Rice Industry Leadership Program
2017-2020

by Ainsley Massina
July 2021
Rice Industry Leadership Program 2017-2020
Extended to 2021 due to COVID-19

By Ainsley Massina

July 2021
AgriFutures Australia Publication no. 21-129
AgriFutures Australia Project no. PRJ-011075
Foreword

The Australian rice industry continues to work towards growing its people and their ability to move the industry forward. Leaders in the rice industry are also seen as leaders within their communities, which is something they are very proud of. It is through programs like the Rice Industry Leadership Program that these leaders will continue to influence the rice industry and their local communities.

This program was a joint initiative between the Ricegrowers’ Association (RGA), AgriFutures Australia, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE), and other key rice industry entities. The total funding for this program was $662,760. Of this amount, the Ricegrowers’ Association (RGA) contributed $124,800 through direct and in-kind contributions. AgriFutures Australia provided direct support of $90,000, and the RGA sourced an additional $110,000 from sponsorship from other rice industry entities. The remaining balance of $367,960 was sourced from the DAWE Leadership in Agricultural Industries Fund 2017.

Despite challenges associated with drought and COVID-19, the Rice Industry Leadership Program has provided significant benefits to current and future industry leaders. AgriFutures Australia is committed to investing in leaders and building capacity in the rice industry, to ensure the future of the industry is in good hands.

This report for the AgriFutures Rice Program is an addition to AgriFutures Australia’s diverse range of research publications. It forms part of our Growing Profitability Arena, which aims to enhance the profitability and sustainability of our levied rural industries.

Most of AgriFutures Australia’s publications are available for viewing, free download or purchase online at www.agrifutures.com.au.

John Smith
General Manager, Research
AgriFutures Australia
Contents

Foreword ............................................................................................................................................... iii
Executive summary ............................................................................................................................... v
Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 1
Objectives ............................................................................................................................................... 3
  Project KPIs ...................................................................................................................................... 3
Program development ........................................................................................................................... 5
  Rice Industry Leadership Taskforce ................................................................................................ 5
  Rice Industry Leadership Coordinator .............................................................................................. 5
  Structure ...................................................................................................................................... 6
  Tier One ...................................................................................................................................... 6
  Tier Two ................................................................................................................................... 7
  Tier Three ................................................................................................................................... 8
  Alumni events ................................................................................................................................. 10
  Online learning ............................................................................................................................... 10
  Program changes due to COVID-19 ............................................................................................... 10
Results ................................................................................................................................................... 12
  Results against KPIs ....................................................................................................................... 12
  Media and social media reach ......................................................................................................... 13
  Other key results ............................................................................................................................ 14
  Alumni event ................................................................................................................................. 14
  COVID-19 changes ......................................................................................................................... 15
Conclusion ............................................................................................................................................ 16
Recommendations ................................................................................................................................ 16
Executive summary

What the report is about
The Rice Industry Leadership Program 2017-2020 was extended due to COVID-19. This report outlines all the programs that have been completed.

Who is the report targeted at?
The AgriFutures Rice Advisory Panel.

Where are the relevant industries located in Australia?
The rice-growing regions of southern NSW.

Background
For the past decade, the rice industry has been evolving and growing to understand the importance of strong leadership. It does this through becoming an industry that truly believes in its people and their ability to innovate, grow and adjust to changes brought about by water reform, pressure from other crops and permanent horticulture, climate variability and market pressures.

Our leaders are not only seen as leaders in the rice industry, but also as leaders within their communities, of which the rice industry is very proud. It hopes these leaders continue to influence not only industry but also regional communities.

Recognising the opportunity to continue the great work in leadership, the Ricegrowers’ Association (RGA) applied for and received $367,960 in funding from the Australian Government’s $5 million Leadership in Agricultural Industries Fund. In addition to federal funding, the RGA was also supported by key organisations in the rice industry: AgriFutures Australia, SunRice, the Rice Marketing Board of the State of NSW, and Rice Extension. This $662,760 funding enabled the Rice Industry Leadership Program 2017-2020 to be established.

Aim/objectives
The RGA believes that developing leaders is an investment in the future of our industry. The objective of the Rice Industry Leadership Program 2017-2020 was to provide an opportunity for potential leaders of our industry to undertake training to develop their leadership skills.

The development of strong and effective industry leaders helps the rice industry to structurally adjust to the many drivers of change influencing the industry, and to continue its economic, environmental and innovation success.

Through strong leadership, the industry is better positioned to embrace the opportunities and challenges facing the industry.
Methods used

Methods used through the Rice Leadership Program consisted of residential training workshops, short face-to-face workshops, online learning opportunities, and social networking events.

Results/findings

Over the duration of the program, 163 people completed leadership programs.

The key findings for this project illustrated a need for professional development opportunities across the rice industry, the broad agricultural sector and, in particular, our regional communities.

Because people working in agriculture often find it to be isolating, the social interaction and networking in this program was a key to its success.

A limited number of people in the industry are willing to take on leadership roles outside their own business. This finding will affect industry stakeholders because there is a risk of not having the right people to lead the businesses and industry in the future.

Implications for relevant stakeholders

Through this program’s strong commitment to investing in future leaders, we were able to improve the industry’s ability to pursue initiatives in the public interest, and to deliver direct and indirect benefits for community. Throughout the leadership program, a common value that has been reinforced is the important role the rice industry plays economically, socially and environmentally for local businesses, communities, and the broader agricultural and irrigation industries.

The Rice Industry Leadership Program has made progress towards addressing the leadership needs of those respective organisations and communities.

Recommendations

We strongly believe the Rice Industry Leadership Program has helped to ensure the future success of the rice industry by delivering high-quality leadership development opportunities for growers and industry associates.

The RGA has built a strong brand over the past 10 years for delivering leadership programs. We recommend that the RGA continue to take the lead in delivering leadership programs to the rice industry, and continue to connect our industry to the local communities in the Southern Riverina.
Introduction

From past leadership programs, the RGA has found that developing strong and effective industry leaders is essential to helping the rice industry not only structurally adjust to the many drivers of change influencing the industry, but also continue its economic, environmental and innovation success.

Through the development of strong leadership, the industry is better positioned to embrace the opportunities and challenges it faces.

By investing in industry leadership, we are able to improve our ability to pursue initiatives in the public interest, and deliver direct and indirect benefits for communities. A common value reinforced throughout the Rice Industry Leadership Program is the important role the rice industry plays economically, socially and environmentally for local businesses, communities and the broader agricultural and irrigation industries.

In addition, the RGA collaborates with many and various other organisations that are not directly associated with the rice industry, but whose decisions influence the industry. This leadership program also helped to address the leadership needs of those respective organisations.

We strongly believe the Rice Industry Leadership Program will help ensure the future success of the rice industry by building on its previous success of delivering high-quality leadership development opportunities for growers and industry associates. In 2017, the RGA applied for funding to support the rollout of a series of leadership programs.

The vision for these programs was to:

Establish a self-replenishing cohort of rice industry leaders who are diverse in knowledge and experience, and who are skilled, confident and self-aware to take on the leadership roles presented to them via the organisation, within and directly and indirectly associated with the industry.

These programs:

- Provide opportunities for continued training and development by targeting three levels of experience:
  - Level 1: New entrant leaders
  - Level 2: Leaders with two years of rice industry leadership experience, or who have demonstrated a notable commitment to the industry, or are otherwise suitably qualified
  - Level 3: Leaders with five years of rice industry leadership experience, or who have demonstrated a significant personal commitment to the industry, or are otherwise suitably qualified

- Address the three key focus areas of industry leadership:
  - Corporate management, international business and trade
  - Research, development and extension (including biosecurity)
  - Policy and advocacy
• Address the leadership needs of:
  – The rice industry’s four main leadership organisations: RGA; Rice Research and Development Advisory Panel; Rice Marketing Board; and SunRice
  – The many and various organisations that are not directly associated with the rice industry, but whose business directly affects the success of the industry, including but not limited to irrigation companies, agricultural peak bodies, and local, state and federal government bodies (e.g. local councils, Local Land Services and research and development organisations).

The rice industry believes that great leadership in the past has brought the industry to where it is today, and through funding these leadership courses, it can ensure that industry leaders will continue to adapt and grow our industry.
Objectives

By developing leaders, the rice industry is investing in its future. It will be these leaders who help the rice industry to not only structurally adjust to the many drivers of change influencing the industry, but also to enable the industry to continue its economic, environmental and innovation success. Through strong leadership development, the industry will be better positioned to embrace the opportunities and tackle the challenges it faces.

For the past decade, the rice industry has been evolving and growing to understand the importance of strong leadership, and working towards an industry that truly believes in its people and their ability to move the industry forward. Leaders in the rice industry are also seen as leaders in their communities. The rice industry is proud of this achievement, and hopes these leaders continue to influence industry and regional communities.

The objectives of the Rice Industry Leadership Program were as follows:

Objective 1: Develop a self-replenishing, multi-skilled and diverse rice industry leadership cohort capable of servicing the leadership needs of the rice industry

Objective 2: Develop a knowledgeable, skilled and articulate rice industry leadership cohort

Objective 3: Develop a more unified and active rice industry leaders alumni network

Objective 4: Develop a more robust and in-depth understanding of the drivers and impediments to the uptake of the program and positions.

Project KPIs

1. Undertake all program activities.
2. Achieve the program’s key outcomes:
   - Twelve people commencing leadership roles directly and indirectly associated with the rice industry annually (commencing year 2 of the program)
   - Twenty-four people undertaking a Leadership Program annually
   - Five people undertaking the Level 3 Leadership Program every two years (commencing year 2 of the program)
   - Five women commencing leadership roles in the rice industry annually (commencing year 2 of the program)
   - Ten women undertaking a Leadership Program annually
   - Four people from each of the following age brackets undertaking the Leadership Program annually (commencing year 2 of the program):
     - 18-34 years
     - 35-49 years
     - 50-65 years
   - Incorporate into the activities at least one component targeting skills and knowledge suited to the three key focus areas of rice industry leadership
• Host one rice industry leaders alumni event bi-annually
• Within two years of the start of the program, develop online tools/resources to enable the rice industry leaders network to be continually active
• Provide emerging leaders with mentorship and opportunities for leadership
• Publish a Leadership Program Evaluation Report annually
• Incorporate approved recommendations of the report into the Leadership Program annually.
Program development

Initially, there were two steps in creating the Rice Industry Leadership Program 2017-2020.

1. Establish a Rice Industry Leadership Taskforce
2. Engage a Rice Industry Leadership Coordinator to oversee and deliver the Rice Industry Leadership Program.

Rice Industry Leadership Taskforce

This group was established in January 2018, comprising key personnel from supporting organisations of the leadership program, including:

- Rachel Kelly – Policy Manager, RGA
- Gillian Kirkup – Director Rice Marketing Board of the State of NSW, and Director SunRice
- Belinda Allitt – General Manager, Communications and Capacity Building, AgriFutures Australia
- Allison Salmon – General Manager, People and Culture, SunRice
- Troy Mauger – Extension Officer, Rice Extension
- Scott Hogan – business owner, rice grower
- Ainsley Massina – Leadership Coordinator, RGA.

The Leadership Taskforce was developed to provide high-level strategic input and decision making. It provided a forum for organisations to express their particular leadership needs and to feed information back to the supporting organisations when required. The taskforce has also provided input into the core content for the program design.

Rice Industry Leadership Coordinator

After an extensive recruitment process, Ainsley Massina was appointed to the position of Leadership Coordinator. Of the 15 applicants, five were interviewed by the selection panel, which consisted of four senior staff members in the rice industry.

Ainsley joined the RGA with more than 15 years’ experience in human resources/learning and development.
**Structure**

The Rice Industry Leadership Program was developed so that it could train three categories of leaders:

- Tier One – new or inexperienced leaders in the rice industry
- Tier Two – emerging leaders
- Tier Three – established leaders

**Tier One**

The Next Gen Program aimed to educate new or inexperienced leaders in the rice industry. The content focused on policy, advocacy, leadership skills, presentation skills and networking.

The Next Gen program ‘Introduction to the Rice Industry’ was rolled out twice in the funding period: in February 2019 and February 2020.

**Achievements – key outputs and outcomes for this program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program content development</th>
<th>The RGA and Rice Extension developed the four-day program content. Internal and external facilitators were engaged to facilitate this program.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program promotion and marketing</td>
<td>The program was promoted via different communication channels, such as direct email, social media and the RGA website, and in newsletters, e.g. Rice Extension, Ricegrowers’ Rice Matters, and Murray Irrigation Talking Water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application process</td>
<td>The RGA developed an application process in which applicants completed a series of questions focusing on candidate’s background, experience and reasons for wanting to complete the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019: Nineteen applications received. A panel of three individually assessed the applications using a selection document. The selection panel then came together to compare ratings and select the 15 successful applications. One participant withdrew for personal reasons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020: Fifteen applications received. All candidates participated in the program.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage one program completed</td>
<td>This program was a four-day residential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019: Held in Deniliquin, NSW, 18-22 February</td>
<td>2020: Held in Deniliquin, NSW, 24-27 February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of interest stage two</td>
<td>Participants were given the opportunity to apply for stage two, which involved four participants visiting Canberra to gain a greater understanding of the political landscape through networking and advocacy for the industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019: Ten of the 14 participants expressed interest in attending stage two. Five were selected, but one withdrew because of work commitments.</td>
<td>2020: This part of the program was cancelled due to COVID-19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instead of travelling to Canberra, the 2020 group were given the opportunity to come together in September 2020 for a one-day Mastery Extension Workshop.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage two program completed</td>
<td>2019: Four participants were in Canberra from 29 to 31 July 2019. Troy Mauger, Rice Extension Coordinator, and Rachel Kelly, RGA Policy Manager, travelled with them. In Canberra, the group attended Parliament and met with representatives from the Department of Agriculture, National Farmers’ Federation, Murray-Darling Basin Authority, Rural Press and Australian Rural Leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Foundation. They also had the opportunity to meet with the Minister for Water, the Minister for Agriculture, and the Minister for the Environment.

2020: Fourteen participants took part in a modified workshop to focus on developing skills learned in stage one and to practise advocacy skills. Included as part of this program was an online Q&A session with the National Farmers’ Federation President Fiona Simson and CEO Tony Mahar. Participants were asked to read the Ag2030: $100 billion in Ag report and generate a series of questions to ask.

**Evaluation**

Because both stages where extremely successful, the RGA will continue to run this program beyond this funding period. Using RGA’s internal resources and regionally based facilitators, this program will continue to educate the next generation of rice farmers beyond 2021.

Feedback showed that, at this stage in their careers, participants enjoyed the opportunity to network and engage with like-minded individuals. This program gave them the opportunity to learn the fundamentals to help them navigate their careers in agriculture and within the rice industry.

Those who travelled to Canberra in the first year found the experience to be extremely worthwhile because they gained a greater understanding of the political landscape in agriculture. Feedback highlighted the need to provide more education to growers about advocacy.

A highlight of the Mastery Extension Workshop was the engagement with the National Farmers’ Federation. Participants were able to engage with senior agricultural leaders from their home or, for some, on the tractor while working.

Program one – Fifteen participants (four attended stage 2)
Program two – Fifteen participants
Extension workshop – Fourteen participants

**Media coverage**

This program attracted media coverage from local newspapers: the *Southern Riverina News* and the *Deniliquin Pastoral Times*. More exposure for both programs was gained through social media (see statistics in Results section).

---

**Tier Two**

The Foundations of Leadership Program targeted the emerging leaders of the industry, with content focusing on developing self-leadership skills.

The Foundations of Leadership Program was supposed to be run twice in the funding period, but because of COVID-19, it ran only once. The remaining funding will be used as part of the additional programs outlined below in ‘Program changes due to COVID-19’.

**Program content development**

The Foundations of Leadership Program content was developed in conjunction with the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF). The program focused on developing the next generation of leaders and provided participants with the opportunity to choose their path in agricultural leadership.

**Overview**

The outcomes for participants of the program:

- Deepened understanding and appreciation of the need for adaptable and responsive leadership that responds and contributes to complex issues
- Understanding of the application of collaborations, courageous contributions, advocacy and influence
Greater self-awareness and adaptability in terms of behavioural responses, management style, and leadership approach
- A structured pathway for future leadership development
- Established relationships for peer support in the rice industry and the ARLF national network of leaders.

### Program promotion and marketing

This program was promoted via different communication channels, including direct email, social media and the RGA website, and newsletters, e.g. Rice Extension, Ricegrowers Rice Matters, and Murray Irrigation Talking Water.

### Application process

Candidates were required to complete an expression of interest. All 19 applications were accepted.

### Stage one program completed

Stage one was successful, with all participants completing a five-day residential program in Deniliquin, NSW, from 28 May to 1 June 2018.

### Stage two program completed

Stage two was successful, with all participants completing a three-day residential program from 1 to 3 July 2018.

### Evaluation

This program received mixed feedback, which suggested the content was outdated and the facilitators did not adjust to the participants’ requirements.

## Tier Three

The Established Leaders Program aimed to develop individuals who aspire to become a board director in the rice industry, with content focusing on developing corporate governance, strategy, and financial skills.

### Achievements – key outputs and outcomes for the reporting period

#### Program content development

The program consisted of three major activities:
- Foundations of Directorship Course
- Governance in Practice three-day workshop in Sydney
- International trip to Vietnam.

For activity one, the RGA engaged the Australian Institute of Company Directors to run the three-day Foundations of Directorship program in-house in regional NSW. It was offered to our successful candidates in the Established Leaders program as well as to 20 other people within our agricultural region (these applicants were required to cover their participation costs). The RGA brought the program to the regions to enable these 20 people to participate in this highly regarded program without the extra costs associated with travel and accommodation in a capital city.

For activity two, the RGA engaged Zoe Routh from Inner Compass to help facilitate the Governance in Practice session in Sydney. Securing the services of Zoe was a fantastic achievement for this program and the rice industry. Zoe has more than 20 years’ experience in leadership development and is an author of three books. In Sydney, the program engaged guest speakers from different industries, providing a great opportunity for knowledge to be shared to the rice industry from others.

For activity three, participants travelled to Vietnam, which gave them an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of international business and how SunRice operates in Vietnam.

#### Program promotion and marketing

The RGA’s communication department marketed this program via social media, print (professional booklet developed, printed and distributed to 300 potential candidates) and word-of-mouth via the RGA’s Rice Conference and pre-season rice meetings.
### Application process

Applicants were required to submit a written application consisting of answers to four questions, a maximum of 2000 words. They also submitted a two-minute video. Applications were managed through an online portal, SmartyGrants. Funding partner AgriFutures Australia provided the RGA with the use of this program.

Twenty candidates expressed interest in the program, with 12 applications being received.

A selection panel consisted of senior representation from RGA, Rice Marketing Board of NSW, SunRice, and AgriFutures Australia. The panel shortlisted seven candidates for interview after scoring all written applications and videos.

Interviews were held in Jerilderie NSW on 19 September 2018. The interview panel included Graeme Kruger, Executive Director RGA; Gillian Kirkup, Board Member SunRice and Rice Marketing Board; Allison Salmon, General Manager Human Resources SunRice; and John Harvey, Managing Director AgriFutures Australia. From this process, five candidates were chosen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage one</th>
<th>Program AICD: Governance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In December 2018, five candidates completed the Foundations of Directorship Course through the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD). In a key achievement linked to this part of the program, the RGA brought the AICD to the local rice-growing region. This meant that not only the five participants in the Established Leaders program could complete the Foundations of Directorship course, it also enabled another 20 people from the region to have access to this course locally and at a lower cost. They included councillors, board members from irrigation groups, and other industry representatives. All five established leaders received a pass mark in this program.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage two</th>
<th>Program Sydney: Governance in action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The five participants went to Sydney for the second stage of the program, from 5 to 7 February 2019, which involved an external facilitator and key industry representatives. Zoe Routh from Inner Compass led the three-day program, which focused on bringing corporate governance to life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage three</th>
<th>Program Vietnam: International business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In March 2019, the group travelled to Vietnam to gain a greater understanding of the international supply chain and international business. The program was led by SunRice. While in Vietnam, the group met with key governing bodies, including AusCham Vietnam (Australian Chamber of Commerce, Vietnam).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This program was extremely successful, with facilitation by highly regarded organisations a key to its success. Candidates from the program have been able to advance their careers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Each stage of this program received significant media coverage in local newspapers and even more on social media. See ‘Media and social media reach over the lifetime of the program’, below.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alumni events

After consultation with the Leadership Taskforce, the decision was made to combine the 2019 Alumni Event with the 2019 RGA Annual Conference. Feedback from participants indicated they would find it difficult to attend both events within a short timeframe.

The alumni event was meant to provide past participants with an opportunity to network and to extend their learnings from the programs previously attended.

The conference gave the alumni an opportunity to not only network with each other but also with the broader industry. The 2019 conference’s theme was ‘Celebrating the people of the rice industry’. With this program focus, the conference agenda included several key speakers focusing on leadership and innovation.

At the conference, Australian television and radio presenter James O’Loghlin spoke about innovation and thinking beyond our current situation. Zoe Routh from Inner Compass presented on change and adapting to change. The alumni group was also invited to attend a breakout session focusing on leadership. Zoe Routh facilitated the breakout session, at which three past participants from leadership programs presented their key learnings. The key outcome was that past participants learnt from each other and gained an insight into what other learning opportunities were available. In closing this session, the cohort were provided with some top tips on networking and how to ensure they get the most out of events they attend.

All alumni were invited to attend the RGA Annual Conference, RGA Gala Dinner, and RGA Annual General Meeting. Through the Rice Industry Leadership Program funding, all alumni were offered one complementary ticket to these events, and 28 alumni attended.

The rice industry praised the RGA for this event. The conference provided the leadership alumni with an opportunity to network and ‘knowledge-share’ with the wider rice industry.

The second alumni event was due to be held at the 2021 Australian Rice Growers Conference, but unfortunately it has been postponed due to COVID-19. Funding will be held over for the 2022 event.

Online learning

Mentoring – Rare Birds Final Report, due mid-August 2021

Rare Birds were engaged to provide 10 growers with access to a mentor external to the industry and the agriculture sector. Building a network with external mentors was about providing a positive experience for our growers, and to challenge their views so that the growers would bring skills back to our industry.

Eight growers took up the opportunity to complete the 12-month mentoring program.

Program changes due to COVID-19

Due to the ever-changing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the RGA decided to make changes to the program. It became evident that trying to run residential programs in the COVID environment was going to be difficult. The RGA worked with the ARLF to consider moving the Tier Two Foundations of Leadership Program online, but it became apparent that it would not receive the desired outcomes.

As a result, the following changes were then presented to the Rice Leadership Taskforce and the RGA Central Executive for approval.
Rice Industry Leadership Program – COVID-19 restrictions

Objective: To provide a series of professional development masterclasses for RGA members and the broader industry, including local communities.

Outputs: Workshops that will give participants the skills, knowledge and confidence to contribute in a leadership capacity to the rice industry, the broader agricultural industry, and our local communities.

Tier One

- **Online training programs.** Josh Farr from Campus Consultancy developed three online learning modules: Time Management; Presentation Skills; and Communication Skills. These programs are available on the RGA website, and at time of writing they have been viewed and completed by 28 people.

Tier Two

- **Community Governance Course.** More than 40 participants completed the Community Governance Course presented by the Associations Forum in May 2021.

Tier Three

- **Three members of the RGA Board or Central Executive to complete the five-day AICD Company Directors’ Course.** When this opportunity was offered, only two members expressed interest in completing the program: Robert Massina, RGA President, and Erin Draper, RGA Board Member.

- **RGA President and Executive Director to complete strategic planning workshop with Zoe Routh.** RGA President, Rob Massina, and RGA Executive Director, Graeme Kruger, completed a full-day workshop with Zoe Routh from Inner Compass.

- **RGA President and Executive Director to run strategic planning session with RGA Board and Central Executive.** Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the RGA Board and Central Executive have not completed this session.
Results

From the RGA’s perspective, these programs have been a resounding success. The RGA has seen a high level of engagement, not only from rice growers and RGA members, but also from within our communities. The RGA is extremely proud to be giving back to the broader community.

Results against KPIs

Changes were made in the original program outline due to COVID-19, which meant that not all activities were completed. When COVID-19 arose in early 2020, the RGA was due to run an eight-day residential Foundations of Leadership Program. After consultation, it was agreed to adjust the program outline to fit the ever-changing COVID-19 environment. From this change, an extra 70 people completed an online program and short workshop, and the RGA Board was upskilled.

Twelve people commencing leadership roles directly and indirectly associated with the rice industry annually

The following people have taken up leadership roles directly and indirectly associated with the rice industry:

- Jeremy Morton – SunRice Board as a grower director
- Robert Massina – President, RGA
- Antony Vagg – Recently elected to the Rice Advisory Board AgriFutures Australia
- Angela Urquhart – Board member, RGA
- Steve Fawns – Board member, Murray Irrigation
- Anika Molesworth – Winner ‘Farmer of Change’ Award in the 2019 Women of Style, Future Shapers Awards, chosen as Australian Financial Review 100 Women of Influence for 2019
- Jane Harris – Chair, South West Music, Finley for the Future (Securing the future of the local region)
- Kellie Crossley – Board Member, RGA
- Michael Chalmers – Board Member, RGA
- Denise Kelly – Board Member, RGA

Twenty-four people undertaking a Leadership Program annually

A total of 163 people completed the leadership program over the extended four-year period.

Five people undertaking the Level 3 Leadership Program every two years (commencing year 2 of the program)

Robert Massina, Antony Vagg, Angela Urquhart, Warren Lang and Jeremy Morton undertook the Level 3 Leadership Program. RGA are seeking funding to continue this successful program.

Five women commencing leadership roles within the rice industry annually (commencing year 2 of the program)

One woman is on the NSW Irrigators Council Board and four women are on the RGA Board
Ten women undertaking a Leadership Program annually
The programs have attracted a diverse group of participants: 45% female and 55% male.

Four people undertaking the Leadership Program annually from the following age brackets (commencing year 2 of the program)

- 18-34 years – achieved
- 35-49 years – achieved
- 50-65 years – achieved
- Age range: 20 to 70 years

Incorporate into the activities at least one component targeting effective communication skills
Effective communication was a key theme through all programs and a topic for an online learning module.

Host one rice industry leaders alumni event bi-annually
In 2018, a leaders alumni event was held at the industry conference, but the second event has been postponed due to COVID-19. It is due to be held in 2022.

Within two years of the commencement of the program, develop online tools/resources to enable the rice industry leaders network to be continually active
RGA has continued to develop a social media platform, with a focus on knowledge sharing and on development opportunities.

Provide emerging leaders with mentorship and opportunities for leadership.
Online mentoring opportunities have been offered through the Rare Birds partnership.

Media and social media reach
Analytics collected from May 2018 to July 2021.

Website: 241 individual page views, with 1.53 minutes average time on page.

Facebook: More than 30 posts with a combined reach of more than 15,900 people.

Instagram: Five posts with a combined reach of more than 1500 people (account launched in April 2020).

Twitter: More than 30 posts with an estimated combined reach of more than 20,000 people.

Newspapers: Several articles in local newspapers in the rice-growing region.
Other key results

The Rice Industry Leadership Program has brought many benefits to the industry, supporting industries and our local communities. Observations from the various components of the program are highlighted below.

Tier One program – Introduction to the Rice Industry

- It is important to provide the next generation of leaders with the opportunity to network and learn.
- The content covered was relevant to the skills required for the participants.
- Learning through practice: participants highlighted the need for more practical and challenging experiences.
- Use facilities and resources to their full capability. Participants noted that they would like the opportunity to learn outdoors more than in a conference facility.

Tier Two program – Foundations of Leadership

- Emerging leaders’ skillsets are very broad, so we needed to be flexible with our content when developing these leaders.
- Many growers have returned to family farms from corporate jobs. They are highly skilled and have been exposed to leadership development through their employment. Future programs need to account for this off-farm experience that is being brought back into agriculture.

Tier Three program – Established Leaders

- A comprehensive selection process is extremely important to ensure successful participants are at the correct skill level and have the right commitment to complete a program at this level.
- This program spanned an eight-month period and three sessions. To maintain momentum, weekly contact with participants is needed so that they remain engaged and are preparing for upcoming sessions.
- When taking primary producers out of their everyday business activities, it is important that every minute is well spent. To achieve this, we consistently ensured the participants were challenged and fully engaged. Projects and extension work were all relevant to the industry or their own businesses.

Online learning – Mentoring

- Providing growers with the opportunity to be mentored by an experienced mentor external to agriculture is the key lesson. Cross-pollination of skills has given growers the most rewarding experience.

Alumni event

Aligning the Alumni event with the RGA Conference was a success. A key lesson is that networking and learning from each other will always be important. Passing knowledge on to others can be rewarding for both parties involved.

The Alumni event was held out of the rice-growing region. Taking people out of their own situation (particularly in a poor growing year) is very effective in stimulating open discussion.
COVID-19 changes

The target audience for the online programs became disengaged with online learning because the market was saturated. Once COVID-19 hit and everyone was working from home, online learning boomed. We found that our growers become disengaged quickly because they were required to be online for extended periods. Growers are more accustomed to being out in the field and networking directly.

The Community Governance program attracted great numbers, indicating a real need for community organisations to be supported in governance.
Conclusion

The Rice Industry Leadership Program has shown great results so far, despite the challenges faced by the Australian agriculture sector – drought and COVID-19 in particular. Our programs and events proved to be more than just leadership programs. The programs gave our industry and communities the opportunity to come together, away from the pressures of farming, to learn and network. They have also given participants a platform to discuss the challenges in their businesses and to look beyond the current situation.

Recommendations

The RGA strongly recommends the following:

1. That AgriFutures Australia and the AgriFutures Rice Program continue to support future Leadership Programs.

2. That the rice industry as a whole continues to seek ways to improve diversity in leadership roles across the industry.

3. That the RGA is given the capacity to continue to develop the next generation of leaders within the rice industry, the broader agriculture sector, and our communities to bring together like-minded people for the future of the Australian rice industry.
Rice Industry Leadership Program
2017–2020

by Ainsley Massina
July 2021

AgriFutures Australia publication no. 21-129
AgriFutures Australia project no. PRJ-011075
ISBN: 978-1-76053-220-8