

Network

ISSUE 1

VICTORIAN RURAL WOMEN'S NETWORK MAGAZINE | 2018

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CELEBRATING

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AND SUCCEED

7 steps to board success



AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

VICTORIAN
RURAL
WOMEN'S
NETWORK

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On the cover: Natasha Shields, of Peninsula Fresh Organics, Mornington Peninsula

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AGRICULTURE VICTORIA



Minister's foreword

As the first female Minister for Agriculture, it is wonderful to see and be part of rural and regional women being at the front and centre of so many Victorian Government initiatives.

I am incredibly proud to have re-established the Victorian Rural Women's Network last year with a \$1.7-million investment. Since then, more than 1,000 talented women from diverse backgrounds and stages of life have subscribed and I am confident this growth will continue.

"WE ARE COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING VICTORIAN WOMEN AND EQUIPPING THEM WITH THE CONNECTIONS, SYSTEMS, SKILLS AND TECHNOLOGIES TO SUCCEED IN THEIR BUSINESSES."

Victoria's rural women are an inspiration. They have always been forward-thinking, multi-skilled and eager to learn. Almost a third of our farmers are women and around half tertiary trained. Many run sophisticated businesses that contribute to the state's \$13.1-billion agriculture sector, while also contributing to their communities and families.

Through networks and programs such as the AgriFutures™ Rural Women's Awards, Victorian Government's Joan Kirner Young and Emerging Women Leaders Program, Women's Board Leadership Program and Victorian Young Farmers Scholarships, there are many opportunities for women to lead and

achieve. I encourage rural women to consider putting themselves or their colleagues forward for the Victorian Women's Trust's directory of leaders, *Here She Is*.

We know there is still much work to do to achieve gender equality, but I am proud to say the boards in the State Government agriculture portfolio comprise 51 per cent females, achieving our commitment across government for 50 per cent women on government boards. Our collective challenge is to make sure that we not only have more women, but more rural women appointed to boards.

As a government, we are committed to tackling the issues women face. One of the most significant issues we have to confront as a community is family violence. I know that many women across regional and rural Victoria are personally impacted. Work in this area is ongoing — of the 227 recommendations made by the Royal Commission, 90 have been implemented and 137 are in progress. One recent action was the establishment of Victoria's first ever dedicated family violence prevention agency, Respect Victoria, which will start its work on 1 August 2018.

We are also committed to supporting Victorian women and equipping them with the connections, systems, skills and technologies to succeed in their businesses. This is why I recently announced \$15 million towards boosting technology on farms and delivered recent land-use planning reforms that make it easier for farmers to be innovative and respond to changing conditions. These investments are aimed at improving the lives of rural and



regional women and encouraging them to reach their full potential.

I look forward to walking alongside all regional and rural women as the network enters a new era of empowerment and opportunity for women. I am incredibly grateful to all the women who refused to give up on this network and I am so pleased to have been able to play a part in bringing it back and introducing a new generation to the Victorian Rural Women's Network.

Enjoy the first issue of the new annual magazine. ♦

The Hon. Jaala Pulford MP
Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Regional Development

Anna Lottkowitz

Anna Lottkowitz and Jenni Mitchell were employed to establish the Rural Women's Network in 1986.

Q: How did the first network operate?

A: The original principle was to facilitate change and add value by linking women across rural and regional Victoria so they could share information, skills and resources. The intent was to build bridges between urban and rural women so there could be shared learning.

In the 1980s, there was a move away from formal membership-based organisations, so the founders of this network weren't about attracting a 'membership'. Instead, they wanted it to be all-inclusive, so women from all backgrounds and experiences could participate and benefit.

As a result, we reached out to women wherever they were in community and industry, women's health, educational establishments and refuges. We also brokered relationships with membership-based organisations such as the Country Women's Association and the Women's Electoral Lobby.

Q: Social media is now connecting people across distances. What communication methods did you employ in the original network?

A: Social media's immediacy is a great benefit to link and connect rural women.

I started work at the network with Jenni Mitchell. Much of our job then was connecting people — on the phone, sharing information and contacts between women with common concerns or interests. The digital



Image credit: Catherine Forge/Museums Victoria



Image credit: Catherine Forge/Museums Victoria

Anna Lottkowitz (above) and fellow founding staff member, Jenni Mitchell (below left), who received a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Queen's Birthday 2018 Honours List

"THE NETWORK HAS ALWAYS AIMED TO INCREASE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE."

age makes information so much more available and current. New communities can form to act with remarkably quick impact.

Q: What was the key focus of the first network?

A: The network aimed to increase recognition of women's participation in public life and acknowledge their unique contribution to rural and regional communities. One way we did this was alongside Liz Hogan, a farmer and social scientist, who was employed to work with staff in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. This was to build connections with farming women and raise the profile of their contribution to productive farm life. This networking helped these women become more aware of regional and city-based services and provided them with pathways to mentor each other and share their skills. ♦

Shaping the future

A Reference Group to help build the Victorian Rural Women's Network was appointed in March 2018 and first met on International Women's Day. The three working group convenors explain how they are working to increase opportunities, support and recognition for rural and regional women.



Ashley Rogers

EVENTS GROUP CONVENOR

"The Events Working Group comes together to discuss event ideas that empower women and build resilience and connectedness in their rural businesses and communities. The first event was the Rural Women's Forum held in Creswick which took the theme, 'Celebrate, connect collaborate.' The forum focused on the network's key themes around personal development and training. It offered the opportunity to expand digital skills, enhance leadership capabilities, strengthen mentoring connections and boost wellbeing. We are looking at broadening the network's reach by encompassing women of all ages and backgrounds. The events group also aims to build and develop relationships with other women's groups that align with the network's strategic objectives so that we work together to inspire and promote all rural and regional women across Victoria."



Jeanette Severs

COMMUNICATIONS GROUP CONVENOR

"The Communications Working Group feels it is important to embrace diversity in how the network finds its relevance for rural women. This involves recognising the ethnic and cultural diversity, abilities, responsibilities and interests of subscribers. We want to explore how you can participate in events and access and share information. This means ensuring the network is connected to and networking with rural community groups. We invite you to contribute your knowledge about local groups and how to communicate with you. Access and equity are important, so we are exploring opportunities and technology to assist women to participate in events. Rural women comprise a varied socio-economic, technologically literate and broad demographic and we should remember that when communicating with each other."



Alana Johnson

EMPOWERED WOMEN GROUP CONVENOR

"Creating meaningful opportunities for all rural women to thrive, succeed and lead in their families, communities, industries and in public life is the focus of our group. The past 30 years has seen enormous changes for rural women as we continue to seek equal opportunity and equal representation in all decision making. Women's empowerment and participation is essential to a growing and flourishing rural and regional Victoria. Networking, both face-to-face and through new technologies, provides us with support and encouragement. It is an antidote to isolation and the source of information and mentoring that creates the pathways for women to step forward and step up. We look forward to facilitating further opportunities and pathways for rural and regional women to lead change." ♦

♦ HAVE YOUR SAY — EMAIL US WITH YOUR SUGGESTIONS/FEEDBACK AT VRWNetwork@ecodev.vic.gov.au

Where are they now?

Three winners of Victorian AgriFutures™ Rural Women's Awards reveal how the award influenced their personal and professional journeys.

1 Deb Bain

VICTORIAN WINNER 2006, NATIONAL WINNER 2007

FARMDAY PROJECT

Deb's FarmDay project started in 2006 to help city families bridge the rural-urban divide. FarmDay connected urban families with farming hosts for a day or overnight experience. From 2006-2013, around 400 city families participated across Australia. FarmDay and its connecting stories had a media reach of more than 10 million people.

"WINNING THE VICTORIAN RURAL WOMEN'S AWARD CHANGED MY LIFE."

"Winning the Victorian Rural Women's Award changed my life. The minute the announcement was made, nothing was ever the same — it was so much better!", says Deb. "The award gave me a credible platform to build confidence and the pleasure of being able to contribute to others. It's led to new lifetime friendships and access to wonderful stories of farmers producing food that dispelled commonly held myths.

Since 2006, I have been able to give back to my local and wider communities in a variety of ways. I am still asked to share my stories of FarmDay. I have sat on numerous boards (with thanks to the Australian Institute of Company Directors course I did as part of the award), mentored women and worked with students eager for a career in agriculture.

2 Tania Chapman

VICTORIAN WINNER 2012

RECOGNITION OF WOMEN IN CITRUS

Tania's award celebrated a citrus industry scholarship program for women. This quickly morphed into a broader 'Shine, Empower, Inspire' industry day at Parliament House in Melbourne, where Tania organised 60 rural women from across Australia to attend a workshop with prominent women guest speakers and leadership mentors.

"The award was recognition of how far I had come, proof that a female could stand her ground in a man's world," says Tania. "Importantly, it was also a symbol to my daughters that they should stand up, speak out and help other women rather than compete and push other women away.

The doors are still opening — it gave me confidence to talk to anyone — women, media representatives, politicians, importers, exporters and growers on a whole host of topics. I have also experienced some amazing journeys — putting my hand up for a Nuffield Scholarship, taking the role of Chair of Voice of Horticulture, and becoming the face of the free trade agreement between Australia and China, working with former Australian Trade Minister, the Hon. Andrew Robb AO.

I am in an alumni of the most amazing women who remind me I am not alone on this journey. The award is important to me in recognising the valuable contribution women make," says Tania.

3 Melissa Connors

VICTORIAN WINNER 2018

THIS FARM NEEDS A FARMER PROJECT

Melissa won this year's award for her project. The project connects tree-changers from the city, like herself, with established and retired farmers who pass on their valuable knowledge to farming newcomers.

"I didn't realise the enormity of the award until the ceremony, when I realised what an honour it was. In a way that was helpful," says Melissa. "When I put in the application, I wasn't intimidated. I just thought I'd give it a go. I learnt that it's important to go for these opportunities.

Receiving the award put the project on the radar and helped it gather traction. I'm now getting calls nationally, asking about when the program is going to spread to other districts and states.

My database has grown from 150 to 500 since I received the award and held a field day. With the bursary from the award, I'm starting a 'profit for purpose' business, where farmers will be paid for their consulting services to tree-changers.

Up to now, it's been non-profit. The directors' course I received as part of the prize has helped to build a business plan for the next step, which is transferring it to other regions," says Melissa. ♦



How to upskill and elevate your business



Learning new technological skills helps future-proof your business and take it to new heights. Opportunities for acquiring new skills are readily available to rural and regional businesses.

The Victorian Government has made a significant investment in digital technologies for producers, with a major \$12-million trial of the Internet of Things (IoT) technology on farms. IoT is a buzz phrase appearing with increasing frequency in business. It refers to a network of internet-connected devices that can send and receive data. In agriculture, IoT benefits are far reaching. For example, they can allow remote monitoring of soil moisture, weather, disease control, stock tracking or crop yield, leading to enhanced productivity, competitiveness and sustainability.



Other recent government initiatives include using digital delivery to provide young farmers with business skills, including an online pilot Best Wool Best Lamb group and a Weed Spotter eLearning training module developed by Agriculture Victoria.

Contrary to some media reports, women farmers show higher confidence in learning new skills than male farmers*. This is evidenced by

a course held in western Victoria on drone technology, where eight of 10 participants were women. Photographer Fiona Lake, who holds workshops on using drones in agriculture, says, despite this, only one per cent of women are drone pilots.

Drones can be used for mapping and checking irrigation lines and troughs, mustering livestock, using infrared technology to measure plant health and weed resistance, reducing farm labour needs, and providing aerial footage to inform farm business decisions.

Fiona sees drones as a great business opportunity for rural women. "At present there are very few female drone pilots in Australia, and less than 20 Australian women are fully licensed," she says. Find out more about flying drones in Australia at the Civil Aviation Safety Authority website: casa.gov.au/aircraft/landing-page/flying-drones-australia ▶

*Agriculture Victoria's 2015 Regional Wellbeing Survey



Government initiatives you should know about

The State Government has introduced initiatives to support rural and regional businesses.

Initiatives include important changes to land-use planning laws to make them easier to navigate, upgrades to local road infrastructure, grants for artisan producers to grow their businesses, and moves to address climate change.

The animal industry planning reforms bring clarity to land-use planning definitions. They also improve the focus on balancing the needs of agricultural businesses with environmental protection and community amenity. Benefits for primary producers are a planning and regulatory system that is easier to understand, a simplified planning process for low-risk farming and more consistency in how planning definitions and regulations are applied.

A \$2-million program has also been launched to support artisanal agriculture producers. The program will include an Industry Development Plan for the artisanal agriculture and premium food sector in Victoria, a grants program to support business growth, and biosecurity and industry support services tailored to the needs of the sector. Consultation through nine regional forums was positive and will help shape the program's content and direction.

The Local Roads to Market program is providing money to help councils improve connections from the farm gate to arterial roads, receival points and markets. These rural road infrastructure upgrades are much-needed to ensure produce is delivered to market quicker and more safely.

Developing policies and initiatives that help people adapt to climate change is an important focus of the government. This topic is now back on the national

"THE ANIMAL INDUSTRY PLANNING REFORMS BRING CLARITY TO LAND-USE PLANNING DEFINITIONS. THEY ALSO IMPROVE THE FOCUS ON BALANCING THE NEEDS OF AGRICULTURAL BUSINESSES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND COMMUNITY AMENITY."

ministerial agenda and work is underway to inform the development of a national strategy for agriculture on adaptation to climate change and emissions reduction. Another new initiative, the \$30-million Agriculture Energy Investment Plan, aims to support farmers in energy efficient processes or technology investments that will help build a more energy efficient, adaptable and innovative agricultural sector. The first step in this is free on-farm energy assessments. Farmers can apply now for an assessment via agriculture.vic.gov.au/agenergy.

In Victoria, the Pilot Adaptation Plan for Primary Industries will inform future directions for investment and policy development by government and industry. To find out more about these initiatives, see agriculture.vic.gov.au ▶

Achieving together

Networking, mentoring, promotional and development opportunities are available from organisations working alongside the Victorian Rural Women's Network. Discover what they can do for you.

Invisible Farmer Project

Initiated and run by Museums Victoria, this project is working with the wider community to document the untold stories of Australian women in agriculture and celebrate their vital contributions. Anyone is welcome to

submit a story. There is no annual event, but organisers regularly speak at events Australia-wide. Contact: invisiblefarmer.net.au, @invisfarmer (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)



Women on Farms

Women on Farms Gathering (WOFG) has been a major annual event for rural and regional women since 1990 to acknowledge and promote women's contributions. It is hosted annually in different shires by a local committee and features workshops, tours and support unique to the host region. WOFG brings women together to network, share experiences, and develop personal and professional skills. Contact: wofg19.org.au



Country Women's Association of Victoria

Country Women's Association of Victoria (CWA) celebrated its 90th birthday in April 2018. The event marked the long-standing relationship between the CWA of Victoria, many rural, regional and metropolitan communities and the State Government. The association continues to support women, children and their families in more than 320 Victorian communities. Contact: cwaofvic.org.au or @cwaofvic (Facebook and Twitter)



Australian Women in Agriculture

Australian Women in Agriculture (AWiA) aims to ensure women influence decision making from farm table to federal politics. It keeps members informed, and runs empowerment programs and events. The membership includes women from all states, industries and stages. AWiA holds a major conference for members each year. Contact: awia.org.au or follow on Facebook and Twitter #AustWomenInAg



Victorian Farmers Federation

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is an active, powerful lobby group dedicated to the interests of farmers and communities. It supports women through Rural Women Uncovered, an annual event attracting inspirational women speakers, and geared to attendees gaining invaluable business knowledge and tackling important health issues. Go to: vff.org.au/vff/Events

Follow on Facebook and Twitter: @victorianfarmersfederation

Image left: Amelia Bright of Amber Creek Farm, South Gippsland, with her daughter Hazel
Photographer: Catherine Forge/Museums Victoria

! Page 10-11 These stories include sensitive themes about mental health. If they trigger concerns with you, please seek professional medical advice or see page 17 for support groups.

Harnessing virtual helplines

Mental health advocate Laura Hough is using social media to help people struggling in rural communities.

Laura grew up running horticulture, beef and dairy farms with her mum and three sisters while her dad earned a second income in the forestry industry. But years of challenges and heartache on the land made her determined to help others.

“RURAL PEOPLE OFTEN DON’T LIKE TO TALK ABOUT THEIR PERSONAL PROBLEMS, SO TEXTING IS EASIER.”

It was tough when Laura’s parents moved from Tasmania to Kerang, Victoria, to grow their vegetable business but lost their crop to floods one year. Just two years ago, they had to sell their much-loved dairy herd due to drought and the milk crisis.

“Dad’s lifelong dream had been to own a dairy farm and when they bought one, I spent a year helping them set it up. I remember the day the new milk prices were released. I was at work and saw the news and instantly cried because I knew it meant nothing good,” recalls Laura. When the Aussie Helpers charity group visited her parents’ farm with hay and tinned goods making them feel less alone, it inspired Laura to do more to help.

She manages the Herd to Bendigo Facebook page to support her former work colleague and friend Joel Bertoncini. Joel is running 1,000 kilometres in 29 days (from Port Augusta in South Australia to Bendigo) to raise funds for farmers experiencing the effects of drought. The page has attracted more than 500 followers and has connected people in their hour of need.



Laura (above) working on her parents’ dairy farm and expecting her first baby

“Joel and I both know people who have lost their lives due to mental health struggles. It’s a huge issue for rural people. I wanted to do something to show that we do care what happens to them,” says Laura.

The Kerang mum regularly promotes work of the Virtual Psychologist — a mobile psychology service that encourages people to reach out for support via text message. “It’s a great idea because rural people often don’t like to talk about their personal problems, so texting is easier,” she says.

Laura credits her mum and sisters for getting her through tough times. “We achieved everything on a farm that a boy could do,” says Laura. “Mum and my younger sister are back milking, another works as a mechanic and another is a jillaroo on a cattle station in Western Australia. They taught me that girls can do anything,” says Laura. ♦

“I REMEMBER THE DAY THE NEW MILK PRICES WERE RELEASED. I WAS AT WORK AND SAW THE NEWS AND INSTANTLY CRIED BECAUSE IT MEANT NOTHING GOOD.”



The ripple effect

Making a difference in rural communities



According to the Victorian Suicide Prevention Framework 2016-2025, the statistics of deaths by suicide were 15.6 men and five women per 100,000 people in 2014. The suicide rate is higher in regional Victoria (14.9 per 100,000) than in metropolitan Melbourne (9.4 per 100,000).

The Victorian Suicide Prevention Framework is part of a 10-year mental health plan aimed at halving these statistics by 2025. There are many organisations and campaigns working towards making this happen. These include the charity beyondblue and the annual campaign, R U OK? Day — which reminds people to check-in on the wellbeing of friends and raise money for this important cause.

The National Centre for Farmer Health has been working towards similar goals with two key mental health projects, The Ripple Effect and From Inside the Farm Gate.

The Ripple Effect* was launched as an online intervention where men could submit their stories of mental health to address the stigma around the topic and improve access to

information and support. Dr Alison Kennedy, who manages the project, says the response was surprising.

“WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT WOMEN OFTEN PARTICIPATE WITH THE VIEW TO ENCOURAGING THE MEN IN THEIR LIVES TO PARTICIPATE.”

“Although originally targeted at men aged 30-64, around 70 per cent of participants have been women,” says Dr Kennedy, a Research Fellow at Deakin University. “We have been told that women often participate with the view to encouraging the men in their lives to participate. They act as conduits in the family,” she explains.

Being able to express their confusion, questions, loss and grief has comforted many of the

project’s contributors, who have found writing down their thoughts therapeutic and prompted many to seek professional help.

The National Centre for Farmer Health, which is funded by the Victorian Government, also launched From Inside the Farm Gate, an initiative for farming people to share their stories through videos with the goal of helping others through tough times. Sixteen women have contributed their stories to a powerful digital portfolio which now works towards saving lives.

One anonymous contributor explained: “One of the things that I took from the videos is the importance of giving within your community and also being able to accept help when you need it.” See farmerhealth.org.au/inside-farm-gate to hear these inspiring stories. ♦

*The Ripple Effect is funded by beyondblue with donations from the Movember Foundation. It is a partnership between the National Centre for Farmer Health, Deakin University, Victorian Farmers’ Federation, Archtop, Sandpit, Western District Health Service and Mental Illness Fellowship North Queensland.

Celebrating rural women

Victoria's rural women are multi-skilled, hard-working and resourceful.

Their talents as businesswomen, connectors, carers and creators are vital for thriving communities.

The Victorian Rural Women's Network offers opportunities for women to collaborate, support and influence one another. It is free to join at extensionaus.com.au/VRWNetwork. Meet some of the network's inspirational subscribers.

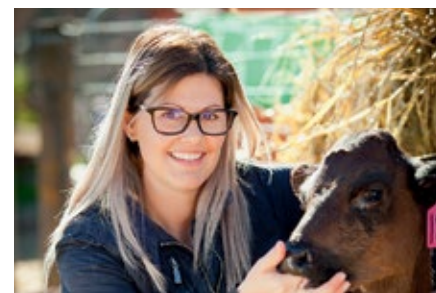
"I NOW LEAD A TEAM OF FANTASTIC PEOPLE, IN AN INDUSTRY WHERE THERE AREN'T MANY FEMALE DISTILLERS AND EVEN LESS OWNER-DISTILLERS."



Natasha Shields

ORGANIC VEGETABLE FARMER

WHERE: Peninsula Fresh Organics, Baxter, Mornington Peninsula
WHY I LOVE WHAT I DO: "I left a career in IT when I met and fell in love with a farmer. I easily fell into farm life, selling our produce at local farmers markets, learning what produce the public wanted. This has steered us in different directions including quality, packaging and systems. Forty-five per cent of our staff are female. We are gentler on both machinery and the produce harvested. I think this brings a broader prospective to our business."



Sheree Myers

DAIRY FARMER

WHERE: Tongala, northern Victoria
WHY I LOVE WHAT I DO: "I have always been interested in banking and finance and I enjoy doing all the administration, auditing and budgeting for the farm. Like many women on farms, I manage all the finances but I also work off-farm in a bank. I love meeting up with our local Young Dairy Network group to share ideas and knowledge. It's important to get off the farm otherwise you can start to feel a bit isolated. It also helps to keep me up-to-date with current farming issues."



Jan Slater and Sarah Sammon

ROSE PETAL FARMERS

WHERE: Simply Rose Petals, Swan Hill, north-west Victoria.
WHY WE LOVE WHAT WE DO: "Every day we celebrate being able to work together as mother and daughter. By using e-commerce, we've been able to reach a global market for our freeze-dried rose petals and edible flowers. We share a thirst for innovation, and love creativity and working outdoors. Our inventions have challenged and changed the status quo in the wedding industry. We were rewarded as a 2018 winner in Australia's Top 50 Small Business Leaders awards."



Angela Enbom and Millie Enbom-Goad

BEEKEEPERS

WHERE: Enbom Honeys, Central Goldfields, central Victoria
WHY WE LOVE WHAT WE DO: "We are passionate about healthy living and caring for the environment. Millie works as a lawyer in the city but spends nearly every weekend working in the bush with me. We are very fortunate to have our 80-year-old cousin Col Smith as our mentor, sharing his knowledge of beekeeping, the land and its history. Our style of beekeeping is in line with the slow food movement. We build our own equipment, rear the queens and take honey only when there is surplus."



Julie McHale

ABORIGINAL ELDER AND BUSH FOOD GROWER

WHERE: Harcourt, Central Highlands, Victoria
WHY I LOVE WHAT I DO: "Food and the plants they come from are very much at the heart of Aboriginal people's cultures — they're one of the ways we connect with Country. Working with food is a good way of learning about culture and appreciating the connection we have with food and land. I use foods traditionally found and used on this Country as well as exploring cooking and teaching options using food from other Aboriginal peoples."



Holly Klintworth

DIRECTOR AND DISTILLER

WHERE: Bass & Flinders Distillery, Red Hill, Mornington Peninsula
WHY I LOVE WHAT I DO: "I joined the family business two years ago, to work with my father. I now lead a team of fantastic people, in an industry where there aren't many female distillers and even less owner-distillers. Distilling has its physical and mental challenges but there's nothing in it that can't be overcome. There is something truly holistic and creatively satisfying about distilling wine and spirits on-site."



Susan Hook

ARTIST AND PSYCHOLOGIST

WHERE: Warrnambool, western Victoria
WHY I LOVE WHAT I DO: "I'm very happy that I've re-discovered art again, and find it's a great balance in my life, given that psychology can be pretty intense at times. I use acrylics and oils, and my style is realistic and impressionistic, with lots of colour and line. I enjoy painting plants, interiors, family portraits and still life. I've been fortunate to have a couple of great teachers who run fabulous classes, and last year I went to Italy to see the Venice Biennale and I travel to Melbourne regularly to see exhibitions."



Fiona Chambers

CEO AND FREE RANGE PIG FARMER

WHERE: Fernleigh Free-Range, western Victoria (near Geelong)
WHY I LOVE WHAT I DO: What I love about my job is the variety it provides. Like most women, I wear a lot of hats. I was 16 when I decided I wanted a career in agriculture and a life on the land where I could raise a family. Agriculture has offered me an endless range of opportunities for community and industry engagement from local to international levels. I also enjoy my work as CEO of the Wheen Bee Foundation, where we work towards eliminating the global threat to bee populations. ♦

Lead and succeed

Claire Braund says growing up on a cattle property gave her the essential tools to build a business and become a women's trailblazer.

Claire (pictured above right) now helps women in Australia and the United Kingdom to reach their full professional potential. "Growing up on a farm taught me great life skills — respect, responsibility and resilience," says Claire.

My father and paternal grandmother gave me an



Co-founder Women on Boards
Claire Braund (above)

unshakeable sense of self and taught me that everything you do is done 'standing on the shoulders of others,'" she says.

Twelve years ago, Claire and business partner, Ruth Medd, founded Women on Boards to achieve 40 per cent representation of women at board level by 2020. Boards falling short of this target are typically the Australian Stock Exchange, superannuation and sport. Although some women may feel unqualified for board roles, many have the skills and experience, says Claire.

In rural and regional areas, many women are more qualified than men to serve on boards. The 2016 Regional Wellbeing Survey found that 47 per cent of female farm managers surveyed had tertiary qualifications. Yet, this high skill level is not reflected in the current representation of women on boards.

"IN RURAL AND REGIONAL AREAS, MANY WOMEN ARE MORE QUALIFIED THAN MEN TO SERVE ON BOARDS."

Women on Boards believes the key is knowing the steps to board-readiness, where to pitch and what to offer a board. It offers a practical pathway for women to reach board potential through face-to-face workshops and webinars. ♦

Register with Women on Boards at womenonboards.net

7 steps to board success

1 Think about what sector and industry you are interested in/or where you can add value. Is it in not-for-profit, government, corporate, start-up or mental health organisations?

2 What is your employer's position on taking on board roles? Do they have one? Can you help them develop one?

3 What transferable skills do you have? Ensure these are articulated in your

'board-ready' CV and speak to your value proposition.

4 How can you pitch yourself to the people/organisations you are seeking to influence for board roles? Have a look at their websites. How many directors are there? How many are women? Are there any obvious gaps? What is the client base? What are their current and emerging issues?

5 Network with those people/organisations and discuss your interest in being on a board and

being a director. If you do not tell anyone, no one will know.

6 Actively look for and apply for board and committee roles. Don't wait for them to fall in your lap or be asked. If you match 60 per cent of the criteria, give it a go. There is nothing to lose and a lot to gain.

7 Practice your pitch (short form and long form) repeatedly so you can articulate clearly what you offer.



2018 Victorian Honour Roll inductees (above) with Minister for Women, the Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP (back row five from right)

In 2016, the Victorian Government released Safe and Strong: a Victorian Gender Equality Strategy to build the attitudinal and behavioural change required to reduce violence against women and deliver gender equality.

Women's leadership and participation is crucial to endorsing gender equality. When women lead, both the community and our economy benefit.

A range of Victorian Government initiatives promote young and emerging leaders and women's participation on boards and lift the visibility of women's contributions and achievements. Find out more here: vic.gov.au/women

Victorian Honour Roll of Women

The Victorian Honour Roll of Women acknowledges and celebrates the considerable achievements of women across a range of cultural backgrounds and professional fields. Inductees have shown dedicated service to their communities and inspirational leadership and excellence in their field.

The Honour Roll is announced annually to coincide with International Women's Day, with nominations open in the first half of the year.

For more details see: vic.gov.au/women/women-s-leadership/victorian-honour-roll-of-women-program

Joan Kirner Young and Emerging Women Leaders

The Joan Kirner Young and Emerging Women Leaders Program recognises the legacy of the late Joan Kirner AC, Victoria's first and only female Premier.

The program supports up-and-coming women leaders aged 18 to 40 using Leadership Victoria's comprehensive skills package.

Scholarships are dedicated to areas Joan was passionate about: education, environment, women's health, western suburbs, Aboriginal women, and culturally diverse women.

Program participants have access to a leadership package specially designed by Leadership Victoria. The program is run annually.

For more details see: vic.gov.au/women/women-s-leadership/joan-kirner-young-and-emerging-women-leaders

Women's Board Leadership Program

State Government has committed to having no less than 50 per cent of women on government boards, to reflect the Victorian community.

Gender equality on boards has been shown to improve organisational performance, innovation and decision making, and enhance board effectiveness and financial performance.

The Women's Board Leadership Program encourages women to serve and excel on community and government boards. It offers a range of governance courses from the Australian Institute of Company Directors and Leadership Victoria, and skills courses to develop women's governance knowledge and leadership skills.

The program is run annually, with applications sought in the first half of the year.

For more details see: vic.gov.au/women/women-s-leadership/women-s-board-leadership-program ♦

Sparkling change in a man's world

Helen Wood is Captain of Barwon Heads Fire Brigade. She is one of 46 women in Victoria who have reached this leadership position among 53,922 volunteers. Helen tells how she is igniting change and working towards gender parity.



Image: Helen Wood, Captain of Barwon Heads Fire Brigade
Photographer: Libby Burnett

I've always been an active person wanting to give back to my community in tangible ways. When I was 18, I joined Barwon Heads 13th Beach Surf Life Saving Club and became one of the first women 'permitted' to be an active member. Before that, it was just accepted that women couldn't do the same jobs as men.

Participation is critical in breaking down pre-existing misconceptions that we all hold and knowing this, I re-joined the club in 2002 when I returned from living overseas. However, I was keen to explore something that was available year-round. A friend, who was also a volunteer with Country Fire Authority (CFA), suggested I join my local brigade.

This was in 2003 and back then the CFA was very different. At the time I was the only female volunteer and some in the brigade didn't give me an easy ride because of it. I expected this as the CFA was a male-dominated environment but, with time, this has changed.

I remember thinking, 'I am not going to let this stop me', as did many of the early women who joined. Through our determination and working together, CFA has become an organisation that now values diversity. Today, a third of the volunteers in our brigade are female and one young woman said she joined our brigade because there was a female captain. People are more comfortable to approach groups if they feel represented in them.

While these upwards trends are positive, the numbers still do not reflect the communities we serve and, as brigades, we should reflect our communities. We all come from different backgrounds, and carry different strengths and weaknesses, and in combining these skills we deliver a better service for everyone.

"WOMEN BRING SO MUCH TO THE TEAM."

Women bring so much to the team. Many are good at multi-tasking because they are always juggling so many balls in the air. In emergency services, this is critical, I know the importance of people sharing information with me while at a fire incident or motor vehicle accident.

Being part of CFA is very rewarding. You gain life experience and assist the community. It has challenged me, offered me friendships, leadership skills and confidence. I met my husband after joining CFA, and we even got married at the fire station!" ♦

Useful contacts

Connect and collaborate with rural Victorian women, access support in tough times and explore opportunities to upskill, lead and succeed here:

Support

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

beyondblue
T: 1300 224 636
W: beyondblue.org.au/

Family Relationships Online
T: 1800 050 321
W: familyrelationships.gov.au

Lifeline Australia
T: 13 11 14
W: lifeline.org.au/

National Centre for Farmer Health
T: 03 5551 8533
W: farmerhealth.org.au

NURSE-ON-CALL
T: 1300 606 024
W: www2.health.vic.gov.au

Smiling Mind App
Free guided meditation any time, anywhere.
W: smilingmind.com.au

Virtual Psychologist
Free 24-hour support via SMS, telephone or email.
T: 0404 032 249 or 1300 665 232
W: virtualpsychologist.com.au
E: admin@virtualpsychologist.com.au

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Vic Emergency
W: emergency.vic.gov.au/relief

Disaster Assist
W: disasterassist.gov.au

FINANCIAL

Rural Financial Counselling Service
T: 1800 686 175
W: agriculture.gov.au/rfcs

Farm debt mediation
W: agriculture.vic.gov.au/mediation

Farm household allowance
T: 13 23 16
W: humanservices.gov.au

Farm Business Concessional Loans
T: 1800 875 675
W: ric.gov.au

Connect

RURAL WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

Australian Women in Agriculture
T: 0418 883 250
W: awia.org.au
E: administration@awia.org.au

Country Women's Association of Victoria
T: 03 9827 8971
W: cwaofvic.org.au
E: admin@cwaofvic.org.au

National Rural Women's Coalition
T: 0455 844 101
W: nrc.com.au
E: admin@nrwc.com.au

Victorian Women's Trust
T: 03 9642 0422
W: vwt.org.au
E: women@vwt.org.au

SPECIAL PROJECTS

From Inside The Farm Gate
W: farmerhealth.org.au/inside-farm-gate

Invisible Farmer Project
W: invisiblefarmer.net.au

Inspire

EDUCATION

Skillsfirst
T: 1800 809 834
W: education.vic.gov.au/skillsfirst/

Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre
W: vtac.edu.au

LEADERSHIP

AgriFutures™ Rural Women's Awards
W: agrifutures.com.au/people-leadership/rural-womens-award/

Enabling Women Leadership Program
This program is for women with disabilities living in Victoria.
W: wdv.org.au
E: wdv@wdv.org.au

Leadership Victoria
W: leadershipvictoria.org/programs

Victorian Regional Community Leadership Program
W: vrclp.com.au/

Women's leadership
W: vic.gov.au/women



Image: Lynley Marshall, Chief Executive Officer, Museums Victoria, at the Victorian AgriFutures™ Rural Women's Awards ceremony



Economic Development,
Jobs, Transport
and Resources