

ISSUE
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VICTORIAN RURAL WOMEN'S NETWORK MAGAZINE

NETWORK CONNECT



RECOVERY

VICTORIAN
RURAL
WOMEN'S
NETWORK

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

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AGRICULTURE VICTORIA



Minister's foreword

It's fair to say the world has changed in immeasurable ways over the last 12 months as we continue to adapt to the challenges of the global pandemic created by COVID.

We also know that the ongoing impacts of COVID are significantly borne by women, and that job losses and economic impacts have created a challenging climate for women's mental and physical health. With so many of us facing changed home and work circumstances, women continue to play a vital role in supporting and leading families, businesses and communities. As the global pandemic continues, no doubt many of you continue to contribute in ways large and small.

Even during such a challenging 12 months, I'm pleased to see some fantastic progress made in some very notable indicators – more women elected to local government; more diverse leadership in several areas for our communities and business sector; more flexible working arrangements unlocking new opportunities for women; and many Australians voicing a new-found appreciation of essential workers in sectors like health, education, and care, which are largely made up of women.

Like all of us, the Victorian Rural Women's Network has pivoted during 2020 and beyond – and with positive results. Digital Country Cuppas welcomed women who otherwise may not have been able to attend a Network get-together. The digital delivery of the Network's Leadership Program increased the number of young women able to access these world-class programs – bringing the grand total to 44 amazing rural women leaders since 2018. And many of us have



The Victorian Government's new 10-year Agriculture Strategy recognises the essential role agriculture will play in our recovery. It highlights significant potential for innovative, low-emissions, export-ready production. The implementation of this strategy over the next 10 years will require each and every one of the 81,000 people working in the sector to realise their potential while we work to attract new entrants and new talent to agriculture.

Having met a number of leadership program participants, I know the difference the Network makes to the capability and confidence of female leaders in rural communities across the state. This is essential to our agriculture sector, to the regional Victorian economy, and to the families and community organisations where so many of you are making such a vital contribution.

I'm pleased to continue the legacy of previous female Ministers for Agriculture, and to support regional Victoria and our \$15.9 billion agriculture sector in a recovery agenda that will build even stronger and more resilient communities. And I'm excited to witness the contributions of so many rural women who are leading the charge.

The Hon. Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture

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The new normal

As we raised a cheeky glass of something on the last night of 2019, and quietly made resolutions for the New Year and decade, none of us could have anticipated the kind of change 2020 would bring.



Workers at Caronlab in North Geelong.

After a black summer of bushfires, we were hit with the health challenges of COVID-19. We also faced border restrictions at a state and national level, the economic shocks of lockdowns, and a strange mix of isolation and overwhelm. The data suggests women have borne the worst of this, first as frontline workers, and then via hits to female-dominated industries such as care, education and hospitality. All while juggling their school-aged children's remote learning.

Even as the vaccine rollout ramps up, COVID-19's impacts continue to unfold. But, more than 12 months on, we can see that it hasn't all been bad news. Just as the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918 triggered some remarkable

social changes, COVID-19 has prompted shifts in behaviours and attitudes that we may be thankful for in the years to come.

Essential reflection

There's nothing like a major upheaval to force us to think deeply about what we care about most, and to prompt us to act on it. Chances are you have made a big change. Perhaps you've changed jobs, launched a business or moved town or, if not, you'll certainly know someone who did. Many of us have taken a risk during this pause and made the changes we realised we needed to make.



Timboon Fine Ice Cream.

The great migration

The number of people leaving the cities for the regions doubled during the pandemic and the number of people leaving the regions slowed, reversing population decline and bringing a flush of new faces to rural towns desperate for new residents. The regions that thrive post-COVID will be those that leverage the new skills and enthusiasm that have arrived on their doorstep.

Digital crash course

Finding ourselves cut off from friends and family, we relied on our screens as a source of connection to the outside world. Armed with new digital skills, many of us have become comfortable with engaging with others via forums we would not otherwise have known existed. This has created new opportunities for learning, collaboration, communities, business ideas – all from our devices and the safety of our own homes.

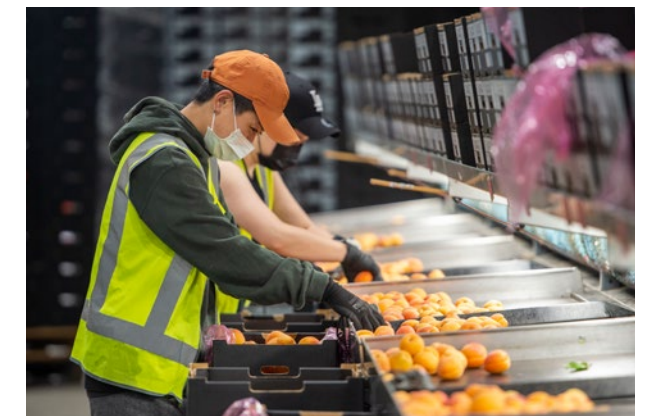
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Though the tyranny of distance wasn't resolved (unfortunately COVID-19 didn't prompt much innovation in teleportation) the shape of it changed. Many employers are more open to different ways of working and are now accommodating remote work. This has brought new opportunities to those living regionally, and a greater appreciation of the regional talent pool.

Navigating uncertainty

Our ability to respond positively to ever-changing circumstances was truly tested in 2020. Social psychology has long held that resilience is one of the most important skills we need to thrive. And though COVID-19 has given us a test case for this that we would never have asked for, we have all learned how to dig deep and get on with things – even when the ground is shifting under our feet.

Armed with the lessons learned from 2020, there are so many exceptional rural women in our communities who are perfectly placed to flourish as our daily lives return to some semblance of normality. Our families, businesses and communities will benefit from the leadership and contribution of these women as we bounce back, better than ever.



Seasonal workers in Shepparton.

Green shoots in the Upper Murray

Life has been tough in the Upper Murray region over the past 18 months. Residents were just beginning to come to terms with the devastating bushfires that tore through 32,173 hectares of land when COVID-19 dealt another cruel blow, followed by a spate of youth suicides. But three generations of rural women who have stepped up to lead the rebuilding efforts say the green shoots of recovery are already promising to leave the area even stronger and more resilient than before.



Gemma Whitehead

Gemma Whitehead's family has lived in Corryong for generations but not even her 93-year-old grandfather had experienced anything like the ferocity of the fires that hit the Upper Murray region on December 30, 2019.

'He lived through the 1939 fires and he said this fire was so much worse — he never thought that he'd see a fire like that,' Gemma says.

When the central support hub for the small community, the Corryong Neighbourhood Centre (CNC), reopened a week later, the 22-year-old was the only employee on deck.

'We had up to a 100 people a day coming in, wanting to know where they could access that initial help, and I was here on my own. Usually, there's a team of up to five of us, but everyone had evacuated or couldn't come in because the roads were closed. So, for the first two days, I had person after person asking the same question, "What financial assistance is there?"'

With the roads closed, Gemma was also needed to work a 12-hour night shift assisting with local traffic control after putting in a full day at the CNC. For weeks, she operated on a couple of hours of sleep.

'It was a crazy time. I think adrenaline had definitely kicked in because I didn't really feel tired.'

When thoughts turned to the rebuilding effort, Gemma was one of the founding members of the Upper Murray Youth Working Group, which was formed to ensure young people have a voice in the recovery.

'It was a crazy time. I think adrenaline had definitely kicked in because I didn't really feel tired.'

Gemma says the response from local kids has been fantastic, with robust contributions from children as young as 12.

With many funding organisations keen to support young people during the recovery process, Gemma is confident projects on the wish list, including a mountain bike track and new skate park, will receive funding.

'Previously we wouldn't have seen any opportunity for new infrastructure or funding to run youth trips. I grew up here and there wasn't much to do!' Gemma laughs. 'Now they've got all this support and an opportunity to make change.'



Thea Newton

Retiree Thea Newton is the Secretary of the CNC Committee and when the fires began closing in, she stayed to help keep its social enterprise bakery open.

'Local residents were asked to evacuate, due to another fire threat and the lack of electricity and water and seventy-five



Opposite: The land is showing signs of bushfire recovery; Top: The green pastures of the Upper Murray; Above: Cattle on dry, smoky landscapes in the Corryong area.

per cent of people left. We only had five staff left in the bakery so I helped until some of them returned. Every afternoon, a small band of volunteers from the CNC helped to pack lunches for the firefighters and government employees.'

Thea was part of the recovery meetings from the start, being a member of both the Upper Murray and Corryong Community Recovery Committee (CRCs).

'We felt it was so important that Corryong had a CRC that a few local residents made a little noise to make it happen.'

'It's a huge process. Being on committees in a small rural town, we sort of get used to dealing with things with two zeros behind it but, all of a sudden, you're looking at things with many, many zeros. One of the chaps said to me, "It's quite intense, isn't it?"'

But Thea is convinced the effort will be worth it, with projects on the books that will improve the quality of life for locals as well as boosting tourism in the region.

'It took us about two years to raise about \$30,000 to put shade sails over the playground and now you can put in for a grant and get \$175,000 to do a project.'

'Obviously, it's not something you would have wished for but there could be a silver lining,' Thea says.



From left: Gemma Whitehead, Jo Mackinnon and Thea Newton.



Jo Mackinnon

As the Chair of Upper Murray Incorporated, a volunteer organization with a focus on cross-border economic development, local farmer Jo Mackinnon was a key driver behind the region's immediate recovery efforts.

'We had the first meeting on the 18th of January, straight after the fires. We had a room full of everyone from police to ambulance, to head of the hospital, the schools — any sort of community group or leadership group you could imagine.'

'Then an organization called Bushfire Recovery Victoria was formulated and nine community recovery committees were set up in nine communities, with a representative from each on the Upper Murray Committee.'

Of the nine committees, seven are headed by women. 'Some of that is because women are naturally leaders; we get on with it.'

Once the initial emergency passed, it was clear there was going to be some tremendous funding opportunities for an area that has traditionally been overlooked, Jo says.

Some of the funded projects will ensure the region will be better prepared for a future natural disaster, such as the installation of solar power and batteries

on critical infrastructure, which will enable the grid to switch to renewables to maintain power during a disaster.

'We had nearly three weeks of no power at all. We didn't have mobile phone connection or internet.'

A marketing push, backed by investment in tourist infrastructure, will also boost economic development locally, Jo says.

'On the health and wellbeing side of things, we need to make sure that our kids really are resilient, and they do know that they're loved, and they're cared for, and that's going to be a big challenge for the community,' Jo says. 'Maybe that is going to be an ongoing commitment by the community.'

However, all three women are feeling positive that the recovery efforts will leave the Upper Murray stronger than before.

'We're actually just in the throes of putting up the Upper Murray community recovery plan for consultation,' Jo says.

'It's a plan that we can use for the next few years to go through the next recovery phase and maybe it's a plan that when there's a disaster somewhere else, we can say, "This is what we did. It might not be what you want to do, but at least it's something that might help you".'

Jo says she's proud of the document that has been pulled together by volunteers.

'We hope that this plan will be something that the community will be happy to embrace.'

Empowering journey to reawaken a sleeping language



Mandy Nicholson lacked confidence in herself and her identity as a Wurundjeri woman until she was surrounded by culturally supportive people and then discovered a book on her language group's 'sleeping' language, Woiwurrung.

Mandy did not know Woiwurrung, but felt it was her mission to 'reawaken' her native language. It has turned out to be an empowering journey — and not just for Mandy.

As a shy teenager, Mandy didn't acknowledge her Aboriginality at school until Year 9, and she struggled to find the words to combat the racism and bullying that occurred throughout her high school years. So, when she discovered a book with a chapter on her native language, Woiwurrung, she was desperate to learn it.

'There's 38 Aboriginal languages in Victoria and there's no fluent speakers of any of them due to the effect of invasion and the displacement of populations onto missions and reserves where they were basically told, "You're not allowed to be Aboriginal anymore. You can't speak your language, practice your culture or do any of the ceremony",' Mandy says.

Luckily, a linguist at the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages was able to help Mandy with the grammatical tools she needed to be able to speak and write Woiwurrung, and she began translating stories and songs into language.

The Wurundjeri women's dance group, Djirri Djirri, which Mandy established in 2013, now performs dances and songs in Woiwurrung and girls as young as two years old are encouraged to dance their culture and learn their language.

'Language is the key to communication, but it's also the key to your identity. Language helps create an understanding of Country, of your homelands, of your creation narratives and everything around you.'

The impact of learning and teaching Woiwurrung has been profound, with Mandy seeing how it has helped young community members feel proud in their identity and foster their leadership skills.

'Language is the key to communication, but it's also the key to your identity.'

'A lot of the young girls go to really "red necky" schools, like I did, and I see how they've changed from being that shy young girl that I used to be. They are doing acknowledgements and speeches at their school, where they're up there representing their culture proudly. I'm so happy they have been empowered to do that. If I'd had my language and support at that age, I would have been such a different teenager.'

Top: Mandy Nicholson and the Wurundjeri women's dance group, Djirri Djirri.

SAMPLE OF THE FUNDED PROJECTS*

Through the community-led Bushfire Recovery processes, State and Federal funding has been secured for the following initiatives:

\$5M

Great River Road touring route — wayside stops, walking tracks, marketing and promotion

\$3M

Upper Murray Power Plan — project to scope and develop renewable energy systems

\$500K

Need to Reseed Program — supporting bushfire affected farmers to seed and regrow pasture

\$1.73M

Upgrades to Community Halls in Cudgewa, Towong, Walwa, and Biggara

\$140K

Tintaldra Avenue of Honour — replanting the beloved trees along this local landmark

If this article has brought up issues for you, contact the confidential crisis support service **Lifeline**, open 24/7 at **13 11 14**

* approximate figures

Reflections

Difficult times can present great opportunities to learn and grow and our network members have made the most of the challenges provided by the COVID-19 pandemic to develop their business and leadership skills.

We asked some of our members to share the lessons and opportunities from 2020 that they will use to focus on the next chapter of their leadership journey.

What lessons and opportunities have you taken from 2020 to focus on in the next chapter in your leadership journey?



'That I will normalise starting over as many times as I need to in order to grow as a person and as a leader. Growth only happens when our willingness to grow becomes stronger than our attachment to staying the same.'

Lee Sandwith, Managing Director, Good / Hands, Kyneton

'2020 proved to me just how lucky we are to be involved in agriculture in Australia. When all else halted, farming continued to grow, so when I was lucky enough to be offered work to help educate people in the industry, I took the opportunity to lead and encourage.'

Melissa McDonald, Dairy Farmer Bessiebelle & Program Coordinator, RIST Agriculture College, Hamilton



'Being an empathetic leader doesn't make you weak. Finding the time to engage meaningfully with my team and forge pathways forward together made us more effective, even remotely.'

Being relatable and vulnerable during times of difficulty can bring out our best leadership, and strengthen our connection to people and place.'

Natalie Ajay, Director Communications and Engagement, GOTAFE, Rutherglen

'The opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of what those around me (family, friends, colleagues, community and myself!) truly need to feel engaged, valued, motivated and inspired. The big learning for me is to understand your own needs – and others'. When we each feel valued and engaged, we achieve more collectively.'

Sarah Thompson, Lead, Regions at Dairy Australia, Avenel



'After completing my leadership course in 2020, I now see myself as an (adaptive) leader not shying away from future opportunities that will grow me as a person and business owner.'

Michelle Badenhorst, Director, Suffoir Winery, Brewery and Distillery, Macarthur



'After 2020, I have learnt that you must be willing and able to adapt to unexpected circumstances. I also learnt about the true value of my team. I learnt about their resilience, the importance of caring and what great outcomes you can achieve when you are sharing the journey.'

Trish Vigliaturo, Manager, P & A Vigliaturo Orchards, Ardmona

'2020 made me realise that I have to work more on finding balance in my life. This includes asking for support when I need it and believing that my best is always good enough. I am focusing on encouraging those around me to celebrate every achievement whether it be big or small.'

Alicia Robinson, Farm Manager, Warakirri Cropping, Carron



'While we spent a lot of 2020 at home I made many connections virtually which as a rural woman is so important. I've learned that technology can open the door to so many opportunities and help you find a tribe who can be anywhere across the country.'

Jessica Knight, Dairy Farmer, Stratford

'2020 has shown that there are many different ways we can communicate and work effectively. We have been forced to innovate, create new technology and find new ways to connect with one another. It has shown that we can and should be open to different ways of working and effective communication is key to everything.'

Annabel Davies, Senior Agribusiness Manager, Melbourne



'Communication is the most important aspect of change, connection and adaptation. I am focussing on what, how, when and with whom I communicate to improve my leadership.'

Rebecca Burgmann, Farmer and Lawyer, Willow Grove

'Being accidental Chair of the Women on Farms Gathering in Port Fairy gave me a clear understanding of the talent and generosity there is "out there". We saw the value of the event – and where there was a job to do, help arrived! COVID-19 caused us to advance our tech skills.'

Lorraine Ermacora, Retired lamb farmer, Winslow



'After seeing so many people wishing away 2020, it is important to remember that any moment in time is precious. Our community needs to support the grass roots leaders this year. I will champion our community of volunteers, because it is their turn for overdue care and support.'

Amelia Hartney, Managing Director, My Round Table, North East Victoria

'All things considered, 2020 was a great opportunity to focus on what is important to me; family, friends, community and personal development. Looking ahead, these key areas do not change, they only continue to develop and grow in various different forms and ways.'

Brooke Rogers, Farm Manager, Chester Shorthorns, Krowera



Emma takes the winding road home

As a teenager, Emma Germano would never have believed she would one day become the President of the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF), not because of her gender, but because back then she was keen to leave the family farm in South Gippsland.

I was actually accepted into medicine at Monash under the rural program, which meant that after I graduated, I would have to work in a regional or rural area for a minimum of six years, and I thought, “No way. No chance. You couldn’t drag me back.” The irony of that is not lost on me now,’ Emma says.

After finishing high school, Emma moved to the city to study at Melbourne University, then decided to try her hand at running a restaurant in Richmond. When the restaurant began to flounder, Emma studied business management and went on to mentor other small business owners. She then brought those skills back to her parent’s Mirboo North property to assist the family business, which had suffered financial pressure on the back of supporting the restaurant.

‘I just thought that I was going to come in and say, “Here’s a marketing plan, here’s how you do a sales funnel, let’s fix up your processes and line management and cut out any expenses and I’ll be gone, but that was 10 and a half years ago.’

Emma eventually bought the farm and, with her family, undertook a restructure that included increasing sheep production and adding a farm gate shop. In 2014, she undertook a Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship to research global export opportunities for Australian primary producers.

‘I didn’t really fall in love with notion of agriculture or being a food producer until I did the scholarship — that’s where I really got an understanding of global

‘...it was giving me opportunities to indulge all of those things that I was just really genuinely interested in — from the political aspect to the agronomical aspect, to the business aspect.’



VFF President Emma Germano.

agriculture. It was just such an eye opener. It gave me a real understanding about what was so awesome about ag and the fact that it was giving me opportunities to indulge all of those things that I was just really genuinely interested in — from the political aspect to the agronomical aspect, to the business aspect.’

Whilst a firm believer that, ‘If you can’t see it, you can’t be it,’ Emma says she has never let a lack of female role models stop her from reaching for a goal.

‘They say men will go for a promotion when they’ve only got about 60 per cent of the attributes and women wait until they’ve got 120 per cent. Well, I’m more on the “male” side of that equation. I just have a crack.’

Emma ‘had a crack’ at becoming the Vice-President

of the VFF three times before she was successful in 2019 and, in 2020, she was elected to the President position, with Danyel Cucinotta as her Vice-President. The duo has made history as the organisation’s first all-female leadership team.

Emma says she’s enjoying the opportunity to broaden the appeal of the VFF and create lasting change that will foster a vibrant and sustainable future for Australian agriculture, but she admits adding the complex volunteer role to her day job as Managing Director of her farming business can be a challenge.

‘It’s like I jumped on a bucking horse. It’s stopped trying to throw me off, but it’ll still see a low hanging branch every now and then and go for it,’ she laughs.



Celia Tucker.

The potential to earn a substantial additional income from carbon credits is the 'icing on the cake' for Celia and Jack Tucker, who are transitioning their business from cropping to running meat sheep with the aim of creating a long-term, healthy farm ecosystem.

'About three years ago, Jack and I decided to move from a high-input cropping system to something that's more regenerative and more about combining conservation with running a profitable farm,' Celia says. 'We're both just really keen on land management and how we can better look after the piece of land that we've got. Jack and I have absolute respect for how Indigenous people have managed this land for thousands of years and I think we can learn from that historic land management where you work with nature rather than against it.'

With improving the soil biology of their property, Rhynie Pastoral, high on their list of priorities, applying for a soil carbon capture project through the Commonwealth's Clean Energy Regulator was a natural fit for the couple. The regulator approved their application in March this year and the Tuckers are now committed to undertaking new activities to increase carbon sequestration in their soils, which will be independently tested every five years. If their soil carbon levels rise, they will receive Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCU), which can be held or sold to buyers in Australia and overseas.

'We are aiming for an average net gain of one per cent of Soil Organic Carbon for the top 30 cm on our

property. This translates to 165 tonnes of CO₂ captured per hectare, or 124 Australian Carbon Credit Units,' Celia says.

That 1 per cent rise would earn the couple 149,296 ACCUs, which have been trading at around \$16.

'But in five years' time, it is expected that the price will be over \$25.'

The project is further proof that taking a holistic approach to land management is not just about being 'warm and fuzzy' and does not need to be at the expense of profit, Celia says.

'I don't think soil health is any different to human health. For soil to be truly healthy, you

need to be thinking holistically and for the longer-term.'

'It's not that we're not using inputs, we're certainly helping the soil, but we're doing it with more biological fertilisers rather than synthetics and chemicals. That will make our soils more productive and it's a much more sustainable model.'

'We want to make sure that we leave a legacy that's meaningful. When we know that what we are doing is for the greater good, that makes running our farm business really enjoyable.'

→ See rhyniepastoral.com.au

Supporting farmers to respond to climate change

The Victorian Government has invested almost \$20 million over four years in the Agriculture Sector Pledge (the pledge) to support the agriculture sector to respond to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Through the pledge, the Government will partner with industry to deliver a long-term vision for Victoria's agriculture sector in a net-zero emissions economy and deliver information, tools and services to support emissions reduction, adaptation and climate risk management across the Victorian agriculture sector. This includes a pilot of up to 250 on-farm action plans with up to \$5 million available in grants to support on-farm action. The pilot will help farmers to use current technologies and practices to adapt to climate change and

reduce emissions (e.g. fertiliser or manure management), and prepare the sector for new technologies and practices as they become available.

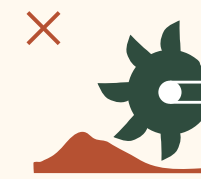
Agriculture Victoria will also lead ground-breaking research and innovation to test emissions reduction technologies suitable for Victorian grazing-based livestock systems.

→ To find out more visit: agriculture.vic.gov.au/climate-and-weather/policy-programs-action

Ways to increase soil carbon



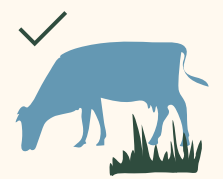
Maintain
and conserve
ground cover



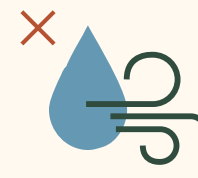
Eliminate
unnecessary soil
cultivation (introduce
zero or minimum tillage)



Avoid
burning off
dead plant
material



Implement
appropriate grazing
management
strategies to avoid
overgrazing pastures



Protect
soil from
wind or water
erosion



Add
composts, manures and
other recycled organics
to build microbe
diversity, which creates
carbon in the soil



Focus on
adding diversity to
the system by using
diverse perennial
pasture mixes



Avoid
chemical fertilizers
and pesticides

Benefits of a soil carbon project



Improved soil
health



Enhanced water
retention and
drought resilience



Increased crop and
pasture yields



Degraded land
regenerated



Additional income
stream

→ Find out more at cleanenergyregulator.gov.au



Natasha Fields from Peninsula Organics, Baxter.

Lessons in Leadership

The VRWN offers funded places in highly-regarded development programs — the Regional Leadership Program, Leadership Victoria, and The Observership Program — to help women at all stages of their career deepen their leadership practice.

The Victorian Rural Women's Network has fostered the leadership skills and experience of 44 women connected to the agricultural sector since 2019, with the COVID-19 pandemic paradoxically enabling the network to increase its impact.

COVID-19 restrictions saw most face-to-face training replaced by online sessions last year, which created efficiencies that enabled more funded places to be offered and increased access to Victorian women, no matter how remote their property.

Feedback from participants has been positive, with 83 per cent reporting they were satisfied or extremely satisfied with their leadership learning journey, reinforcing the value of this structured opportunity for reflection, and development — and especially the importance of funding support.

The Victorian Rural Women's Network was established in 1986 as a way to build visibility and recognition of the vital role of women in rural communities across the state, a forum for rural women to share their skills and experiences with others like them, and a link with the Victorian Government about the issues impacting them.

Thanks to the tireless contributions of many rural woman over these many years, we've seen progress in many areas, but as the Victorian Government's Gender Equality Strategy outlines, the work is far from done.

Today, as was the case 35 years ago, leadership development continues to be an important focus for the Victorian Rural Women's Network. Through formal and informal leadership development, the Network hopes to see a continued increase of the number of rural women in decision making positions. Unlocking the contributions of rural women in leadership roles is a critical measure to ensure an economy and a Victorian community that not only supports the needs of rural women, but also builds a more inclusive community for everyone.

Whether your leadership journey sees you contributing as an elected official, a board position, working in the public service, community or public sector, driving a private enterprise or small businesses, or stepping up to play a role in your local community, developing or deepening a leadership practice is a great investment in your future, and the future of those you care most about.

→ See the 2020 Leadership and Mentoring Program and 2021 Alumni on page 16.

Meet three of the program's participants



Kirsten Diprose

The Observership Program

Living on a sheep, cattle and crop farm was big change for then ABC journalist Kirsten Diprose, who moved to her husband's South West Victorian property eight years ago. Kirsten is involved in the farm's administration and has multiple part-time roles, including fill-in weather presenter for the ABC, podcast manager for an agri-tech company and journalism tutor at Deakin University, as well as being the mother of two primary-school children.

'Board members are often older, and male, so understanding the differences that I bring are actually an asset really helped me to apply.'

However, Kirsten was keen to take on a community leadership position as a not-for-profit board member. After being accepted into the 12-month Observership Program, she was placed on the South West TAFE Board. At the end of the year, a position on the board became vacant and Kirsten's application was able to achieve her goal.

'It was luck and timing, but if that hadn't have happened, I would have felt very confident about applying for other board positions because it made me understand what I could potentially bring to a board. Board members are often older, and male, so understanding the differences that I bring are actually an asset really helped me to apply.'

'I'm thoroughly enjoying being part of an organisation that's making a difference in the lives of people in the community that I live in.'



Kate Wallis

Williamson Leadership Program

Kate Wallis works part-time on her family's South Gippsland beef cattle farm, has a full-time position as Executive Manager of Regional and Agribusiness Banking for the Commonwealth Bank and sits on the Gippsland Food and Fibre Board.

She also runs her own hobby farm. Despite her busy schedule, it was a feeling that she had an obligation to be doing more for her community, and a desire to better connect regional and metropolitan areas, that prompted Kate to apply for the Gippsland Community Leadership Program.

'One of my leadership cohort is one of the heads of the Alfred Hospital's Psychiatric Unit and I was speaking to her about the challenge in regional Victoria that if you have a need for a psychiatric appointment you'd be waiting eight weeks or longer to see somebody.'

'I introduced her to a contact who runs a number of medical clinics in Gippsland and they've actually now set up a tele-health offering, which means that somebody who presents needing psychiatric help can see one of her team within 24 hours. That was really cool.'



Michelle Badenhorst

Regional Leadership program (Great South Coast)

Seeing the positive impact an Australian Rural Leadership program had on her husband prompted Michelle Badenhorst to apply for the 2020 Great South Coast Leadership program, sponsored by the Victorian Rural Women's Network.

Michelle and her husband developed Suffoir wines and cellar door on a working farm in south West Victoria back in 2012. With the business's major client focus being the Melbourne market, the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on their sales.

'I've really gained much more confidence in who I am as a person, as well as a business owner'

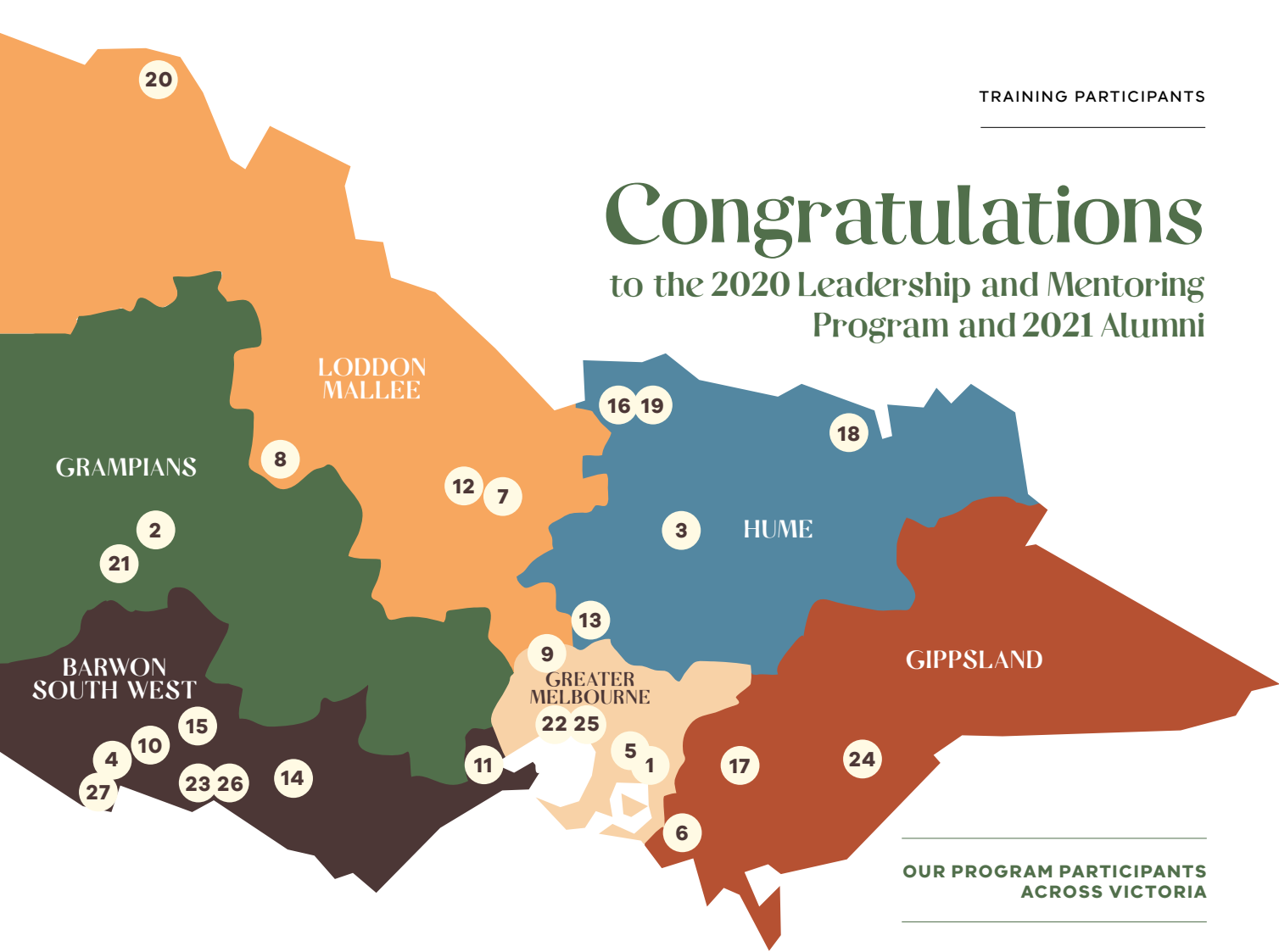
Michelle says participating in the leadership course, which was moved online, helped her understand her own leadership and learn about the Great South Coast region as a whole, including the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. COVID-19 added another lens to her studies, as she had to adapt to a digital environment and embrace change.

With her eyes firmly trained on new ideas and new markets, Michelle launched a successful new product line, gin, and is now looking to better target future international travellers. Michelle is also fostering partnerships with other local businesses.

'I've really gained much more confidence in who I am as a person, as well as a business owner,' Michelle says.

Congratulations

to the 2020 Leadership and Mentoring Program and 2021 Alumni



OUR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS ACROSS VICTORIA

2020

Office for Women

- 1. **Olivia Lineham**, Cora Lynn (Strengthening Boards Program)
- 2. **Denise McClellan**, Horsham (Strengthening Boards Program)
- 3. **Kirsten Larsen**, Violet Town (Mastering Boards Program)
- 4. **Tania Luckin**, Heywood (Mastering Boards Program)

Leadership Victoria

- 5. **Kate Wallis**, Pakenham Upper (Williamson Leadership Program)
- 6. **Brooke Rogers**, Krowera (Women Leading Now)
- 7. **Charlotte Aves**, Marong (Women Leading Now)
- 8. **Alicia Robinson**, Carron (Women Leading Now)
- 9. **Jenn Scott**, Sunbury (Women Leading Now)

Regional Leadership Programs

- 10. **Michelle Badenhorst**, MacArthur (Great South Coast)
- 11. **Jayne Newgreen**, Evansford (Geelong)
- 12. **Carly Noble**, Arnold (Loddon Murray)

The Observership Program

- 13. **Hannah Anderson**, Kilmore (Victorian Farmers Federation Board)
- 14. **Georgie Selman**, Kolora (Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority Board)
- 15. **Kirsten Diprose**, Caramut (South West TAFE Board)

2021

Leadership Victoria

- 16. **Trish (Pasqualina) Vigliaturo**, Ardmona (Williamson Leadership Program)
- 17. **Rebecca Burgmann**, Willow Grove (Williamson Leadership Program)

Four additional places will also be awarded for the Women Leading Now Program to be delivered in July/August 2021

Regional Leadership Programs

- 18. **Amelia Hartney**, Springhurst (Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program)
- 19. **Ranmali Kariyawasam**, Shepparton (Goulburn Murray Community Leadership Program)
- 20. **Jessica Seaver**, Mildura (Northern Mallee Community Leadership Program)
- 21. **Rebecca Dunsmuir**, Lower Norton (Wimmera Community Leadership Program)

The Observership Program

- 22. **Annabel David**, Melbourne (Victorian Farmers Federation Board)
- 23. **Jennifer Emeny**, Warrnambool (Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority Board)
- 24. **Jessica Knight**, Stratford (East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority Board)
- 25. **Lucy Gubbins**, Melbourne (West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority Board)
- 26. **Lisa Lang**, Warrnambool (Dial Before You Dig Board)
- 27. **Shelley Bourke**, Portland (South West TAFE Board)

Useful contacts

Connect and collaborate with rural women, access support, and explore opportunities to upskill and lead with this handy directory:

RESOURCING

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Beyond Blue
T: 1300 22 4636
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
- Virtual Psychologist
Text: 0488 807 266
W: virtualpsychologist.com.au

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

- In an emergency
T: 000
- Vic Emergency
W: emergency.vic.gov.au/respond
- Disaster Assist
W: disasterassist.gov.au

FINANCIAL

- Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) T: 1800 686 175
W: agriculture.gov.au/RFCS
Access at your nearest RFCS office
- Farm Household Allowance
T: 13 23 16 W: humanservices.gov.au
- Regional Investment Corporation concessional loans
T: 1800 875 675 W: ric.gov.au

INSPIRING

LEADERSHIP

- VICTORIAN RURAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND MENTORING PROGRAM PARTNERS
- Women Victoria
W: vic.gov.au/about-women-victoria
- Regional Leadership
W: rla.org.au

- The Observership Program
W: observership.com.au
- Leadership Victoria
W: leadershipvictoria.org
- OTHER LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL WOMEN
- AgriFutures™ Rural Women's Award
W: agrifutures.com.au/people-leadership/rural-womens-award
- Australian Rural Leadership Foundation
W: rural-leaders.org.au
- Enabling Women Leadership Program – for women with disabilities living in Victoria
W: wdv.org.au
- Joan Kirner Young and Emerging Leaders Program
W: vic.gov.au/joan-kirner-young-and-emerging-leaders-program
- Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarships
W: nuffield.com.au
- Victorian Honour Roll of Women
W: vic.gov.au/victorian-honour-roll-women-program

CONNECTING

RURAL AND REGIONAL WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

- NATIONAL
- Australian Meat Business Women
W: amic.org.au/mbw
- Australasian Women in Emergencies Network
W: awenetwork.com.au
- Australian Women in Agriculture
W: awia.org.au
- Country Women's Association of Australia
W: cwaa.org.au
- Dairy Australia
W: dairyaustralia.com.au
- National Rural Women's Coalition
W: nrwc.com.au
- Women in Dairy Australia
W: facebook.com/WIDA-Women-in-Dairy-Australia-1418007245120581
- Women in Seafood Australasia (WISA)
W: womeninseafood.org.au
- VICTORIAN
- Australian Local Government Women's Association (Victorian branch)
W: algwa.com.au
- Business and Professional Women Victoria
W: bpw.com.au/victoria
- Central Victorian Rural Women's Network
E: mel@leadlm.org.au
- Corangamite Rural Women's Network
W: landcarevic.org.au/groups/corangamite/rural-womens-network
- Country Women's Association of Victoria
W: cwaofvic.org.au
- East Gippsland Women in Agriculture Network
W: egln.org.au/blog/east-gippsland-women-in-agriculture-network
- W: facebook.com/groups/115719442464995
- Encouraging Women in Horticulture
W: ewha.com.au
- Girls with Hammers
W: girlswithhammers.com.au
- Golden Plains Rural Women's Network
W: facebook.com/goldenplainsruralwomensnetwork
- Local Women Leading Change
W: vlga.org.au/advocacy/womens-policy/local-women-leading-change
- Show Some #dairylove
W: facebook.com/groups/1591950161115622
- Victorian Women in Agriculture
W: facebook.com/groups/176726392864444
- Victorian Women's Trust
W: vwt.org.au
- Women in Local Democracy (WILD)
W: facebook.com/GeelongWILD
- Women in Gippsland
W: facebook.com/womeningippsland
- Women in Mining Vic
W: ausimm.com/community/women-in-mining-vic
- Women in Water Directors Network
W: vicwater.org.au/members/wwdn-mentoring-network
- Women on Farms
W: womenonfarms.org

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- From Inside the Farm Gate
W: farmerhealth.org.au/inside-farm-gate
- Invisible Farmer Project
W: invisiblefarmer.net.au

