**What we value:** Leadership as a practice, Collective action, Diverse perspectives, Challenging entrenched ideas, First Nations cultures and knowledge, Lifelong learning

#### Strategic objectives 2025-2030

- *Grow leadership development through experiential learning:* Deliver transformative learning that develops courage and action
- *Strengthen rural networks:* Connecting people and ideas to lead change across place sector and organisation
- *Mobilise collective action:* Support networks of people to tackle complexity and make progress on what matters most

Inherent in all strategic priorities is our work with ARLF's alumni network.

#### Information on directors

During the 2024-25 financial year the following people served on the board:

Continuing

- Mr Richard (Rick) Sawers GAICD, Harvard PMD, Chair of Board of Directors of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation. Joined 4 March 2016 – appointed as Chair 17 November 2022.
- Ms Melissa Fletcher FARLF, Holds a Diploma of Meat Management and a Graduate Certificate in Rural Leadership. Joined 17 November 2017.
- Ms Marjorie (Margaux) Beauchamp BAgEc (Hons) MCom CA FAICD Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. Joined ARLF Board 9 August 2019.
- The Hon Niall Blair Masters of Occupational Health and Safety (Newcastle University), Bachelor of Horticultural Science (WSU), Adjunct Professor at Charles Sturt University, GAICD. Joined ARLF Board 29 February 2024.
- Ms Sally Dalwood FARLF. Joined ARLF Board 28 February 2024.
- Mr John Maher BAgSc (Hons) MBA GAICD FAIM. Chair of Nominations and Remuneration Committee. Joined ARLF Board 8 March 2023.
- Ms Mena Waller, BBus ProfComm, GradCert Ed (Leadership), DipCommDev, FARLF. Joined ARLF Board 8 March 2023.

The ARLF seeks to maintain a board that is of an appropriate size that collectively has the skills, commitment and knowledge to enable it to discharge its duties effectively and to add value.

During the year, the ARLF held five board meetings, four Audit and Risk Committee meetings, four Nominations and Remuneration Committee meetings.





## Directors' Report

### Director's benefits

During or since the financial year, no director of the ARLF has received, or become entitled to receive, a benefit (other than potential or perceived benefit as disclosed in note 14 (c) related party transactions) by reason of a contract made by the ARLF with the director, or with a firm of which a director is a member or with an entity in which a director has a substantial interest.

### Indemnification and insurance of directors and officers

During the financial year, the ARLF has paid premiums insuring all the directors and officers of the ARLF against costs incurred in defending proceedings for conduct involving a contravention of sections 182 or 183 of the Corporations Act 2001, as permitted by section 199B of the Corporations Act 2001. The total amount of the insurance contract premiums paid was \$3,444 (2024: \$7,085) excluding GST.

### Board attendance

During the year, the ARLF held five board meetings, a Strategy Day, four Audit and Risk Committee meetings and four Nominations and Remuneration Committee meetings.

| DIRECTOR                     | BOARD MEETINGS* | Board Strategy Day | AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE * | NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE * |
|------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Marjorie (Margaux) Beauchamp | 4 (5)           | 1 (1)              | 4 (4)                      | -                       |
| The Hon Niall Blair          | 5 (5)           | 1 (1)              | -                          | 4 (4)                   |
| Sally Dalwood                | 5 (5)           | 1 (1)              | 4 (4)                      | -                       |
| Melissa Fletcher             | 2 (5)           | 0 (1)              | -                          | 2 (4)                   |
| John Maher                   | 4 (5)           | 1 (1)              | -                          | 2 (4)                   |
| Richard (Rick) Sawers        | 5 (5)           | 1 (1)              | 4 (4)                      | -                       |
| Mena Waller                  | 5 (5)           | 1 (1)              | 4 (4)                      | 3 (4)                   |

- o Board meetings (x5): 15.08.24, 10.Oct.24, 19 Nov 24, 5 Mar 25, 29 May 25
- o Board Strategy (x1): Mar '25
- o ARC meetings (x4): 30 July 24, 9 Oct 24, 11 Feb 25, 15 May 25
- o NRC meetings (x4): 30 July 24, 29 Oct 24, 11 Feb 25, 16 May 25

### Workplace health and safety regulations

ARLF's operations are subject to various workplace health and safety regulations under both Commonwealth and State legislation. The Board believes that ARLF has adequate systems in place for the management of its workplace health and safety requirements and is not aware of any breaches of those requirements as they apply to ARLF.

### Culture

Directors are committed to upholding a culture of diversity and inclusion, to challenging entrenched ideas and approaches, to foster collaboration and to influence change for positive impact.

### Changes in the state of affairs

There were no other significant changes during the reporting period in the state of the affairs of the ARLF, other than those disclosed in this report and the accounts.

### Expanding leadership opportunities

This year, the ARLF continued to extend its reach and impact by delivering more leadership opportunities in more regional locations across Australia. In collaboration with our project partner after completing Phase One, our team completed the delivery of Phase Two—The Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative. This ambitious project expanded our footprint to 35 regions across the country and is projected to conclude reporting on the impact in August 2025.

### New initiatives

With project partner Regional Arts Australia and ARLF Associates in October 2024 we launched the Collaboration Canvas, Catalysing creative industries partnerships – the culmination of a process of convening a series of conversations leading



## Directors' Report

to a national gathering of our Alumni who are key regional, rural and remote industry leaders to challenge and test their assumptions with creative industries leaders.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our dedicated partners and the ARLF team for their tireless efforts in making this possible. There were no other significant changes in the affairs of the ARLF during this reporting period, aside from the advancements and projects detailed in this report and in our financial accounts.

### Subsequent events

The Directors are not aware of any other matter or circumstance since the end of the financial year that have significantly affected the ARLF's affairs.

### Operating results

The surplus for the financial year was \$6,525. (2024: \$102,409 surplus).

### Future developments and results

The future focus of the ARLF is to continue to deliver high quality leadership opportunities for more people in more places while also ensuring the organisation is capable and sustainable. The ARLF will continue to position itself to work towards the new strategic priorities over the next three years. The ARLF will continue our work with multiple delivery partners and associates to grow the delivery of leadership activities across rural, regional and remote Australia.

### Company details

The ARLF is a public company limited by guarantee. If the ARLF is wound up, the constitution states that each member and each member who ceased to be a member in the preceding year is required to contribute a maximum of \$10 each towards meeting any outstanding obligations of the ARLF; 935 individual members and 20 institutional members totalling 955 total members.

At 30 June 2024, the number of members was 938.

### Auditor independence

A copy of the auditor's independence declaration as required by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 is set out immediately after this report.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Sawers".

Mr Rick Sawers  
Chair

Date: 09 October 2025

## Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited

### Directors Declaration

In the Directors' opinion:

- the attached financial statements and notes comply with the Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosures, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and other mandatory professional reporting requirements;
- the attached financial statements and notes give a true and fair view of the Foundation's financial position as at 30 June 2025 and of its performance for the financial year ended on that date; and
- there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Foundation will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors.



**Mr Rick Sawers**

*Chair*

Date: 09 October 2025





**RSM Australia Partners**

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**AUDITOR'S INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION**

As lead auditor for the audit of the financial report of Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited for the year ended 30 June 2025, I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been no contraventions of:

- (i) the auditor independence requirements of the *Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* in relation to the audit; and
- (ii) any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

**RSM AUSTRALIA PARTNERS**

**Ged Stenhouse**  
Partner

Canberra, ACT  
Dated: 9 October 2025

**THE POWER OF BEING UNDERSTOOD**  
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## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Members of Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited

### Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited, which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2025, Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the statement of financial position, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of material accounting policies, and the declaration by those charged with governance.

In our opinion, the financial report of Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited has been prepared in accordance with Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:

- (a) giving a true and fair view of the registered entity's financial position as at 30 June 2025 and of its financial performance and cash flows for the year ended on that date; and
- (b) complying with Australian Accounting Standards- Simplified Disclosures and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*.

### Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

### Other Information

Those charged with governance are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited's annual report for the year ended 30 June 2025, but does not include the financial report and the auditor's report thereon.

Our opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and accordingly we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

## THE POWER OF BEING UNDERSTOOD ASSURANCE | TAX | CONSULTING

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In connection with our audit of the financial report, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial report or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

**Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Report**

The Directors of the registered entity are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards- Simplified Disclosures and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* (ACNC Act) and for such internal control as the Directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the Directors are responsible for assessing Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

**Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report**

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial report is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website at: [http://www.auasb.gov.au/auditors\\_responsibilities/ar4.pdf](http://www.auasb.gov.au/auditors_responsibilities/ar4.pdf). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "RSM".

**RSM AUSTRALIA PARTNERS**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ged Stenhouse".

**Ged Stenhouse**  
Partner

Canberra, ACT  
Dated: 9 October 2025



Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited  
Statement of profit and loss and other comprehensive income  
For the year ended 30 June 2025

|                                                          | Note | 2025<br>\$   | 2024<br>\$     |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|----------------|
| Revenue and other income                                 | 2    | 9,605,722    | 8,787,854      |
| Operating costs                                          |      | (4,516,854)  | (3,958,380)    |
| Staffing costs                                           |      | (4,496,015)  | (3,980,350)    |
| Core administrative costs                                |      | (476,139)    | (637,399)      |
| Lease interest expense                                   |      | (1,602)      | (1,866)        |
| Depreciation and amortisation                            |      | (108,587)    | (107,450)      |
| <b>Surplus for the year</b>                              |      | <b>6,525</b> | <b>102,409</b> |
| Other comprehensive income                               |      | -            | -              |
| <b>Surplus attributable to members of the Foundation</b> |      | <b>6,525</b> | <b>102,409</b> |

The above statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes



**Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited**  
**Statement of financial position**  
**As at 30 June 2025**

|                                      | Note | 2025<br>\$       | 2024<br>\$        |
|--------------------------------------|------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>                |      |                  |                   |
| Cash and cash equivalents            | 3    | 4,800,991        | 8,534,448         |
| Trade and other receivables          | 4    | 409,810          | 391,277           |
| Investments                          | 5    | 2,060,000        | 2,060,000         |
| Other current assets                 | 6    | 162,044          | 170,364           |
| <b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>          |      | <b>7,432,845</b> | <b>11,156,089</b> |
| <b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>            |      |                  |                   |
| Plant and equipment                  | 7    | 58,908           | 58,082            |
| Right-of-use assets                  | 8    | 25,341           | 111,047           |
| <b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>      |      | <b>84,249</b>    | <b>169,129</b>    |
| <b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>                  |      | <b>7,517,094</b> | <b>11,325,218</b> |
| <b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>           |      |                  |                   |
| Payables                             | 9    | 563,962          | 449,199           |
| Provisions                           | 10   | 315,959          | 285,575           |
| Unearned revenue                     | 11   | 3,494,998        | 6,564,644         |
| Lease liabilities                    | 12   | 26,356           | 37,068            |
| Other liabilities                    | 13   | 769,078          | 8,685             |
| <b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>     |      | <b>5,170,353</b> | <b>7,345,171</b>  |
| <b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>       |      |                  |                   |
| Provisions                           | 10   | 58,010           | 42,368            |
| Unearned revenue                     | 11   | 157,705          | 1,738,191         |
| Lease liabilities                    | 12   | -                | 74,987            |
| <b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b> |      | <b>215,715</b>   | <b>1,855,546</b>  |
| <b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>             |      | <b>5,386,068</b> | <b>9,200,717</b>  |
| <b>NET ASSETS</b>                    |      | <b>2,131,026</b> | <b>2,124,501</b>  |
| <b>EQUITY</b>                        |      |                  |                   |
| Reserves                             |      | 2,131,026        | 2,124,501         |
| <b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>                  |      | <b>2,131,026</b> | <b>2,124,501</b>  |

*The above statement of financial position should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes*

**Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited**  
**Statement of changes in equity**  
**For the year ended 30 June 2025**

|                                             | <b>Commitments<br/>Reserve<sup>1</sup><br/>\$</b> | <b>General<br/>Reserve<sup>2</sup><br/>\$</b> | <b>Development<br/>Funds<br/>Reserve<sup>3</sup><br/>\$</b> | <b>Endowment<br/>Funds<br/>Reserve<sup>4</sup><br/>\$</b> | <b>Retained<br/>Surplus<br/>\$</b> | <b>Total<br/>\$</b> |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Balance at 1 July 2023</b>               | 820,000                                           | 462,000                                       | 625,479                                                     | 114,613                                                   | -                                  | 2,022,092           |
| <b>Comprehensive income</b>                 |                                                   |                                               |                                                             |                                                           |                                    |                     |
| Surplus/(Deficit) for the year              | -                                                 | -                                             | -                                                           | -                                                         | 102,409                            | 102,409             |
| <b>Total comprehensive income</b>           | -                                                 | -                                             | -                                                           | -                                                         | 102,409                            | 102,409             |
| <b>Other transfers</b>                      |                                                   |                                               |                                                             |                                                           |                                    |                     |
| Transfers to reserves from Retained Surplus | -                                                 | 102,409                                       |                                                             |                                                           | (102,409)                          | -                   |
| <b>Balance at 30 June 2024</b>              | <b>820,000</b>                                    | <b>564,409</b>                                | <b>625,479</b>                                              | <b>114,613</b>                                            | <b>-</b>                           | <b>2,124,501</b>    |
| <b>Comprehensive income</b>                 |                                                   |                                               |                                                             |                                                           |                                    |                     |
| Surplus/(Deficit) for the year              | -                                                 | -                                             | -                                                           | -                                                         | 6,525                              | 6,525               |
| <b>Total comprehensive income</b>           | -                                                 | -                                             | -                                                           | -                                                         | 6,525                              | 6,525               |
| <b>Other transfers</b>                      |                                                   |                                               |                                                             |                                                           |                                    |                     |
| Transfers to reserves from Retained Surplus |                                                   | 6,525                                         |                                                             |                                                           | (6,525)                            |                     |
| <b>Total other transfers</b>                | -                                                 | 6,525                                         | -                                                           | -                                                         | (6,525)                            |                     |
| <b>Balance at 30 June 2025</b>              | <b>820,000</b>                                    | <b>570,934</b>                                | <b>625,479</b>                                              | <b>114,613</b>                                            | <b>-</b>                           | <b>2,131,026</b>    |

<sup>1</sup> The Commitments Reserve represents the estimated funds to complete courses in progress and other contractual obligations entered into by the Foundation.

<sup>2</sup> The General Reserve represents the estimated funds necessary to cover closure costs including staff entitlements should the Foundation need to cease operations.

<sup>3</sup> The Development Funds Reserve represents the balance of members' funds available for discretionary activities of the Foundation.

<sup>4</sup> The Endowment Funds Reserve represents donations received from fellows, board, staff and other donors to fund ARLF scholarships.

*The above statement of changes in equity should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes*

**Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited**  
**Statement of cash flows**  
**For the year ended 30 June 2025**

|                                                               | Note      | 2025<br>\$         | 2024<br>\$       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|------------------|
| <b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>                   |           |                    |                  |
| Course fees and sponsorships received                         |           | 6,346,025          | 9,143,100        |
| Interest received                                             |           | 225,202            | 178,159          |
| Other receipts                                                |           | 58,322             | 20,805           |
| Payments for operations and conduct of courses                |           | (10,251,998)       | (9,431,149)      |
| Lease interest paid                                           |           | (1,602)            | (1,866)          |
| <b>Net cash generated from operating activities</b>           | <b>16</b> | <b>(3,624,051)</b> | <b>(90,951)</b>  |
| <b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>                   |           |                    |                  |
| Purchases of furniture and equipment                          |           | (35,924)           | (23,301)         |
| Proceeds from/ (payments for) term deposits                   |           | -                  | 200              |
| <b>Net cash generated from/(used in) investing activities</b> |           | <b>(35,924)</b>    | <b>(23,101)</b>  |
| <b>CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>                   |           |                    |                  |
| Lease liabilities paid                                        |           | (73,482)           | (73,459)         |
| <b>Net cash used in financing activities</b>                  |           | <b>(73,482)</b>    | <b>(73,459)</b>  |
| Net movement in cash and cash equivalents                     |           | (3,733,457)        | (187,511)        |
| Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year      |           | 8,534,448          | 8,721,959        |
| <b>Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year</b>     | <b>3</b>  | <b>4,800,991</b>   | <b>8,534,448</b> |

*The above statement of cash flows should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes*

**Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited**  
**Notes to the financial statements**  
**30 June 2025**

**Note 1. Summary of material accounting policies**

The principal accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

**a. New or amended Accounting Standards and Interpretations adopted**

The Foundation has adopted all of the new or amended Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board ('AASB') that are mandatory for the current reporting period.

Any new or amended Accounting Standards or Interpretations that are not yet mandatory have not been early adopted.

**b. Basis of preparation**

The financial statements are general purpose financial statements that have been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures of the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*. The foundation is a not-for-profit entity for financial reporting purposes under Australian Accounting Standards.

Australian Accounting Standards set out accounting policies that the AASB has concluded would result in financial statements containing relevant and reliable information about transactions, events and conditions. Material accounting policies adopted in the preparation of these financial statements are presented below and have been consistently applied unless stated otherwise. The financial statements, except for the cash flow information, have been prepared on an accruals basis and are based on historical costs, modified, where applicable, by the measurement at fair value of selected non-current assets, financial assets and financial liabilities. The amounts presented in the financial statements have been rounded to the nearest dollar.

**c. Critical accounting judgements, estimates and assumptions**

The Directors evaluate estimates and judgements incorporated into the financial report based on historical knowledge and best available current information. Estimates and judgements assume a reasonable expectation of future events and are based on current trends and economic data, obtained both externally and within the Foundation.

*Key judgement – Deferral of revenue and revenue recognition*

i) Australian Rural Leadership Program

Payments made prior to the commencement of a course and course scholarships are deferred and recognised as income received in advance when received. On commencement of a course, outstanding scholarships are recognised as course receivables and unearned revenue. Revenue is then recognised progressively as course expenses are incurred over the completion of each course. Judgement has been exercised in considering the impacts that the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had, or may have, on the Foundation based on known information. This consideration extends to the measurement of progress of course completions for revenue recognition purpose.

ii) Short Courses

Payments made prior to the commencement of a course and course scholarships are deferred and recognised as income received in advance when received. On commencement of a course, outstanding fees are recognised as course receivables and unearned revenue. Revenue is then recognised progressively as course expenses are incurred over the completion of each course.

iii) Grant Revenue

Grants are recognised as revenue in the year received or receivable to the extent of expenditure during the year for the purpose of the grant. Grant monies that have been received or are receivable but have not been expended at balance date, including interest thereon where required under the terms of the grant, are recognised as Unexpended grants in unearned revenue.



**Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited**  
**Notes to the financial statements**  
**30 June 2025**

**Note 1. Summary of significant accounting policies (continued)**

**d. Comparative figures**

Where necessary, comparative figures have been adjusted to conform to changes in presentation in these financial statements.

**e. Goods and Services Tax ('GST') and other similar taxes**

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of associated GST, unless the GST incurred is not recoverable from the tax authority. In this case it is recognised as part of the cost of the acquisition of the asset or as part of the expense.

Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the tax authority is included in other receivables or other payables in the statement of financial position.

Cash flows are presented on a gross basis. The GST components of cash flows arising from investing or financing activities which are recoverable from, or payable to the tax authority, are presented as operating cash flows.

Commitments and contingencies are disclosed net of the amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the tax authority.

**f. Income tax**

As the company is a charitable institution in terms of subsection 50-5 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997, as amended, it is exempt from paying income tax.

|                                               | 2025<br>\$              | 2024<br>\$              |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Note 2: Revenue and other income</b>       |                         |                         |
| <i>Revenue from contracts with customers:</i> |                         |                         |
| Course revenue                                | 8,919,785               | 8,414,698               |
| Network membership fees and events            | 166,715                 | 158,032                 |
| <i>Income from other sources</i>              |                         |                         |
| Donations and sponsorships                    | 234,493                 | 11,399                  |
| Interest                                      | 226,407                 | 194,319                 |
| Sundry income                                 | 58,322                  | 9,406                   |
|                                               | <b><u>9,605,722</u></b> | <b><u>8,787,854</u></b> |

**Accounting policy**

*Revenue from contracts with customers*

Revenue is recognised at an amount that reflects the consideration to which the Foundation is expected to be entitled in exchange for transferring goods or services to a customer. For each contract with a customer, the Foundation: identifies the contract with a customer; identifies the performance obligations in the contract; determines the transaction price which takes into account estimates of variable consideration and the time value of money; allocates the transaction price to the separate performance obligations on the basis of the relative stand-alone selling price of each distinct good or service to be delivered; and recognises revenue when or as each performance obligation is satisfied in a manner that depicts the transfer to the customer of the goods or services promised.

For the course revenue the Foundation applies the input method of measuring progress for each performance obligation satisfied over time. Consequently, course revenue is progressively recognised in the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income as follows: (i) for course costs, revenue is recognised for direct course costs incurred in respect of sessions; and (ii) for the contribution to core administrative costs, progressively over the term of the course (including the selection period prior to the commencement of a course) in accordance with the stage of completion of each course.

Network membership fees are recognised when billed which is generally in four instalments over the term of a course. Network events income and expenses are recognised as revenue and expense when the event is held.

Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited  
Notes to the financial statements  
30 June 2025

Other income

Interest revenue is recognised on a proportional basis taking into account the interest rates applicable to financial assets. Reciprocal grants contain specific conditions and enforceable obligations on the use of those funds are recognised as and when the Foundation satisfies its performance obligations stated within the grant agreements. A contract liability is recognised for unspent grant funds for which a refund obligation exists in relation to the funding period. General grants that do not impose specific performance obligations on the Foundation are recognised as income when the Foundation obtains control of those funds, which is usually on receipt. All revenue is stated net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST).

|                                          | 2025             | 2024             |
|------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                                          | \$               | \$               |
| <b>Note 3: Cash and cash equivalents</b> |                  |                  |
| Cash on hand and at bank                 | <u>4,800,991</u> | <u>8,534,448</u> |

Accounting policy

Cash and cash equivalents include cash on hand and in banks, in deposits at call and investments in money market instruments convertible to cash within 45 days.

|                                            | 2025           | 2024           |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
|                                            | \$             | \$             |
| <b>Note 4: Trade and other receivables</b> |                |                |
| Trade receivables                          | 395,973        | 375,864        |
| Provision for bad debts                    | (3,526)        | (3,350)        |
| Interest Receivable                        | 17,363         | 16,158         |
| Accrued income                             | -              | 2,605          |
|                                            | <u>409,810</u> | <u>391,277</u> |

Current receivables are receivable within 30 days. \$1,828 of receivables were overdue by 90 days or more under approved payment plans or other arrangements (2024: \$17,100). All receivables have been assessed for impairment and \$3,526 has been recognised as allowance for impairment at 30 June 2025 (2024: \$3,350).

Accounting policy

Trade and other receivables are recognised at amortised cost, less any provision for impairment. Receivables expected to be settled within 12 months of the end of the reporting period are classified as current assets with all other receivables being classified as non-current assets.

|                            | 2025             | 2024             |
|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                            | \$               | \$               |
| <b>Note 5: Investments</b> |                  |                  |
| Fixed term deposits        | <u>2,060,000</u> | <u>2,060,000</u> |

Accounting policy

Financial assets are initially measured at fair value on trade date, which includes transaction costs, when the related contractual rights or obligations exist. All financial assets are classified as 'financial assets at amortised cost' and are recognised at amortised cost.

**Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited**  
**Notes to the financial statements**  
**30 June 2025**

|                                     | 2025<br>\$     | 2024<br>\$     |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Note 6: Other current assets</b> |                |                |
| Prepaid ARLP and short course costs | 6,005          | 61,910         |
| Prepaid insurance                   | 35,711         | 33,292         |
| Prepaid other expenses              | 120,328        | 75,162         |
|                                     | <b>162,044</b> | <b>170,364</b> |

Prepaid Course Costs

Direct course costs incurred prior to the commencement of a course are recognised as prepaid course costs (other current assets).

|                                          | 2025<br>\$    | 2024<br>\$    |
|------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Note 7: Plant and equipment</b>       |               |               |
| Furniture, plant and equipment – at cost | 288,410       | 252,486       |
| Accumulated depreciation                 | (229,502)     | (194,404)     |
|                                          | <b>58,908</b> | <b>58,082</b> |

(a) Movement in the carrying amounts for each class of plant and equipment between the beginning and the end of the current and previous financial years

**Furniture, plant and equipment**

|                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Opening Balance | 58,082        |
| Additions       | 35,924        |
| Depreciation    | (35,098)      |
| Closing Balance | <b>58,908</b> |

**Accounting Policy**

Each class of plant and equipment is carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation. The carrying amount of plant and equipment is reviewed annually by the Foundation to ensure it is not in excess of the remaining service potential of these assets.

Depreciation is charged at the following rates:

|                                |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Furniture, plant and equipment | 5 - 10 years |
| Computer hardware and software | 3 - 4 years  |

Impairment

At each reporting date, the Foundation reviews the carrying values of its tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have been impaired. If such an indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset, being the higher of the asset's fair value less costs to sell and value in use, is compared to the asset's carrying value. As a not-for-profit entity, value in use for the Foundation, according to AASB 136 Impairment of Assets, is depreciated replacement cost. Any excess of the asset's carrying value over its recoverable amount is expensed to the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income. No impairment indicators were present at 30 June 2025.

**Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited**  
**Notes to the financial statements**  
**30 June 2025**

|                                    | 2025<br>\$    | 2024<br>\$     |
|------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>Note 8: Right-of-use assets</b> |               |                |
| Right-of-use assets at cost        | 134,752       | 147,508        |
| Accumulated amortisation           | (109,411)     | (36,461)       |
|                                    | <u>25,341</u> | <u>111,047</u> |

(a) Movements in carrying amounts for right-of-use assets between the beginning and the end of the current financial year:

|                      | ROU<br>Assets |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Opening balance      | 111,047       |
| ROU adjustment       | (12,217)      |
| Amortisation expense | (73,489)      |
| Closing Balance      | <u>25,341</u> |

**Accounting Policy**

At inception of a contract, the entity assesses whether a contract is, or contains, a lease. A contract is considered to contain a lease if it allows the entity the right to control the use of an identified asset over a period of time in return for consideration. Where a contract or arrangement contains a lease, the entity recognises a right-of-use asset and a lease liability at the commencement date of the lease.

A right-of-use asset is initially measured at cost, which is the present value of the future lease payments adjusted for any lease payments made at or before the commencement date, plus any make-good obligations. Lease assets are depreciated using the straight line method over the shorter of their useful life and the lease term. Periodic adjustments are made for any re-measurements of the lease liabilities and for impairment losses.

|                                | 2025<br>\$     | 2024<br>\$     |
|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Note 9: Payables</b>        |                |                |
| Unsecured liabilities:         |                |                |
| Creditors and accrued expenses | 501,455        | 432,230        |
| GST payable                    | 62,507         | 16,969         |
|                                | <u>563,962</u> | <u>449,199</u> |

**Accounting Policy**

These amounts represent liabilities for goods and services provided to the Foundation prior to the end of the financial year and which are unpaid. Due to their short-term nature they are measured at amortised cost and are not discounted. The amounts are unsecured and are usually paid within 30 days of recognition.

|                                       | 2025<br>\$     | 2024<br>\$     |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Note 10: Provisions</b>            |                |                |
| CURRENT                               |                |                |
| Employee benefits: annual leave       | 223,144        | 197,772        |
| Employee benefits: long service leave | 92,815         | 87,803         |
| Total Current Provisions              | <u>315,959</u> | <u>285,575</u> |
| NON-CURRENT                           |                |                |
| Employee benefits: long service leave | 58,010         | 42,368         |
| Total Non-Current Provisions          | <u>58,010</u>  | <u>42,368</u>  |



**Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited**  
**Notes to the financial statements**  
**30 June 2025**

**Accounting Policy**

Short-term employee benefits

Provision is made for the Foundation's obligation for short-term employee benefits. Short-term employee benefits are benefits (other than termination benefits) that are expected to be settled wholly within 12 months after the end of the annual reporting period in which the employees render the related service, including wages, salaries and sick leave. Short-term employee benefits are measured at the (undiscounted) amounts expected to be paid when the obligation is settled.

The Foundation's obligations for short-term employee benefits such as wages, salaries and sick leave are recognised as a part of current trade and other payables in the statement of financial position.

Other long-term employee benefits

The Foundation classifies employees' long service leave and annual leave entitlements as other long-term employee benefits as they are not expected to be settled wholly within 12 months after the end of the annual reporting period in which the employees render the related service. Provision is made for the Foundation's obligation for other long-term employee benefits, which are measured at the present value of the expected future payments to be made to employees. Expected future payments incorporate anticipated future wage and salary levels, durations of service and employee departures, and are discounted at rates determined by reference to market yields at the end of the reporting period on government bonds that have maturity dates that approximate the terms of the obligations. Upon the remeasurement of obligations for other long-term employee benefits, the net change in the obligations is recognised in profit or loss classified under employee benefits expense.

Retirement benefit obligations

Defined contribution superannuation benefits

All employees of the Foundation receive defined contribution superannuation entitlements, for which the Foundation pays the fixed superannuation guarantee contribution (currently 10% of the employee's average ordinary salary) to the employee's superannuation fund of choice. All contributions in respect of employee's defined contributions entitlements are recognised as an expense when they become payable. The Foundation's obligation with respect to employees' defined contribution entitlements is limited to its obligation for any unpaid superannuation guarantee contributions at the end of the reporting period.

All obligations for unpaid superannuation guarantee contributions are measured at the (undiscounted) amounts expected to be paid when the obligation is settled and are presented as current liabilities in the Foundation's statement of financial position.

|                                    | 2025<br>\$              | 2024<br>\$              |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Note 11: Unearned revenue</b>   |                         |                         |
| <b>CURRENT</b>                     |                         |                         |
| Core Course revenue                | 1,509,815               | 366,755                 |
| DRLP Revenue                       | 1,450,000               | 6,077,663               |
| Other grants and short courses     | 535,183                 | 120,226                 |
| Total current unearned revenue     | <u><u>3,494,998</u></u> | <u><u>6,564,644</u></u> |
| <b>NON-CURRENT</b>                 |                         |                         |
| Core Course revenue                | 157,705                 | 1,738,191               |
| Total non-current unearned revenue | <u><u>157,705</u></u>   | <u><u>1,738,191</u></u> |

**Accounting Policy**

Unearned revenue - Courses

Prior to the commencement of a course, course scholarships are deferred and recognised as income received in advance when received. On commencement of a course, outstanding scholarships are recognised as course receivables and unearned revenue when invoiced. Course scholarships are generally invoiced on commencement of the course however in some instances scholarships are progressively invoiced in instalments over the term of the course.

Contract liability for Course Make-Up Costs

A contract liability is recognised by transfer from course unearned revenue to contract liabilities for course make-ups for the estimated direct course costs associated with a missed session where a participant is unable to attend a course session and is eligible to attend a future course session in order to complete the course curriculum.

**Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited**  
**Notes to the financial statements**  
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|                                     | 2025<br>\$    | 2024<br>\$    |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Note 12: Lease liabilities</b>   |               |               |
| CURRENT                             |               |               |
| Lease liabilities                   | 26,356        | 37,068        |
| Total current lease liabilities     | <u>26,356</u> | <u>37,068</u> |
| NON-CURRENT                         |               |               |
| Lease liabilities                   | -             | 74,987        |
| Total non-current lease liabilities | <u>-</u>      | <u>74,987</u> |

**Accounting Policy**

Lease liabilities are initially measured at the present value of future minimum lease payments, discounted using the entity's incremental borrowing rate if the rate implicit in the lease cannot be readily determined, and are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest rate. Minimum lease payments include fixed payments, amounts expected to be paid under a residual value guarantee, the exercise price of purchase options for which the Foundation is reasonably certain to exercise and incorporate the entity's expectations of lease extension options.

The lease liability is remeasured when there are changes in future lease payments arising from a change in rates, index or lease terms from exercising an extension or termination option. A corresponding adjustment is made to the carrying amount of the lease assets.

The entity's leases relate primarily to the office premises.

Short term leases (lease term of 12 months or less) and leases of low value assets (\$10,000 or less) are recognised as incurred as an expense in the statement comprehensive income. The amount expensed in the statement of profit and loss and other comprehensive income in relation to short-term and low-value leases was Nil (2024: \$1,866).

|                                           | 2025<br>\$     | 2024<br>\$   |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>Note 13: Other Current Liabilities</b> |                |              |
| Program Participant's Welfare Fund        | 8,685          | 8,685        |
| Bruce Simpson Rural Scholarship Fund      | 760,393        | -            |
|                                           | <u>769,078</u> | <u>8,685</u> |

The Participant's Welfare Fund has been established to provide financial assistance to those participants of the Foundation's programs who have difficulty in meeting some of the financial costs of the program.

The Bruce Simpson Rural Scholarship Fund is established to honour the contribution and legacy of Bruce Simpson. The Fund is intended to create a perpetual scholarship supporting access to the Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP).

**Note 14: Related Party Disclosures**

**(a) Details of Key Management Personnel**

Names and positions held of key management personnel in office at any time during the financial year are:

*(i) Directors of Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited*

|                           |              |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Mr R Sawers (Chairperson) | Ms S Dalwood |
| Ms Margaux Beauchamp      | Mr J Maher   |
| Mr Hon. Niall Blair       | Mrs M Waller |
| Ms M Fletcher             |              |

*(ii) Executives*

|                    |               |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Mr M Linnegar (CE) | Ms P Woodhill |
| Mr L McDonald      |               |
| Ms A Hogg          |               |

|                               |                  |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>(b) Total Compensation</b> | <u>1,162,923</u> | <u>1,036,337</u> |
|-------------------------------|------------------|------------------|

**Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited**  
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**(c) Transactions with Director related entities**

| Name of entity                                  | Current year transactions and balances (including GST)                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Australian Meat Processer Corporation (1)       | Scholarships revenue - ARLP Course 31 (\$60,500)<br>Scholarship revenue (Agribusiness) - (\$46,530) |
| Consolidated Pastoral Company (2)               | Scholarship revenue - Agribusiness - Sales credit offered (\$14,850)                                |
| Fletcher International Exports (3)              | Scholarship revenue (Agribusiness) - (\$31,020)<br>General Donation to ARLF- (\$12,250)             |
| Cotton Research and Development Corporation (4) | Scholarship revenue - TRAIL (\$12,012)<br>Scholarships revenue - ARLP Course 31 & 32 (\$40,333)     |
| Telstra Corporation Limited (5)                 | Scholarship revenue - Agribusiness - Sales credit offered (\$10,000)                                |
| goFARM Australia Pty Ltd (6)                    | Scholarship revenue - TRAIL (\$12,012)                                                              |

<sup>1</sup> Related entity of Ms Melissa Fletcher - Chairman

<sup>2</sup> Related entity of Ms Margaux Beauchamp - Non Executive Director

<sup>3</sup> Related entity of Ms Melissa Fletcher - Chairman

<sup>4</sup> Related entity Of Mr Niall Blair - Non Executive Director

<sup>5</sup> Related entity Of Mr Matthew Linnagar - Chief Executive Officer

<sup>6</sup> Related entity Of Mr John Maher, Director

**Note 15: Commitments and contingencies**

There were no commitments and contingent liabilities at 30 June 2025 (At 30 June 2024 – nil).

|                                                                                   | 2025<br>\$         | 2024<br>\$      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Note 16: Cash flow information</b>                                             |                    |                 |
| <b><i>Reconciliation of net cash from operating activities to net surplus</i></b> |                    |                 |
| Surplus (deficit) for the year                                                    | 6,525              | 102,409         |
| Non-cash flows in operating surplus:                                              |                    |                 |
| Depreciation and amortisation                                                     | 108,587            | 107,450         |
| Changes in assets and liabilities:                                                |                    |                 |
| (Increase)/Decrease in trade and other receivables                                | (18,533)           | (121,567)       |
| (Increase)/Decrease in other current assets                                       | 8,320              | (346)           |
| Increase/(Decrease) in trade and other payables                                   | 875,156            | 31,448          |
| Increase/(Decrease) in unearned revenue                                           | (4,650,132)        | (244,061)       |
| Increase/(Decrease) in provisions                                                 | 46,026             | 33,716          |
| Net cash received from operating activities                                       | <b>(3,624,051)</b> | <b>(90,951)</b> |

**Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Limited**  
**Notes to the financial statements**  
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|                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 2025<br>\$       | 2024<br>\$        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Note 17: Financial Risk Management</b>                                                                                                                                                       |                  |                   |
| The Foundation's principal financial instruments comprise cash at bank, receivables, investments and accounts payable. These financial instruments arise from the operations of the Foundation. |                  |                   |
| The carrying amount for each category of financial instruments, measured in accordance with AASB 9 as detailed in the accounting policies to these financial statements, are as follows:        |                  |                   |
| Financial assets at amortised cost                                                                                                                                                              |                  |                   |
| Cash and cash equivalents                                                                                                                                                                       | 4,800,991        | 8,534,448         |
| Fixed term deposits                                                                                                                                                                             | 2,060,000        | 2,060,000         |
| Receivables                                                                                                                                                                                     | 409,810          | 391,277           |
| Total Financial Assets                                                                                                                                                                          | <u>7,270,801</u> | <u>10,985,725</u> |
| Financial Liabilities                                                                                                                                                                           |                  |                   |
| Financial liabilities at amortised cost                                                                                                                                                         |                  |                   |
| Payables excluding GST payable                                                                                                                                                                  | 501,455          | 432,230           |
| Total Financial Liabilities                                                                                                                                                                     | <u>501,455</u>   | <u>432,230</u>    |

**Note 18: Subsequent Events**

The Directors are not aware of any other matter or circumstance that has arisen since the balance date that has significantly affected the state of affairs of the Foundation.

**Note 19: Company details**

The Foundation is a public company limited by guarantee. If the Foundation is wound up, the constitution states that each member and each member who ceased to be a member in the preceding year is required to contribute a maximum of \$10 each towards meeting any outstanding's and obligations of the Foundation. At 30 June 2025 the number of members was 923 (2024: 923).

The registered office and principal place of business of the company is: 1st Floor, Forest Industries House, 24 Napier Close, Deakin ACT 2600.

|                                                                                                                    | 2025<br>\$    | 2024<br>\$    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Note 20: Remuneration of auditors</b>                                                                           |               |               |
| During the financial year the following fees were paid or payable for services provided by RSM Australia Partners: |               |               |
| Audit of the financial statements                                                                                  | 15,000        | 15,425        |
| Compilation of financial statements                                                                                | 3,000         | 3,000         |
| Audit of grant acquittals                                                                                          | 3,000         | 1,725         |
|                                                                                                                    | <u>21,000</u> | <u>20,150</u> |







**Australian Rural Leadership Foundation**

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