



At a glance

Skilled leadership is one of the most crucial elements in the health and prosperity of any industry and, for that matter, of any community – local, regional or national. But it is not always easy to have the right people assume leadership roles at the right time, nor to have those with leadership potential step forward.

The increasing urbanisation of Australia, with almost two thirds of the population living in a capital city, is making it increasingly difficult for primary industries and rural communities to harness talented leadership. RIRDC has an ongoing commitment to developing the leadership and human capacity of primary industries and their communities. Through programs such as the Rural Women's Award, the Horizon Scholarship and RIRDC Rural Leaders, it aims to enhance the capabilities of future leaders to contribute to their industries and communities.

The Rural Women's Award is designed to support those with leadership potential to develop the confidence and skills necessary to undertake a specific project that the nominees believe will advance a specific rural industry, or benefit rural communities.

The Horizon Scholarship targets the next generation of leaders in agriculture and primary industries. It provides financial support for agriculture-related tertiary studies and work placements, while introducing students to networks and personal development opportunities.

RIRDC Rural Leaders is an initiative tailored to the specific leadership needs of emerging, developing and maturing industries as they attempt to establish new industry structures and find a place for their products in the market.

Since 2000, RIRDC has supported more than 250 people through its leadership and capacity-building programs.



Western Australia's Sue Middleton was catapulted into the media spotlight when she was named the National Winner of the 2010 Rural Women's Award

RIRDC Rural Women's Award

The Rural Women's Award was initiated in 1994 by the ABC, and was taken on by RIRDC in 2000. The Award aims to foster women's confidence in taking on leadership roles, and to encourage diversity in leadership. It has been expanded during the past decade to provide greater levels of support, feedback and training to more participants each year. Since 2006 a national winner and runner-up have been selected from the state-based winners, which has helped to increase the profile of the Award and winner projects.



Each state and territory winner receives a \$10,000 financial bursary to implement the project they have nominated in their Award entry. These might range from a research project for a specific rural industry, to social initiatives aimed at strengthening rural communities. State and territory winners and runners-up also participate in the full Company Directors Course with the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD), and are assisted in developing an individual integrated leadership plan. While women outnumber men in Australia, the 2012 Boardroom Diversity Index shows that 24 per cent of the leading 850 public and private company or organisational boards have no female directors. Overall, women hold an average of 21 per cent of directorships in these companies.

The Award also links recipients with a national network of women who are passionate about primary industries and the future of rural Australia, and provides the opportunity for winners to develop media relations and promotional skills, as winners commit to promoting the award to future candidates.

RIRDC Rural Women's Award national winners

2012 Mary Retallack

(South Australia)

Project: Developing a 'Women in Wine' website as a central meeting place and information-sharing hub for women in the wine industry.

2011 Caroline Robinson

(Western Australia)

Project: Expanding the Wheatbelt Business Network as a conduit to investment in the region, and supporting businesses in using marketing, as well as electronic and social media.

2010 Sue Middleton

(Western Australia)

Project: Creating a more environmentally sustainable pork industry by commercialising biogas from piggery waste for energy.

2009 Roma Britnell

(Victoria)

Project: Generating discussion on the ownership of the dairy industry's supply chain and the implications for producers.

2008 Ros Smerdon

(Queensland)

Project: Benchmarking the Australian avocado industry with the South African industry and investigating value adding and oil extraction techniques and opportunities.

2007 Deborah Bain

(Victoria)

Project: Establishing National Farm Day, on which farming families open their homes and properties to urban Australians to promote a greater understanding of farm life and modern farming practices.

2006 Martha Shepherd

(Queensland)

Project: Increasing value for Australian native rainforest products.

CASE STUDY



Spotlight on role models

Western Australia's Sue Middleton was catapulted into the media spotlight when she was named the National Winner of the 2010 Rural Women's Award – she spent the two days following the award ceremony doing back-to-back interviews. Over the next 15 months she gave 55 presentations to organisations ranging from the local women's farm field days to national conferences.

Sue initially attributed the intense media attention to the political currency of her award project – the commercialisation of a process to convert pig waste into energy – and to the increasing profile of the award, built up over more than a decade.

But after speaking with hundreds, if not thousands, of women during her award year, she came to realise that all the attention was not really about the award; as the winner she simply embodied, for a time, the potential of rural women everywhere to make a positive contribution to their industries and communities.

"I found I had become a role model, particularly for young women. In rural Australia, women are not as visible, although there are many out there doing incredible, innovative things. The award makes those women and the role they play more visible and it opens doors for them.

As for her award project, she says the pork industry has been able to commercialise the conversion of waste to energy from indoor housing systems with available technology that has moved from proof of concept to commercial stage.

However, in outdoor piggery systems such as the one she operates with her husband Michael Brennan and his family, the anaerobic digestion involved is more complex to manage and is more capital intensive.

They run a 650 sow farrow-to-finish piggery north-east of Perth, and Sue has gathered extensive information about the technology, capital and skills required to commercialise the technology. The research shows the complexity of the process poses a significant barrier to adoption for outdoor production systems.

“**there are many [women] out there doing incredible, innovative things. The award makes those women and the role they play more visible and it opens doors for them”**

In addition to the farm businesses, Sue also runs a rural development consultancy, and has been approached to join a number of organisational boards since her award win. Chief among these is the Western Australian Regional Development Trust which has an oversight role of the Royalties for Regions Program which distributes average of \$1.2 billion a year in royalties to regional Western Australia. She is also the rural and regional representative of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Reform Council.

Horizon Scholarship



The aim of the Horizon Scholarship is to encourage top students to develop careers in agriculture, developing

the next generation of industry leaders across a diverse range of related fields of study. The program was initiated in 2010 to support academic pursuit and expand the perspectives of students, while building leadership and advocacy skills for Australia's primary industries. Scholarships are awarded to students as they enter their first year of university to pursue a degree with relevance to agriculture.

The program was developed by RIRDC in partnership with industry sponsors, who assist with funding, mentoring and work placements.

Scholarships include:

- a \$5000 annual bursary for the duration of the degree
- mentoring partnerships with university faculty members and industry leaders
- professional development workshops
- annual industry work placements that give students first-hand exposure to modern agricultural practices, and
- opportunities to network and gain knowledge at a range of industry events.

Between 2010 and 2013 the program has sponsored 39 students undertaking degrees including agricultural science, veterinary science, natural resource management, rural science, agricultural economics, and agribusiness.

Horizon Scholarship Sponsors

- Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Australian Egg Corporation
- Australian Pork Limited
- Cotton Research and Development Corporation
- Grains Research and Development Corporation
- Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation
- Horticulture Australia Limited
- Meat and Livestock Australia
- Lallemand Animal Nutrition
- Sugar Research Australia
- Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) and the RIRDC Rice and Chicken Meat Programs
- Woolworths
- McCaughey Memorial Institute
- Australian Wool Innovation

CASE STUDY



Networks and new perspectives for Richie

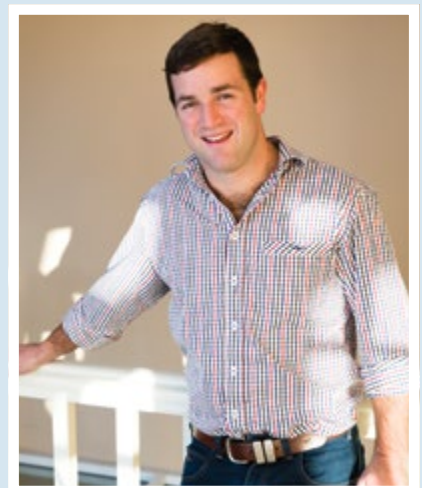
Richie Quigley is a fifth-generation farmer. His family first settled at Trangie in central-western NSW more than 125 years ago. In the long term, he expects the family farm will be his future too - a 6000 hectare mixed-cropping, cotton and livestock operation called Muntham. In the meantime he is completing a Bachelor of Agricultural Science at the University of Sydney, and his Horizon Scholarship is supporting his studies and broader ambitions to promote agriculture.

Richie's Horizon Scholarship sponsor is Woolworths, and he has spent two weeks on a work placement in the fresh food division at the Woolworths head office. "I've seen what happens from the producer's perspective, so it was really interesting to see the other half of the supply chain; what happens when the product leaves the farm, through to the retail store."

Meanwhile, Cotton Australia sponsored his participation in the biennial Australian Cotton Conference in Queensland in 2012. He says meeting industry leaders and people at the forefront of science and farming has put him in touch with a range of potential speakers for the regular career information and networking sessions he helps organise as president of the University of Sydney Agricultural Society.

There have been many rewarding networking experiences as a result of the Horizon Scholarship, including the opportunity to visit secondary schools in Sydney to talk to students about his industry. "It's fantastic to help people understand how their food and fibre is produced, and to represent the agricultural industry. The Horizon Scholarship workshops in Canberra are also great because you get to meet

a lot of other young people who are passionate about agriculture. It is really refreshing, and it keeps you motivated."



Richard Quigley is completing a Bachelor of Agricultural Science at the University of Sydney, and his Horizon Scholarship is supporting his studies and broader ambitions to promote agriculture.



RIRDC Rural Leaders targets stakeholders in Australia's emerging, developing and maturing rural industries. It aims to foster the personal development of individuals, but also to help develop leadership and networking skills that will allow participants to build cohesion and collaboration within their industries, and with other industries that will be crucial to the success of their chosen sector.

One of the major issues facing emerging industries is the need to develop a market presence for their product and industry. Industries that can do this are more likely to be successful; those where participants act in isolation are more likely to struggle.

RIRDC Rural Leaders helps participants understand the possible structures and governance requirements to establish an effective industry organisation and the skills and strategies needed for success. It allows these industries to better plan for the future through implementing succession plans that are built around skilled and confident future leaders.

The first program was held in 2013, with 13 participants from a diverse range of industries joining an eight-day residential course facilitated by the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation. A second course is proposed for 2015.

CASE STUDY



Eyes opened to new opportunities

As a director of Australian Native Foods Industry Limited (ANFIL), Amanda Garner is hoping the new skills she has developed through RIRDC Rural Leaders will help move her industry forward.

She runs a grass roots food business, Sorella Catering, based at Birregurra in Victoria's south-west, incorporating Australian native flavours into her menus and promoting locally grown Shitake mushrooms.

A chef for more than 25 years, Amanda says RIRDC Rural Leaders was not the first time she had participated in business management and training for directors. However, she found it offered some valuable new skills and networks that she can use in both her own business and in the wider native foods industry.

“It opened our eyes to the opportunities in our own industries, and helped build connections. It gave me so many more professional skills”

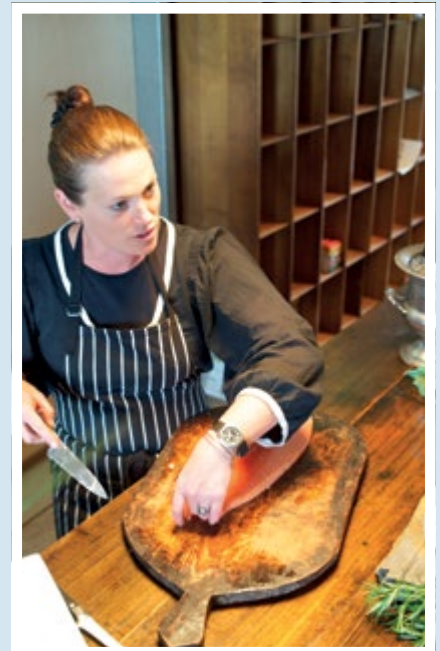
The program included four days of 'outward bound' activities, testing the team building and management styles of participants and highlighting their different personal approaches to problem solving. This was followed by four days of more conventional training, which Amanda rates as outstanding.

She has learned to recognise and appreciate different leadership styles and skills – quiet people can make equally good leaders as “louder” people. The program included one day focused on negotiation skills and another at Parliament House in Canberra which provided the chance to meet with a number of Senators and raise industry issues.

“It opened our eyes to the opportunities in our own industries, and helped build connections. It gave me so many more professional skills.”

She has quickly put the negotiation skills into action, and feels more confident in being an active member of the ANFIL board. This includes extending her personal networks to make connections in a positive way for ANFIL. She has also taken advantage of other learning opportunities, including grants processes. “It has also given me the courage to go for grants that I would never have considered applying for previously.”

The advice from the politicians they met has also stayed with her: if you want to speak with government; don't bring a problem, bring a solution. “I have never been afraid to connect with government, or to ask, but the program has given me better skills to do so.”



Amanda Garner is hoping the new skills she has developed through RIRDC Rural Leaders program will help move her industry forward