



Candace Vea Vea, Rockhampton, QLD

Scholarship funded by Private Donor

Candace is a Wakka Wakka Cobble Cobble woman passionate about equitable access to social and economic participation.

Fifteen years ago, she moved to Central Queensland for a six-month work contract, fell in love with regional life, and never looked back. While she may not have an extensive list of academic achievements, she has proven herself to be an active and inclusive leader in her community.

She sees this program as an opportunity to formalise her existing skills and broaden her perspective and approach to leading effective and collaborative teams.

Nicholas Blandford, Bairnsdale, VIC

Scholarship funded by Meat and Livestock Australia



Through his extensive experience in various community and industry leadership roles, Nick Blandford has developed a nuanced understanding of the agricultural sector and its challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, health, safety, well-being, and the complexities of global market competition. His insights are grounded in the belief that a robust agriculture sector is vital for the resilience of rural and regional communities, and he advocates for pragmatic progression within the industry to maintain its integral role in these areas.

Nick's position with the Victorian Government's Young Farmers Advisory Council and the National Centre for Farmer Health allows him to offer candid and fearless advice on issues affecting both his local community and the wider industry at state and national levels. A progressive thinker, he seeks to cultivate ideas and networks to bring about meaningful changes, addressing critical issues like improving mental health support in farming communities, fostering alignment between government policy and agricultural practices for climate change, and enhancing the representation of farming communities in all levels of government in Australia.

Committed to driving impactful leadership, Nick actively supports organisations advocating for necessary changes within the industry. Outside of work, his dedication extends to his involvement with the Meerlieu Rural Fire Brigade and Bengworden Landcare group, where he plays a crucial role in preparing and responding to the needs of his community.



Dean Sutton, Glengarry, VIC

Scholarship funded by Prime Super

Dean Sutton, Manager of Connected Communities at Baw Baw Shire Council, exemplifies leadership and dedication in various sectors, including community planning, youth, reconciliation, aged care, and child safety. His team plays a crucial role in implementing the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan and administering the Community Grants Program, focusing on enhancing community resilience and wellbeing. In addition to his professional role, Dean is deeply committed to volunteer work that significantly impacts regional and remote Australia. He is the Deputy Board Chair for Quantum Support Services in Gippsland, an organisation supporting vulnerable individuals through diverse services, from foster care to crisis accommodation.

Dean also serves on the Victorian State Government's LGBTIQ+ Taskforce, advising on policy and overseeing critical legislative reforms. His leadership within this group has been instrumental in driving major changes, including the Victorian Birth Certificate and Religious Exemption Reforms.

As President of the Glengarry Community Association, Dean led the development of a comprehensive town plan, successfully enhancing the town's infrastructure and liveability. This initiative reflects his commitment to building sustainable, resilient communities.

Dean's guiding philosophy is to positively impact the world, advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion. His active involvement in the LGBTIQ+, rural and regional Victoria, and Gippsland communities demonstrates his passion for driving change where it matters most.

Cressida Cains, Robertson, NSW

Scholarship funded by AgriFutures Australia



Cressida Cains has been a pioneer in Australian dairy innovation, since co-founding Pecora Dairy, an artisan sheep milk dairy, in 2011. She achieved a significant milestone in the Australian cheese-making industry by becoming the first to receive a license for raw milk cheese production in 2018. Under her guidance, Pecora Dairy has evolved to include Pecora Cheese and Wine, a European-inspired hospitality venture within a regional Australian backdrop.

Increasingly aware of the decline of small family dairy farms, Cressida founded Dairy Cocoon, a not-for-profit initiative that has been instrumental in providing farmers with the resources to transition towards producing niche dairy products, tapping into a growing consumer demand for Australian owned dairy products. This initiative provides a sustainable and profitable path for many small dairy businesses, allowing them to become price-setters, not price-takers, increasing the possibility of securing an enduring legacy for family dairy farms into the future.

Beyond her business achievements, Cressida is a staunch advocate for carbon-neutral agriculture and has been actively involved in promoting peer-to-peer energy trading, driving Pecora Dairy towards an energy-positive business model. Her roles as an NSW Women in Dairy Bale Up Committee Member, 2020 AgriFutures Rural Woman of the Year National Runner Up, a member of the NSW Agriculture Minister's Advisory Group, and a board member of Australian Women in Agriculture showcase her dedication to advancing and mentoring within the agricultural sector.



Gregory Zillman, Wandoan, QLD

Scholarship funded by Australian Lot Feeders Association

Greg Zillman has forged a reputation in QLD's beef sector for his innovative approach and strategic planning in managing intensive livestock systems, commodity trading, and project management. His diverse background, enriched by his tenure in the Australian Army and experiences in global travel and professional rugby in the UK, brings a unique perspective to his work.

At the core of his career is his successful management of his family beef business, where his deep understanding of the supply chain has led him in good stead through his roles on the Northern Pastoral Council, the QLD Minister of Agriculture's Roundtable Future Focus Council, and the National Council of Young Farmers. In the broader agribusiness industry, Greg has contributed as an external participant on the Australian Lot Feeders Association's Committee and as a Surge Assessment Officer for the QLD Rural Industry Development Authority in 2022. His involvement in these roles showcases his ability to drive industry education and support vital funding initiatives, demonstrating his comprehensive and impactful contribution to Australian agribusiness and rural community development.

Greg's commitment to community-led leadership extends beyond the farm gates. He is the president of the local school's Parents and Citizens Association and the Returned and Services League, reflecting his dedication to supporting and enriching rural communities.

Kristen Diprose, Caramut, VIC

Scholarship funded by the Gardiner Dairy Foundation



As the co-founder and host of the podcast Ducks on the Pond, Kristen Diprose has created an impactful digital platform for rural women. The podcast, which has achieved 50,000 downloads, covers diverse topics including business, mental health, women's health, and farming, serving as a vital resource and community for women across Australia and New Zealand.

Having transitioned to farm life from Melbourne a decade ago, Kristen brings a unique dual perspective to the agriculture sector. Her urban background gives her insight into the misconceptions and concerns of city-based food consumers, while her role on-farm allows her to understand the realities and challenges facing many agricultural industries.

Kristen's expertise extends to agricultural communications and agtech, where she has worked to bridge the gap between scientific research and on-farm application. Besides 'Ducks on the Pond', she has created and presented the Innovation Ag podcast and is a co-host on ABC Melbourne's Conversation Hour.

In addition to her agricultural and media pursuits, Kristen is the Deputy Chair of Southwest TAFE, further contributing to education in her region. Her hands-on involvement in agriculture extends to co-directing Simpson Dairies and Pinegrove Trust, family-run businesses in rural Victoria, which collectively support 20 local jobs.



Cherisse Buzzacott, Hugh, NT

Scholarship funded by National Indigenous Australian Agency

Cherisse is a Blak Business Advocate for the NT Indigenous Business Network. In 13 years as a midwife, she is an advocate for maternity health reform and birthing on country, and regularly speaks on a range of social challenges for Mparntwe and NT communities.

Inspired by her Arrernte Elders, Cherisse now focuses on her own consultancy group, Speakwrite and supporting Aboriginal businesses across the NT, where she hopes to empower her People to reach economic self-determination.

As the Chair of Rhodanthe Lipsett Trust, she supports the provision of First Nations midwifery scholarships and is actively involved in projects that support culturally safe sexual and reproductive healthcare for First Nations women and birthing people.

Nicholas Haddow, Hobart, TAS

Scholarship funded by the Thyne Reid Foundation



Nick Haddow's journey into the world of cheese began 25 years ago with a bucket of fresh goat's milk in SA's Eden Valley. This passion led him down a path that now sees him as the Founder and CEO of the Bruny Island Cheese Co group, a collective of businesses that includes two artisan cheese production facilities, a dairy farm, an iconic tourism destination, a craft brewery, and a flourishing online/e-commerce platform. Located in regional TAS, these enterprises collectively provide employment for over 50 people, contributing significantly to local economies through employment, tourism, and place branding.

In addition to running his business, Nick is actively involved in promoting TAS and supporting other artisan producers and agri-food businesses. His dedication to small island living earned him a Churchill Fellowship in 2014 to study small island economies globally.

Nick also enjoys a successful media career, co-presenting all five series of Gourmet Farmer on SBS, and has co-authored several books, including Milk.Made, which received the prestigious US James Beard Award. His roles as Chair of Brand Tasmania, Non-Executive Director for Wine Tasmania, Island Beehive, PVEAC/T30, and the Agritourism Reference Group, as well as a member of the selection panel for Churchill Fellowship Australia, further blend his multifaceted contributions to the agricultural and tourism sectors.



Selena Sylvester, Nundle, NSW

Scholarship funded by AgriFutures Australia

Selena Sylvester, Director and Secretary of Sylvester Pastoral Trust and Integrated Veterinary Rehabilitation, is a dynamic veterinarian and agricultural innovator. At Integrated Veterinary Rehabilitation, she's at the forefront of developing botanical nutraceuticals and providing integrative animal rehabilitation services in rural NSW. Her work not only offers alternatives for complex animal cases but also educates rural veterinarians on integrating these practices. Selena's focus on industrial hemp byproducts for her nutraceuticals demonstrates her commitment to regional development. She's deeply involved in the Hemp for Health initiative and is active in policy discussions in the hemp industry.

As an FEI veterinarian and Equestrian Australia Vet, Selena leads veterinary teams and is part of incident management committees. She's also a community advocate, lobbying for beneficial land usage and working with organizations for sustainable energy projects. Holding key positions in various agricultural and veterinary committees, Selena is passionate about ensuring quality in the hemp market. Her extensive experience in veterinary practice and cattle production informs her innovative approaches to agricultural challenges. Selena's dedication to sustainability is evident in her involvement in the industrial hemp industry, highlighting its potential for health, agriculture, and environmental rehabilitation.

Samuel Lee, Linthorpe, QLD

Scholarship funded by Cotton Australia, Cotton Research and Development Corporation and Cotton Seed Distributors



Sam Lee serves as the Extension and Development Manager for Queensland, NT, and WA at Cotton Seed Distributors. In this role, Sam leads a dedicated team focused on helping Australian cotton growers achieve optimal yields. A significant part of his work involves supporting the burgeoning cotton industry in Northern Australia, fostering new relationships and networks with enthusiastic and progressive individuals.

Sam's journey in the cotton industry began in 2009 with the CSIRO Cotton Plant Breeding Team, following his studies in rural science at the University of New England. His experience includes working on farming operations in NSW, a technical officer role in Dalby, and a one-year stint with Bayer's canola research program in Canada. Joining Cotton Seed Distributors in 2016, Sam initially covered the Darling Downs and Central QLD regions before taking on his current, expansive managerial role in 2018. His commitment to the industry is evident in his efforts to support and expand cotton farming, particularly in Northern Australia.

Currently, Sam's primary focus is leading his team through a period of substantial growth and change within the company, aiming to minimise disruption and encourage adaptation to new developments.



Gordon McNeil, Quirindi, QLD

*Scholarship funded by
Grains Research and Development Corporation*

Gordon McNeil is an export trader at Agracom Pty Ltd, where he plays a pivotal role in connecting grain growers with new and existing export markets. His work significantly enhances farm gate returns, funnelling investment back into local communities.

Born and raised in Moree, Gordon launched his career in agricultural on a local cotton and grain property for Australian Food and Fibre (AFF). After a brief period working and traveling overseas in 2007, he rejoined AFF in Moree before attending Marcus Oldham College in 2009.

The college experience, including organising a fundraising event for Ovarian Cancer Australia and receiving a scholarship to study the ethanol industry in the USA, broadened his understanding of what a career in agriculture could look like. He joined Agracom in 2011, initially focusing on domestic logistics before transitioning to export logistics and sales. His role involved multiple trips to Asia, fostering partnerships and understanding local cultures.

In 2019, Gordon moved to Toowoomba to establish a new office for Agracom, aiming to expand the company's markets in QLD. This venture, though challenging due to drought and COVID-19, enabled him to develop new skills. Currently, he manages export contract execution, sales into Asia, and trades barley at Agracom, leveraging over a decade of experience in the industry.

Hannah Mann, Cable Beach, WA

Scholarship funded by Telstra



Hannah Mann has dedicated over 17 years to enhancing health and wellbeing in the Kimberley region. Starting as a pharmacy student, she is now the owner, director and chief pharmacist of three pharmacies focused on serving First Nations communities whilst working extensively in remote areas to improve medication access and integrate traditional bush medicine into clinical care.

Hannah's community-focused approach at Kimberley Pharmacy Services has branches in Broome, Derby, and Fitzroy Crossing and emphasises quality medicine use and local employment. This innovative model led the Broome branch to be named Pharmacy of the Year by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia in 2015. Hannah herself was honoured as First Amongst Equals in the Business News 40under40 awards in 2019.

Committed to ensuring equitable healthcare access, Hannah strives to make remote pharmacy a recognised career choice, advocating for virtual, culturally appropriate consultations. She also lectures in rural and remote pharmacy practice and First Nations primary care at Curtin University and UNE, mentoring early-career pharmacists and contributing to workforce development. Hannah holds positions with the Pharmacy Board of Australia, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, and the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service, focusing on policy, governance, and training.



Anna Playfair-Hannay, Sydney, NSW

Scholarship funded by Woolworths

Raised on a cattle and sheep farm in Scotland, Anna Playfair-Hannay's early life was deeply rooted in the agri-food industry, shaping her enduring passion for agriculture. Today, as the Head of Environment for Woolworths Group Ltd, she plays an integral role in connecting the retail giant with the Australian agricultural community, ensuring a sustainable and ethical supply chain.

In her position, Anna extends her reach throughout rural, regional, and remote Australia, engaging in complex collaborations with a diverse range of stakeholders including farmers, NGOs, industry bodies, and community groups. Her dedication and strategic approach are key in enhancing agricultural and environmental standards, which are crucial for supplying Woolworths' stores with premium-quality products sourced responsibly. Anna's work transcends traditional supply chain management, as she works towards pioneering new partnerships, embracing innovative technologies, and optimising supply chain processes. Her efforts are not only vital in streamlining operations but also in narrowing the divide between rural producers and urban consumers, enriching their understanding of sustainable agriculture.

Beyond her professional commitments, Anna is an active participant in various industry forums and roundtable discussions, where she contributes to the advancement of agricultural and seafood standards. Her involvement in these discussions underscores her commitment to elevating the industry she grew up in, bringing invaluable insights from her extensive experience in the field.

Jye Forrester, Dubbo, NSW

*Scholarship funded by
The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care*



Born and raised on Wiradjuri Country in Dubbo, NSW, Jye Forrester embodies a deep connection to his roots and a strong dedication to serving his community. As a proud Wiradjuri man, Jye has spent the last 12 years working for NSW Health in roles that support vulnerable children and families in regional areas. His current position as Senior Health Clinician in the Joint Child Protection Response Program at Western NSW Local Health District is a testament to his commitment to regional, rural, and remote healthcare, particularly for First Nations communities.

Jye's role covers about 33% of rural, regional, and remote NSW, focusing on coordinating health responses for children and families affected by violence, abuse, or neglect. He provides vital social and therapeutic support to aid recovery, underlining his deep understanding of the unique challenges faced by people living in these areas.

In addition to his primary role, Jye actively contributes to various initiatives and working groups. He is a member of the Family Safety Collaboration Working Party focusing on domestic violence responses, the PARVAN Aboriginal Group aiding in decision-making around First Nations service provision, and previously, the Future Health Leaders Advisory Group, advocating for youth in the development of regional healthcare services.



Cassandra Walker, Horsham, VIC

Scholarship funded by Agriculture Victoria Research

Dr. Cassandra Walker is the Acting Research Leader for Crop Quality at Agriculture Victoria, DEECA in Horsham. Managing 12 staff, the team are at the cutting edge of agricultural research, focusing on developing grain varieties that are not just high-yielding but optimally suited to the Mallee-Wimmera conditions. In her role, Cassandra is not only accountable for the leadership and strategic direction of research but also plays a critical part in driving innovation in agricultural practices.

Her role is pivotal in enhancing the marketability, nutritional value, and processing aspects of vital crops. She accomplishes this through partnerships within Agriculture Victoria and collaborations with external bodies such as the Grains and Research Development Corporation, commercial plant breeding companies, interstate researchers (state agronomy programs, national variety trials, grower groups), and industry partners (Australian Plant Proteins, Unigrain, Kraft-Heinz).

A PhD holder in analytical chemistry from the University of Melbourne, Cassandra specialises in creating innovative sensor technologies, with a particular focus on 'Near Infrared Reflectance' and image analysis. Her expertise is not limited to research; she also volunteers as secretary for the Australasian Grain Science Association, contributing significantly to the field.

Barbara Ibuai, Thursday Island, QLD

Scholarship funded by the Torres Strait Regional Authority



Barbara Ibuai is the Advisor for Strategic Policy & Engagement at the Torres Strait Regional Authority. As a Traditional Owner from Saibai Island and a fluent speaker of Kala Kawaw Ya, her Indigenous clan language, Barbara is deeply rooted in her community. Her career is marked by her longstanding commitment to her region serving as a Marine Customs Enforcement Officer, Australia's first Torres Strait Islander Diplomat in Melanesia and Micronesia, the first female Torres Strait Islander long-haul train driver, and a pioneering Civilian Peace Monitor in Bougainville.

Her work ranges from grassroots initiatives on Saibai Island to high-pressure global stages like the Bougainville Peace process and the Fijian political crisis. Barbara has made significant contributions in health, education, housing, and the Torres Strait Treaty Office. In her current role, she contributes to major corporate documents for the Torres Strait Regional Authority, such as annual reports and development plans.

Barbara is passionate about enhancing community engagement in the Torres Strait, especially regarding participation in ABS census and surveys. She understands that accurate data collection is crucial for empowerment, allowing communities to negotiate and improve services based on evidence and truth-telling. Her journey from local initiatives to international diplomacy showcases her as a trailblazer and cultural broker, respected and revered in her community for her tireless advocacy and leadership.



Hassim Adidi, Bamaga, QLD

Scholarship funded by the Torres Strait Regional Authority

Hassim Adidi is the Youth Alcohol and Other Drugs officer for Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) Family and Community Services. Hailing from Bamaga, a small community in Far North Queensland, Hassim is a proud descendant of the Sui Baidam Clan from Saibai and the Wunta Clan of Lockhart River. With a deep-rooted passion for social work, he firmly believes in the power of First Nations people healing their own communities.

Growing up as a self-confessed 'troubled youth,' Hassim credits his strong sense of culture and the support of his family as the pillars that helped him transform into a positive role model for the younger generation in his community. His personal experiences have given him a unique perspective and a drive to make a significant difference in the lives of First Nations people.

Currently, Hassim is undertaking a diploma in leadership and management. This step is more than just personal growth; it's about enhancing his ability to serve his community better. He acknowledges that while he is still learning, his journey serves as a powerful example to the younger generation.

His approach combines a thirst for knowledge with a commitment to networking and learning from others. Hassim is dedicated to absorbing all he can to contribute more effectively to his community and build more opportunities for young people to find their feet.

Matt Norton, Westbrook, QLD

*Scholarship funded by the People First Bank Foundation and
ARLF donors*



Matt Norton is the Director of AgDSA, a specialised consultancy based in Toowoomba, servicing clients across QLD, NSW, and SA. With expertise in town planning and environmental compliance, Matt primarily focuses on intensive livestock industries such as feedlots, pork, and poultry. His role involves assisting producers in navigating complex government processes to achieve their development goals, leveraging his extensive experience in government, private consulting, and intensive livestock sectors.

A passionate advocate for the agricultural sector, Matt's initial interest in the industry was piqued through his high school cattle show team in Sydney. His career in intensive livestock later developed through the QLD Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Now recognised as an expert in intensive livestock production, Matt frequently presents at industry events like the Toowoomba and Surat Basin Enterprise (TSBE) Protein conference and was instrumental in initiating the TSBE Sheep and Goat Feedlotting Emerging Opportunities Event. His accolades include being selected for the MLA Red Meat Ambassador program and receiving the Rural Consultant of the Year Award at the Australian Farmer of the Year awards.

Matt actively contributes to his community, being a member of the Lions Club of Westbrook and Districts and a volunteer presenter for the AgForce School to Industry Partnership Program.



Fiona Marshall, Mulwala, NSW

*Scholarship funded by
Grains Research and Development Corporation*

Fiona Marshall, Director of Bull Plain Farms Pty Ltd, is a seasoned mixed farmer with 27 years in grain and sheep production under her belt. Operating a broadacre, dryland grain and prime lamb enterprise with her family near Mulwala, Fiona's background in applied science and education complements her extensive involvement in leadership programs. These include the Australian Institute of Company Directors, National Farmers' Federation Diversity in Ag Leadership Program, and the Farmers for Climate Action Climate Smart Agriculture Scholarship.

A proponent of lifelong learning in agriculture, Fiona contributes to shaping industry policies through her participation in the Grain Growers National Policy Group. She emphasises the need for informed, science-based policies, particularly in response to climate change challenges in agriculture. Her work with the Grain Growers National Policy Group, GRDC Southern Panel, and her local community showcases her commitment to skill-building and capacity enhancement in rural areas, underlining her passion for strengthening the agricultural community.

Outside of the family enterprise, Fiona is the Chair of the Riverine Plains Farming Systems Group, a not-for-profit focussing on farmer-driven research and extension that delivers on-the-ground benefits to its members. She is also the Director of AgBiz Assist, another not-for profit organisation working to secure the economic well-being of people in rural and regional by improving their financial position, building their social capacity and resilience.

Timothy Ford, Charleton, QLD

Scholarship funded by the Thyne Reid Foundation



Tim Ford is the Founder and Managing Director of Feed Central Pty Ltd, a leading company in Australia's domestic fodder industry. Under Tim's leadership, Feed Central has set new standards in quality assurance, marketing, and distribution, heavily incorporating digital technologies. Tim's role extends beyond managing the company; he is a key driver of change across the industry, contributing to its growth and development. With many livestock sectors facing increasing challenges due to changing climatic conditions, Tim's approach ensures Feed Central now plays a pivotal role in aiding these sectors during crises like droughts, floods, and fires.

As an industry leader, Tim has advised the government up to the prime ministerial level, notably as a member of the Prime Minister's Drought Taskforce during the 2017-2020 drought. His contributions to the industry have helped established a benchmark for quality standards and effective commercial mechanisms within the fodder market.

Outside of work Tim actively participates in the Australian Fodder Industry Association (AFIA), offering significant contributions, including organising key segments of the national AFIA conference and the National Hay Quality Awards. His work extends to providing commentary for the rural and national press on fodder industry matters, particularly during disaster events.



Zachary Gonzales, Perth, WA

Scholarship funded by CBH Group

Zachary Gonzales is the Head of Project Delivery at CBH Group, Australia's largest co-operative with operations extending along the value chain from fertiliser to grain storage, handling, transport, marketing, and processing. His role involves managing a diverse portfolio of projects across CBH's grain handling assets in rural Western Australia. With over 15 years of experience in project management, Zachary has a strong background in rural, mining, and construction industries, particularly in remote areas of Western Australia.

In his position at CBH Group, Zachary has been instrumental in delivering infrastructure projects that not only support the grain industry but also contribute positively to regional and rural communities in WA. He is deeply involved in initiatives like the Agricultural Supply Chain Improvement Program, where he serves on the delivery committee. His efforts ensure that the projects under this initiative not only meet their objectives but also maximize community benefits, including increased local spending and Indigenous engagement.

Before joining CBH Group, Zachary worked for Ahrens Group in Newman and Port Hedland, fulfilling various roles including division manager and project manager. He was also involved with BHP as a contract representative and electrical manager's representative, managing large-scale projects in the region. His extensive experience in managing multi-discipline projects in the mining and construction sectors has equipped him with a unique perspective and skill set that he brings to his leadership style.

Stephanie Wurst, Stokes Bay, SA

*Scholarship funded by the
John B. Innovation in Agriculture Scholarship*



With over a decade in the agricultural sector, Stephanie Wurst is a dedicated advocate for sustainability, biosecurity, and innovation. As Director of Wurst Agricultural Pty Ltd on Kangaroo Island, she's adeptly navigated the company through challenges like the Black Summer fires, leveraging her business management skills to maintain resilience amidst climatic and economic fluctuations.

Stephanie champions sustainable farming and effective biosecurity, initiating the Farmer Blitz Program with Livestock SA to curb Kangaroo Island's feral cat population. This program, involving farmers in targeted trapping, has shown great promise, leading to her appointment as Biosecurity Ambassador in the Decade of Biosecurity National Program.

Outside of farming, Stephanie's commitment extends to her community. She serves as Deputy Chair of Agriculture Kangaroo Island and is a board member of Regional Development Australia. Her co-founding and chairing of a committee that secured \$1.8 million funding for a childcare centre in Parndana underscores her dedication to addressing early childhood education needs in remote areas. Her advocacy in this area has included contributions to the SA Royal Commission into ECEC, chaired by the Hon Julia Gillard AC.



Nicole Walsh, Alice Springs, NT

Scholarship funded by the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation

Nicole Walsh is the Chief Operating Officer (COO) for the NT Chamber of Commerce, a role she undertakes from Alice Springs making her the first person to occupy the position outside of Darwin. Her responsibilities extend across various facets of the organisation, including overseeing regional councils, managing events, and nurturing membership throughout the NT.

Through her work, Nicole focusses on engagement with a range of government and community leaders, including local elected members, councillors, federal senators, seniors MPs, and has previously advised the Prime Minister's office. Through these interactions, Nicole advocates for the NT's diverse challenges and opportunities, with a particular focus on remote and regional areas.

In addition to her COO role, Nicole is deeply involved in her community. She holds positions as Vice Chair of the NT Government's Community Benefit Fund, Treasurer of the Alice Springs Turf Club, and is a Board Member of Neighbourhood Watch. Her passion for the NT is further highlighted by her long-standing involvement in the hockey community, where she has served in local committees, coaching roles, and as a player, including a tenure on the Hockey NT board. Nicole's achievements include winning Young Centralian of the Year at 17 and the Telstra Women's Business Awards in the private and corporate sector in 2017.

Kalair McArthur, Wandal, QLD

Scholarship funded by the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation



KKalair McArthur is the Founder and Director of Ethix Group Pty Ltd, specialising in boosting economic development in Australia's rural, regional, and remote areas. Through her work, Kalair collaborates with communities to discover their unique strengths, promoting tourism, entrepreneurship, and cultural activities, thereby enhancing their sustainability and liveability. This also encompasses training and capacity-building to foster a skilled workforce ready for emerging opportunities.

Her efforts include tackling infrastructure challenges in these areas, creating business cases for projects that enhance connectivity, and attracting investment for local economic growth. As an advocate in policy discussions, she influences decision-making to secure supportive policies and funding for these regions. She has lived in Fiji, Jordan, Botswana, and remote Australia, gaining insights into different cultures and sustainable practices. Her career spans roles in environmental liaison, project development, and economic development, equipping her with a keen ability to synthesize complex information and uncover opportunities.



Linda McSherry, Broome, WA

Scholarship funded by

The Australian Department of Health and Aged Care

Linda McSherry is an accomplished professional with a diverse background in enhancing business systems and team development across rural sectors such as mining, health, Native Title, and disability. She holds qualifications in commerce, occupational health and safety, risk management, and governance, equipping her with a versatile skill set to tackle challenges.

Currently engaged in the not-for-profit disability sector at Far North Community Services in Broome, WA, Linda is dedicated to improving service access equity for rural and remote Australians. She possesses a deep understanding of the Kimberley region's unique socio-cultural landscape, addressing the complex needs of people with disabilities and their families. Driven by a philosophy of chasing better Linda strives to enhance the lives of society's most vulnerable members through her work.

Her strong interest in trauma-informed practices led her to recognise the benefits of art therapy, especially for clients in the disability sector in the Kimberley region. She values art therapy as a non-verbal method for self-expression, providing a crucial communication channel for those who find words inadequate.

Kenneth Dachi, Leeton, NSW

Scholarship funded by H V McKay Charitable Trust



Ken Dachi stands as a pivotal figure in fostering multicultural engagement and economic development in the New South Wales Riverina, serving as the Multicultural Affairs Advisor and Program Coordinator at Leeton Shire Council. His role encompasses leading migrant economic development initiatives and community development projects, underpinning his commitment to enhancing the integration and prosperity of migrants in rural areas. Ken's strategic partnerships and background in academia bridge the gap between policy and practical application, particularly in facilitating skilled labour programs to address workforce challenges in rural, regional, and remote Australia.

Ken's career spanned globally, with experiences in over 40 countries through various international development projects. His tenure abroad, especially in conflict-affected regions, has deeply informed his approach to supporting migrant settlement and economic growth in Leeton, making it a model for regional welcome and inclusion.

Ken's leadership extends beyond his professional role, as evidenced by his active involvement in the Leeton Multicultural Support Group, the Rotary Club of Leeton, and the Western Riverina Arts Board. His vision for Leeton and his determination to secure over \$800K in funding for community projects within three years exemplify his dedication to driving meaningful change



Chloe Lollback, Kyabram, VIC

Scholarship funded by Australian Meat Processing Corporation

In 2016, Chloe completed her degree in Agricultural Science at the University of Queensland, where she competed in the ICMJ and was selected to join the Australian National team, competing in the US in 2017. After graduating, Chloe joined Teys Australia as a graduate, transitioning into an R&D project manager role focusing on objective carcass measurement technologies and beef carcass automation.

Following this, Chloe served as a Senior Business Development Officer in the MSA program for Meat & Livestock Australia. Her primary responsibility was engaging with high-impact MSA processors, post-processor program stakeholders, and supply chains to drive growth, sophistication, and greater value in the MSA program along the beef and sheep meat supply chain.

In 2022, Chloe joined Greenham as the Strategic Initiatives Manager, working on system development and implementation, innovation, and the graduate program across the company. Chloe is deeply committed to advocating for the diverse range of opportunities available in the red meat industry and contributing to efforts to attract and retain talent in this sector.



Sam White, Dubbo, NSW

Scholarship funded by Fletcher International Exports

Sam White lives in Dubbo, Central West New South Wales. At 34 years old, he has two sons, Henry (3 years) and Patrick (1.5 years). Both Sam and his wife, Amelia, come from farming backgrounds—Sam from a small cattle farm in Narrabri, and Amelia from a larger mixed farming operation in Binnaway.

Sam has always worked in the agricultural sector and feels fortunate to be part of an industry he deeply cares about. He appreciates the support and opportunities provided by his current company, which have exceeded his expectations. Amelia, an Occupational Therapist and strong advocate for mental health, has helped Sam learn to share more about himself with others, and he now encourages others to do the same.

The White family is active and social, enjoying a fantastic group of friends in Dubbo, whom they see regularly. Balancing work and family life can be challenging, but Sam and Amelia make it work and have fun along the way. They are also planning to expand their family in the future.