

THE AUSTRALIAN RURAL LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION: A LEADERSHIP IMPACT STUDY AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

RESEARCH FOR EDUCATIONAL IMPACT (REDI)

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1. Background

1.1 Rationale for reports

This retrospective study of the programs of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF) considers the Foundation's capacity, performance and relevance historically and contemporaneously. The study reports on the achievements of the individual programs and contributes to the existing evidence about the social, political and economic impact of the work of alumni leaders. The focus on the impact and influence of ARLF programs aims to inform strategic planning and provide a framework for program evaluation, expansion and the identification of new partnership and funding opportunities.

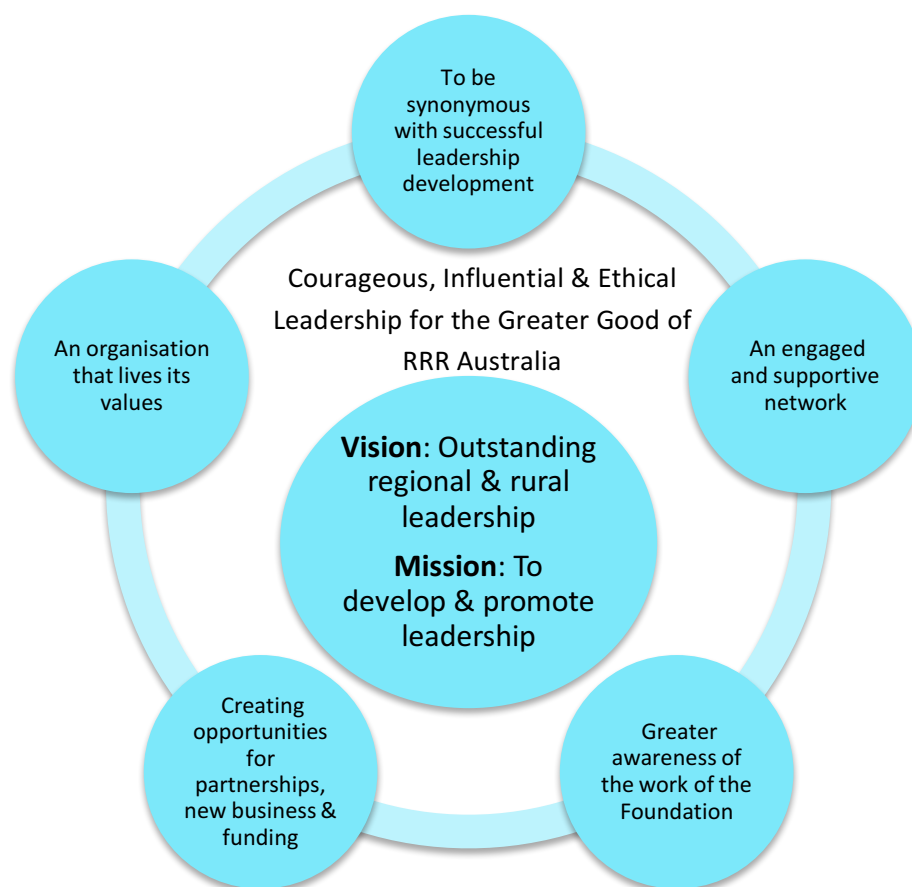


Figure 1

Vision, Mission and ARLF Priorities and Values from 2015-18 Strategic Plan

The ARLF was established in 1992 to address a need to build leadership capacity within rural, regional and remote (RRR) Australia. The assumption was that developing individual leaders through an experiential program, informed by a balance between theory and modelling leadership practice over 18 months, would inform change across organisations, industries, and rural communities. There was an overarching aim of contributing to the public good. Capacity building was to be achieved through developing stronger links between sectors, and networks of leaders, that would in turn lead to innovation and community development.

Since the establishment of the flagship Australian Rural Leadership Development Program (ARLP), the Foundation has also developed a range of shorter more focused leadership development programs to address the needs of RRR Australia. These include TRAIL for young leaders and TRAILblazer, a course for those at the top of their career. Fee-for-service specialist industry programs have been tailored to meet particular needs. In addition, programs have been developed to meet specific needs of communities and groups such as the Torres Strait Women's Leadership Development and Torres Strait Young Leaders programs commencing from 2010.

Funding is reliant on sponsorship, fee-for-service programs and donations. The ARLF, as a social enterprise, is a not for profit public company. It requires a minimum of \$1.5-2m annually to provide its programs, which averages over \$1,000 per day to deliver the programs to each individual. Sponsorship of scholarship places makes up the majority of the Foundation's income other than funding raised from fee-for-service industry specialist programs.

The ARLF has undergone a number of governance, organisational and curriculum renewal processes to meet the needs of the rapidly changing RRR sectors within a transforming social, political, economic, and environmental context locally and globally. An earlier evaluation in 2008 provides some baseline data with regard to the ARLP and the position and impact of the ARLF at that time for individual alumni and their sponsors.

With a new CEO appointed in 2014 and changes to the composition of the Board so that it more closely reflects that of typical corporate boards, the ARLF undertook a review. This involved considering its mission, capacities and impact through a 2015 Kitchen Table discussion with stakeholders and a Perception study, in addition to its regular surveys and cohort reports. A major aim has been to achieve a more secure and longer-term funding base.

The role of leaders and leadership development with regard to those already in positions of influence and future leaders cannot be under-estimated. The context is rapidly and radically changing as Australia transitions from an industrial and mining reliant export economy to a post-industrial service oriented knowledge economy. Factors now impacting RRR Australia include:

- Growing awareness of the impact of climate change on the environment highlighting issues around sustainability
- Greater interconnectedness and interdependencies locally and globally due to communication technologies
- A more politically volatile environment regarding trade barriers and agreements (Brexit and a more protectionist USA)
- New opportunities in Asia
- Declining populations in rural areas but increasing populations in some regional centres due to the movement of retirees and lower income populations with correspondingly higher demands on services and lower tax revenues
- Greater economic disparity between RRR and metropolitan centres, and increased inequality, particularly with regard to embedded disadvantage of Indigenous populations (See [Closing the Gap](#) 2017)

- Research & Development (R&D) framework spanning 14 primary industry sectors and 8 cross sectoral ones to consider research priorities, emerging needs and opportunities (with universities, stakeholders and growers etc.) aiming to develop a less fragmented approach and focus on key priorities
- Government defunding or reduction of funding to Research Development Corporations (RDC).

These factors point to the need for a range of policy and community-based initiatives that can revitalise and facilitate renewal in RRR Australia.

1.2 Terms of reference

The broad objective of the retrospective evaluation is to identify the influence of the ARLP and other Foundation programs upon the leadership of program graduates and consequently the impact of their leadership within RRR Australia over time. This report records these achievements through a qualitative and quantitative study to demonstrate how ARLF graduates contribute to:

- Industry (including industry clusters such as RDC's) across sectors and within communities
- Communities through voluntary work
- Changed processes and practices and/or ways of working (Consultancy Brief 2016 p.1).

1.3 ARLF leadership philosophy

The ARLF has a unique position relative to other leadership development courses with its focus on RRR Australia. The ARLF has over 25 years developed a flagship program, the ARLP that is premised upon two approaches to leadership development – that it is experientially based and is premised upon reflective practice. Eight core principles develop from this philosophy, each associated with a set of leadership dispositions or capabilities. The aim of each of the ARLF programs seeks to develop/enhance in individuals these dispositions and capabilities.

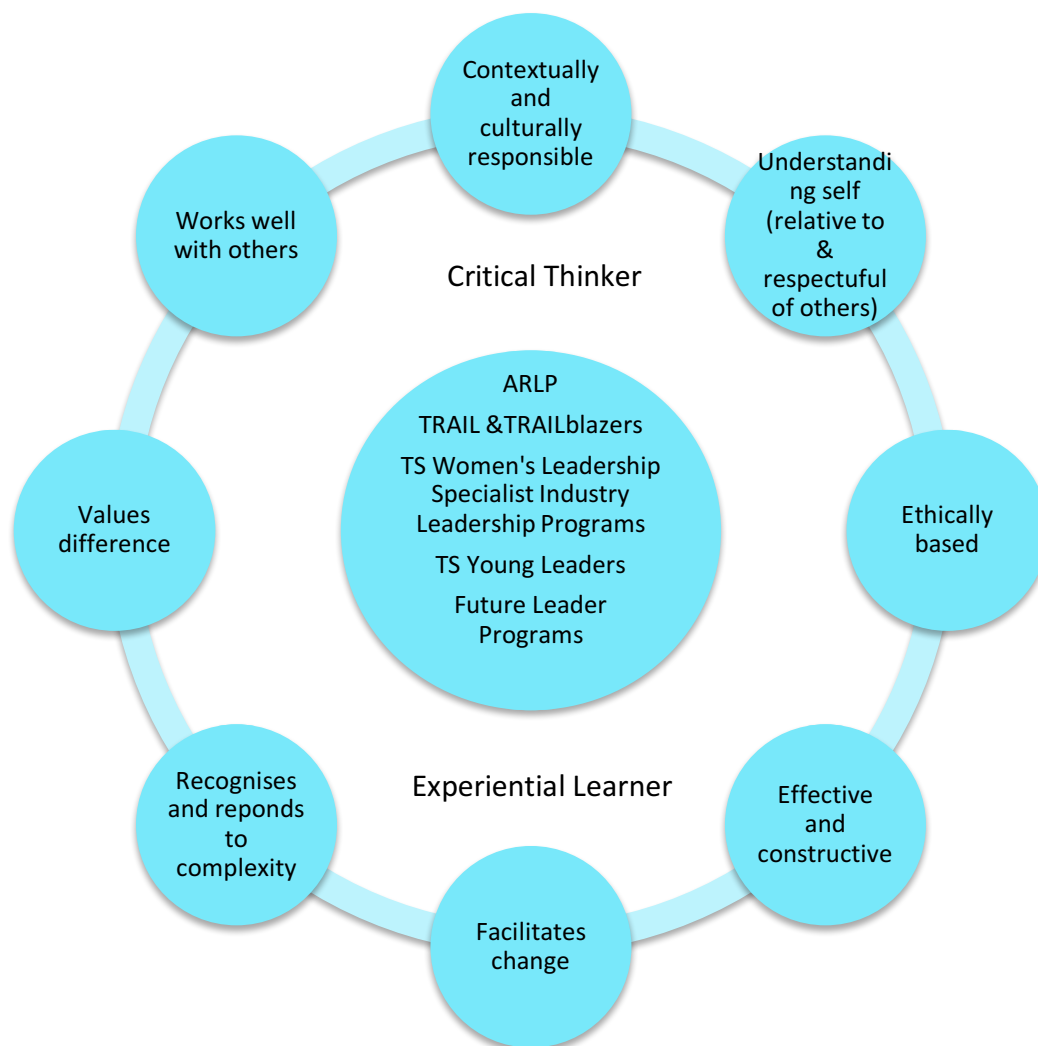


Figure 2
ARLF leadership Development philosophy core principles

This values-driven approach is significantly different from many other leadership programs which tend to focus on instilling skills that are considered to be important to leaders, although more in line with many executive leadership development programs. Other scholarship and leadership programs have different priorities, approaches and or scope. Specialist programs have been developed in partnership with other organisations informed by the ARLF eight principles to meet the specific needs of an industry or community. Each addresses niche concerns whether building the next leadership cohorts from young emerging leaders or increasing women's representation in leadership. The ARLF programs have created a loose decoupled network or associations between individuals across a diversity of contexts, levels of expertise and industries.

1.4 Research questions

This evaluation of the leadership impact of ARLF graduates sought to answer the following:

- How does the individual recognise increased personal efficacy post-program?
- How does the individual gauge their impact as a leader at different levels – industry, workplace and community, post-program (both short and long term)?
- What is the evidence of leadership impact and change post-program within industry, workplace and community (short and long-term)?
- What are the multiple stakeholder perspectives (including sponsors and partners) of the impact required by them?
- How are networks mobilised and engaged and to what effect?
- What are the implications of the research findings for how programs can be evaluated and strengthened going forward?

1.5 Evaluation methodological overview

This multi-perspectival approach aimed to capture the views of all stakeholders: graduates, industries, sponsors, communities and the ARLF and its Board. The purposeful sampling for interview sought to gain a representative sample according to gender, background, ethnicity, race and location for each program type. Nine case studies provide rich retrospective analyses by tracking through individual alumni life narratives over time and allow analysis of the relationships within and between alumni cohorts. The case studies focus on providing contextualised evidence to illustrate impact and the benefits and costs for individual participants, industries, organisations and communities. Where applicable, they also highlight issues arising for particular targeted groups aimed at improving the extent and nature of provision of ARLF programs. Multiple data sources and types allowed for data triangulation, including interview and survey data and document analysis. Cluster analyses, descriptive statistics and themes all contributed to the development of recommendations and the evaluation framework.

This retrospective evaluation seeks to:

- Adopt an appropriate balance between coverage and depth of information (targeted interviews to gain a representative sample of programs and stakeholders)
- Prioritise quality of information over quantity (case studies with specific focus)
- Adopt a systematic approach — including the use of structured tools for enquiry/analysis (e.g. NVivo. This is a tool for the management of a large dataset of qualitative data (classification, coding and exploration)).

The evaluation design is based on lines of evidence: empirical base arising from document review; analysis of alumni and stakeholder interviews and focus groups; alumni and sponsor survey data; and consultations with ARLF derived from the retrospective study.

1.6 Literature review

This literature review explicitly locates the ARLF leadership principles and philosophy within the context of broader leadership, change and network literature followed by a closer examination of literature relating to diversity and leadership capacity building. The section concludes with an examination of literature that considers Indigenous leadership.

1.7 Locating the study within the leadership, change and network literature

Organisational, community and geographical contexts have become more interdependent and complex. Contemporary organisational, educational and governance research moves beyond earlier attempts to show direct causality between leadership (formal /positional or informal) and specific outcomes either within an organisation or community (Gronn 2000). The shift away from the focus on hero leaders, leader/follower dichotomies and who leads results from strong evidence that leadership is a relational practice. As stated in the ARLF's philosophy, contemporary leadership research shows that leadership is a highly situated and collective social practice. Leadership is both value and process driven in ways that are ongoing and changing as context also changes. 'Leaders proactively "read the situation", interpreting their context and mediate it through shaping those contextual factors that are manipulable, and feeding back the consequences of their actions into this context' (Wallace and Tomlinson 2012, p. 22). In particular, public service leaders are constrained by wider bureaucratic processes.

Organisational studies refer to the 'dynamic, disintegrative and situated nature' of organisational change (Gray et al. 2010). Leaders, usually those in positional authority and therefore able to allocate resources, can provide organisational conditions conducive to change, although that depends on the nature of the change imperative. Leadership within the organisational context involves a range of relational practices such as:

- Promoting, supporting and mentoring individuals
- Synthesising ideas and developing vision
- Mobilising and allocating resources
- Informing and promoting strategic planning
- Setting up transparent and fair recruitment and reward systems
- Developing diversity policies
- Acting as a policy advocate for the organisation.

Equally, employees adopt, adapt or reject specific leadership approaches and imperatives. Organisations are porous. Those within them have competing interests, objectives and values, often with a sense of obligation to the wider industry, profession, community as well as to family. Organisational change is more likely to occur when an organisation's interests coincide with and mobilise those of their workers (Barends et al. 2014). Recent attention in organisational studies has focused on notions of distributive leadership where, in theory, responsibility and resources are dispersed out and down to others, although this notion cannot be confused with democratic leadership (Spillane 2006) within organisations. It also highlights the significance of collaboration within and between NGOs and voluntary organisations and links to policy activism.

All of the above literature points to the significance of leadership as a purposeful, contextualised and relational practice. Leadership is something many do, takes on multiple forms, but is still recognisable as leadership with regard to social practice. What is less well researched is how leadership professional development can address this rapidly changing context.

Within a networked society (both real and virtual) there are emergent notions of *network leadership* which are more attuned to the ARLF, its aims and how its alumni impact on rural, regional and remote Australia. Due to the increasingly local and global networked nature of the work of organisations and individuals, leadership is not constrained to a single organisation. Castells (1994) in *The Network Society* argues that power is not located in individuals (leaders or institutions) but in network *relations* and that network connections make organisations more porous to outside influence. A networked society requires more horizontal forms of organisational hierarchy (or distributed leadership). Networks are also a policy response to 'wicked problems' with the trend towards greater interagency collaboration within communities (e.g. local Learning and Employment Networks in Victoria), which can be viewed as a move towards greater network governance more generally (NLC 2000, Vandaman 2012).

Qualitative research on networks (Kamp 2006) tells us that networks are sustained provided they exist for an agreed upon purpose, although they often have diverse membership across a range of disciplines and backgrounds. Networks are more likely to be sustained and have an impact when they use collaborative practices to address a perceived problem and when political perspectives converge. Network leadership is not gained by positional authority, but is earned by individuals in terms of what they do. Networks require respect for diversity of background, position, location, and values. Network leadership is about continual negotiation with a range of stakeholders and recognition of changing contexts while bringing personal as well as organisational resources to the network (BANFF 2004).

Purposeful leadership is particularly significant in networks and communities. The focus of leadership activities has to be clear and doable. Collective or community leadership is most likely location specific but that also requires commitment in terms of time and energy and a capacity to fuel a public imaginary (Quick 2015). Collective or community leadership differs from organisational leadership as the leaders:

...Work within overlapping layers and shifting sources of influence, resistance, and negotiation ... Followers freely choose their leaders and choose when to act collectively with them, and a shift in consciousness among those gathered can quickly turn an official leader into a follower struggling to keep up. The boundaries of action in community are flexible and porous. In communities, the essential dynamics and characteristics of leadership appear more clearly in relational patterns of thinking, acting, and responding that can move in multiple directions. (Schweigart, 2007, p. 328)

The *community development* literature provides models of how one can understand leadership for capacity building within a community or region (Case et al. 2015). The focus is on investment in leadership on the ground and bottom up rather than top down and within.

1.8 Diversity and leadership capacity building

In 1996 the Karpin report argued that by 2015 we would have gender and cultural /ethnic diversity across all levels of leadership in Australia. However, in 2017 the Australian Government's Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) reports that 'women remain under-represented in leadership roles holding just 16.3 per cent of CEO and 37.4 per cent of all manager roles' (WGEA 2017). Frequent reports since Karpin have questioned the calibre of Australian business leadership (e.g. Gahan, et al. 2015).

Respondents to this study who frequently worked across all agricultural sectors suggested that the calibre of rural leadership was uneven. Sinclair (2005) argues that leadership development programs in management schools have, until recently, failed to address issues around gender, diversity, race, class or sexuality. The focus has been on developing specific strategic skills that tend to be de-contextualised. This is now unacceptable in contemporary times due to diversity at all levels of an organisation, including within public decision-making forums. Increasingly, organisational theory and leadership theory argue that recognition of difference within and between organisations and communities is critical. Diversity is now seen to be a benefit and not a problem. But as yet, there is a lack of diversity in key corporate executive and board leadership roles. Leadership development programs still tend to be skills or strategy focused rather than addressing the position of leaders relative to others i.e. reflection on others' practice rather than on power relations and how one is positioned within that relative to gender, race or class relations.

Those leadership programs which are more successful focus on:

- reflection on self
- understanding how one is positioned relative to others in terms of power and resources;
- critical thinking
- a capacity to strategise, synthesise ideas, imagine alternative futures but always value-driven.

Leadership is about recognition and respect for difference as well as trust. The ALRF programs address these issues directly through their philosophy of leadership.

1.9 Change literature

To understand the impact of leadership requires theorising change:

Organizational change is complex, and has a dynamic, disintegrative, and situated nature. Organizations and organizational fields continue to experience transformations of various kinds — less hierarchy, more teaming, new types of collaboration, novel work locations and work practices, innovative practices and technologies, greater reliance on network structures, and process improvement — all of which create the need for renewed understanding of change and its consequences for organizations. (Gray et al. 2012, p.121)

Social and organisational change research is well past the notion of resisters and change agents, as one can be depicted as a resistor in one context and a change agent in another. Social network and actor network theory argue that ‘individuals become entrenched in social structures that influence how one views reality, and regulate access to valued resources’ (Saari & Kallio 2011; Vardeman et al. 2012). What is evident across all the change literature is the focus on ownership of change and having a sense of agency or capacity to make a difference, of being in some ways in control, as well as recognition of and respect for difference and ideas in self and others. This sense of agency arises from personal dispositions, background, experience as racialised, gendered and sexualised beings but can also be enhanced in particular organisational or community contexts (Farhurst & Cooren 2009). That is, the closer you are to having a greater sense of control, the further away is a sense of helplessness in controlling your environment and expectations. Those who feel that change is controllable are more likely to engage with a change process. Change processes are about negotiating the formation of individual, collective and organisational identity in ways that have meaning. Change is about being and becoming as well as belonging. Both positional and informal leadership have had to tap into identity and relational work in order to build organisational or community capacity. The issue is how networks of leaders (e.g. alumni) organise and strategise to build community capacity, releasing the constraints of place and time.

1.10 Leadership influence and impact

Community capacity and organisational change theory shows that influence, even within specific organisations, is difficult to track and impossible to measure as studies are often self-referential about what leaders think they are doing without regard for the perceptions and agency of 'followers' and what happens in terms of practice (Hazy et al 2005). And yet at the community level, individual and collective action can have significant impact in terms of building social capital within communities (Forrest and Keane 2001). Evaluation of the impact of leadership development programs also raises issues of return on investment for the individual, both personally and professionally; the organisation and sponsor; and how to give an account of who can claim responsibility for which outcomes. What individual leaders do on returning to their workplace and community is largely reliant on self-reporting.

In a network there is an element of seriality involved as to how to judge impact other than through interviews of those within the network to which the leader belongs. Social network analysis has sought to quantify the strength of network relationships through mapping those relationships (a time-consuming methodology). While this may indicate the intensity of connections around nodes (leaders) and the networks they have developed or belong to, SNA does not offer much in terms of the quality of engagement or impact. Such approaches assume that the links between individuals are proxies for engagement and impact, which is often not the case. SNA does not specifically assist in determining the quality of the engagement or sustainability or what the network does, or consider the enabling and disabling conditions under which networks are sustained.

Studies that consider the quality of network engagement refer to network sociality (Wittel 2001). Individuals build social capital through their networks which, in turn, build on their economic position, social status and recognition across their networks (Seddon et al. 2005). Qualitative studies focus on the quality of engagement between the networkers, and how social capital is produced through these relationships. Individual leaders mobilise their cultural, economic and social capital to influence others and extend their networks of influence across sectors.

1.11 Network leadership

A sustainable network is one that is strategic in terms of who joins, who networks with whom and why; is generally informal in relationships and meetings; and is usually linked to conviviality. Significantly, the capacity to interpret others' conduct and to understand group dynamics is critical as there is often a fluid and diverse range of contacts working in different bureaucratic or community contexts. This requires the capacity to enact multiple communication modes (formal reports, cross-cultural, body language); to be straightforward with no hidden agendas; and to be conversationally competent. Such practices are reliant on perceptions of the whole person and personal preferences. Networking often requires a level of affability (empathy, compassion, warmth, responsiveness and attentiveness) in leaders; Integrity in being self-aware, reliable, realistic, honest and open; and a level of audacity in terms of relishing change and innovation, challenging authority and breaking rules. There is a requirement for a high level of adaptability, tolerance of differences, enjoyment of cultural diversity, flexibility, being non-judgemental and open to criticism. To achieve aims there is therefore a level of tenacity required, as well as patience, persistence, and being comfortable with uncertainty and stress. Community network developers have to be more accountable and others are suspicious of those with greater professional expertise (Hazy et al. 2015). Relationships are also impacted by class, gender, race, ethnicity, and often by friendship, which requires some level of self-disclosure. Daily levels of chat test affinity and engender a sense of shared interest because trust is the basis of any leadership relationship.

At the level of the community there is significant evidence of the benefits (social, political, economic and environmental) of networks. Networks offer:

- Practical assistance
- Collective empathy for sharing risk and resources in situations of scarcity and uncertainty
- An improved sense of individual safety and strengthened community cohesion
- Encouragement for all forms of voluntarism dependent on resources, preferences, motivation
- Personal support
- Cheap advice and user-friendly referral system
- Help before professional services
- Informal care prior to medical assistance
- Quality of life due to social interaction which produces greater happiness
- A higher level of commitment
- The ability to mobilise in social and other campaigns.

Being networked gives meaning to people's lives, particularly in small communities. Social indicators (e.g. Australian Index of Quality of Life) as to the levels of health and wellbeing in different geographic communities show that rural and regional communities fare better than inner urban areas because of the greater sense of community.

1.12 Indigenous leadership

There is now a significant body of Indigenous leadership research that indicates the importance of place and belonging (Blackmore 2010, Rhea 2004). While central to this is connectedness to land, respect for elders and Indigenous knowledges, there are also distinctive cultural differences based on location and country (Rosile et al. 2016, Foster et al. 2016, Sinclair 2016). The significance of leadership development in Indigenous communities cannot be under-estimated in terms of cultural, economic, political, health and wellbeing and environmental benefits (TSRA 2013). Respecting the values of Indigenous leadership can foster individual and community empowerment, inform policy, mentor young people, develop local entrepreneurial activities and good governance, all priorities recognised and outlined in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsular Regional Plan 2009-29. This is a national priority in terms of *Closing the Gap*. What is equally important is recognition of two-way leadership, and how and what the non-Indigenous can and should learn from Indigenous peoples, especially (but not only) in areas which focus on the collective rather than the individual.

1.13 Young people and leadership

Young people are confronted with a world of increased insecurity: precarious employment, climate change, de-industrialisation, and more volatile global politics post-1945, as well as awareness of risks associated with drugs and violence (White and Wyn, 2013). There are major issues emerging around mental health with high levels of anxiety and depression among young people and the need to develop resilience. Gender, sexuality, race and class are central to young people's identity formation and sense of self as youth is a social process of being and becoming. Young people are on the one hand expected to be more independent due to the individualisation of responsibility which requires greater reflexivity, whether as learners or workers—however, while young people mature earlier physically, this is not necessarily the case emotionally—on the other hand, young people are more financially dependent over time on their families due to rising costs in education, housing and living. There is no clear arrival point for adulthood. Young people are often vulnerable and cannot be expected to experience and reflect on their learning in the same way as adults as they lack prior experience and resilience to deal with failure or being out of their comfort zones.

While there are greater expectations and assumptions that young people are increasingly mobile and into popular culture, youth studies suggest that issues of connectedness to family and friends as well as place cannot be ignored. Community resources are critical to the ways in which young people imagine their possible futures. Community resources are distributed via the market, policies and family networks and linked structurally to education, health and welfare resources.

The nature of social movements and activist organisations, sites for young people to becoming and being leaders, has changed, with the focus being on specific causes (e.g. environmental) and an increased significance of online activism. There is greater disengagement with positional leadership and politics generally (Bastedo 2015). Connections to such movements are often transitory. Young people's participation in politics or other organisations where leadership is nurtured is closely associated with friendship groupings and particular activities – music, the arts and sport (Brooks et al 2015).

While modelling of leadership is often seen to be one way in which young people learn about leading, there is also significant evidence to show that many are deterred from leadership if the model is seen to be unattainable e.g. the hero leader, the female leader who does it all (Archard 2013). Approaches which focus on peer-to-peer and cross-age mentoring have been shown to be more effective. Fear of failure is a significant factor for young people who have not experienced success previously, particularly from marginalised young people. Within particular cultural groups there is also a stronger sense of responsibility to family and community than to individual leadership.

1.14 Positioning ARLF philosophy, principles and practice within the literature

The ARLF approach to leadership is not prescriptive about what constitutes good leadership, but considers leadership to be highly situated as contextual factors influence opportunities and create barriers. The eight principles of the ARLF leadership philosophy align with contemporary research which has only recently recognised that leadership is not a set of inherent individual abilities but a social practice that constitutes individual identity in relation to others. The foci of ARLF programs are appropriately based on the notion that professional learning occurs experientially and through a pedagogy of action/reflection. The series of activities and workshops in each program mean individuals are placed in situations out of their comfort zones physically, emotionally and intellectually. Individuals learn about leading by better understanding themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, behaviours and attitudes in relation to others. Leadership is also situated. ARLF participants are expected to work as a team in different contexts with a diverse group of people with different life experiences, views and values and where the individual is one of many used to assuming leadership. By challenging everyday assumptions about themselves, their own practices of leadership and what constitutes a problem within challenging contexts and from different perspectives, the complexity of social relationships is unpacked through a process of reflection and discussion. The international element of the ARLF further challenges cultural stereotypes and encourages a more global and national perspective on local or industry specific issues.

In summary, the ARLF principles are very reflective of and consistent with contemporary leadership literature around individual, adult leaders. Indeed, we would say that the leadership literature has, in recent years, caught up with the ARLF values based approach to leadership development. However, this review of leadership literature has also highlighted some gaps or areas where further development may be helpful. The first of these is in relation to young people and leadership. The ARLF principles and philosophy are aimed at the development of adult leaders and do not address the specific needs of young people in or aspiring to leadership positions; they appear to assume that youth leadership development can be successful when following the same approach as for adult leaders. However, this is inconsistent with recent literature, which suggests that leadership development programs for young people need to take a particular approach which recognises the specific nature of their vulnerability in a rapidly changing local and global context where they lack the organisational and life experience of adults that is assumed within ARLF programs. The second is of potential development in response to the leadership literature is in the area of networks. Although literature on network leadership is, in many ways, emergent, it does highlight the central role that hierarchical networks play in contributing towards leadership outcomes in contrast to more traditional understandings of leadership that have revolved around positional leadership. This matter is further explored in section 8 of this report that addresses 'Mobilising Networks'. The third area of potential development in response to current leadership literature is Indigenous leadership. Again, there is little recognition in the ARLF philosophy of the significance of place as understood within Indigenous knowledges and cultures and what is also in emergent literature on Indigenous leadership (e.g. Rhea 2004).

2. Methodological approach

2.1 Introduction

This was a mixed method evaluative research approach combining quantitative and qualitative analysis including descriptive statistical analysis of survey data. Greene et al. (1989) isolates five justifications for combining quantitative and qualitative research:

- **Triangulation:** convergence, corroboration, correspondence or results from different methods. In coding triangulation, the emphasis was placed on seeking corroboration between descriptive survey data and survey data.
- **Complementarity:** 'seeks elaboration, enhancement, illustration, clarification of the results from one method with the results from another';
- **Development:** 'seeks to use the results from one method to help develop or inform the other method, where development is broadly construed to include sampling and implementation, as well as measurement decisions'
- **Initiation:** 'seeks the discovery of paradox and contradiction, new perspectives of evaluation frameworks, the recasting of questions or results from one method with questions or results from the other method'
- **Expansion:** 'seeks to extend the breadth and range of enquiry by using different methods for different inquiry components' (p.259).

The research design involved synthesising extant and new data gained from analysis of documents (curriculum, policies, prior reports and evaluations) as well as surveys and interviews. Interviews were sort from amongst the ARLF's stakeholders: alumni, sponsors, industries, communities, ARLF management team and Board. Our approach was to undertake the majority of the interviews with stakeholders (ARLF staff, alumni, sponsors and Board), to develop the case studies and then draw from this data to inform the surveys to both alumni and sponsors to establish patterns and remedy any gaps in the data and facilitate a cluster analysis. The methodological aim of this study and of the evaluation framework developed from the above is to provide credible, fair and accurate assessments of the programs of the ARLF considered against their specific objectives within an overarching philosophy.

2.2 Project timeline and process

The project commenced in October 2016. The team immediately submitted a general ethics NEAF application in order to commence interviews with ARLF personnel and alumni and later submitted an additional ethics application in order to undertake the Torres Strait study, which also require approval for access by the Torres Strait Regional Authority. During this time, extant data were collected and the survey instruments were developed. Consent was gained in the first week of February. After a consultation process with the ARLF, the surveys of alumni and of sponsors were sent out in March 2017.

The approach and sequence of this study involved:

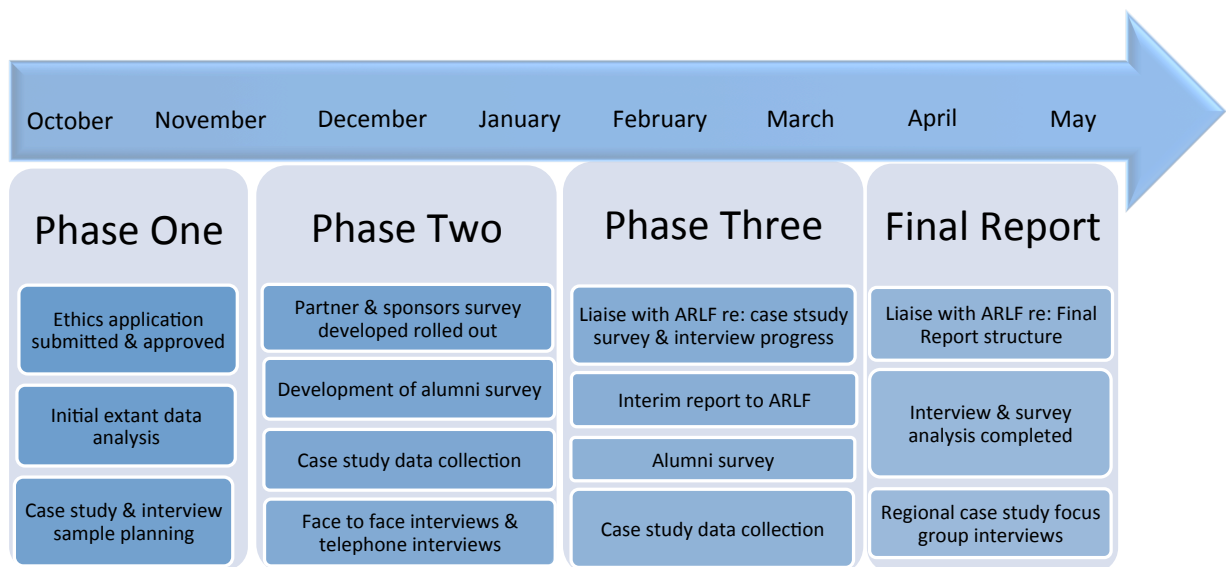


Figure 3

2016-17 Project timeline with research phases

- **Phase One** – Initial analysis of ARLF extant data (Kitchen Table, Perception Survey, cohort reports, evaluation surveys of programs) and publicly available documents and websites to develop a profile of ARLF programs over time. This synthesis informed first level interview and case study sample planning in conjunction with negotiation with ARLF staff. Concurrently ethics application submitted and approved.
- **Phase Two** – ARLF partner and sponsor survey developed and tested. This was rolled out in December 2016 but low return numbers over the holiday period required an extension to the closing date with renewed prompts to the selected cohort. Development of alumni survey. Face to face interviews conducted with primary stakeholders and identified individuals for impact case studies. Research for in depth retrospective evaluation of ARLF case study and regional specialist case studies initiated. Ongoing telephone interviews with stakeholders and alumni. Researchers travel to Torres Strait to conduct data collection for case study.

- **Phase Three** – Roll out of Alumni survey. Follow up telephone interviews conducted with individuals identified during case study analysis to inform cross-sector relations, triangulate data and in depth understanding of strength and quality of network. Interim report submitted to ARLF (March) and discussion regarding structure of final report. First level analysis of alumni survey data (April) by team and second level analysis (May) with extant, case study and interview generated data. Face to face focus group conducted in Narrabri NSW (May) after extensive efforts to bring major stakeholders together to deepen understanding of regional context and industry issues. First draft of final report completed (end of April) including discussions with ARLF staff about revised formatting and presentation, second draft generated (early May) including finalising graphics for final report.

2.3 The research design

As noted in the initial proposal, Stake's (2004) responsive evaluation model is used to guide this study. Stake's (2004) model advocates engagement with all stakeholders about effectiveness and impact on practice and is used in this project to distinguish four generations in the historical development of evaluation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989): measurement, description, judgement and negotiation. 'Measurement' in this project includes the collection of statistical survey data. 'Description' refers to the identification of the features of a program or policy. 'Judgement' is the assessment of the quality of a program based on a comparison between standards and actual effects. These can tend to reflect a 'management-bias' as outcomes are judged merely on program aims and not unexpected consequences. Often there is little dialogue with and between stakeholders, while their interests are at stake (value component). In addition, no use is made of their experiences and expertise (the knowledge component). This evaluation was process driven and iterative in terms of working with both program developers and stakeholders as it collected multiple sources of evidence. In the case studies, we have re-interviewed or requested further information from the interviewees and ARLF as well as sponsors.

Several changes were deemed necessary to the initial research design:

- The timeline was extended due to the difficulty of getting participant responses to the Sponsors and Partner Survey over the six weeks of the 2016-17 Christmas break (15th December to 30th January).
- Following a review of extant data it was found that surveys were undertaken not long before the commencement of this project. This raised concerns regarding potential return rates that were low. Surveys were developed taking into consideration data that has been previously collected by the ARLF as well as the outcomes of the interview data collected by the research team.
- Focus group interviews across key partners were deferred until 2017 due to inability to have shared time and participant availability.
- Individual interviews were conducted face to face in Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and the Western District of Victoria where possible or by telephone/skype/video conference for those individuals in remote locations (Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, Queensland and Northern Territory).

- We undertook more ARLF and TS alumni interviews than the 60 initially proposed and/or anticipated. This led to a wider range of individuals to share their stories as to how the ARLF experience has impacted their life and contributions made to their community and more detailed examples of changes in leadership practice and impact.
- This research design was tailored to explore the transference of knowledge gained from programs to outcomes that benefits public good particularly with TS participants. Sixty Torres Strait Islander ARLF alumni sponsored by the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) were identified in the Phase One extant data analysis, and hence, it was considered important to invite Indigenous participants to partake in the project to include representation of alumni across context and cohorts. Yarning circles (n=6 x 2 groups), a conversational research approach that involves the sharing of stories, reflects Indigenous ways of communicating and storying experience. The story content is directed by the yarning circle and participants were asked to share their stories on community capacity building, individual achievements, workplace and community benefits and mentoring the next generation of leaders. Three representatives from the TSRA (n=3) were interviewed and asked to share stories about sponsoring leaders and how ARLF leadership programs assist in building capacity and benefiting the wider community.
- Following discussions with the ARLF CEO and Manager in Phase 3 it was decided that case studies would focus on impact in a range of areas including community capacity building, alumni and industry cluster groupings and locations.
- Two regionally based industry focus groups were undertaken in Narrabri after these were organised by local industry leaders rather than separate regional and industry focus groups.

2.3.1 Ethics

University ethics and national ethics applications were submitted and approved on the basis of confidentiality of participants which involves not naming or use of pseudonyms for participants and to de-identify particular businesses and industries. Plain language statements were sent out and interviews were agreed on the above condition. We sought ethical clearance according to and from the Torres Strait Island Regional Council to enter the region and permission to gain access to each of the island communities to conduct face-to-face interviews and yarning circles.

2.3.2 Extant data

Extant data were analysed using NVivo and informed the project as to the nature and scope of the ARLF programs since their inception. Extant data were used at all critical points in the phases of this project to inform the iterative process of synthesis and analysis.

Extant Data		
ARLF provided documents	Evaluations	Websites & Newsletters
ARLF constitution	Annual report 2014-2015	Network-E 2015-16
ARLF building resilience through leadership	ARLF audit	rural-leaders.com.au
ARLF strategic plan summary	Kitchen Table survey 2015	tsra.gov.au
ARLP graduate summaries (Cohort 1-23)	ARLF research and evaluation project report	
End of program reports (Cohorts 1-23)	Kitchen Table feedback issues	
Governance structure	ARFL Survey 2	
Learning structure and principles	Rural and regional education report	
Leadership philosophy	Rural leadership report 2008	
Strategic plan 2015-2018	Syntheses report 2014	
	TSYLP Evaluation 2015	

Figure 4

Extant data integrated into study

2.3.3 Participants and interviews

In Phase One of the project approximately 260 people were purposely selected to be representative of the ARLF program participants according to cohort, gender, location, and transition to JCU. All were forwarded an invitation to participate in the research project. At the final stages of the project in May close to 100 individuals were interviewed either face to face, by phone or Skype (see Appendix 4 Personal Interviews and Focus Group Interview Questions).

A total of 87 in-depth interviews were conducted, either in person or by skype, as follows:

- 62 alumni, including 7 Graduate Certificate of Rural Leadership graduates
- 17 sponsors or representatives of partner organisations, some of whom were also alumni
- 5 current or former ARLF staff members and ARLF Board members
- 10 individuals who were not alumni but who could comment first-hand on the impact of leadership exercised by certain alumni (for impact case studies and vignettes)
- 8 participants in two industry focus groups.

NB. [1-5 totals more than 87 because many alumni are also sponsors and partners]

Alumni interviewees were evenly divided by gender and were representative of program type and cohort, industry, public and private workplaces and location.

Alumni who were also James Cook University (JCU) graduates (n=7) were selected to explore the impact of this transition. Questions focused on their impressions of the benefits and link between the JCU graduate diploma and the ARLF program, the curriculum content and preparedness to continue to a master's degree.

At each interview participants were asked to:

- Map their networks and relationships
- Discuss evidence of their impact with regard to short and long-term impact as individuals (in organisation, local community, industry, and broader community), their relationship with alumni and engagement in public policy
- Identify their contribution that could be attributed to the program and how they understand success and impact.

Through purposeful sampling a geographic spread to include regional and remote alumni was gained given this could not be left to the serendipity of who responded to the surveys. The table below shows the breakdown by ARLF program of interviewees by location and gender to illustrate sample rigour.

Table 1

TI, ARLP, TRAIL & TRAILblazers participants x locations & gender interviewed by Deakin

	TS	QLD	NSW	ACT	VIC	TAS	SA	WA	NT	Total
Male	4	2	16	4	1		2	3		32
Female	9	2	4	3	7	2	1	1	1	30

2.3.4 Case study

Case study research (Yin 2003) is a mix of qualitative and descriptive quantitative methodology that relies on multiple sources of evidence and prior theoretical propositions (Yin 2003). The research design was based on answering the key question: What is the impact of the ARLF programs in building capacity in RRR Australia? The presumption was that individual leaders can have social, political, cultural and economic impact through their leadership practice within an organisation, community, industry or public context.

As indicated in the proposal, the evaluation focused on the diversity of alumni impacts on everyday practice, in the community and on policy through undertaking 9 case studies, each identifying on a different aspect of the ARLF programs as well as focusing on impact. The sample provides typical cases or exemplars of impact of individual leaders who have undertaken ARLF programs, including a longitudinal case study of the flagship program that indicates change over time. Multiple case study design allows for more robust conclusions, because they also indicate the significance of context (geographical, workplace, community). The range of case studies together with the survey data indicate patterns that then offer a level of generalizability as to impact and future planning. A case study design was appropriate as a meta-evaluation study because it describes the intervention, illustrates what happens, explores the situation where there is no single variable or causality, and answers the how and why questions in real life contexts. Case studies illuminate the complexity underpinning why people make decisions, how they are implemented and with what results.

2.3.5 Case study sampling

Enacting individual leadership capacity (n= 1 & 4)

We identified one ARLP alumnus who has visibly achieved high levels of external success. Participant was asked to map social networks, and we used this snowball sampling technique to track impact of the alumnus through nominated individuals. Four nominated individuals agreed to be interviewed. The interviewee was asked to elaborate on what they saw as the conditions and context for that success.

Long term benefits of ARLP (n=37)

The focus was on the impact of alumni from the flagship program of the ARLP. It sought to identify the contribution of the program to their individual leadership and their understandings as to how this translates into benefits for their organisation industry and community over time. NVivo was used to pull out common themes around long term and short-term benefits; personal change; change of worldview; indicators of success and the value and use of networks and ARLF; approaches and examples of new approaches in organisation. Individual exemplars indicative of long-term benefits and the range of impact and success factors (economic, political, social, personal, professional).

Regional industries – cotton (n= 4 & 8)

The cotton industry which has a long-term affiliation with the ARLP was selected in consultation with ARLF leadership for 2 focus groups. The aim was to explore the long-term leadership benefits of the sector, its impact on region and industry, expectations from the ARLF and intentions towards supporting ARLF in the future.

Agent of organisational change (n= 1)

This case study considers how the ARLP has benefited the leadership capabilities of one visible achiever alumnus and how this has translated into impacts on and outcomes for the various organisations. The case study also highlights some significant benefits for community and industry.

Community capacity building volunteerism (n= 5)

This case study sought to understand alumni leadership diversity and how that interacts with context. It focused on the benefits made to a rural community in mainland Australia through the work of 5 alumni who worked in that location.

International community capacity building (n=2)

Through interview this case study was identified as an exemplar of the impact of voluntarism resulting from an individual's participation in the ARLP Overseas Study Program.

Community based capacity building in Torres Strait (n=13)

Participants for this case study were selected with the assistance of the Torres Straits Regional Authority and included: TS Women's Leadership program (n=7), TS Young Leaders program (n=3), TRAIL (n=1) and ARLP (n=2). The focus of questioning was on particular contextual issues and benefits of remote communities and the nature of alumni leadership capabilities and relationships that most impact on their communities.

Building partnerships – rice (n=5)

The rice industry through the RRDC and key bodies such as the Ricegrowers Australia and SunRice has been a major sponsor of the ARLF. They have been partners in developing the Emerging Young Rice Leaders specialist program.

2.3.6 Online surveys

The online surveys sought collective data about the longer-term impact of the alumni (n=959) involvement and sponsors/partners (n=93) motivations and experiences. Survey questions were developed by the research team using Qualtrics secure online platform. Surveys were disseminated early March 2017.

2.3.7 Recording and transcribing

All interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Pseudonyms are used in reported documents and verbal presentations.

2.3.8 Analysis

NVivo is a tool for the management of a large dataset of qualitative data (classification, coding, queries and exploration) collected through interviews conducted by the research team, comments from ARLF surveys, Kitchen Table discussions conducted by ARLF as well as alumni final reports. NVivo was used to code open-ended survey questions extracted from alumni and sponsor surveys and reported as descriptive statistics.

3. Leadership, impact and change

How leadership as a relational practice can produce productive change, and the types of evidence that indicate the difference that leadership has made, are two key issues in leadership research. This chapter uses the notion of storying to capture how individual ARLF alumni and observers of their practice understand the impact of their leadership at an individual level in rural, regional and remote Australia. It responds to Term of Reference 3: Changed processes and practices and/or ways of working. Section 5 that follows address separately the issues of alumni leadership impact within industry and within organisations or workplaces.

In this study we consider all aspects of leadership—formal and informal. *Positional leadership* refers to decision-making authority that derives from a formal position of responsibility within an organisation, although large national and multinational organisations can have multiple layers of decision-making such as at branch, regional, state, national and international levels. That is, a particular individual may hold a relatively senior position at branch level, for example, whilst at the same time not holding any decision-making authority at international level, within the same organisation. *Informal leadership* is where individuals indicate through their practice what is recognised as leadership but more often in unpaid roles in communities, through building relationships, working as a volunteer, organising community activities, mentoring and teaching, lobbying and policy activism among other things.

3.1 Understanding impact and influence

This introductory discussion considers how the impact of alumni leadership is understood by the ARLF, its stakeholder and partner organisations who fund the programs and the alumni.

Impact is a term that has taken on greater significance in the context of limited funds and greater accountability. Governments and organisations seek to identify greater efficiencies while also being more effective. Current debates indicate the complexity surrounding the notion of impact, as something that has a defined outcome or output that is measurable in some instances but is often reduced to indicators. Impact may differ from influence, which is about persuasion, whereas engagement is about informing policy and practice, for example, through an interactive and often longer-term process.

This study uses a range of indicators with regard to impact. These include the diversity and range of programs and their relevance to different user groups; the short term/long term outcomes for individual leaders as reported by alumni and observed by others; and case studies of individuals, regionally based industries and communities. Impact can also vary according to the geographical reach or scale of impact into RRR Australia at the local, regional and national level as well as at the individual, organisation or community level. Impact is also about scope: the diversity and range of activities in which leaders are involved.

Another indicator of impact of the ARLF programs is the extent to which the principles of leadership are taken up and made evident through practice, as indicated by * Michael:

... If some of our underlying leadership principles are seen in the impact story ... seeing some of these principles some of which are behaviours, some of which manifest themselves in that organisation/industry? (Interview 2016/17, Alumni/Staff ARLP C7)

The study also makes a case for how leadership is also about influence and engagement. Indicators of influence include examples of where alumni have informed policy as well as practice through modelling, mentoring and managing. As one ARLP alumnus commented:

It was a difficult thing at the time when I was [on the Board]... any sort of advocacy and policy environment, what do you 'count'? Do you count how many policies you've written? How many media articles? How do you judge the effect ... of an individual in a small local community, where they've got a very small, you know, possibilities in a community? You should be able to write what have you changed as a result of the course, things you've learnt in the course, and how have you continued ... People come back and say [since the program] I work totally differently with my partner, or my husband, and then when I'm at work I actually listen to people. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C9, Government)

Indicators of engagement are where leaders are seen to be working through networks and partnerships to disseminate knowledge, provide personal support and build communities of practice. This chapter covers all these dimensions of impact. As the ARLF CEO states:

I mean, leaders go out and lead. The other interesting [indicator of impact] would be the extent to which people feel that they continue to network with other graduates ... in little knots around the country, two and three and four and five graduates, maybe across different industries or disciplines are actively working together. Behaviours, relationships, people go and form our own networks. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni/Staff ARLP C7)

Understanding the impact of leadership is problematic as the following excerpts from the interviews with stakeholders illustrates. This is particularly so for an organisation such as the ARLF whose core work is to provide leadership development of individuals who come from across rural, regional and remote Australia and who work in a wide range of industries and workplaces: NGOs, corporate and government organisations, family properties and businesses, and local communities—some in paid work and others as volunteers.

One person was on my course who on paper you would say has never done anything all that significant. He was a bit older when he did the course and he's never participated in any national organisations. He's been the mayor of Cunnamulla for over ten years and he's been the chair of the Queensland Rural Remote Local Government Associations and he's been influential in that big region of south-west Queensland relating to indigenous engagement, involvement and reconciliation, and water reform and drought management, and you think, well, he's got to run a property at Cunnamulla. He's going to have a bit of trouble getting involved at the national scale from Cunnamulla but he's actually made a difference at Cunnamulla. And you flick through the Rural Press he's there. So he's at it again, so I know exactly what he's doing, where he is ... the statements I've seen him make have been statesman-like and helpful and they've contributed. And you think, well, he never got to chair MLA or AWI – pity he didn't, but he has done a job – so, I'd actually say that's a success, still.

Another in my course is a woman – the amount of free time she's given to people in how to communicate and engage with rural Australians is incalculable and she's a professional in the field, and she's giving it away for free. Communication and training and these skills and networks – it's very hard to measure these things in a way that some people think is desirable. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C4, Executive manager, Government)

The core issue regarding impact is what is observable by others and also whether and what changes in practice, attitudes and values can be attributed back to the ARLF program.

Amongst the ARLF team there is a shared understanding as to the dilemmas raised when seeking to understand impact, given the leadership philosophy of the ARLF which is not premised upon stars or hero leaders. 'Well, I'm not going to talk about pinups ... I'm not making judgments about whether they're a federal minister or a leader of a community group'

It's difficult in that any human being is formed by a range of experiences. And how you separate the bits and say, "Well, I can attribute that to that"... At the same time, [as a graduate myself] I can point exactly to the program as to why. Mainly in the changes in the way I think and what that leads to – my ability to critically reflect as opposed to where I was before I did the program ... It's led to better day-to-day decisions, it's leads to ... more meaningful long-term pathways of where you're going ... while I always had a good ability to form relationships, to really understand people ... I think some of the measures ... will be subjective, the individual's reflection on self and changes in behaviours as to what that's meant for them, for the organisation, for whomever that they're influencing. Another measure would be others' experience of the leader, so what are some of our partners and sponsors saying about the impacts they're seeing on not so much where people are leading, although that might be part of it ... I think the power of stories has to be part of it. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni/Staff ARLP C7)

Impact is measured – wrong word – by the leadership demonstrated by our graduates. And it's the stories they tell, if we're going to judge its impact in the context in which that person's leadership is enacted I think the only way you can actually do that is through that context. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni/Staff)

How impact is understood is dependent on context and also the on position or role of the individual leader. For example a public servant:

I don't think in my case that the sponsor can actually see anything tangible, especially within the public service, where we don't work off narrative too well in everything. It tends to be more about turning it into dollars ... (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government)

How people do leadership is really different. So you would have some people who go and do the course and would not obviously be using their skills in their work place because there's no opportunity but they would be using the skills they learnt maybe in another context. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C3, Agriculture)

Members of the ARLF Board, past and present, suggest that the ongoing capacity to recruit and recognise outstanding leaders is indicative of both the success of the ARLF and its impact.

A bit of change come in the last couple of years but it's really only modifications, it's not a fundamental change. So I guess the view was that the model worked and we still seem to be able to recruit outstanding people onto the program because that's all we can measure. A measure is if you can't fill the program and you don't have support of the alumni [then] you're clearly not doing something that's right. (Interview 2016/17, Staff/Board)

... You know it's a sample, it's only anecdotal ... I'm involved in agriculture and climate change ... I do get out into rural areas and rural industries so I get fairly wide interaction and you do encounter the graduates and they've unfailingly been on the positive side. (Interview 2016/17, Board)

... Impact is happening out there because we know we can always ring them [alumni] up and ask, but they don't have to come here to tell us. We've got lots of people we can talk to. They're just one of the myriad of groups but if people on the course are actually doing good things out there, we think that's good. That's our evaluation. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C4, Executive manager, Government)

I think you measure it post-graduation in terms of what we achieve, both individually, but also as an alumni, and as a group. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government)

A primary indicator of success is whether the ARLF meets its aims, such as

... If leadership demonstrates social and cultural responsibility, is it highly participatory? ... that [leaders] are ethical in the way that they go about doing things. That they have looked at different voices and vested interests and silences ... That they've looked at, in doing that they would have to essentially look at issues of power and control. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni/Staff)

Likewise, sponsors, including within the RDCs, see the notion of impact as a difficult one that they also struggle with as funders. Government funders are interested in the ways leaders influence others and inform policymakers in productive and nuanced ways:

If you're going to go and talk to a minister you better make sure you're going with one or two things that they can do not 200 things that they can't do. You've actually worked your way through what's the problem, what might be the solution, who are the winners, who are the losers, how can you help yourself, all of those sorts of things first. That they're running through sensible community processes. They're engaging with people ... So, it's to have good processes, to actually understand how government works, to understand how communities operate. To have an awareness that trade is a two-way street. So, I'm not looking for really hard indicators. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C4, Executive manager, Government)

... Some sort of longitudinal study, and maybe even if it shows what the person went on to do, or did they stay in a rural area. This retention is always one of our big questions ... but leadership doesn't necessarily have to be going to the top, it could be just providing leadership qualities with the people around them. It would certainly be something that's meant to grow people and so on ...even if they could go into an unpaid job and still be a great leader. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni, Government)

Equally, it is problematic for agribusinesses as to how to evaluate impact. Retention within the industry or organisation is one indicator.

That's a fairly difficult question I suppose. I suppose it has to be based around feedback from the participants and probably a bit of feedback from the organisation that the participants have been representing or the industries that they've been representing. But I know that in our cohort, you know how many of them are still involved in the industry. But what differences have they made either socially or to the industries or to the community? I think interviewing people 5, 10 years down the track is a really good way but you just can't measure that. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C13, Agriculture)

Tracking the career pathways of individual alumni is also difficult in terms of the timing and when any benefits of a program become evident either to the individual alumni or others.

Say for us here with our sponsorship the things we look for is like career pathways of that person... we're really big on how they have to give back to community. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C14)

I think people after they do the program move into positions of leadership and influence in that industry and how they can influence positive change ... I guess that's hard to measure and it's hard to ask them I think straight after they do the course cause they might not know and sometimes I think it takes 6 months, a year, or longer, for them to recognise where they fit and how they might really make a difference. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Executive manager, Cotton)

Alumni concur that the capacity of ARLF programs to attract applicants, that there is a highly competitive process of selection and that alumni and sponsors continue to promote ARLF programs is one form of evidence as to the success of the programs for individual leadership capacity building. The question is whether the work of the alumni individually and collectively makes a difference in capacity building in RRR Australia.

I understand they're getting no trouble getting graduate people coming in. People are happy with the course. They recommend it to their colleagues. They get a lot out of it. They recommend it to their friends. And it seems that you know that word of mouth. Whether it makes any difference to Australia ... whether it's a combination of experiences helping fulfil a vision I don't know the answer to that. I think the ALRP does a fantastic job. I think they are really good at what they do and they've made an enormous difference to Australia. I think it's extraordinary – it's hard – they constantly want to quantify that, and I think that's difficult. The best way of doing that is looking at your cohort and each year that comes out – they're talking about what they're going to do, and having a process of mapping what each cohort does against what they say they're going to do. Also I think ... to link it to an annual conference where people get together and they report back on – you know, each year reports back on what they've done against their commitments. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C3, Agriculture)

Inevitably the people that do the course are probably going to be leaders anyhow and so I think the question is not have we produced leaders or haven't we, it's probably have we produced better leaders and have we made them stop and think about the wider picture and the implications. But, to me, story-telling is one of the great things. I would go back to the board. If they said, 'What's our KPI?' I'd say, 'For what purpose? Why do you want it? Tell me why you want it?'. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Wool)

Would you recommend it to others, which I have, and would you do it again or have you realised that you never want to go back and do it again ... I would. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazer 2010, Consultant)

... Being able to count and quantify widgets. So, you can say 20 people have had promotions and that would probably be quite a legitimate way to count it. And you can say that 30 people have done 'xy', that's also perfectly legitimate. But I think that absolutely undersells the program. The ARLF has to get better at capturing stories and capturing those personal stories of the benefits. So, I think it – yeah, I think if you try and aggregate too much, you lose the impact. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C11, Not for Profit)

I would be looking to see how the participants, how their organisations or how their industries have changed because of their participation in the course – I'd be looking to see how their teams ... and I'd be happy for my teams to comment on my performance, 360-degree feedback post undertaking the TRAILBlazing course. You know, how peers rank my performance is really interesting and how they see me being able to shape the industry and do they consider me a leader in my field in terms of research. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazers 2013, Cotton)

It's easy to say show me your bio ... Then there's that temptation to say I was a certain level manager before ... Have I gone from earning fifty thousand dollars a year to a hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year? Have I gone from managing 5 staff to 25 staff? I don't think that's success. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C13, Government)

There is also a need to recognise that not all individuals benefit in the same way from leadership development or the ARLF programs in particular, and that not all go on to do greater things in ways that will benefit their industry, organisation or community. This can be explained by the policy and organisational environment, or the particular timing of the program with regard to the individual's personal and professional life, as well as their individual disposition to learning and program selection criteria and procedures.

I think we also have to be realistic about what we're doing with the course and we're actually planting the seed. Now sometimes the environment's perfect and we get that return straight away and sometimes we've just got to wait for the environment to be right and when the environment's right, it actually starts growing and giving a harvest but not all planes take off at the same time and not all seeds will germinate. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Wool)

The common theme throughout these accounts is the power of storying in terms of elucidating the complexity of understanding the impact of leadership development over time.

Within the following sections discussion draws from survey, interview and extant data to consider impact from the range of perspectives discussed above. Analysis is exemplified and elaborated through case studies.

3.2 Enhancing individual personal leadership capacity

Extant (or pre-existing) data are replete with examples of the ways ARLF programs have enhanced the individual leadership capacity of participants. For example, the 2008 Urbis report found that 'for some graduates it is a *'life-changing experience'*' (p. 22, original emphasis) and 'The ARLP is effective in creating positive outcomes for graduates in terms of expanding their worldview, and developing their confidence and ability to undertake a range of leadership activities' (p. 22). Thus, the 2008 Urbis report found that '94% of graduates reported that the ARLP provided them with the capacity to grow and develop as a leader'.

The following three comments derived from the 2015 Kitchen Table survey are typical of those from alumni that are to be found in the extant data:

The course was an amazing experience that gave me the confidence to explore new leadership opportunities. (ARLF Alumni, 2015 Kitchen Table survey)

I'm not the same person - my understanding, my application to business and people has altered for the better due to the leadership program. Also enabled me to be the leader that was always inside of me. (ARLF Alumni, 2015 Kitchen Table survey)

It was a life altering experience that even now, 12 years later, still influences the way I manage my business, my time, my family, how I participate in the community and my input into industry issues. (ARLF Alumni, 2015 Kitchen Table survey)

The 2017 alumni interview and survey responses reflect many similar themes. Alumni were overwhelmingly positive about the benefits of the program and what they had gained personally. Many reflect on the program on a daily basis and continue to draw actively on learnings for years after completion – indeed ARLF alumni from cohort 1, for example, were still doing so at the time of this study

However, it was also common for respondents to reflect on their leadership capacity before the program, in comparison to their capacity at the time of the survey or their interview.

Alumni perceptions of personal leadership capacity pre-program

2017 alumni survey respondents frequently described themselves as having somewhat limited personal leadership capacities prior to undertaking their ARLF program. For example, one respondent noted that before the program he or she ‘had much less emotional intelligence’ while another recognised that he/she had been: ‘Irrational [and] emotional’ and ‘Limited by my understandings and assumptions’. For others, there was recognition that prior to their ARLF program they had possessed only a very ‘limited understanding of effective leadership, stakeholder engagement and personal strengths and weaknesses’ and that this had significantly impacted leadership capacity at that time. For example, one respondent noted that he or she had ‘lacked courage and was afraid of being my true self. This made it difficult to make real change in case I rocked the boat’. Another recalled that while he or she had ‘cared, [and] was motivated I lacked confidence to completely say or contribute my true feelings or ideas, despite a history of positive outcomes’.

It was also common for the 2017 alumni survey respondents to note that prior to their ARLF program they had been somewhat intolerant or impatient and lacking awareness of the importance of considering others’ views and perspectives during negotiations. In turn, many reported that this had negatively affected the chances of success. The following comments are typical of the ways in which alumni survey respondents described their leadership styles pre-program:

Domineering and dictatorial. (2017 ARLF alumni survey)

Passionate and driven and often brought about change, however this would often involve conflict. (2017 ARLF alumni survey)

Autocratic in approach, limited by non-inclusive instruction rather than an all-inclusive environment to encourage change. (2017 ARLF alumni survey)

Quite naive in my thinking, I didn't recognise that others had relevant viewpoints. I believed I had the answers. (2017 ARLF alumni survey)

Similar themes are observable in the alumni interview data as exemplified in the following excerpt, which highlights that post-program this alumnus was able to recognise the potentially limiting impact of a leadership style that was not as reflective as might have been desirable:

Because I was thrust into a leadership role very early, early twenties, and you take on the world, you want to change the world – you think you’re much more powerful than you are. I think this was a really good reality check for me to go ‘you know, some self-awareness wouldn’t go stray’ – because sometimes the messages [I was] delivering were pretty blunt.
(Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C11, Not for Profit)

Such responses contrast quite strongly with those that alumni use to describe their post-program experience.

Alumni perceptions of personal leadership capacity and effectiveness post-program

2017 alumni survey data show that 196 of the 211 respondents (93%) indicated that subsequent to their ARLF program they had developed significantly enhanced leadership capacity. These data compare favourably to those from the 2008 URBIS evaluation commissioned by the ARLF which reported that 87% of surveyed ARLP graduates reported ‘skills and ability to make a more substantial contribution to rural Australia’ (p. 24). However, within this (Deakin 2017) study, 173 of 211 alumni respondents (82%) also reported that their ARLF leadership program/s had better equipped them to be effective in a leadership role. With a mean score of 4.2 out of 5 on a 5-point Likert scale, participants of the 2017 Alumni survey affirmed strong impact of ARLF leadership program/s in enhancing their leadership capacity post-program (see Figure 5).

	Program impact on participants’ personal leadership efficacy		Program impact on participants’ leadership effectiveness post-program	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
1 Least	1.2%	0.9%	0.0%	0.9%
2	4.8%	5.6%	1.2%	0.9%
3	10.8%	19.6%	14.5%	8.4%
4	59.0%	57.9%	49.4%	57.0%
5 Most	24.1%	15.9%	34.9%	32.7%

(107 male and 83 female respondents)

Figure 5

Alumni perceptions of program impact on their personal leadership capacity and effectiveness post-program, by gender

2017 Alumni survey respondents appeared to strongly attribute increased personal leadership efficacy to the ARLF program or programs they have completed, with a mean score of 3.9 out of 5 on a 5-point Likert scale. There were no significant differences when these data were separated by gender. More than 77% of survey respondents strongly attribute increased personal leadership efficacy to the ARLF program or programs they have completed (see figure 5 above). There were no significant differences when these data were separated by age or gender.

2017 alumni interview and survey data also reveal a number of key themes around the effect of ARLF programs on participants. Although the ARLF does not provide skills-based leadership programs, many of these themes do nonetheless relate to the enhancement or development of particular leadership skills. However, as is demonstrated by survey and interview responses, such skills were not ‘taught’ but were, instead, developed through a greater understanding of self and others, including of strengths and weaknesses in relation to others. Thus, according to one ARLF alumni survey respondent: ‘The ARLP gave me an opportunity, in a safe environment, to practice and develop my personal leadership’. A proportion of the 2017 alumni survey and interview data relating to personal leadership capacity, along with extant data where relevant, are therefore grouped in response to the following key leadership skill areas.

Communication

Alumni consistently report significantly enhanced communication skills arising from their ARLF program/s. For example, this respondent to the 2015 Kitchen Table survey noted:

I am not long post ARLP and I use what I have learnt daily in all interactions with clients, family, govt. departments, and community and am aware of a changed / improved quality in the way I approach these relationships. (2015 Kitchen Table survey)

A further example is provided by a 2017 alumni interviewee who noted that the program ‘did help my communication skills’ which, in turn, had led to an increase in assertive and productive interactions with her boss, with positive outcomes:

... like I never used to ... because he was our boss you know, there’s a lot of respect. A lot of respect around all of us but [now] if I disagree with something I would go up and say to him ‘no, I don’t agree with this but we can do this [instead]’. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

One of the real things this program has assisted me in actually recognising is that you need to modify your language to meet your audience needs. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C18, Banking)

Enhanced personal communication skills almost inevitably lead to increased skills and capacity in the area of negotiation.

Negotiation skills

Many 2017 interview and survey respondents noted that a key outcome of their ARLF program had been significant growth in their capacity to negotiate:

So look, one really great thing about the ARLP was that we did a whole unit on negotiation ... [that] was so useful, that theoretical background ... for me personally, my negotiation skills have changed. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C13, Government)

In turn, alumni report that this has enabled them to successfully undertake what are often quite difficult and complex negotiations in mutually respectful ways. This is strongly in accordance with a number of the ARLF leadership principles, including 'Recognises and responds to complexity'. For example, one 2017 alumni survey respondent noted that the program had '... enabled me to bring to the table difficult problems and seek an outcome through mutual understanding and respect' and that he or she 'can remain less emotional now when dealing with opposing points of view'. Other alumni in positions of authority report that they now have a 'much greater personal understanding and awareness [of] more effective stakeholder engagement, [and the] ability to communicate and [engage] partnership[s] to achieve outcomes'. This is reflected in the following interview excerpts, which serve to highlight the positive impact of such increased negotiation skills:

... When you go, as an ARLP graduate, to talk to government industries, which is what I'm more involved with, ... that sort of experience really helps you with how you handle those people. You understand how they operate. But you [also] understand what their constraints are and how they're thinking. It doesn't stop you wanting to get your point of view through, but what it does allow you to do is better understand the process and get better acceptance. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Cotton)

... You have to express it in a way that establishes common ground and you're actually working towards a win-win. And that's definitely a ... skill that I learned from the ARLP and had lots and lots of practice. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government)

Problem solving and conflict resolution

Strongly related to strengthened negotiation skills in ARLF alumni is enhanced problem solving and conflict resolution skills. For example, a respondent to the 2015 Kitchen Table Survey noted that the ARLF had:

... Utterly changed my approach to working with people on difficult (and not-so-difficult) problems. Provided experiential learnings and experiences which I've taken with me and utilised regularly in my professional and personal life. (2015 Kitchen Table survey)

In turn, these skills have enhanced leaders' capacities to understand and respond to complexity through the opportunity to develop:

... A much broader perspective about the issues that are important to resolving a conflict or problem. Also have a better understanding of the context of the situation. (2017 alumni survey)

Another interviewee found that post-program she was able to successfully engage in:

... Quite complex controversial issues where there's been a lot of angst and a lot of infighting within our industry and actually managing to have meetings where people at least can appreciate each other or each other's issues and don't fight all night and shout at each other. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazer, Consultant)

These and other accounts make a strong connection between the development of problem solving and conflict resolution skills and the enactment of significantly enhanced leadership capacity, leading to successful outcomes on what are often seemingly intractable issues.

Mentoring and team leadership capacity

Numerous ARLF alumni appear to be actively involved in the mentoring of future leaders, especially in their professional, organisational and volunteer roles. For example, 69.23% of 2017 alumni survey respondents indicated that they have undertaken a mentoring role since completion of their ARLF program/s. The following exemplifies this:

And I reflect on when I was young and making mistakes and I somehow got through. I talk about that all the time now and I publicly talk about that. You know we cannot be an organisation where you think people are either superstars or you're useless and if you're an older person you've got to embrace the young people and you're got to assist them and develop them and train them otherwise they won't stay and eventually we'll have no one. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C13, Agriculture)

Within an organisational setting, such mentoring of future leaders can also take place within, and enhance, a teamwork environment. For example, one alumnus noted that he or she does:

Inspire and lead others as well as work as part of multi-disciplinary, multi-regional teams - both professionally and as a volunteer. (2015 Kitchen Table survey)

In their interview responses, ARLF alumni also indicated repeatedly that they would be willing to serve as a mentor for future ARLF leaders. For example, this interviewee noted that not only would she be willing to participate in a formal mentoring program through the ARLF, she would also be very happy to be mentored through such a program herself.

I personally would love to be a mentor ... absolutely. But that's because I like giving and I like to contribute. [Also, if I personally] wanted a mentor, I would probably still be interested in going to the ARLP for one. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government)

However, as would be expected, many of the most significant perceived benefits of participation in an ARLF program are not skills-based but are, instead, related to higher order leadership qualities and capabilities. These are described in turn below.

Understanding and respecting others

Many, many alumni interviews commented on the way in which the program/s had challenged them to develop a deeper understanding of and respect for others, including those with very different backgrounds. Good working relationships, consultation and clear communications were seen as critically important in effective leadership practice:

... Well particularly around personalities and understanding personalities and different personality types... that had an immediate and profound impact on the way I worked with people and understood people. ... I still to this day use that information, not to typecast people but just to understand where somebody may be coming from. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C11, Not for Profit)

For me it was much more about understanding the emotions, drivers, values and philosophies behind what I did and what others were doing, to try and get that alignment happening. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C10, Not for Profit)

For many, this contributed to a deep and personal commitment to social justice, and to working with others “from an ethical base with respect and openness etc.” (2017 alumni survey). Specific examples from 2017 alumni survey responses include:

- *... Working with the government on developing the Gender Equity program, National Women's Summit and Australian delegate to the United Nations. (2017 alumni survey)*
- *... Upholding the ARLP objectives of improving the life quality of rural and regional Australia. (2017 alumni survey)*
- *... A more considered approach and higher understanding of relating with Aboriginal people. (2017 alumni survey)*

Overall, ARLF alumni data indicated that their decision-making processes are being informed by the context in which they find themselves. All appeared to be mindful of their cultural environment and of the cultural differences that emerge in and across industry, workplaces and community. As one alumnus illustrated, her program led to her being:

... A better leader because you don't have preconceptions about people's views. And I've found that I can connect with many different points of view and people and personalities, so much better now as a result of that less judgmental – and I'm white, so I've got these built-in biases towards this horrible white supremacy thing that they cultivate over years. And that has helped – so doing the leadership program just melts some of the barriers, I suppose, or preconceptions that you have about certain issues. So, it makes you much more agile, much more connected, and people look to you as a leader too because they feel safe or think that they can trust you. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government)

Self-development

Within the alumni survey responses there was a strong relationship between respondents' perceptions of increased self-awareness and perceptions of their own increased leadership capacity. One interviewee said:

The focus on personal development and leadership skills helped me to better understand myself and has, I believe, directly led to me being a more effective leader at work.
(2015 Kitchen Table survey)

Alumni frequently commented on the ways participation in an ARLF program/s had increased their self-confidence and the effect this has had on their leadership. For example, one 2017 alumni survey respondent acknowledged that he or she had developed a 'greater confidence in my abilities' while another noted that their program had 'given me the peace of mind [about] how the way I approached leadership and operate was effective and impactful'. For many, this led directly to embracing new roles and challenges as exemplified in the following:

Undertaking the program helped me to better understand myself and hence gave me the confidence to take on new leadership roles and realise my potential to contribute. (2015 Kitchen Table survey)

[I now have] confidence and tools to accept challenges outside my comfort zone. (2017 alumni survey)

I am much more confident and able to communicate 'with any audience or individual'.
(2017 alumni survey)

I now have the motivation to seek out new challenges to repay the investment that my sponsor risked in my development. (2017 alumni survey)

There were also strong perceptions that increased self-awareness, arising from participation in an ARLF program, contributed directly to enhanced personal leadership capacity and contribution. This is exemplified in the following responses:

Whilst I am not in an executive role in a big private or government role the course gave me the self-awareness to identify my expertise and abilities and the confidence to fulfil reach my potential as a technical expert. (2015 Kitchen Table survey)

The program made me 'more aware – the awareness of what I was doing, and how I was doing it. And then also more aware of how to effectively do it. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Cotton)

I now have a much deeper personal understanding of the impact I was having [that had also] led to many missed opportunities for me and the communities that I lived and worked in. (2017 alumni survey)

There were many references to ARLF programs contributing significantly to the personal growth, understanding and emotional maturity of alumni, a key aspect of effective leadership development. For example, one alumnus commented that the program:

... Was affirming and it was also really good because it questioned my leadership skills, and like every X, there's probably a fair amount of arrogance there, you know, you get put on a pedestal, you're qualified, you're good at your job and you lead the team. And no-one asks you any questions. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAIL 2015, Agriculture)

Another recalled:

Before I did the program, based on my leadership in my past world, yeah, it was an interesting thing. There was a youthful arrogance, I suppose, that I had developed in that environment, which was accepted on your team, that they will just follow. You tell them, and you are the leader. As I said before, no questions are really asked of you, they're clear directions, that's it, you're the boss. The course and what I learnt enabled me to take a step back, to realise that perhaps I'm not coming across in the way that I need to. Perhaps I need to take a step back. So that was really good. I did actually learn to take a step back and engage with them more too, because I was just a bull at a gate, 'This is what we're going to do', clear vision of the future, I had already pegged it out. I've now created a shared vision. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C13, Agriculture)

An expansion of personal horizons

Amongst survey and interview responses there were numerous references to the ways in which the ARLF program/s had expanded participants' personal horizons. Some of these relate to issues of social justice, as described above, and understandings of beauty in the complexity of the human condition. However, at times this expansion of personal horizons related directly to perceptions of rural and regional Australia, as exemplified in the following:

Initially, if I'm truly honest, it probably challenged some of my own stereotypes and perceptions about rural Australia... One of the examples that I would give is, obviously, as an Indigenous person, Native Title's really important to me. And then I'm with a bunch of farmers and people who were actually opposing Native Title claims.... Yes. So, for me, and it's kind of a funny thing, but I say, if anybody had've told me before I did the course that one of my best friends out of it would be a pig farmer and a grain producer, I would've laughed at them. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C14)

Increased resilience

On many occasions interviewees were transparent about how their ARLF program/s helped them to mentally face life's challenges. Amongst ARLP alumni there were frequent references to the Kimberley component of the program as having had this effect:

Even in my personal world I know, when I had my first child who didn't sleep well at all, if ever, the number of nights I sat there going 'do you know what? I managed two weeks in the Kimberley on no sleep doing really incredible physical challenges and was pushed to my mental limits, I can actually get through tonight because I've done it before.' Just simple things like that in terms of resilience and knowing that I can get past things that I didn't think I could. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C10, Not for Profit)

In a more general sense, one young alumnus commented how the program has had a significant effect on his life: 'even my mentality or seeing that particular circumstance [which] is challenging but I'm [now] willing to take that risk and step in'. (TS alumni 2017 interview)

Capacity to respond to complexity

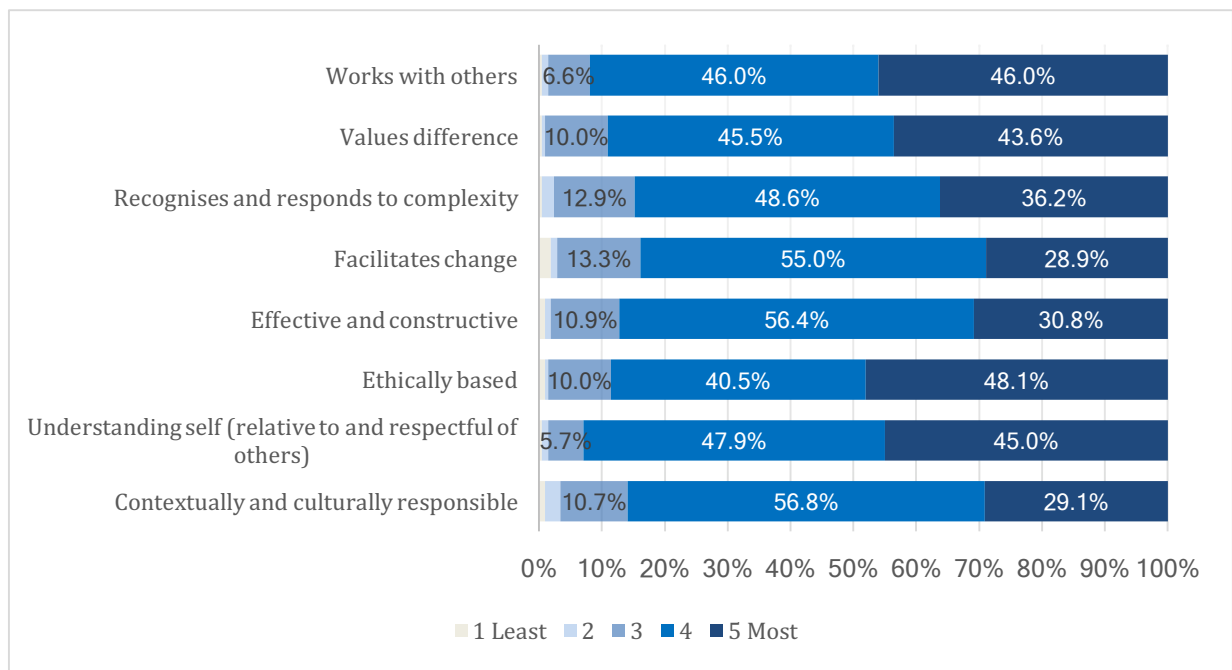
ARLF alumni felt, overall, that their ARLF program had prepared them not only to recognise but also to effectively respond to complexity. As one 2017 alumni survey respondent noted, the program/s 'definitely gave me a view into the diversified people involved in making an impact; a boarder understanding and greater perception, particularly of agri-politics'. For those in more formal leadership roles such as chair of a board, there were specific opportunities to achieve increased diversity when implementing a restructure 'at the same time as the industry was going through a period of change'. Policy and its enactment was also an area where alumni recognised complexity through 'multifaceted policy advocate (meetings with and between government, farmers and media) to bring about significant reforms in drought, land clearing and land use conflict'.

Within the survey responses, ethical actions and those aimed at environmental sustainability regularly appeared alongside references to improved governance i.e. the three were often seen as interconnected. The following quotes are representative of comments by many ARLF alumni who undertook the survey:

[I am a] strong advocate for many of the Landcare principles being adopted into everyday agricultural management systems. (2017 alumni survey)

Informed social and economic assessments led water reform in MDB for enhanced long term sustainability. (2017 alumni survey)

Consistent with the above subsections, the 2017 alumni survey asked respondents to indicate the extent to which their leadership practices now reflect the (specified) ARLF leadership principles. The findings are set out in Figure 6, below:



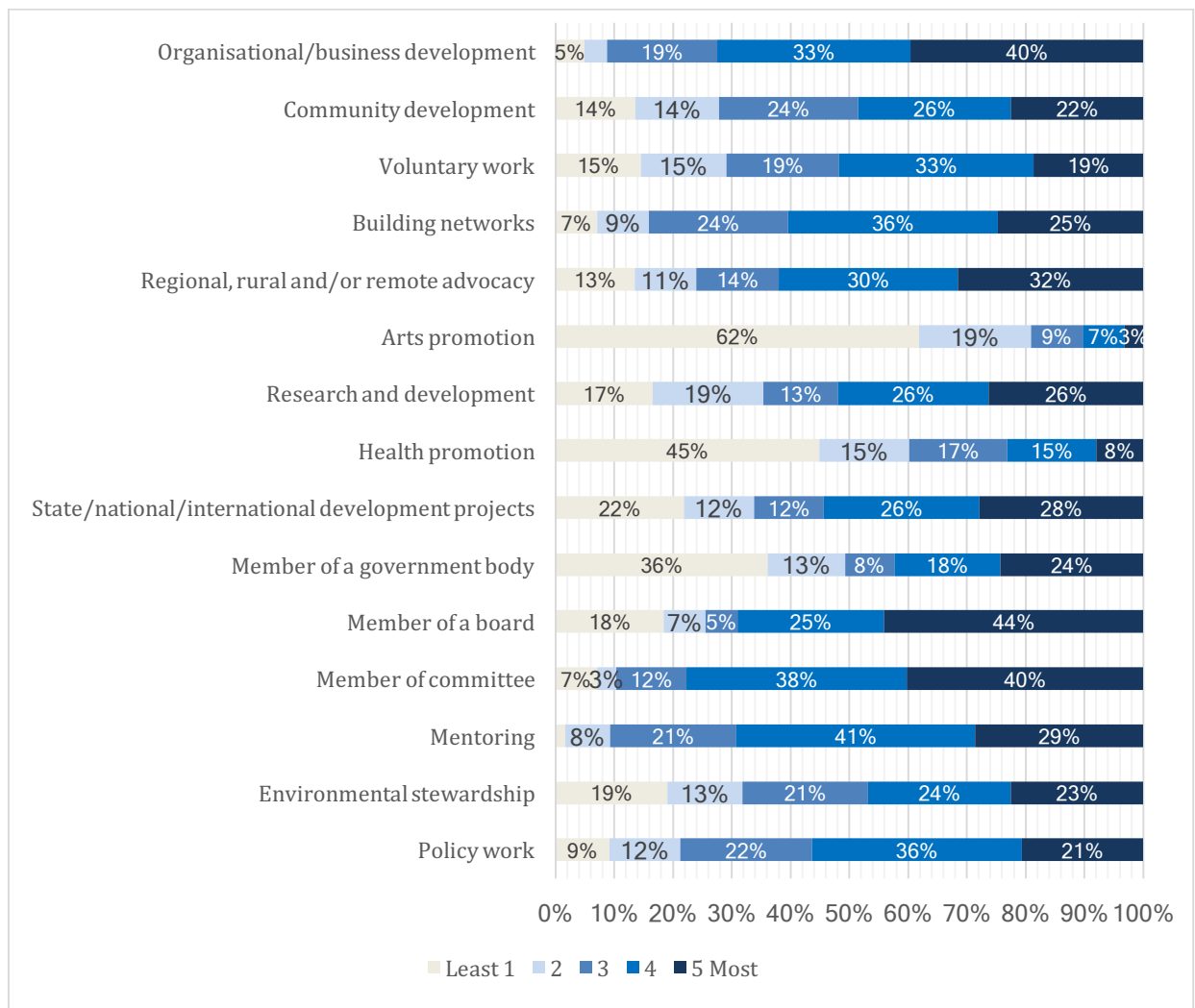
N=211

Figure 6

Extent to which ARLF alumni consider their leadership practices reflect specific ARLF leadership principles

For all of the listed principles, an average mean score of 4.3 on a 5-point Likert scale (with 5 being highest) shows that ARLF alumni consider their leadership practices strongly reflect specific ARLF leadership principles. For example, records of responses with above the average scores show that 88.6% of respondents indicated that their leadership is ethically based; 87.2% consider their leadership to be effective and constructive; and around 87% believe their leadership is culturally and contextually responsible, with none of the ARLF leadership principles accruing a percentage rating of less than 83.9. There were no significant differences when these data were separated by gender.

Perhaps not surprisingly, ARLF alumni apply their leadership capacity across a very wide range of roles, as shown in Figure 7, below. For example, records of responses with above the average scores show that 57% of participants have been or are engaged in policy work, 62% have been or are engaged in rural, regional and remote advocacy, 73% have been or are engaged in organisational and/or business development and 69% have been or are a member of a board.



N=184

Figure 7

Areas within which ARLF alumni have applied their leadership since completion

Further analysis revealed that female respondents indicated significantly higher levels of participation than their male counterparts in the areas of membership of a government body; state/national/international development projects' building networks; and community development.

3.3 Case study: enacting individual leadership capacity

Introduction

This case study considers how the leadership of one community entrepreneur alumnus of the ARLP has translated into benefits for and impact on her community and for rural and regional Australia. It draws from two extended interviews with the alumnus herself and also on follow-up interviews with three other individuals selected from organisations with which this alumnus has been or is currently associated. The aim of these following interviews was to identify specific examples of the impact of her leadership, personally, professionally and in the community, and for rural and regional Australia more broadly. The case study has also drawn on a range of other publicly available data.

Eleanor* completed an agricultural science degree before commencing a career in rural journalism, initially with the ABC and then later with other media organisations. She subsequently worked for the Minister for Primary Industries before taking up advocacy work and undertaking voluntary leadership roles for the Rural Press Club. At the time of being selected for the ARLP approximately 10 years ago Eleanor was not in an ongoing paid organisational role but did have considerable leadership experience.

Leadership Principles

The case study is organised around the ARLF principles to discuss achievement and impact.

Understanding self (relative to and respectful of others)

Shortly after graduating, Eleanor accepted a full-time paid role as a communications manager but found she was not able to implement the leadership concept she developed because of dissonance between her values and those of the organisation. She left this position as a result. The following year she completed a Graduate Certificate in Rural Leadership with James Cook University and during that time reflected on some of what she had learnt from the ARLP, including that 'leadership is an action you take, not a position you hold'. Eleanor now prioritises values based leadership and work satisfaction over financial income and as a result is currently:

... Working as a sustainability consultant around slow clothing, so this is largely about natural fibres, which is the connection to agriculture. And I'm establishing [a] social enterprise and doing leadership in this space with individuals, teachers, students, local councils, individuals, craft groups. Anybody who is interested in an alternative to the fast fashion system that has been - come over the top of us in the last 20 years.

Like almost all ARLP alumni, Eleanor found the program hugely beneficial and a transformational experience, advancing her confidence, skills, capacity and also self-awareness. By the time she completed the program Eleanor had 'already started to make changes' in her life, having decided that she 'didn't want to keep going' with the jobs she had previously held:

So it was actually only through the growth that came afterwards that I realised how much I had learnt and how much progress I had been able to make. ... as I challenged and questioned myself more by what I was learning and being exposed to, I made changes and I could see how I wanted it to be different.

Later, Eleanor reflected on how she had benefited from the program in a more general sense:

Because purpose is one of my values and these are things that I've benefited from the ARLP, to find authenticity, creativity, autonomy and purpose. They're the values I'm working to.

Ethically based

Eleanor describes herself as a sustainability consultant. She explains that 'every day we eat and we dress. A lot of it comes from agriculture, otherwise it is plastic and this is the thing. Two thirds of new clothing is synthetic fibre derived from petroleum'. She had recently given two invited keynote addresses, one in Brisbane at the 2017 Food and Fibre Agricultural Educators Conference and the other in Melbourne at the Home Economics Institute of Australia national conference:

So this is where my leadership has got me to, and my only qualifications really are what I started with, with my Ag Science degree, and my leadership training. I find it very satisfying that I'm now invited to speak at that level about something. And it says to me that what I'm doing is valued and important. Because I'm not aligned to anyone — I'm speaking from my values and my truths. So I feel as if I'm leading and I'm utilising everything that I've learnt. And I've actually been asked, and am currently preparing for, a TEDx QUT talk.

Eleanor also characterises herself as a 'natural-fibre champion' linking the everyday action of dressing to health, wellbeing and sustainability. In 2013 she established a ground breaking website about her slow clothing movement through which she aims to facilitate a conversation about ethical ways of dressing for the benefit of ourselves, society and the planet. Eleanor's goal is to inspire a more sustainable clothing culture through her website and through facilitated presentations and workshops. She has also drawn on her own media background and the media training provided by the ARLP to generate significant media coverage. For example, she has been interviewed several times by ABC TV and also by Chanel 7. This media coverage is part of Eleanor's advocacy work:

Advocacy around clothing is what I call it. To me, I think about it, it is like the slow food movement and now there is a slow clothing movement. It is about fibres but it is also about - and that is the connection with the home economics things — it is actually about the fact that we need to have a few skills. We need to be able to sew on buttons and both make and refashion our own clothes.

In addition to paid consultancy work, Eleanor does a lot of good-will or voluntary work, which she says she can manage so long as her project is financially sustainable overall:

Oh well I talk to groups mainly ... I've just accepted an invitation to speak at Griffith University Eco Centre and they don't have any funding [so that's voluntary]. A lot of it is ... community work, it is not paid work. And I guess I just happen to be — I think a lot of leadership work has to be like that because it is for social good. So you can't necessarily be rewarded financially, because as soon as you're rewarded financially you've got a vested interest. And that is the thing — I've recognised it is actually a benefit that the natural fibre industries aren't aligning with me because I can speak out and I have spoken out.

Contextually and culturally responsible

For Eleanor, the slow clothing movement that she has started goes far deeper than clothes to wear and skills to make them with:

It is about empowerment. It is about having flexibility and being able to manage garments to make them work on your shape; because none of us are the same, and yet we try and keep looking to purchase that will be the magic pill. Whereas really when we can change things for ourselves, but we've lost our way on that. And I think it is [also] about time ... about making some time because we all have recreation time, it is just how we choose to use it.

At its essence, there are a number of aspects to Eleanor's work in the slow clothing movement. The first and most obvious is sustainable clothing but much of what she does is also about leadership capacity building — encouraging others to undertake leadership roles within their local communities related to the slow clothing. Related to this is the sustainability of rural and regional communities themselves — providing a focus that encourages rural and sometimes isolated individuals (primarily women) to come together over shared interests and that therefore fosters a sense of shared community.

Effective and constructive/Facilitates change

Eleanor's work for the Home Economics Institute of Australia Queensland branch is a typical example. Eleanor spoke at the state conference but she also ran a series of professional development workshops for teachers in twelve rural and remote Queensland regions. As the state association president reports:

... The teachers really like her messages and the depth of what she goes into but also, when she runs the workshops, it's very hands-on so the teachers learn a lot from that and they're also able to take some of the ideas into the classroom. [Eleanor] has [also] done two articles for us now [for the association journal].

Drawing from the ARLP course content, Eleanor describes her leadership as post-conventional, by which she means that she is working for the greater or public good and not in a formal or positional leadership role. She provides an example of a female academic who contacted her after a public talk:

...Saying that what I had said around clothing had a profound influence on her ... So I mean I found that really gratifying, that I could have a profound influence on someone who struck me as being very well informed and across everything anyway.

Taking on board advice that it takes ten years 'to be out there identified with something':

I feel like I'm five years in and I'm starting to get some traction ... You are not rewarded financially but you're rewarded in other ways ... I guess the gold nuggets come in different forms. ... [and] I guess the confidence that the ARLP has given me is that I don't need any measures. I just know. I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing without the ARLP.

Recognises and responds to complexity

The president of the Home Economics Institute of Australia describes the impact of Eleanor's leadership on the state's teachers:

I think the way she has shown leadership is in helping teachers think about sustainable textiles in a different way ... this is what I consider leadership, when someone makes you think again about the same area but from a different angle.

The combination of practical, hands-on workshops, high-level and both factually and scientifically grounded presentations and written journal articles has been highly influential with this group

... Textiles in schools at the moment is in a bit of state of flux with the new curriculum and I think what Eleanor has done is she has given teachers ideas on new ways of looking at textiles and also looking at important issues because in design and technologies curriculum, sustainability is an important aspect of that curriculum. So she's very much helping teachers how to teach about sustainable textiles and some of the important information that goes with that. So that in turn is helping the home economics programs be contemporary [and] will support the position of home economics in schools. ... [Eleanor] has been prepared to travel quite considerably to promote these messages to home economics teachers and I think it has given teachers confidence, not only in what to teach but when you have a keynote speaker speaking about textiles, it gives inspiration like 'oh what I am doing is important'... so I think that is very good for the home economics profession.

Works with others/ Community capacity building

A further example of Eleanor's community leadership is work she has done for a rural local government body in Queensland. Over a period of two years Eleanor has presented a series of more than 15 highly successful community workshops across rural and remote Queensland around sustainable clothing. However, as the manager of cultural services for this local government body describes it, the workshops were also about leadership:

... Talking about leadership, her journey, about the studies she did with the ARLF and about being a leader in rural communities, again bringing [community] sustainability into the whole equation. ...So [in this community] there's a group of women that now meet regularly who work on the slow clothing movement. It just breeds social capital, I suppose in these communities. A couple of these ladies come from isolated stations — properties. So now they're meeting regularly. ... These are isolated communities. It is really important therefore that women do get together because often they are each other's [only] support.

The manager of cultural services later commented that as a result of Eleanor's workshops, one of these ladies had 'started up a small home-based business with slow clothing. So she has launched a website, is selling a bit of stuff from home'.

Another participant in these rural workshops was not local but had travelled from a neighbouring region. This woman was inspired to return to her local council and apply for a grant that would enable Eleanor to host a series of workshops there. She described this process and the outcome as follows:

So that's the impact it had on me, that I wanted to bring Eleanor to my country town to show people how they can lead by example because this is a big issue and it covers a lot of issues within it, the sustainability. It is not just clothing, it's about sustaining a lot of other aspects of your life ... People in rural and remote communities are isolated from a lot of choices that go on in bigger towns and the cities so we have to create all our own entertainment, we have to create our own opportunities ... [Eleanor] walks the talk. She gets out there. She's interested to get out and connect with rural communities.

Networking and influence

One woman from Western Australia, Peggy, who had invited Eleanor to present a slow clothing workshop to a group of women at the community centre in the region described the workshop as being full to capacity and highly successful. 'It obviously did strike a chord and quite a few people are asking when she'll be back'. Peggy observed that Eleanor was:

... Actually very proactive in organising other appointments while she was over here. She went to see the Council and she certainly, once she was down south here ... she ended up setting up appointments with other people who are doing natural textile work or doing women's workshops, other people had sewing workshops and that sort of thing. So while she was down here [as well as doing the workshop] one evening she followed up with other people so she is spreading the word ... so hopefully it's basically planting little seeds everywhere so that people are a bit more aware about the amount of textile waste and also the fact that you can do something hands-on to reduce that.

During the visit to Western Australia Eleanor was interviewed by the ABC, both on television and on radio. Peggy observes that:

On the one hand, she tries to connect with people locally wherever she is and on that one-on-one scale but I think that's actually a very slow way of making change and I think she appreciates that. The other thing she does is obviously try to increase her profile as a speaker, reaching bigger audiences and she did speak about her aim that she wants to travel and speak, both here and internationally, so she's obviously got big plans. Her aim really is to travel around and basically spread the word as widely as she can and have as much influence as she can.

ARLP Network

Eleanor does make use of the ARLP network from within her own cohort, but also recognises the complexities and difficulties the network itself:

Oh yes I do keep in touch. I did a lunchtime leadership talk in 2015 in Canberra. I try to attend events if they're in my city. I do intend going to the event in October. So yes I have stayed connected. I've got a few personal contacts from the course and whenever somebody from the group emails I try and engage on it. But it is quite a difficult, nebulous thing for the organisation isn't it?

* Pseudonym

3.4 Conclusion

This section has shown that alumni report significant increases in personal leadership capacity post-program, with a mean score of 4.2 out of 5, survey respondents strongly attributing increased effectiveness in a leadership role to the ARLF program/s they had completed. However, the interview and survey responses also demonstrate that alumni reflect on and enact their personal or individual leadership in complex, contextualised and nuanced ways that are consistent with and reflective of the ARLF values-based leadership approach. The interview and survey data presented within this section show significant increases in personal leadership capacity in areas including communication, negotiation, problem solving and conflict resolution skills; and mentoring and leadership capacity development. Significantly, the data highlight that alumni have also developed significant higher order leadership qualities or capabilities, including increased understanding of and respect for others; increased self-awareness in the context of perceptions of their leadership capacity; an expansion of personal horizons; increased resilience; and enhanced capacity to respond to complexity. Alumni report that they apply their leadership across a wide range of roles including board membership (69%), organisational or business development (73%), rural, regional and remote advocacy (62%) and policy work (57%). Female respondents report higher levels of leadership in the areas of membership of a government body and community/state/national/international development projects. These data clearly respond to Term of Reference 3 for this review, Changed processes and practices and/or ways of working.

One of the weaknesses of self-reported data on personal leadership efficacy is that which was highlighted in section 2, Literature Review: the tendency for respondents to inflate their own capacities. However, within this section this is offset, to some extent, by the case study on 'Enacting individual leadership capacity'. This provides Eleanor's own account of her personal leadership, often enacted in rural and remote contexts, but it also provides the accounts of three other individuals who provided detailed examples of the impact of Eleanor's leadership and the changes in practice that resulted. These accounts show that Eleanor's work has not only had a significant impact on the development of a sustainable clothing movement within Australia, but also that Eleanor has, and is continuing to, actively build leadership capacity within regional and remote women. That is, she is building a leadership network through which she aims to facilitate the ongoing development of her slow clothing movement. Although Eleanor does not hold a positional leadership role in the traditional sense, her story and that provided by others in relation to her leadership, is inspirational and very much reflects the ARLF leadership principles.

* pseudonym

4. Leadership impact and change within rural and regional Australia; Industry; workplace and community in short and long-term

4.1 Impact on rural, regional and remote Australia

The ARLF was established in 1992 after a review of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Its aim was to enhance individual leader's capabilities in order to realise bottom up structural, cultural, social and economic change across rural, regional and remote Australia (Andrew 2013, p. 10). The first cohort of the flagship Australian Rural Leadership Program commenced in 1993. There is little question that the ARLF has been successful in achieving its primary aim of individual leadership development over the 25 years of its development based on the interview data and survey data in the 2008 Report, the 2015 Kitchen table survey (94.62% in agreement) and the interview and survey data from 2017. In the 2017 ARLF Alumni survey, a total of 212 respondents rated a high mean score of 3.9 out of 5, when they were asked to rate the extent to which they can attribute increased personal leadership efficacy to their ARLF programs.

Prior reports and the current analysis indicate that there is a high level of consistency of responses with regard to how ARLF programs' challenge priorities, values and belief systems, and widen participants' perspectives, enabling them to see how their industry/workplace is part of a larger complex web of relationships in rural Australia and globally. The sustainability over 25 years of such positive feedback is testimony to the quality of the programs and their capacity to bring about leadership capacity building within the different rural sectors.

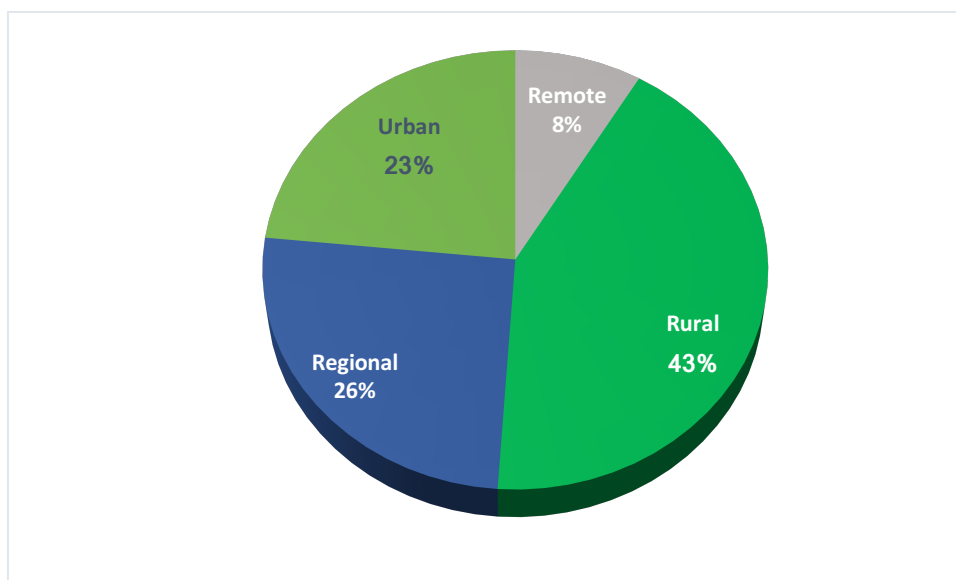
However, as described by a former CEO of the ARLF, the context since 1993 has changed radically.

I mean it's a complex environment. You've got globalisation, you've got the withdrawal of government resources from rural areas. You've got change in the nature of industries. You've got ... natural disasters and moving away from particular approaches, things that have driven Rural and Regional communities into ... really struggling, ... I think it's very difficult to then assess leadership and how leaders contributed to the development of industry when those forces which are much more powerful are playing in the background ... or more often ...in the foreground and the leaders are playing in the background.
(Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazer, Health)

An overarching commitment to RRR Australia is evident in nearly all of the 212 alumni responses to the Alumni survey in 2017.

I believe that everyone that comes through [the ARLF] would have to come out a better person. but how you measure that is more difficult. We look at this all the time in our organisation, how do we measure these things. Do you [even] need to measure it or do you just need to be confident in the fact that it's doing what it set out to do. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C13, Agriculture)

While many individuals have progressed through their careers in terms of gaining higher level organisational positions (see sections 4.2 and 4.3), moved across sectors, or moved from local to national or international levels, another indicator of long term commitment is that among the alumni respondents to the 2017 survey, 77% continue to live in RRR Australia (see Figure 11). This is aligned with the responses to a 5-point Likert scale question to which 75% of respondents rated as average and above average their opportunity to apply their leadership expertise in RRR Australia following completion of their ARLF programs.



N=188

Figure 8

ARLF Alumni distribution by residential postcode (ARLF Alumni Survey 2017)

Figure 8 above, shows that the vast majority of alumni survey respondents live in rural, regional and remote locations. Those alumni who do live in urban areas are often in key industry organisational positions (e.g. RDCs, Ricegrowers, Cotton Australia) from which they can and do wield influence with regard to RRR Australia. Furthermore, many of those who have moved to an urban location continue to work for an agribusiness, in a government portfolio or in a consultancy role focused on RRR, or in related fields of the arts, health or education where they have become advocates for RRR. One alumnus described their commitment to RRR Australia as being:

Through engagement with industry, policy and community bodies including advisory committees as well as through a leadership position in a national organisation (CSIRO) with my position in a regional city. (2017 Alumni survey)

Indeed, some argued it has been critical to move into urban locations in order for the voice of RRR Australia to be heard by key decision-makers:

Now I am more limited with reducing investment in rural community and industry development. Changing focus and broader economic development policy with reducing resources. Impacts of centralised decision-making in capital cities has a disempowering impact on leadership capacities to make significant difference. Leaders are challenged to move to careers in capital city locations to make any significant policy or operational difference in rural or regional locations. (2017 Alumni survey)

For the alumni and the sponsors, the focus of the ARLF on rural, regional and remote Australia made it distinctive relative to other leadership programs:

There is that benefit ... I love the fact that it's [ARLF] dedicated to rural regional Australia ... the initial concept was very, very sound a ... because I think Rural and Regional Australia does require that sort of support. If the ARLF does for people what it did for me in terms of feeling people growing in the sense of their inner confidence and knowing that their contribution is ... it's following an idea. Then that's success. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C16, Consultant)

The focus on diversity of participants is intended to develop a wider sense of unity across agribusinesses, government, NGOs and communities despite often competing interests (e.g. water, coal and renewables). Bringing together emerging leaders in confronting situations with other leaders from different backgrounds, locations, industries, expertise and attitudes encourages if not requires different ways of thinking and doing that recognises complexity of the rural and regional environments in ways that then impacted on how the alumni then worked, lived and connected with each other in rural Australia.

What the rural leadership [focus of ARLF] does ... if you're into horticulture for example ... there are different issues that you need to consider – the tyranny of distance, poor telecommunications and infrastructure start to come into play ... and how they relate to your environment, as well as health, Red Cross, Indigenous – you're picking up stuff from others that you can apply. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Wool)

To address this complexity and inter-connectedness of issues across rural and urban Australia, the ARLF has included participants not directly in agribusiness on farms or in an agricultural industry within their programs.

The power of diversity in the leadership cohorts is also reflected in the composition of recent specialist programs (e.g. Young Leaders Rice) which involve stakeholders not just in rice but across all sectors in regional and rural areas in order to address shared problems as 'it's good to have that different expertise (e.g. Telstra and Westpac) there so they understand' (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Executive manager, Cotton). One alumnus from the finance sector stated:

I'm still doing the same job but it's expanded. I still look after a small area in Northern NSW but now my business stretches from Tweed Heads down to all up to Sydney, basically to the top of Sydney ... I don't really look after much agriculture at all but it's regional ... I'm regional rather than rural. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C18, Banking)

What emerges from the extant and current data is how each alumnus's commitment is enacted in practice. First, a key theme throughout the interviews and surveys was that the ARLP and other programs encouraged participants to consider not only their own industry or organisational perspective, but also the 'wider picture' at a national and international level. This meant they foregrounded rural issues whenever possible in policy and decision making:

I believe that I have contributed to Rural and Regional Australia and to government policy development and implementation over the years. (Kitchen Table Survey 2015).

I was fortunate to complete the course at a relatively young age (25), so the benefits were realised very quickly, and are continuing to be realised as my career progresses. I spent 15 years in agri-politics, and whilst I have spent the last 18 months in a different sector, a significant number of our members are based in rural, regional and remote areas, so the social policy elements of the course have been invaluable. I frequently refer to the course as life-changing, and it truly is. It provides the skills and networks to set participants up on a lifelong journey of learning and leadership, and you can't put a price on that! Already seeing improvements in my attitude towards how I structure my work and team. I have gained an enormous amount of confidence which is helping me to drive some of my key projects with senior management. The Kimberley and especially the media training in Adelaide has helped that. Being a participant in the ARLP has got more involved in my industry and is allowing me to work on challenging projects that can have an impact on industry. (Kitchen Table Survey 2015)

Secondly, a typical comment was that the ARLP opened the individual's eyes to the bigger picture and this has changed how they think about their industry and their role (and in some instances responsibilities) in the workplace, to their communities and families.

I have widened my sphere of influence to national and international level. (2017 Alumni survey)

I now operate at a more strategic level and am better able to see more of the components of the bigger picture.” (2017 Alumni survey)

“Female livestock leader of my generation, not my words. Able to influence and contribute to organisations and major issues at a local, national and global level(s). (2017 Alumni survey)

I'm in a job role that gives me a fantastic opportunity to influence things in my region. To be honest, I'm less involved in community than traditionally, but need to put effort where it can have greatest impact. (2017 Alumni survey)

Through engagement with industry, policy & community bodies including advisory committees and boards. Through executive position in a major regional university. (2017 Alumni survey)

The following table indicates how individuals self-reported on the scale of impact of the program over time.

Table 2

ARLF survey respondents' perceptions of program impact over time

	At doing ARLF program (%)	Now (%)	Change over time (%)
International	6.6%	20.5%	13.9%
National	26.9%	47.1%	20.2%
State wide	32.1%	45.2%	13.1%
Regional	43.4%	47.6%	4.2%
Town or farm/property(ies)	37.3%	35.7%	-1.6%

The scope as well as the scale of alumni impact and influence has expanded:

I now operate at a more strategic level and am better able to see more of the components of the bigger picture. Within my organisation I am now better able to manage operations and find time to develop strategic programs. Within my industry I have been recognised as having the capacity to deliver at both a regional and statewide level and am leading projects at request of state funding organisations. I am also more involved in community development. (2017 Alumni survey)

Agendas outside my industry. As a result I have been able to develop an understanding of bigger picture opportunities. (2017 Alumni survey)

Major input and application statewide. (2017 Alumni survey)

Better able to see the big picture, but having difficulty getting industry to move forward. (2017 Alumni survey)

I have gained reputation as someone that can make things happen even outside of my area of expertise. (2017 Alumni survey)

Confident that I can influence government policy regarding the mining industry - leading practise. (2017 Alumni survey)

Over the years my ability has grown to have a greater reach and to work across different sectors and industries. Influential in terms of policy development, advocacy, lobbying, governance and leadership across various sectors. (2017 Alumni survey)

Others commented that following the ARLP they have:

Widened my spheres of influence to national and international level. I'm now the Mayor of my community which was my long-term goal but have also served as Chair on two national bodies. I'm a confident and inclusive in my decision-making process and have a good work life balance. (2017 Alumni survey)

Heightened level of confidence, self-actualisation, with a larger perspective. (2017 Alumni survey)

Post program trajectories

Many ARLF graduates took different career trajectories either during or after the program. Some moved up into positional leadership roles within an organisation or into new positions. In these positions they have continued to be advocates purposefully working for RRR.

I took on senior leadership roles in my organisation and influenced policy to achieve better outcomes for Rural and Regional Victoria. (Alumni survey 2017)

I have since become head of a Government agency and able to exert considerable influence for the benefit of Rural and Regional Australians. I have also been able to contribute in a meaningful way to reducing Indigenous disadvantage. I am sure that I would not be in the position I am in today if I had not undertaken the ARLP. (Kitchen Table Survey 2015)

Hopefully much more effective. Mostly community based, but at national level (Director of MDBA for 4 years during Plan development and then implementation, and Director of Forest & Wood Products R&D Corp), and also State (member of NSW Climate Change Council, Director NSW Rural Assistance Authority, Chair NSW Regional Communities Consultative Council) as well as regional (Chair, Reg Dev Australian Committee for Riverina, Director Riverina Local Land Services. (2017 Alumni survey)

The following is an example of how this commitment by an alumnus in a state government service area brings to bear a capacity to influence resourcing and policy affecting RRR:

As a senior leader with the state [body] part of my request is that I have some sort of rural and regional involvement... No matter what my role would have been I've always asked for something to do with rural... Now having had an understanding, having worked in the area, having touched different spheres of rural regional life, all the rest, you see how valuable the role is and how it fits in the big picture. It makes me advocate for it ... we're very much a top driven down organisation where the majority of decision are made up high. So your influence is within a certain scope ... My involvement has restored parity and [provided] a separate voice. And similarly nationally... I'm involved with some national programs particularly as regards to some financial situations and advice to ensure that rural and regional Australia don't miss. Our focus is on there because delivering corporate services for isolated communities is quite complex, and exploring ... ways of doing it. It's very expensive to send professional staff out to a remote community somewhere to see one person when they can cost the same amount of price for seeing fifty people... You find the little person, you look after them and from a rural and regional perspective they're everywhere. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C13, Government)

Thirdly, others were sufficiently challenged to change jobs, some taking up entrepreneurial or consultancy activities that promote RRR industries and local economies through being innovative and by developing new rural industries or providing expertise that increases rural productivity:

After the ARLP, I became quite heavily involved in drought relief, local mental health issues, DPI, trying to bring communities together in that space. ... And through my [food business] and all those sorts of programs that I've been involved in in Central Western New South Wales and the Blue Mountains, I got involved in the native foods industry. (Interview 2016/7, TRAIL, Agriculture)

The information that I capture, provided accurate information for companies, local government and ARTC, advice to plan and invest in infrastructure. This will create change to the freight task to the domestic and export markets, lowering the freight cost to industry and making access to the global market, more efficient. (2017 Alumni survey)

Many saw their role as educating those not from the RRR Australia to counter various myths about rural life:

I think, you know, this great divide that people talk about ... sort of reflects what people feel...there is lack of knowledge, or lack of understanding, certainly, from many people. particularly in urban regions around what goes on or what the issues are that confront Rural and Regional Australia ... In fact, it is a completely different beast ... it comes down to communication a lot. And equally, I think there is just as much...misunderstanding from those who live and breathe in Rural and Regional Australia about people who live in urban areas...cities have a life of their own ... but there is something about Rural and Regional Australia that has soul. ... And that is why I have that passion. (Interview 2016/17, ARLP C12, Government)

Others considered that their role to bring about change in RRR Australia required a different approach, particularly as they were moving into retirement after a long period of significant activity.

Still good, but in a different way. Where previously I had a hands-on role and was an active catalyst for change, now I reflect more and record and communicate the narrative of change through life stories of Australians. (2017 Alumni survey)

Ability to see others point of view and the need for a narrative on my part to influence. (2017 Alumni survey)

I am still passionate and driven and bring about change, however I believe I now see more points of view and am able to bring better collaboration to change, resulting in greater buy in. (2017 Alumni survey)

Not as dominant as in the past as the next generation is stepping up. I am more localised in my endeavours to enact change, particularly in the water industry. (2017 Alumni survey)

This commitment to RRR is evident in regard to the long-term involvement of a significant number of alumni in the ARLF over 25 years (see ARLP case study, below) and in the 2008 Urbis Research and Evaluation Report (see Chapter 5), although in all sources of new and extant data reference is made to the under-utilisation of the ARLF network and resources (See also Kitchen Table Survey and Feedback and 2017 Alumni survey).

The rapidly changing environment of the past 20 years shapes the extent to which leaders can produce change in the short term, and this is often industry specific. Opportunities to apply leadership expertise broadly within the RRR sector for the 32 Meat and Livestock industry alumni post-ARLP program, for example, were varied, with greater opportunities in the areas of advocacy (20/27), and less so in of policy (16/32), environmental studentship (16/31) and in state, national, international (11/26) and community development (11/27). This is shown in Figure 9, below.

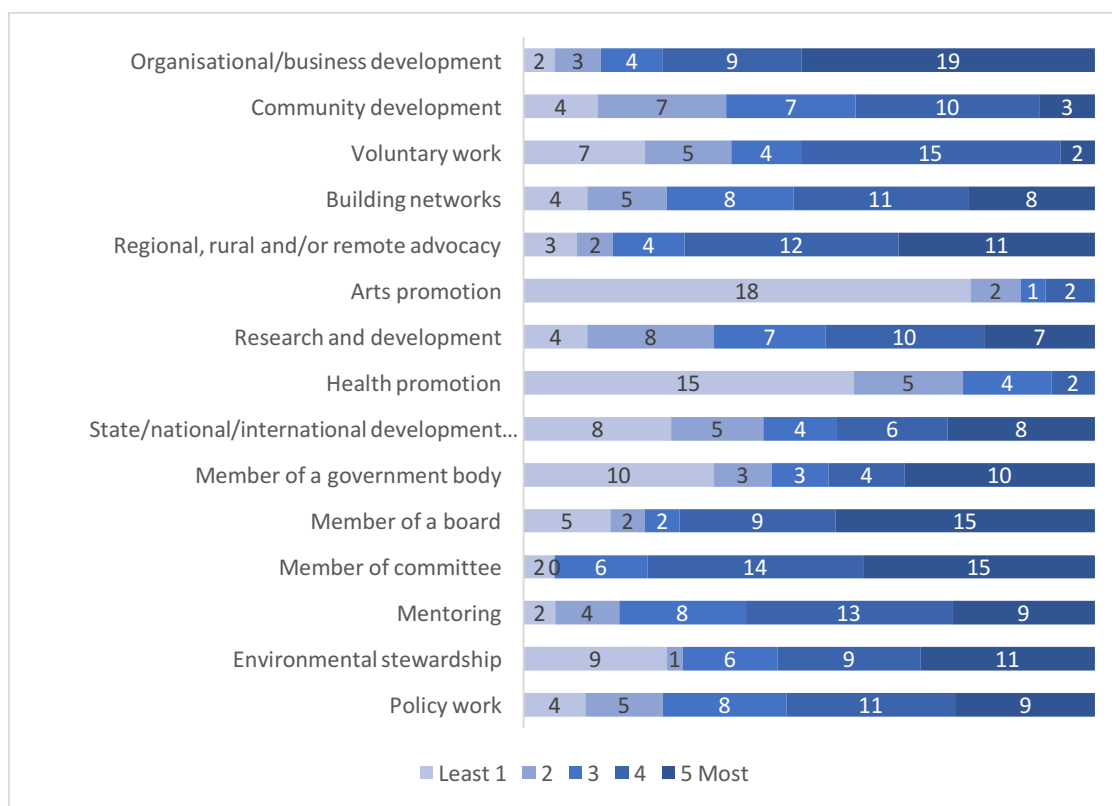


Figure 9
ARLF graduates' self-reported opportunities to apply leadership expertise in RRR, by field

Gender

There has been a significant push by the ARLF and sponsors to increase the diversity of participants, and this is evident with each cohort having greater numbers of women and Indigenous participants. However, although there are nearly equal numbers of males and females in 2017 cohorts and numbers of Indigenous participants included in each cohort where possible, the scale of leadership impact over time indicates gender differences which cannot be ignored.

Table 3*Differences in change over time in leadership impact by gender*

	Female	Male	Difference between female and male
International	11.1%	17.8%	6.7% <i>M</i>
National	13.8%	24.3%	10.5% <i>M</i>
State wide	13.9%	13.1%	0.8% <i>F</i>
Regional	4.3%	3.7%	0.6% <i>F</i>
Town or farm/property(ies)	-5.6%	0.9%	6.5% <i>M</i>

While female participants perceive they have had considerable improvement in their leadership impact at the international and national level, for male participants, greater increases have been self-reported at national and international levels. Again, some caution should be taken here as research indicates men tend to inflate self-reports.

Public good

A major aim of the ARLF is to develop in leaders a desire to contribute not only to RRR Australia but more broadly to the public good and as global citizens:

Personal efficacy in terms of a development of an individual and their thinking styles and patterns and behaviours. Public good, real in terms of ethics and examination of social good, really questioning that, and critical enquiry, so really deep and all those three things. Those are what I take home every time I think about leadership, particularly if we examine those, deep into those three areas. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni/Board ARLP C20)

This expectation goes beyond what leaders do in their workplace (whether it is on the family property, or in corporate organisations, NGO, government bureaucracy) or in their community. It is about a wider commitment to working towards the notion of a 'good society'.

Promoting public policy and good governance

The public good is about a fairer and just society and it is promoted and enacted on through a range of leadership practices that are often referred to as transformational—a term used by many of the ARLF alumni. Many alumni have gained significant experience in positional and other leadership, they have moved into consultancy. In these roles, their impact is more intangible and diffuse as they work across numerous sectors—government, corporations and industry—but with the wider public good in mind:

I have, in the last three years done quite a few jobs where I was, compared to my colleagues, quite brave in making recommendations for good change for things that are done on a national level in biosecurity or in research. So I'm quite happy to think about how it could be done and just make a recommendation. I think [about] what could be right and the best way of doing it and I suggest it ... Quite often people actually don't know because I'm doing the work, obviously, of a consultant in the background, ... but they can see new development. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni/Staff, TRAILblazer)

While each has a particular niche or specialism, issues of the role of leaders and governance are always central. When working with funders of research and development, the efficient and effective use of funds is therefore an important contribution:

Probably one of the big impacts that I have, together with my team, is to actually make sure they [their contractor] do proper measurement and evaluation of the project and get proper work plans done. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni/Staff, TRAILblazer)

Good governance is perceived as being achieved through being accountable to all stakeholders but there was also the wider question regarding the contribution and impact of the ARLF programs to the public good:

Many of the alumni speak about how building capacity of RRR Australia is also about being active citizens to contribute to the common good. Some enact their civic responsibility through being involved in a range of community activities, as was one Queensland alumni in cohort 22 of the ARLP: sports groups, social groups, arts groups, community development groups, advocacy groups, regional development agendas, economic development agendas, all those sort of things. I'm a fairly active citizen myself. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Health)

What many drew from the ARLP course was a new perspective; one understood that they were privileged in terms of their experience and current position within society. This imparted to them an ethical responsibility to use that privilege for the benefit of others:

Realistically we're not all going to change the world but we just all need to be perhaps slightly better people and more understanding and you know more flexible and all of those sorts of things which bit by bit makes the community better as well. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C13, Agriculture)

Because I just know how incredibly privileged I've been to have some of the opportunities and I want others to have opportunities, to be the best that they can be. And I ... look at where I invest my energy, it's all driven by that because if you can invest in people, then good things happen. It's when people are uninvested in other people, then things go off the rail. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C11, Not for Profit)

Civic responsibility is also about investing an individual's time, energy and resources in people where there are no benefits for themselves. Contribution to the public good is also about demonstrating cultural and social responsibility

I'm 38 and did the course 15-odd years ago. For me it was leading to a role that was going to combine my passion for social justice issues with a connection back to the land and knowing that a third of the food we distribute through Foodbank Australia goes back into rural communities, knowing that farmers play such an integral role in the food we are able to provide – we do full breakfast programs with fresh fruit and vegetables sourced from amazingly generous farmers. For me, this is my rural communities background combining with social justice. It's really fabulous in that respect. It's also incredibly challenging because culturally this organisation needs some serious work – not just our organisation, but the states as well – I'm going to be drawing heavily on what I learned in the course but have also already started the phone calls back to some of my colleagues from course 10 going 'I've got a live one here – how am I going to handle this one'... It's really interesting that a lot of the social justice work we did during the Sydney session of our course – we spent a night on the streets, did some work with Paul Moulds and the Salvos – and interestingly he's on the board of Foodbank New South Wales. I was at a meeting last week and went 'I know you from way back when!' It's really fascinating for me that a lot of the program content around social justice is actually coming to light right now for me. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C10, Not for Profit)

When questioned about whether the program had a public or community benefit:

But most of us go back and there's a call to action that you go and contribute for the greater good of other apart and beyond you professionally. So people will often rocket in from ... and be candidates for an astronaut program, you know, it's horrendous. ... We get them and go, 'That's great, what are you doing for community? How do you contribute?'. So, ... we're currently mentoring a young fellow in Brisbane who is setting up a cocoa growing cooperative in one of the islands in the Solomon Islands. He's also the Chair of the Hostel's Association, for regional kids to stay in hostels around WA. And lots of Aboriginal kids as well. I've been working, volunteering with the WA Society, assisting them in the growth of the bee-keeping amateurs and the bio security risks – that presents to the professionals as a result of the flow-hive image. So that ranged from a cohort of 50 to over 500 in under a year and they were struggling strategically. I helped with ... really basic strategic planning. All pro bono. [Another] one of the graduates is running a leadership program for young Aboriginal kids in the community, and on Tuesday two weeks' time I'll be up there for the day. I'll pull into [Native Title group], call in on a young fellow and set up a mentoring relationship with him. It's easy for me, I'm in an out of the office [role], a think tank. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C17, Executive manager, Government)

They see their role as making for a better society generally and RRR Australia is integral to that common project. This commitment to the public good is evident within the meat and livestock industry, which is Australia wide:

Quite simply make sure that common sense prevails in everything I have to do with, most things are not rocket science, we just need to be able to take out people's agendas or emotion and you'll get to a common-sense outcome. (2017 Alumni survey, Meat and Livestock)

One of the most important areas at present is educating the town and city people and school children that every family needs a farmer. (2017 Alumni survey, Meat and Livestock).

On a community level, it is more about supporting people and groups more effectively. (2017 Alumni survey, Meat and Livestock)

I wish to continue capturing Australian stories that inspire others and to mentor young people to live to their full potential. (2017 Alumni survey)

The alumni also saw their role as being at the forefront to bring about transformative change at all levels of society and in key areas ranging from water management, climate change, technology, infrastructure and education that benefit all:

Influence public awareness of real strategic importance of a viable regional sector, long term planning and building of assets or infrastructure in local community education within industry. (2017 Alumni survey, Meat and Livestock)

Leading change adaptation, particularly in social economic development of regional communities. (2017 Alumni survey, Meat and Livestock)

Increased collaboration, openness to diversity and change, fairer access to technology in regional areas. (2017 Alumni survey, Meat and Livestock)

Australian Farmers Policy effectiveness on big issues such as climate change. (2017 Alumni survey, Meat and Livestock)

Irrigation water usage is the biggest topic in our area. I am engaged with a member owned company to facilitate actions to keep water for local agricultural use. (2017 Alumni survey, Meat and Livestock)

A theme throughout was the need for greater inclusiveness within communities through modelling leadership and seeking organisational and cultural change:

Increase participation and recognition of under-represented demographics in agriculture including young people and women. Empower people to be innovative and think more positively about change. Support diversity by being more inclusive and accepting of gender and cultural differences. Empowering others to think about what can be achieved not what can't be changed. (2017 Alumni survey, Meat and Livestock)

Greater participation by women in management of rural businesses; increased government recognition and funding in rural, regional and remote Australia. (2017 Alumni survey, Meat and Livestock)

Often comments were littered with references to the common good and fairness. These are indicative of the alumni's wider commitment to the public good. Such comments were 'I would like to assist in restoring mining's status in the regional communities where we operate as positive influencers on community resilience', 'community responsibility', 'creating community events' and 'working cohesively for the region rather than divided'. Perhaps the commitment to beyond RRR Australia is summed up by two alumni: 'It's about being fair to all, where the vast majority benefit in the long run or 'Just for the common good'.

4.2 Summary

There was a strong sense among the alumni who responded to the 2017 survey and interviews as well as being evident from extant data that ARLF programs provided a strong transformative imperative.

When asked where they wished to focus their leadership skills in the future, a major theme was environmental sustainability. Again, many of the alumni have been working in environmental sustainability in specific industries over time: I' introduced the cotton industry to environmental management systems that became the Best Management Plan in 2010' (2017 Alumni survey). Others' plans for the future related to RRR Australia included:

Table 4

Focus of future leadership

Alumni survey responses
Revolutionising how we think about environmental sustainability
Conserving endangered wildlife both in Australia and worldwide
Energy and water efficiency
Environmental sustainability and nature conservation
Business and environmental sustainability balanced by commercial feasibility
Economic, environmental sustainability for the sector, culture, diversity, health, career paths, connections throughout the value chain, research and development, marketing
Continue the reform/change agenda in water to benefit society, environment and individuals.
Sustainability and social license to operate in Fishing related activities
Renewable timber industry for Tasmania like Europe
Irrigation water usage is the biggest topic in our area. I am engaged with a member owned company to facilitate actions to keep water for local agricultural use
Continue the industry's world leading animal welfare initiatives, decoupling industry as much as possible from the regulatory environment to a co-regulatory environment where possible.

The core work of many of the alumni has now focused on developing environmental sustainable policies and practices, as these can no longer be separated from agribusiness, corporate and community sustainability in RRR Australia.

4.3 Case study: Long-term benefits of the Australian Rural Leadership Program

This case study draws on data from the 2017 alumni survey and interview responses to focus on what the alumni identified as the contribution of the Australian Rural Leadership Program (ARLP) to their leadership practice over the period of their career. The ARLP has been the flagship course for the ARLF since it was established in 1992. The ARLP was modelled on a US rural leadership development program and funded through initiative of the RIRDC when funds were readily available to build capacity in the rural sector. The principles of the ARLF, which have developed over the 25 years and are drawn from contemporary research in the field, now inform all ARLF programs. This case study considers how individual alumni understand and enact leadership following completion of the ARLP as translated into benefits for and impact on their community, organisation and/or industry. It identifies how, for the individual graduate respondents, their capacity to be a change agent was enhanced as a consequence of the ARLP and how this capacity has been mobilised through the relationships and networks that were established during and after their participation in the ARLP.

The following exemplars have been selected on the basis that they are a representative sample of participant stories as to their experience of the ARLP. The case draws from interviews with 37 graduates of the ARLP, their current CVs, and the final reports and survey responses of individual graduates from cohorts 11 to 23 made to the ARLF and to their sponsor organisation. This retrospective analysis is possible because the sample of respondents to this 2017 Deakin study includes at least one participant from each of the 23 ARLP cohorts, although follow-up data were collected including with respect to impact and career trajectories over time. The report therefore also considers the extent to which learnings from the program can be attributed to later life and career trajectories. In so doing, the analysis focuses on impact understood as the capacity to bring about change through leadership in the public sector, agribusinesses and community.

4.3.1 Long-term commitment to facilitating change over time

Early participants in the first five cohorts of the ARLP from (1993-2003) considered themselves to be part of an evolving program or ‘guinea pigs’ — a process which was both stimulating and demanding — as the philosophy and nature of the program was being fully developed. For many, this experience has led to long-term engagement with and commitment to the ARLF.

As an initiator of the program, Snow, an academic researcher, was Deputy Chair (1990-3) of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) in 1985. The RIRDC’s role was to bring research to new rural industries ask multi-industry questions and engage through research with topics of national interest. The rationale for establishing the ARLF was, in this context, not how to get farmers to adopt research but more about ‘training some very capable rural leaders who would represent their industries and their regions strongly to government and industry bodies and drive research that way’ through a specific rural leadership program. After five years on the ARLF Board, Snow became Chief Scientist for the Department of Agriculture, then a Professor and Dean of Agriculture, only to return to the ARLF Board in 2010 with a desire to reinvigorate the alumni network or Leaders Network.

He had been active in the development of an earlier ARLF Graduate Association and he considered it was important for the ARLF to develop a more structured form of association, which would mobilise the now extensive pool of graduate talent.

Many in the first five cohorts continue to play central roles in the ARLF and remain key figures in the RRR sector nationally and internationally, often with movement across public and private sectors, government (RDCs) and non-government organisations, but where they have also been advocates for and decision-makers about sponsoring the ARLF programs as well as being actively engaged in identifying and mentoring ALRP participants.

A participant in cohort 1 in 1992, *Drew had moved from commercial production and farming into a community oriented business. At the time of him doing the ARLP, Drew was Divisional Manager of Kewpie Pig Enterprises Pty Ltd and manager of multi -site pig production enterprise, consisting of both company owned and contract piggery units. He was Director and Divisional Manager of a large family business, the Kewpie Group of Companies, which was a large business group vertically integrated within the Stockfeed Milling and Pig Meat Production Industry (from paddock to plate). After the ARLP course he changed career in 1994-95 to become a self-employed owner of The Clever Shopper, which operated a 'Shop from Home Grocery Shopping Service' in the Rockhampton community. He again promoted community development within the region during 1995-97 as Office Manager for Agtour Australia Pty Ltd, a niche travel company offering 'agricultural themed' travel experiences to domestic and international clientele. This community based focus continued in 1999 when he became Executive Officer for CQ Friendly Society Ltd operating three Community Pharmacies in Rockhampton. During this time, the Friendly Society cemented itself as an important community health resource and assured its future principally by moving from a loss-making enterprise to one that is continually growing and is currently generating record annual surpluses. When asked whether he still thought about the ARLP and what he gained from it he responded:

If it wasn't for the program I wouldn't be undertaking this role as the Queensland representative on this national association that represents all the Friendly Society-type pharmacies. [The program] gave me ... not just the confidence and the ability, but also the drive to do that. If you want the rural and regional Australia to prosper, I'm the CEO of an organisation that's turned over about \$8 million a year, and I put that down to three things: one is my education, two is my upbringing within a family business environment, and the third one is skills that came through the ARLP to enable me to be a successful CEO. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C1, Executive manager, Health)

Another from Cohort 8, *Jake was Executive Director of the Eminent Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory after being in the industry for seven years and the previous 20 years with Telstra. He was encouraged by a cohort 1 graduate and the previous Executive Director to do the ARLP. He was funded by the FDRC for both ARLP and later for TRAILblazers, the latter course because he was 'looking for a recharge ... something to rekindle the fire following on from the ARLP'. The FDRC asked him to do the ARLP because they wanted someone to assess it for its benefits, future prospects regarding continuing to sponsorship. He considered that the '[ARLP] challenged me personally ... and it exposed me, opened me up to you know there's a big bright world out there ... And challenged [my] thinking'. Jake reflects that the course gave him 'a greater understanding of myself. And I think it gave me the enthusiasm to pursue some of these challenging roles'. Evidence of his impact was that he moved from Darwin to Brisbane with the recreational fishing industry and then into commercial fishing industry as an advocate, representative and lobbyist located in WA.

He attributes this directly to the ARLP as having:

Inspired me to say well you know you can make a difference if you really put your head down and take on the challenges and be prepared to step forward and lead and that's what it's all about...its leadership and it's given me that confidence to – some might say bit too cocky but the confidence to have a crack and the confidence to say 'no'. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni/Sponsor C8, Fishing)

Jake is now the CEO of the Fisheries RDC. 'A measure of some success, is being able to stick around for three-and-a-half years when there's been nine [CEOs] in 10 years'. He has undertaken significant structural adjustments to the organisation with positive feedback from the Board and other sources. But he also listens to criticism 'because from people who don't embrace change and this industry is changing you know rapidly and people have got to keep up with it. I go back to the ARLP, you know you can do things, just a matter of putting your head down and putting your shoulder to the wheel and taking the punches or roll with the punches". He considered the media training was just outstanding and he has used similar approaches with his staff, undertaking a refresher, as the media is so critical for his work. The ARLP's 'given me the tools and the confidence to address fairly delicate issues that you got to deal with sometimes in the media in this game, sharks being one'. A particular long-term benefit over 16 years has been that:

You have immediately got an alumni there that you can go to and ... there are 240 graduates after course 8. So you can ring any one of those and once you say you're a graduate from the ARLP – immediately you're a friend. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni/Sponsor C8, Fishing)

He considered that the ARLP 'gives you access to people that you know maybe not help you directly but can steer you to someone who can'. In terms of impact on his leadership practice he felt the ARLP:

Made me lift my eyes up to the horizon rather than look at my feet and I've tried to then instil that into my work. First up was a committee of management in Darwin that I worked to and tried to then get them, lift them up so that they were looking at you know what was happening today before over what was going to happen in the next you know two for three, five, ten years. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni/Sponsor C8, Fishing)

Coming from an agricultural background, growing up on a small dairy farm in north New South Wales and once a primary producer meant he had a close relationship with other CEOs in agriculture or primary industries in WA. He meets regularly with WA farmers, Wines WA and WA Grains. At the same time, having done the ARLP, he felt TRAILblazers was repetitive, possibly because it was not intended as a refresher course but for more experienced and high-level leaders. In this instance, the cohort mix was not quite right in terms of encouraging interaction and it is noted that this program is currently not on offer.

4.3.2 Advocacy

Members of the Board and CEOs of the ARLF (the last CEO being a graduate) were attracted to the organisation because of its reputation and also because they had witnessed on the ground and in the rural policy sector, industries and communities, the work of many of its graduates and advocacy. As one ARLF Board member, not a Fellow, summarised:

I know people who have done the course and have valued it highly. I know people who have served on the board in the past, and I also know people who have supported the organisation in a philanthropic sense. I could see the value that those people had placed upon the institution and the organisation, as being a critical part of the landscape for empowering regional and rural communities, to adapt change – adapt to change. (Interview 2016/17, Board)

This ongoing engagement with the ARLF by individuals as they move through different stages of their career signals how these graduates and Board members have played an advocacy role for agribusiness and worked in governments and other organisations to build RRR capacity. Likewise, graduates are called upon within their industry and by the ARLF to advocate:

They ask the ARLP graduates at different times to present to different committees, they ask them to mentor other people in the industry. They've done some – and they've ebbed and flowed as they've had a time to focus on that too – but they've done some great things. (Interview 2016/17, Staff/Board)

A more recent trend is that with declining funds, organisations are seeking to capitalise on the ARLF pool of talent they have within their organisations through their corporate planning and professional development processes:

I would say that [organisation name] also do some good things with their supporting staff and they see it as part of their senior leadership development process and they've got long term serving staff in the system. They would probably say they can do more; the staff, the alumni themselves. [Organisation name] has the ARLP very well integrated into their major development plan. (Interview 2016/17, Staff/Board)

Meat and Livestock Australia, a long-term investor in the ARLP, have in-house and out-sourced leadership programs, as do most of the ARLF partners. Within the last two years there have been, with reduced income and organisational reform process moves, moves within the organisation to better manage talent and align leadership development to organisational aims. The manager in charge of capacity building commented that she had been made aware of the ARLP because it was spoken of as being extremely successful. Earlier, the practice in the MLA 'to bring together their alumni to help – instead of paying a consultant – asked the alumni group to do their moon-shots for the future, kind of, what are the opportunities and challenges, and paid them a sitting fee' (Interview 2016/17, Staff/Board). Now, as a consequence of the recent organisational reform, the manager of capacity building wished to better use the ARLP graduates as an asset:

The ARLF supplied me with all the names and contact details for all the past scholars in MLA and I started digging a bit deeper into that group and inviting them to advocacy workshops and events ... to tap into some of that talent that is already there that we don't have to necessarily retrain. (Interview 2016/17, Meat/Livestock)

This has meant a greater desire to align the ARLP scholarships more closely to the MLA strategic planning, which would require for the direct report manager in the MLA to have:

Greater input on selection as we're very much steering things a lot more in line with the meat industry's strategic plan, which is a five year plan ... that's a big part of my remit is to be able to identify that leadership. (Interview 2016/17, Meat/Livestock)

In the fisheries industry there have been similar strategies mobilised to capitalise on graduate expertise. As stated by a member of the Department of Sustainability and Environment and an ARLP graduate *Lee, the course 'extended my thinking about a whole range of issues that I'd never thought about before'.

Our program – each program – and I think that continues to this day – it usually has a theme running all the way through it. Ours was a concentration on the fisheries industry, and it was just so mind-blowing, all of that, I suppose, industry, but looking at it not just from Australia’s perspective, but a global perspective. So we spent a couple of – period – time in Fiji and in Nouméa as part of the program with the local indigenous people, and in one area the effects of the – particularly New Caledonia – the effects of the nickel mining by the French in the reef areas on the prawn industry by the Kanak people, the indigenous people. So, just sort of broadening things that you don’t even think about. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C10, Government)

The Ricegrowers Association (See rice case study, section 7) is making similar moves to bring together graduates from ARLP and other ARLF programs. These are initial moves to mobilise the expertise of the ARLF graduates as resources to be used more strategically within organisations and industry.

4.3.3 Recognising and responding to complexity

Over time the Fellows of the ARLP have had diffuse and ubiquitous but powerful influence both within and across different agribusinesses, public and private sectors, government and community. This has occurred in a number of ways, primarily by developing capacity within an increasingly complex network of rural industries. A common thread throughout the ARLP cohort reports and interviews was the impact of the meetings and workshops in Canberra around governance and how a better understanding of politics and policymaking enable them to engage with politicians regarding RRR:

It did help me like going to parliament house and all that was an eye opener. And it kind of made me see where all our issues go to because I’d never been there before. And when I came back it did help me. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

As the career pathway of each graduate varied considerably, the scope and scale of impact also varied. The survey data indicated that many remained on the family property but expanded their influence through working with various industry organisations such as the RGA, Cotton Australia (see cotton case study, section 5). Some moved out of organisations into consultancy roles where their influence spread across industry sectors by encouraging interagency dialogue and programs and policy development. As noted earlier, others moved to urban positions where they could wield influence for RRR.

This variability as to the differing nature and scope of impact in terms of how it addressed complexity is exemplified in the work of a Fellow from cohort 9. She had been on a family sheep, cattle, and crop property during which time she wrote training materials. She then became CEO of an organisation that looked after rural and remote doctors undertaking training and workforce projects to do with rural communities in the south-east of South

Australia and partly across Victoria. As a consequence, she developed innovative national safety strategies for farms and rural roads and worked with trainee doctors. At this point she was told she should apply for the ARLP. Her experience of the program, which she said has had a lasting impact, is summarised below:

The Kimberley is very much about that, about how you are and how you interact with others and how you can identify things that are in your circle of influence ... But you also learnt a lot about people from agriculture, from banking, from health, local government, from government departments so it really is quite broad and it gives people an opportunity to broaden their networks, their insight into things. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C9, Government)

As do many of the earlier ARLP graduates who have moved through positional leadership in a range of organisations over the 20 years, she is now living in Sydney. Despite this, she remains committed to the rural sector in her position as CEO of a medical technology company in which she has worked with the Minister on private health insurance reform.

The private health insurers have not provided any support for rural patients that are covered by private health insurance ... I really pushed the Minister who committed \$2.2 million at the last election to reform the private health packages available to policy holders and one of them is rural. Now, am I the catalyst for the whole thing? I don't know. But it's really important so there is now going to be a committee. Because most rural people have to go to a public hospital as a private patient but the facility is the same as if it was public and in fact rural hospitals don't have the same services. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C9, Government).

Her advocacy for the rural sector continued into her own education when she studied for an international MBA at the Melbourne Business School. She has now developed, through the business school, a rural scholarship with the aim to bring in rural students. Its graduates have moved into other business schools where she speaks about the rural components and not-for-profit communities. She maintains connections with other ARLF people and calls on the ARLF to ask 'do you know somebody who ... because I'd really like to draw some health people together to find out more about what should be in a rural policy ... ask them what they believe a rural private health insurance policy should offer that it doesn't offer at the moment, from their own experience'. Her expertise in health also led her to be on the board of the Farmers' Federation: 'I used to deal with mental health because there were a lot of suicides, I used to deal with roads, anything that has to do with infrastructure, telecommunications'. For her, the ARLP course means that:

I think I'm probably very conscious that I just want to keep on doing things for rural ... By keeping in touch with the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation I know what they're doing, [and] I keep thinking about rural, I keep focusing on rural, I keep making sure that I contribute. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C9, Government)

Regardless of location of residence or position, the ARLF is a focal point for its graduates.

4.3.4 Affecting and constructing rural capacity building with and through government

The now federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources was the first partner with the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation in establishing the ARLF in 1992. The Department continues to sponsor both individuals within government and general scholarships. Individuals are nominated by the department and the external scholarships are left open but selection for both is left to the ARLF against ARLP selection criteria.

In federal and state departments, despite frequent restructuring over the past 20 years, there is now a number of ARLP alumni, many of them in top level positional leadership at Senior Executive Service (SES) making policy and working with stakeholders across all rural industry and community sectors. The long-term aim of the Department in sponsoring the ARLF has been to build capacity in other industries and not just in government. As a sponsor, they have not been able to, or even wish to, maintain contact with graduates or go to all events. One of the managers responsible for the funding stated:

If people out there are doing good things we're getting value for it because we interact with them in other ways. So, just because we aren't close to our graduates in the same sense that NAB or somebody might be we see that they are having an effect. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C4, Executive manager, Government)

The ARLF leadership program directly aligns with this department's priorities in terms of relating to industry, rural capacity building, social welfare programs, regional natural resource management and land care networks (DAWR, 2017). The alumni in SES from earlier cohorts continue to present to ARLP cohort groups and therefore gain a sense of how the program has changed since they had participated. They have worked with the ARLF to create greater diversity of participants within the ARLP through targeted sponsorship – a 'culturally linguistically diverse female or in other words a woman in ag, often indigenous and in the department' – so as to change the profile of leadership in agriculture.

Another at SES level had, before entering cohort 4, previous experience as a member of Department of Agriculture in presenting to ARLF to 'help the people who were on the course understand how government worked'. In the 18 months during the course he was promoted into the SES and has had another promotion since. 'Personally, I think the course offered me a sort of opportunity to reflect on myself and where I was going and what I could do'. For him, leadership in SES meant he was reliant on others to provide correct information, and therefore you have to 'use leadership and management and organisational skills rather than your sheer own personal knowledge and capacity', which the ARLP provided. His involvement in the ARLP was particularly useful at the time as his role was in 'natural resource management which was about capacity building' and in the period when there was a privatisation of the wheat board. His involvement as a bureaucrat with the ARLP meant 'connections with farmers and being able to be treated as credible'.

Currently, in the federal Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, these alumni continue to meet informally and are actively involved in identifying and mentoring others within their departments to apply. They have seen in most ARLP graduates observable changes

in values and leadership practices. As an alumnus in an SES position argued, agriculture is a fascinating area because it's 'above its weight' politically but the image often portrayed is not the reality'. Now in the SES in another federal Department, she considered the ARLP 'did build on my skill set and it also made me more aware of my weaknesses and development, so the things I needed to work on, as well as my strengths'. Her manager noted this and had commented on her change.

4.3.5 Short-term benefits: Ethical leadership

A second member of the department for 17 years, *Tom, knew about the ARLP but felt it was not right for him at the time until 2015. He had moved up through the department to be head of HR, which made him responsible for one aspect of the ARLP recruitment. He was mentored and nominated by two ARLP alumni who he considered to be 'paragons of the ARLP in this department ... and great champions of the program here'.

I was at a point I think I can contribute more, looking for a way to challenge myself in a different kind of way. The timing worked out for me with children and I wanted to have the right head space to commit to it. It was a challenging interview... much more about your ethics and your leadership and your aspirations and motivations. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government)

Tom observed from his colleagues that 'everyone seems to get something quite different out of it'. For him, the benefit was less about the experience of leadership, as he already managed a team of 60-odd people and was, instead, more about ethics-based leadership that challenged his thinking and approach and made him much less passive. Personally, he felt he was calmer, more focused and looking to have a better life-work balance. He said it took time to digest the learning he gained as he perhaps had higher expectations as 'I wasn't seeing the big personal change that people talked about. I think the more I reflect on all the bits and pieces that I've done means that I am changing my perspective' (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government). With regard to his approach to change he responded:

We learn how to make changes within the parameters of what we can change. I believe yes, I've literally taken away a great deal from the program that I'm able to use here in the workplace that is actually changing me, the way I work with other people ... I talk more about how people – the emotive side – rather than just task oriented focus. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government)

At the state level within government there were similar connections.

A fellow cohort 22 participant, funded by the Fisheries RDC, has led the development of the national Marine NRM Plan development for OceanWatch in a stakeholder-led planning process. For her the Sydney/Canberra Session 3 on ethics, influence and social leadership was the most energising.

Working for non-government organisations in the social/environment field, she felt this aspect of the course was probably the most relevant and fit to her work/life role, and she relished the opportunity to explore these issues with others. She was very concerned to witness some of her cohort struggle with the issues at hand, and realised that many lacked knowledge and awareness of the socio-political issues in major Australian cities. Describing herself as a values-driven person, she benefited by gaining a better understanding of how others perceive the world, their drivers and concerns, and has since been better equipped to draw out the commonalities.

Also in Cohort 22 was a male sponsored by the Victorian Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. Since completing the ARLP he has been promoted to Director level and his responsibilities now include biosecurity. As Director, his first action was to establish a leadership team and along with other Branch Directors he has actively participated in a broader Divisional leadership team for agriculture services and biosecurity operations across Victoria. This role has been about establishing the vision and strategic direction for the Branch and associated priorities and plans. He stated:

I have consciously applied the learnings I have experienced during the program on an almost weekly, if not daily, basis in my workplace. The approach I have taken to the establishment and function of our Branch leadership team is something that has been shaped to a large extent by my experiences throughout my time in the program, as is the approach I have sought to undertake in engaging with branch staff and other internal and external stakeholders. This has provided positive results and a positive environment for further development of staff and ideas. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government)

In particular, he learnt about situational leadership and his perspective broadened. He tries to practice ethical decision-making in the workplace with a focus on integrity, 'hastening less' and being inclusive and collaborative. He sets aside dedicated time each week for critical reflection. His next focus is on leadership development on others where he is applying the knowledge and skills he experienced during the ARLP. The timing of the program was opportune as it gave him the skills he needed. But as with others, the program also led him to reflect on his life outside the workplace where he has consciously sought to foster personal relationships.

A female funded by Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation (RIRDC) in cohort 22 considered the course made her 'Go outside your comfort zone but not when core values are in conflict'. She held to what she thought were important values. Since then she has researched and published a report on alternative business and financing models for the sheep industry for those looking to grow their business anywhere along the supply chain.

This was to encourage a change in thinking on how a business can be managed and be financed to grow. She was recently approached by 3 farmers and an Australian quinoa business to work with them in an Executive Officer role which covers operations across the supply chain from research, development, processing through to retail with huge growth

potential globally in the health food sector. She remains involved in child related community groups and activities and assists on her husband's family farm.

The analysis of these cohorts indicated there were some in which the dynamic was awkward while other cohorts had stronger synergy and remained connected to each other. Course 10 had a particular energy that has been maintained.

I think one of the things and I have relied on ... is an alumni of participants – within the department, but also the connections within our course. I mean, I only had conversations with [fellow alumni] yesterday when three of us were in Canberra ... But I think I've used the network quite a bit, particularly in my own course, but occasionally I've extended out and just sought, has anybody done anything like this before or whatever, and got contact back. I utilize the networks. Probably not as much these days as I used to, and there's a whole lot of reasons for that now, but in my work within the community, particularly around some of the work in leading the organisation that I was chair of the board of, through significant change and massive increase in size. But conversely, it was really helpful in – in me being able to contact a few people, just to get a sense of whether my actions were reasonable in a time of significant negative change. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C10, Government)

4.3.6 Valuing and working with others while building networks of influence

The diversity of the experience and participants in the program led to a greater spread of networks inside as well as outside an industry with a diffusion of connections. For a Department of Agriculture SES, the ARLP course provided:

An opportunity to reflect on myself and where I was going and what I could do. It gave me a lot of networks so I could do things a bit better ... it just gave me some insights into how to work with farm organisations, rural groups, and ways into them ... working in rural and regional Australia, and with agriculture, and the training provided an opportunity to develop my own leadership skills, my own networks into rural Australia ... It gave me a lot of networks so I could do things a bit better. After I'd done the course people seemed to think I knew everybody. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C4, Executive manager, Government)

All the ARLP alumni at SES level interviewed within the department mentioned how they have frequent discussions with fellow alumni based on 'Chatham House Rule' to sound out an idea or strategy. This network provided social support but also a space to test ideas: 'You trust your people in your cohort because you spend a lot of time with them in difficult situations, and everyone's quite open about their history and where they're from, and those types of things, and that's a powerful shared experience'. The networks and knowledge he gained in the course meant that he could 'ring people up' and be able to get some real information out of them when he did work with rural adjustment and water reform. 'The rural leadership program in those days had been rich with people who worked in the cotton industry, the irrigation industry and grains and so those contacts actually mattered'.

As a key policymaker he could identify where the ARLF graduates had significant impact on a region—naming individuals in North Eastern Victoria and in Narrabri whom he continues to contact and in the dairy and beef industries (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C4, Executive manager, Government).

These networks of influence worked across the agro-political sphere with one graduate becoming a Federal Minister and another a member of federal parliament. The latter was encouraged to apply by her colleagues because:

They saw me working with women in agriculture. They thought we need more women in agriculture. The leadership course ... would be a good opportunity for both me and the course itself. It was very male dominated, army led. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C3, Agriculture)

The ARLP course gave her confidence and the network. 'I already had really extensive networks but I got another network when I did the course'. In particular, she has participated actively as an alumnus and learned more experientially post course through the connections to the ARLF. This involved running alumni conferences, organizing speakers and 'putting the topic of leadership into a rural context'. She initiated an award for the Rural Leader of the Year, which she won and also nominated other people for. She has been a guest speaker at international conferences and learned a lot about how other countries focus on leadership. Consequently, more than 20 years ago she established a 'consultancy company working in leadership and using much of the stuff I'd learned through the ARLP and the networks prior to standing for and winning a seat in Federal Parliament'. With regard to her professional work in community development: 'I do that locally. I do it regionally. I do it nationally. I do it internationally. I do it in industry. I do it in business. I do it in church groups. I do it wherever – all over the place'. She maintains an ongoing professional relationship with the ARLF on common matters of interest. The role of many of the ARLP graduates in agro-politics is evident, for example, in the Queensland Farming Federation, a long-term sponsor of the ARLP.

The ARLP continues to provide opportunities to build networks of influence between industry and government. Recent participants continue to view the ARLP as providing access to networks within and across their industries. *Greg from Cohort 22 was typical. From a background in NT in Indigenous health, education, employment and justice he considered the ARLP expanded his outlook beyond the bureaucracy:

So, looking for ways that I can contribute just a bit more on issues of social importance to the country. So rather than just producing the rigid stuff that I produce here at work, it's actually what is the role of this organisation – you being a leader across the economy, across the community, and things like that and how do we do that type of thing? ... It's about ... modelling the organisation that I want to be a leader of. So I've got quite a different approach now to how I deal with flexibility – how we approach recruitment, all those kind of things. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government)

These networks have flow on effects at the personal, organisational, community and national levels. While there is significant interaction between alumni and various graduates within government, the Department alumnus considered these networks were not mobilised as much as they should be. However, they certainly go to the ARLF network when they 'implement policies or appoint people to boards or things like that, you have a network of people who are active within the industry or community or whatever else, who can really guide some of your thinking'. He was concerned that there were lost opportunities with the move of graduation from Canberra as sponsors and politicians alike would attend because they would be able to speak with each other and the ARLF graduates could meet policymakers.

4.3.7 Community activity

The above narratives indicate the impact of ARLP graduate leadership at the organisational and policy level. At the grassroots, there is also significant community activism, which draws on the skills and networks of the ARLF. Despite the capacity of ARLF graduates in government to work across industries and with NGOS, there remains a view that local community activity is more likely to have the greatest impact:

I think there is a lot of well-intentioned people in government and government agencies that want to do the right thing, particularly by small regional communities. But despite the best intentions, a lot of their endeavours are very clumsy, and fail to have a good impact, because these things are just better done and generated and delivered and implemented by local communities. (Interview 2016/17, Board)

Steve (pseudonym), a farmer in cohort 8, exemplified how the ARLP program offered long term benefits enhancing leadership dispositions, skills and drive with significant outcomes for his industry and community. Steve had already undertaken prior leadership programs (Queens Trust in 1994); was actively involved with NSW Young Farmers group; created and led Youth Link that aimed to educate young NSW farmers in new ideas; and set up a sponsored 2-3 day think tank for young rural people to 'inoculate them with ideas'. When involved in the 'water wars' in his region during the 1990s he was encouraged by a cohort 1 alumnus to apply to undertake the ARLP. Once in the program, he realised that his projects mirrored the ARLF by bringing in high profile speakers, exposing participants to ideas and solutions and undertaking workshops that they took back to community.

The ARLP was, he stated, 'a fantastic experience'. While his cohort included a lot of public servants which was 'good and bad in some ways' it also had a 'good cross section' generally. The 'Indigenous content was excellent' and overall 'the whole experience was powerful and one that has lasted for my life'. As with nearly all ARLP participants, the Kimberly experience was the 'most powerful learning experience you can go through...sharing leadership with amazing people' and had profound effect in terms of self-discovery. He considered the facilitators were very good and commended the fantastic quality of presenters brought in 'not just someone being paid but who really believes they can help. And because they are good you respect them and listen'. The Canberra experience was of significant value for him, although he would have liked more information as to how to 'learn the game' of lobbying. The whole course:

Opened me up—my mind—got rid of lot of prejudices and baggage. It led to a big change in that I saw leadership not from the front, but how to do it with others. Great leadership is where you empower group of people to gain ownership, let them discover and act as a mentor...and this is what the ARLF did. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Cotton)

He also changed his life-work balance by restricting his seven-day work time to be with his young family more by moving the office away from home ... 'It made me think what was important, helped my marriage and bringing up children'. While he was already an active leader in the community, the course made him more aware and how to do it more effectively. It was also distinctive: 'The ARLP is over 60 days and 18 months – it continues to shore up and strengthen learnings as you do it together as a group. That makes it a permanent learning experience'.

When asked what could be attributed to the ARLP over the long term he identified how he gained new tools with ongoing benefits — communication skills, media training, negotiation skills 'which I still draw on today'. 'What I liked was being exposed to ourselves and learning about ourselves and then being provided with skills and environment on how to use or develop new skills'. Bringing in top level trainers 'lifted us all'. He continues to use these skills 20 years on and shares them with others. 'I still have the ARLF resources such as the media releases about how to develop key messages ... which I photocopy and send out'.

He continues to 'network with people from the cohort ... some more than others as some are more active ... Some I ring for advice as a sounding board'.

He cited how he used the ARLF network to assist a local community in relation to a large mine being built nearby. As leader of the anti-coal mine movement he continues to meet with ministers, goes to Canberra, gets them to visit and see why it should not happen. He said that the locals were so close and involved and a little stale on ideas. 'I rang the ARLF and they were excited as they hoped it happened more often and gave email addresses within the region. I sent out a background paper with an invite to meet. Many gave ideas over email as they could not come ... I put out feelers so that people within the area would come and have a think tank on whether what we are doing is right or wrong. I had 60 names in region we invited—20 responded and 6 were in the room'. While he was disappointed in the turnout he agreed 'It is not their issue it is my issue'. They sat down over 2 hours in a pub and nussed it out. They came from diverse backgrounds ... two had nothing to do with agriculture: chicken industry, rural media work, one who was involved in social community services who provided excellent advice and ideas [that were] completely different and useful. When asked about return on investment he commented:

Well for the five grand he invested – and the \$45 grand scholarship it was not much. There was value for money. Fantastic investment for me personally but also for my industry which has got more than their money's worth. Success in the water wars brought back \$110m, and that involved two other ARLF alumni at a strategy level. We went from a politician saying 'Read my lips. You are not getting anything' to \$110m. With regard to the Coal Action group, they have already received \$200m to get them off the plain and half a billion will be paid. I am a cog within that machine. Even at five percent it is a very cheap investment for a remarkable program. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Cotton)

4.3.8 Valuing difference: Challenging assumptions

With a significant presence of Indigenous participants in nearly all of the ARLP cohorts together with the Kimberley and international experience and increasing numbers of women within the cohorts, issues around recognition of difference were foregrounded. One government graduate was particularly influenced and observed others were also greatly influenced by the Indigenous component of the program.

I know that some people thought that the Indigenous content was too much. But I don't think you can ever have too much ... I watched people's attitudes change before my eyes. So if that's happening ... I think it's fantastic. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government)

He was aware of other leadership courses from an Indigenous specific perspective which he considered 'a poor excuse for a leadership course compared to this one'.

An indigenous participant in cohort 16 who had worked her way up from shopfloor to now the manager of a Land Council owned station and a director of companies spoke of her learning

from the experience of other cultures, and the Sydney experience of homelessness. But what particularly troubled her was that many of her cohort had not previously met an Aboriginal person.

Her major focus was therefore to understand better why this was the case, leading to difficult discussions regarding long held attitudes within families and communities about Indigenous people. For herself, the program facilitated and extended her work within communities. After speaking on International Women's Day:

I was asked to stay on for the week to help these ladies find courage and strength to step up to issues. I was so happy to get great feedback on how I helped these women and the positive change a lot of them have made and continue to do. I also went to the high school where the up and coming young ladies are already showing great leadership skills in their school and community. They needed support and courage. They loved to hear my stories and they provided great feedback. They want to do the things I do and be strong like me. They are also still doing very well. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C16, Consultant)

In return, she organised for these young girls to go to the Station to camp. Her learning from the ARLP has informed her work as one of the two Bidjara representatives working with six other land claim groups, due to her new knowledge about grazing, soils, wheat, chemicals, and the use of pesticides.

It has also helped provide great insight for my people when I can tell them so much about how important it is to have these skills. Saying how important relationships are in every state and country, in business and trade. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government)

In the same cohort, a manager of a large Land Council property considered the ARLP:

Expedites the learning that would normally happen over a five or ten-year period into 18 months. The sponsors should know that they are not only developing an individual for their benefit but for the benefit of society as well ... the connection with land and Indigenous people made this experience unique and special. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government)

Another graduate observed that for Aboriginal women the ARLP program was:

Very focused. Very clear. A clear goal. Clear guidelines. And from what I've seen its having success within what it's trying to do... the women that I've come across that have done the course seem to be going back to their communities and taking up leadership roles in a whole variety of ways. So I think it sort of showcasing that as a case study in a really effective and productive and valuable and needed and... there's no competition, there's no one else doing that sort of work. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C3, Agriculture)

The bureaucrat from cohort 22 considered that he adopted a more long-term public good perspective after the course:

Very much trying to champion the change that I think needs to happen ... as simple as issues around reconciliation ... I've taken a vastly more active role than perhaps I otherwise might have. In this job I've had plenty of opportunities to really influence, and I've probably maximised those opportunities where I might not have otherwise pushed quite as hard. Gender equality, that kind of diversity space in particular has been really important for me. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government)

A consultant in the arts, another graduate learnt to recognize the diversity of ideas. 'Ideologically on the left' and activist, the course made him aware of any biases. He speaks with one of his cohort friends three nights a week, although politically opposed, as they coach each other through their personal and professional lives.

A more recent graduate and bureaucrat realised as a male:

You develop such a tight bond that there is an emotional change in you that occurs within this group ... people all of a sudden are not too embarrassed to talk about their emotional problems, or their issues, and you know there's a lot of caring and sharing that goes on ... I don't think you'd get this in a traditional leadership program ... at the end of it we were all saying it's okay to admit failure and it's okay to fail. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Government)

4.3.9 Building national and international capacity through consultancy

Many of the earlier ARLP graduates have moved into consultancy as their expertise has become invaluable to the rural sector. Consultancy is not only a typical trajectory of many formerly in positional leadership roles as CEOs and directors, but, also for those who, as the ARLF principles argue, saw leadership occurring in different ways in different places. Those who worked in consultancy considered that they can often inform change and have greater influence outside the organisational constraints of government or industry. Such was the case of *Paul, born in Sydney but with a long-term family interest in farming, who undertook university agriculture studies and joined the NSW Department of Agriculture. Public service was in his DNA due to his parents being service-oriented through volunteer, school and community work. He moved from cheap milk production due to his marketing expertise and into an advisory position in charge of tech people, three researchers and 70 advisors in off-farm wool production and regional development. Sponsored by the NSW Department of Agriculture, a long-term strong supporter of the ARLF, he undertook the ARLP because 'through my network, I knew other people who had done the course who said it's an excellent course'. When he commented to the Director General of the Department that the last two ARLP graduates they had sponsored had left the Department, the DG stated that 'it is not about you staying in the Department, it's about your leadership skills and impact ... And we picked you because we know we'll get our money back'.

While Paul had already undertaken other leadership courses it was a good refresher on handling the media and other matters. However, for many in his cohort this content was new. He gained,

An insight into when we think about change, change can't be done in isolation and so inevitably what we tend to see is that if you're in an industry, then that's the most important issue ... What the course does is goes, well, it's important but just be aware there's all this other stuff happening—politics etc. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Wool)

By the end of the program Paul had moved into a new position in the sheep and wool program to undertake crisis management due to his enhanced skills in industry development and 'managing people'. The ARLP gave him contact with '20 other characters from a whole range of industries across Australia who are impressive in their own right', which had flow-on effects. After the course he could pick up the phone and say in any industry 'could you let him know I did the Rural Leadership Program course eight?' and all of a sudden you got quicker access...'. Paul was then seconded back into the Department of Ag to join their export development team covering China, Hong Kong and Taiwan in a more demand driven approach. As Senior Manager his role was to resolve issues and calm people down in order to get some sensibility and equity back into a program run on national rules in an area which was experiencing a lot of social tension due to sheep disease, largely in NSW, regarding quarantining and compensation.

So I came in and said this is actually not a sheep problem, guys, this is a people problem so let's get the relationships right and let's work our way through that. So we did that and made some changes nationally, state-wide and locally in a field traditionally run by veterinarians and Health'.

In terms of return on investment he was clear. Being in charge of the Sheep and Wool program, which represents a third of the wool industry, meant the \$40,000 investment was worthwhile. He considered that the course meant he was making decisions, which had long-term impact on the industry. The benefits come he argued in multiple layers. If you focus on leadership simply delivering economic benefit, then we have a man sitting with a whip going, 'Come on, faster, I want more money.' And that's not sustainable:

I remember having this discussion with a number of industries I'm working with on the investments in sustainability ... Sustainability is that we leave an environment in the same way or better than we found it. Now that environment could be our finances, it could be our human resources. Leadership is about inspiring and leading that environment and leaving both people, financial, the way we treat one another, our use of resources, the long-term aspects in a better way than what we found them. And it's got a strong equity dimension as well. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Wool)

His later career included consulting about exporting meat products after which he joined an executive recruiting firm for six years, focusing on business culture and keeping staff, and then formed his own management consulting firm. During this period, he became involved with two research and development bodies around innovation as they had witnessed his skills in program management and application. He continues undertaking reviews and consulting on their behalf and working with industry. Now 16 years later he remains passionate about human behaviour, leadership and change, most recently consulting with the turf industry:

The ARLP was important for the 'bigger picture stuff'. Middle management has a really major problem because there's a gap in engagement, it's hard to get people engaged. They have trouble connecting the dots ... Leadership is to see the future first but then you help people understand what they do and how they contribute to it but you do need to be holistic and wide in that view. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Wool)

The ARLP also caters for an increasingly diverse cohort from finance, management education and health sectors, all relevant to building rural capacity. Continuing on an eclectic career pathway Lucus (pseudonym) is now on the ARLF Board. After trying nursing and economics, Lucus became a trainer managing acrobatics troupes for the Peoples' Republic of China. As a community artist, he set up contemporary circuses around the country in Queensland and WA and ran International Arts' Festival, Adelaide and Perth.

He then was involved in a kidney health project in 10 remote Aboriginal communities in the Western Desert and worked on Christmas Island before the detention centre was established. It was then that a mentor and former chair of the Community Arts Board at the Australia Council suggested the course because *Lucas was promising more than he could deliver in his own company.

The ARLP fundamentally jumped me out of the Arts into a whole range of sectors and at the end of the course in 2011 I was asked to join the ARLF Board. It shifted me into the corporate world ... While I was kind of on that trajectory because the Perth Festival had introduced me to St George's Parish which is where all the money is in Perth, at the height of the boom ... there was access to a lot of power and money and that was kind of pleasant... I became the chair of the Community Arts Cultural Development Chair for the Australia Council nationally in 2014. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C17, Arts)

He attributes some the major funding successes in this role to the ARLP where he learnt about the political process in Canberra. While he had a mentor from whom he learnt how to lobby, 'it was developing real skill within the leadership program. It teaches you to deal with complexity'. He continues to work across sectors. Recent consultancies include the abalone fishery of WA to move them out of competition into a cooperative company, CS Energy and power utility in Chinchilla and disability in the Kimberly, taking 'a fairly diverse and a-political take on empowering people in the workplace doing front line work, helping teams sort themselves out in terms of role clarity'. For example, Horizon Railways in Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia were privatising and buying other businesses. So he focused on role clarity in the first four lines of management from front lines through to vice presidents. He described his work as often 'shifting the blame off an individual and unpacking it in terms of what are the system drivers, structures of systems and symbolic events and behaviours'. To do this work, he calls on a network of expertise across all sectors across age groups from retirees to emerging leaders and often draws on the ARLP network:

You've got a cohort of people you can talk to where you go, 'I'm stuck'. So working with the abalone folk, you know, there's only a limited number of licenses competing for a thousand kilometres of coast, but they have the resource ... They're not going to change overnight ... So I ran it through a guy from my course and a woman from disabilities who was on course 18 or 19. And I talked to them three nights a week probably and they coached me through it ... I talk to someone from the network two nights a week. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C17, Arts)

He calls upon his cohort wherever he is located. He takes Arts leaders in his workshops to hear the Indigenous member from his cohort and to hear the owner of the Meatworks in Dubbo talk about her leadership style.

She had 60 Afghani Hazaris working for her in Albany the day 9/11 happened. So she briefed all the staff 'there will be no ridicule and there will be no jibes. There will be nothing against the Afghan crew. They didn't cause the problem, they're all good people. And she had no stabbings, no fights'.

These consultancies continue to have significant impact across all rural industry sectors, locally, statewide and nationally. They bring diverse expertise to focus on how leadership development and change management can promote economic growth and social equity.

4.3.10 Intergenerational capacity building

Evident in all the interviews were the intergenerational flow-on effects. For one graduate his experience translated into family with his son, an apprentice builder, spending 12 months raising money to help rebuild the residents a village in Darwin with sustainable products. You cannot measure leadership 'but if our leaders are good then they'll inspire others to be leaders'. An analysis of the more recent cohort reports confirms the powerful impact of the ARLP on the individual by identifying and supporting emerging leaders. A recent graduate in cohort 22 working in federal Department sought nomination from his supervisor and mentor, also an ARLP graduate, as he felt in need of renewal although he continued to be passionate about his work in rural health. He concluded that the course motivated him 'beyond the scope of what I'm doing at the moment ... I learned some major things around teamwork, and that was out of the Kimberley ... I realised I didn't necessarily work effectively under stress'. His immediate reaction was not to work only with those people who he trusted but to 'take time out to make sure that I pull in everybody, and try to utilise the skills that each of those people have, rather than isolate individual people, which has such a detrimental effect on teamwork'. Receiving honest feedback from their peers was considered to be a common benefit across all cohorts as they were also leaders. He now accepts that accepting failure by himself and of others is part of the job. Others sought to join the program to gain inspiration, renewal, mentors and networks, as was the case of a young woman in cohort 23 who was forward thinking:

Often living very remotely sometimes you don't know whether or not your skills are on par with other POs or EOs and artistic directors across the rest of the country. So that was I going to be able to get a job on the same level outside of this area? ... And to kind of get the confidence up and yeah, really just start expanding and start being inspired again ... particularly in the arts sector with so many funding slashes ... you just feel like there must be a better way of doing things. Having people that are all kinds going through I suppose was a bit of a shift and all being leaders and all being in difficult areas and just being able to reach out personally. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C23, Agriculture)

4.3.11 Future thinking

There was a shared concern in all industries and among those in CEO positions that there needs to be care about selection of ARLP applicants to foreground the criteria of having a sense of responsibility to give back to the industry:

It is about their personal development but you've got to get people to want to give back to industry, not just do the course because it grows the resume and gets the next job because it might be good for their business ... their personal business. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C4, Executive manager, Government)

All referred to the gap in Australia in rural leadership, particularly at the middle management level, and how this indicates a need to target programs at mid-career leaders. Others felt there was need to have greater follow-up to fully capitalise on each group's expertise post-program:

They shouldn't sort of finish and it's all over ... there could be ongoing discussion. I wonder if there's an ongoing role in the ARLF for someone to be a sounding board. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C4, Executive manager, Government)

4.3.12 Conclusion

A common theme throughout the discussions with the alumni has been to problematise the extent to which an individual can attribute their later career trajectories, values and practices to a leadership program, no matter how good, and how to identify and map that attribution. This is the ongoing challenge for the ARLF:

But it's sort of hard to say because while you use things that are directly from the program, [there is also influence from] other things that sort of shaped you and made you who you are. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C4, Executive manager, Government)

Despite this qualification, there is demonstrable evidence in the extant and new data and as illustrated in this case study that the ARLP has, over 25 years, had a significant impact on individuals in key positions in communities, government and NGO organisations and on rural, regional and remote Australia. The impact of their leadership is evident not merely because many have been and continue to be in key positional leadership, but leaders have influence and impact on practice through professional and voluntary networks and policy activism.

There has been a consistency of responses regarding the quality of the ARLP as the 'iconic' leadership development program in rural Australia by the alumni (Cohorts 1-23), and in previous reports. This recognition of quality is confirmed by the sustained sponsorship of the RDCs and associated industry organisations. The ARLP was considered to be distinctive from

other leadership programs because of its length and focus on rural, regional and remote Australia. This analysis indicates how the course encouraged thinking about the bigger picture and the greater (or public) good, locating RRR Australia within the national and global context.

The individual members who responded from all cohorts illustrated how they continue to work pro-actively in communities within and beyond any organisational position. The breadth of activities of ARLP alumni over 25 years is significant, working across all sectors. Over-time, the ARLF alumni have responded to changing contexts, circumstances and expectations and to the rapidly changing needs of local, national and international markets.

The exemplars indicate how context frames leadership practice for those in positional or formal leadership in government, and illustrate how change occurs in multiple ways over time in terms of changing individual's values, priorities, awareness of and respect for difference, as well as their goals and leadership practices.

There was significant interaction between ARLP graduates from most but not all cohorts although less so between cohorts. Recognition of any former ARLF graduates in other contexts immediately re-established connections based on a sense of trust upon which there could be discussions regarding policy, regional issues, gaining support and testing out ideas of ideas, indicating the potential for capitalising further on such networks. Throughout, the ARLF remains as the focal point or node for creating such networks.

Impact in terms of change occurs through the grassroots policy activism of many of the alumni. Most of the ARLP alumni respondents referred to how they gained knowledge in terms of understanding the game of politics, how to use the media and communicate ideas, how to lobby and thereby inform policy and practice. The ARLP networks, as is the case for most productive networks, are based on working together on shared issues across diverse interest groups and on relationships of trust and respect for different perspectives.

A major benefit from the ARLP was that policy makers and various rural stakeholder organisations and communities can inform and be informed in confidence. This was most evident in the relationship of trust between ARLP graduates and members of government departments who shape policy and inform politicians. Within government there are ARLP alumni with a shared understanding of good governance, public good, sound leadership principles and practices which in turn they impart back to other organisations through alumni. There is clear evidence of how policy is influenced through both individual activism and the ARLP networks with discussions and information around rural issues being shared between bureaucrats and others in the ARLP, often more covertly than overtly. This is based on trust built through the ARLP and it enables individuals to call upon expertise and knowledge of the issues on the ground. This network capacity also recognizes that those in positional leadership work within certain constraints.

A major theme in the above accounts is how long-term impact across the various sectors occurs. The significant spread and diffusion of knowledge and well-informed leadership and governance practices, some of which could be attributed directly to the ARLP, occurs in the form of consultancies. An enduring aspect of these consultancies, which requires astute understanding of situational leadership, is not only how they provide outreach of leadership practice through professional development and mentoring but also the ongoing focus of alumni on critical reflection and networks they have gained through the ARLP.

Most of the above examples, as throughout the extant data and 2017 Deakin studies, refer to their commitment to rural and regional Australia and to building leadership capacity through mentorship and leadership development. Each of the individuals were mentored by alumni or by long term sponsors who saw the ARLP as a powerful way to build capacity within an industry, organisation or community, and in turn they reciprocated through mentoring others or working with the ARLF in delivering their programs. Individuals within cohorts continue to call upon their collective expertise, although this varies according to the cohort mix and the individual.

This case study indicates how the alumni believe that they continue to practice what they learnt in the ARLP as much as was possible within the constraints of their context. This work contributes to healthier workplace cultures and organisations and more networked communities, the social glue of collective support. In turn, this builds rural, regional and remote capacity.

4.4 Impact on industry

Survey responses indicate that ARLF alumni are currently employed within 17 of the 19 officially designated ABS industry sectors, with the only sectors not represented by alumni being construction and wholesale trade. More than half of all alumni respondents currently work in 'Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing' (54.25%). Other sectors in which alumni survey respondents are currently employed in significant proportions include 'Other Services' (11.32%), 'Health Care and Social Assistance' (8.49%), 'Professional, Scientific and Technical Services' (7.55%), and 'Education and Training' (5.19%). Although some alumni survey respondents are also currently working within the remaining 12 (of 17) sectors, 2.5% or fewer of all respondents are represented in each.

This is depicted in Table 5 below:

Table 5

Distribution of 2017 alumni survey respondents across ABS industry sectors

Industry sector	Count	%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	115	54.3%
Mining	4	1.9%
Manufacturing	4	1.9%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	2	1.0%
Construction	0	0.0%
Wholesale Trade	0	0.0%
Retail Trade	1	0.5%
Accommodation and Food Services	1	0.5%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	2	0.9%
Information Media and Telecommunications	2	0.9%
Financial and Insurance Services	5	2.4%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	1	0.5%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	16	7.6%
Administrative and Support Services	1	0.5%
Public Administration and Safety	4	1.9%
Education and Training	11	5.2%
Health Care and Social Assistance	18	8.5%
Arts and Recreation Services	1	0.5%
Other Services	24	11.3%
Total	212	100%

Thus, the largest group of alumni survey respondents, by far, is currently employed within 'Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing'. Within this sector, alumni survey respondents are currently working within 13 sub-sectors, the largest proportions being 'Red meat' (28.8%), 'Grain (other than rice)' (23.4%), 'Cotton' (19.8%), 'Other' (18%), 'Wool' (12%), 'Wine' (10.8%) and 'Dairy' (8.1%).

Frequencies are shown in Figure 10, below:

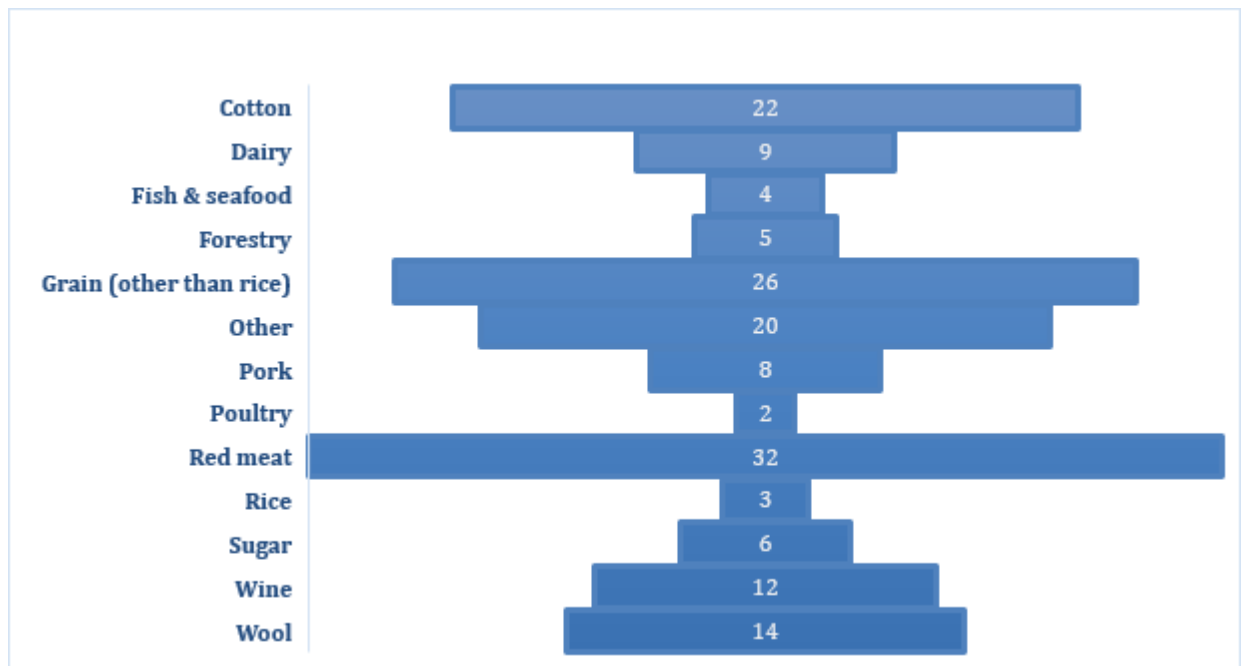


Figure 10

Frequencies of alumni survey respondents in different agricultural sub-sectors

Industry leadership and change through alumni

As shown in Figure 11, 67.9% of all alumni survey respondents indicated that they had taken on an industry leadership role following completion of their ARLF program/s, a clear majority. It is not possible to compare these data to the results of the 2008 Urbis Research and Evaluation Report since that survey did not appear to differentiate between industry leadership and leadership within a field of work therefore conflating industry leadership with positional leadership. On the other hand, the 2017 Deakin survey included questions specific to industry leadership following program completion.

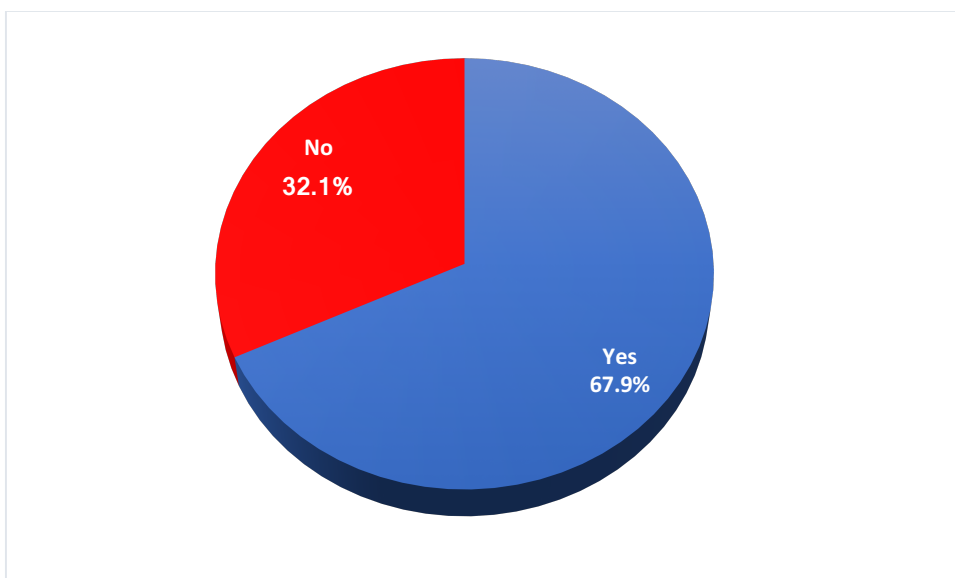


Figure 11

Proportion of participants who have taken on an industry leadership role following ARLF program completion

The following is an indicative comment from an alumnus:

If I look at everyone who participated in the course that I went through, every one of them continues to be very dynamic and very much shaping and influencing the industries they're associated with — all of them now either have some board role or a significant leadership role. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazer 2013, Cotton)

However, the 2017 alumni survey data also show that more males than females have taken on industry leadership roles (as depicted in Figure 12) suggesting decreased industry leadership opportunities for women within industry, amongst other possible contributing factors.

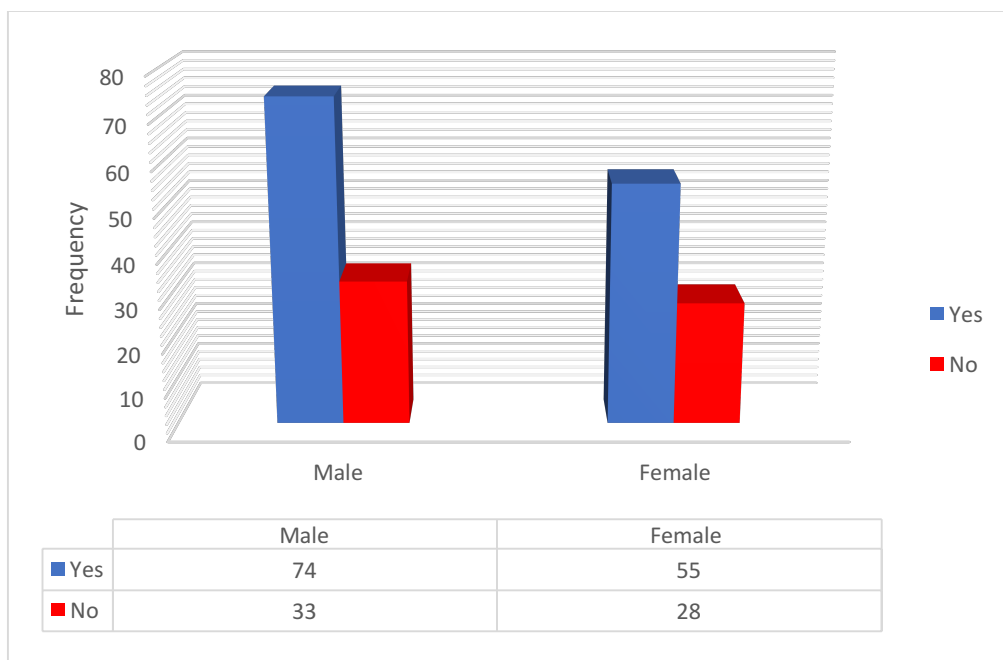
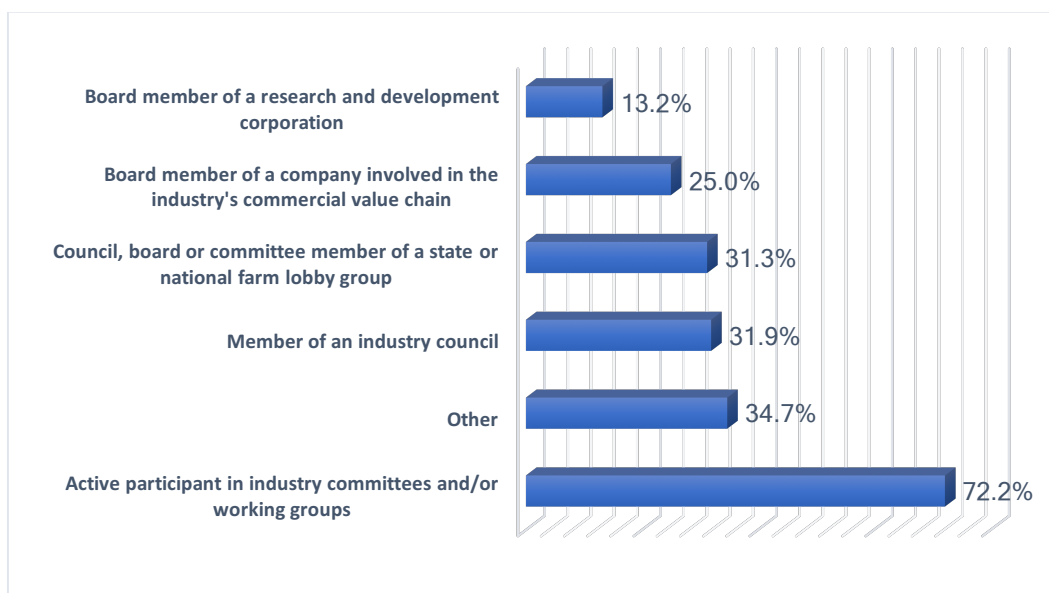


Figure 12

Proportions of male and female industry leaders among alumni survey respondents

The nature of industry leadership roles held by alumni varied considerably, with the largest proportion being active participants within one or more industry committees/and or working groups (72.2%), and the smallest proportion being board members of research and development corporations (13.2%). The distribution of alumni survey respondents across industry leadership roles is depicted in Figure 13, below. Please note that respondents could select more than one option (thus the total exceeds 100%).



N=144

Figure 13

Distribution of alumni survey respondents across industry leadership roles

Within the 'other' category, alumni industry leadership roles included ministerial appointment to various government industry advisory committees, membership of ministerial advisory bodies, membership of international industry boards, executive director or senior executive/senior leader within state or national industry bodies, CEO of a peak industry council, membership of national rural advisory bodies or councils, and senior public servant.

When these data are separated out by gender, some significant differences emerge, as shown in Figure 14, below. For example, males are three times more likely than females to be a member of an industry council and one-third more likely to be a board member of a company involved in an industry's commercial value chain. This suggests significant challenges for industries in terms of gender equity and diversity, and maximising leadership potential.

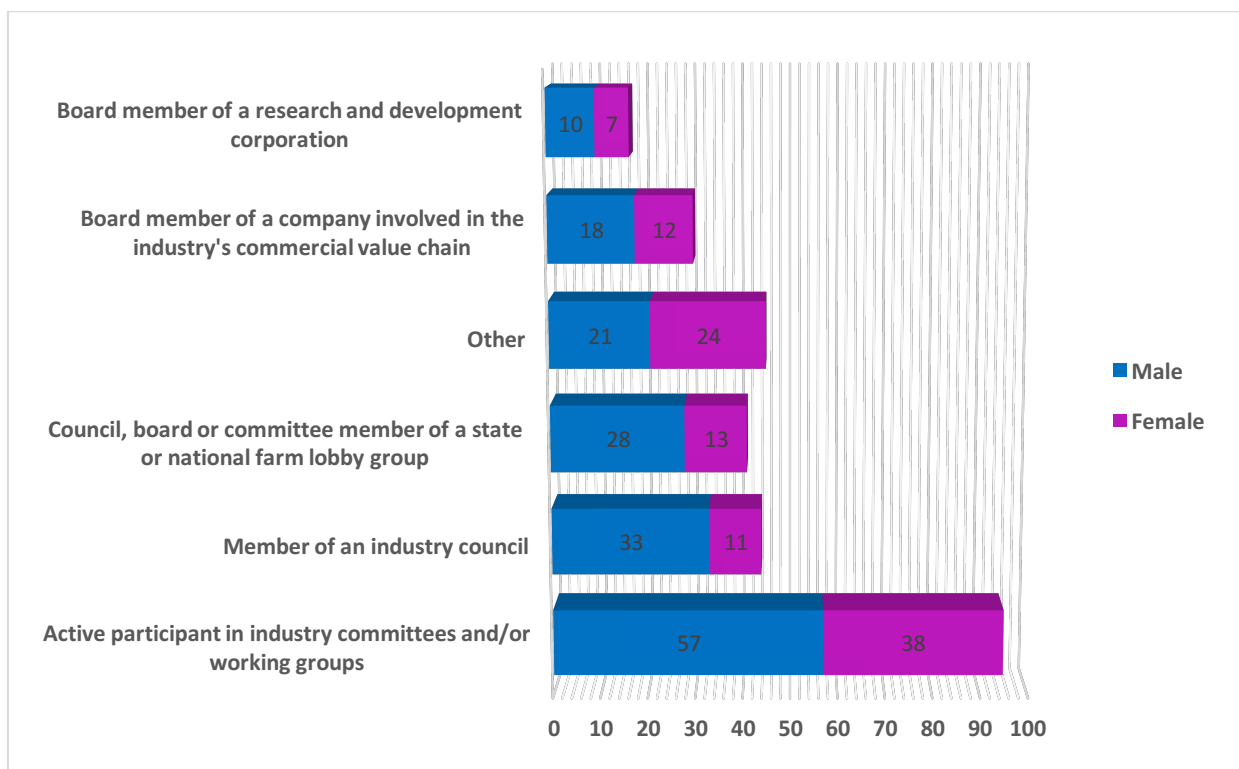


Figure 14

Distribution of alumni survey respondents across industry leadership roles, by gender

Seventy-two per cent of all alumni survey respondents indicated that they had played an instrumental role in bringing about significant change as a result of taking on their industry role or roles. That is, the majority of alumni survey respondents had taken on an industry leadership role since completing their ARLF program/s and the vast majority of those believed they had been instrumental in bringing about significant change within their industry.

Within their survey responses, alumni provided 79 specific examples of industry change they had led or facilitated, a summary being set out as Appendix 6. These include the examples set out in Table 6, below.

Table 6

Specific examples of industry change led by ARLF alumni post program completion

Alumni survey responses
Coordinated integrated health care for an Aboriginal chronic disease response
Led water reform in Murray Darling Basin, enhancing long-term sustainability
Led an initiative to develop a national Horticulture Code of Conduct, providing transparency for transactions between farmers and wholesalers
Led new decision-making process based on scientific evidence through role as government industry advisory board member
Led introduction of an industry QA process that lowered costs and achieved higher acceptance by external stakeholders
Drove a significant triple bottom line landscape change through role on Cotton Research Development Corporation and Meat and Livestock Association boards
Facilitated greater cohesion and capacity to influence policy to achieve greater commercial outcomes for the industry through role as Chair of peak industry organisation
Drove the creation and development of a forward-looking industry vision
Created a funded national peak industry body through role as member of industry forum
Improved industry recognition of women as farmers with the first election of a female to a national industry body by peers
Achieved innovation within the wine industry e.g. developed mulching applications and also experimented with native grasses in the mid-row swards. Was also an advocate for the preservation of trees in new vineyard developments within South Australia

Consistent with the ARLF leadership principles, it is notable that the majority of the examples of industry change provided by alumni involved working with others in one form or other—establishing teams, leading teams, enhancing communication within teams, and leading or contributing to the more effective operation of boards or committees. There was little evidence of the solo or hero leader. One specific example provided by an alumnus was about the work of another alumni in starting a network group for women involved in the feedlot industry:

So I've become one of the committee members of that group and I just think it's such a great idea and the girls who are involved with it are really wonderful and I definitely wanted to be part of it. I think it is such a good thing for the industry. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAIL 2016, Wool)

Another alumnus noted that it was through the ARLP that he developed an understanding of just how important people are, and the relationships between them, for the future of the industry:

It [the ARLP] actually helped me to see and probably better understand the potential of the industry – and I guess what it really highlighted for me is that it's the people involved in the industry that actually pave the future of the industry. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazer 2013, Cotton)

Of those not in a formal industry leadership role, 26 respondents indicated that they are advocates for industry in other ways, such as through promoting agricultural industries or rural and regional education and development within other sectors including government, finance, communications, community services or philanthropy.

I'm a banker and all these other guys [in the program] ran piggeries or mines or stuff that really mattered. You know, that produce something. Our industry doesn't need any help, it's just there ... so if your question was does [the program] make me think about my industry more, no not really. But does it make me think about industries that really matter more, absolutely. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C18, Banking)

Role of ARLF programs in facilitating industry change

Of the alumni who responded to the survey, 71.1% believed that participation in their ARLF program/s had strongly influenced their decision to take on the industry leadership role or roles they held, a very significant majority. Eighty-seven percent of those also believed that their ARLF program/s had equipped them to be more effective in their leadership roles. Within this context, alumni were asked to describe their capacity to bring about change in their industry, workplace and community, both before and after the ARLF program/s they completed. A selection of the responses, limited to change within industry, is set out within Table 7, below. It is evident that the 'before' responses are highly variable ranging from 'limited' and 'local' to 'reasonably effective'.

Table 7*Capacity to bring about industry change before ARLF program*

Alumni survey responses
<i>"Prior to the ARLP I didn't have industry roles outside my workplace and therefore had limited influence at industry level."</i>
<i>"More effective at local levels than Nationally."</i>
<i>"Probably more enterprise based but still had scope within the region and the state through various committees and representative groups."</i>
<i>"My role was focussed at a national level, coordinating state government agencies in fisheries/aquaculture management around Australia. I was reasonably effective in this role."</i>
<i>"I had been proactive in facilitating new ideas that generate change that influences industry nationwide."</i>
<i>"I was regional focused and involved in the rice and irrigation industries as an active grower and participator in industry affairs, however leadership roles was a secondary focus."</i>
<i>"Well known in thought leadership and innovation sectors of industry, background of success and credibility."</i>

This variability is consistent with the responses to the alumni survey as a whole (i.e. where the data are not limited to change within industry). Thus, respondents described their capacity to bring about change prior to their ARLF program/s in ways that ranged from 'non-existent' and 'limited' to 'significant' and 'confident'. However, some *before* responses were also quite nuanced, describing their capacity as 'significant but lacking scale' or 'passionate but lacking capacity'. That is, it is clear that ARLF programs can attract participants who are already practiced, capable and skilled leaders, as well as those with potential but who are seeking a development opportunity.

Notably, responses were somewhat less varied within the ‘after’ survey question, as evident in Table 8, below.

Table 8

Capacity to bring about industry change after ARLF program

Alumni survey responses
<i>“Not as prevalent as in the past as there is the next generation that is stepping up. I am more localised in my endeavours to enact change, particularly in the water industry.”</i>
<i>“Better able to see the big picture, but having difficulty getting industry to move forward.”</i>
<i>“Change in this particular industry sector has been extremely slow because of public and politicians’ perception. By educating and informing, that perception is gradually changing.”</i>
<i>“Very good, I do a lot of industry development work now.”</i>
<i>“I am now a Delegate to our national peak industry body and executive committee member on our state industry body and have input in decision making at this level.”</i>
<i>“More strategic, structured, sharp and savvy.”</i>
<i>“Increasing rapidly.”</i>
<i>“Stronger and more structured and considering.”</i>
<i>“Major input and application state-wide.”</i>
<i>“Now I have an ability to build collaborative participatory processes that are multi-discipline – in a range of industry sectors – and at any spatial scale.”</i>
<i>“Considerable ability. I am sought after for advice and involvement in my industry. I enjoy the challenges and broad network of new people I confidently interact with.”</i>
<i>“I am well positioned to help guide/influence policy outcomes that have a direct benefit to cotton industry, and a wider benefit to irrigation.”</i>
<i>“Influential in terms of policy development, advocacy, lobbying, governance and leadership across various sectors and industries.”</i>
<i>“Within my industry I have been recognised as having the capacity to deliver at both a regional and state-wide level and am leading projects at request of state funding organisations. I am also more involved in community development agendas outside my industry.”</i>
<i>“Confident that I can influence government policy regarding the mining industry – leading practice.”</i>

Thus, although one respondent described his or her capacity to bring about change after the program as ‘not as prevalent as in the past’, others described their capacity more positively, in ways such as ‘Stronger’, ‘Influential’ and ‘Confident’. Similar to the pattern of the ‘before’ responses, this pattern for industry leaders reflects that evident within the survey responses as a whole. However, it is also noted that several respondents expressed frustration when issues they experienced as ethical or moral arose whilst attempting to bring about change post-program. Indeed a number of interviewees reported having left their industry following the ARLF for this reason. The following is typical of such responses:

It also becomes a little difficult when ... now one of the things I've always had, and it certainly gets reinforced by a lot of the things in the rural leadership program, is that ethics matter, matter number one. And it's sometimes difficult when you working to that standard and I do, and I know what it means and I work for that standards, when things around for people who have a lot more influence than I probably will ever have don't work ... don't rate those sort of things very highly at all. That becomes a little difficult. And you know one of the things that I guess determined — if I can't ... influence things, to try and move them back towards that sort of standard, I usually say this is not a place for me and I just walk. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C5, Agriculture)

However, a significant proportion of the alumni who were interviewed also indicated that their ARLF program/s had either changed the way they think about their industry or had led to a significantly deeper understanding of the ways in which the industry views leadership:

It made me appreciate the industry a lot more, that there is a lot of support for up and coming people and that they do see leadership as something that is important and that they understand. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAIL 2016, Wool)

So I said to the D-G at the time 'Are you sure you want me to do this course because the last two people that have done it have both left the Department ...'. He said 'Mate, it is not about you staying in the Department, it's about your leadership skills and impact you'll have in industry, agriculture and rural communities in the future'. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Wool)

A comparison of alumni survey respondents' capacities to facilitate industry change before and after their ARLF program/s is set out in Table 9, below. This shows significantly increased industry leadership capacity post-program.

Table 9

Changes in industry leadership impact amongst alumni survey respondents

At doing ARLF (%)	Now (%)	Change over time (%)
47.2%	59.0%	11.8%

When these data are disaggregated by gender, the data show slightly higher results for male respondents. However, caution must be exercised when interpreting these findings as numerous prior studies of leadership have shown a marked tendency for males to overstate and for women to understate, when self-reporting leadership roles and impact.

Table 10*Changes in industry leadership impact amongst alumni survey respondents, by gender*

Change over time in Female participants	Change over time in Male participants	<i>Difference between female & male participants</i>
12%	13%	1% M

Role of ARLF alumni in facilitating industry change in the future

ARLF alumni were fulsome and ambitious when describing their intentions to bring about change in their industry in the future. The complete set of responses is set out as Appendix 7 with Table 11 (over page) providing a cross section of examples. It is notable that the majority of the stated intentions relate to the future of specific agricultural industries and of agriculture. A common trend is the desire to recognise and increase opportunities for young people and women in agriculture, as well as regional development. This is notable given the gender differences in leadership roles reported earlier in this section – it suggests not that alumni are aware that there are notably fewer leadership opportunities for women within industry but also that they seek to contribute towards addressing this gap.

Table 11*ARLF alumni descriptions of their desires to bring about future industry change*

Alumni survey responses
<i>"The 'game changer' is women's leadership in agricultural industries and organisations."</i>
<i>"I want to create opportunities for younger farmers to enter industry – currently it is too costly."</i>
<i>"I would like to assist the pork industry to become more transparent about modern farming methods to rebuild trust with consumers and improve our industry's ability to attract and retain talent within production to build capacity and resilience in our workforce."</i>
<i>"I want to expand the 'Grow our Own' partnership model for rural and regional workforce development by building capacity of other regions to build on the pilot my team have developed in Western Riverina."</i>
<i>"I want an increased proportion of young people from regional Australia to be able to access higher education locally via the Cloud, and to pathway their career journey with local employers who have struggled to attract and retain graduates."</i>
<i>"I want to continue the reform/change agenda in water to benefit society, environment and individuals."</i>
<i>"Encouraging wider representational diversity and improved governance practices on committees and boards in the rural sector."</i>
<i>"Making greater in-roads into addressing food insecurity in Australia ensuring food relief encompasses education as well as the provision of food and groceries."</i>
<i>"I want to improve people's understanding of the important role agriculture provides and how prime ag land should be protected from extractive industries destroying agricultural land."</i>
<i>"Improving trade and market access for the agriculture sector, maintaining and improving Australia's international reputation for clean, green and high-quality produce."</i>
<i>"Organisational efficiency and coherence; Australian farmers policy effectiveness on big issues such as climate change; social change; the 'game changer'; is women's leadership in agri-industries and organisations."</i>

Comparison of impact on industry within specific sectors

Comparison of certain alumni data was undertaken within specific agricultural subsectors, namely red meat, wool, grains and dairy. These data show that amongst the survey respondents, the scale of leadership impact prior to undertaking the ARLF program/s was notably lower for grains at statewide and regional levels and noticeably higher at industry and statewide levels for dairy. However, post-program there is very little difference in the scale of leadership impact between these agricultural subsectors and, in turn, between the subsectors and the alumni respondents as a whole: (as noted above) alumni survey respondents report a significant increase in leadership impact within their industry at regional, state wide, national and international levels post-program, with the greatest increases being at national and international levels. This also suggests that while there may be some variation in capacity for

leadership impact pre-program, one effect of completing ARLF program/s is that this variation is reduced i.e. there is a general increase in capacity but the increase may be greatest among those whose capacity was at the lower end prior to the program.

4.5 Case studies: Regional industries

4.5.1 Case study: Cotton

The capacity of individual graduates of the ARLP to impact on policy and practice within an industry is exemplified in case of one partnership of the ARLF with major sponsors and partners over the past 24 years. The Cotton RDC has been the primary sponsor, as have Cotton Australia, which represents the cotton growers, and Auscott, a commercial firm, among others. This case study illustrates the significance of the ARLF programs in terms of what their graduates contribute to the North-West region of NSW bordering Queensland over the past 25 years. It draws on 22 responses to the alumni survey, and interview and extant data.

Seventeen of the respondents had done the ARLP, 1 TRAIL, 2 TRAILblazers and 1 the Graduate Certificate of Rural Leadership, covering the period from 1993-2015.

Cotton is grown in 152 communities from northern Queensland down to Griffith in southern NSW. The average cotton farmer is aged 39 years and in a family business operated by 6-7 people, usually undertaking mixed crop farming including sheep and cattle while retaining 42% native vegetation on land. Cotton farming has flow on effects within the community and region as the farmer also owns and buys goods and services from local businesses in towns and contributes to national accounts annually \$2b. The cotton industry is a leading export producer of high quality cotton. Over the last 20 years Australia's cotton yield has increased by 38%. This is despite significant issues prior to 2009, with the lowest yields in 2007-8 due to drought (cottonaustralia.com.au) followed by the GFC, waning industry confidence and sustainability and highlighting sensitivity around water security issues.

The cotton industry relies heavily on relationship with researchers. For us to stay profitable keep on going up and up and we continue to founder to make the next step improvement ... no other way to remain viable. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C1, Cotton)

The CDRC in 2009, under the leadership of an ARLP graduate, Bruce Finney, developed a *Vision for the Future Cotton* Industry in Australia with potential scenarios. Vision 2029 project was collaboration between CRDC, Cotton Australia and the Australian Cotton Industry Council (ACIC), with representatives from member organisations forming a Reference Group. The project scope covered the whole of the Australian cotton industry from input suppliers through to marketers over a 20-year outlook. Bruce, the CEO who created the industry vision, stated 'that can be attributed to the course—having a process ... knowing what a vision was. Learning about group dynamics etc. and a shared process. Skills around the process which happened during the course'.

The Preferred Future plan 2029 outlined key principles for the industry:

- Differentiated - world leading supplier of an elite quality cotton that is highly sought in premium market segments
- Responsible - producer and supplier of the most environmentally and socially responsible cotton on the globe
- Tough - resilient and equipped for future challenges
- Successful - exciting new levels of performance that transform productivity and profitability of every sector of the industry
- Respected - an industry recognised and valued by the wider community for its contribution to fibre and food needs of the world
- Capable - an industry that retains, attracts and develops highly capable people.

In achieving these elements, the industry and its representative organisations such as Cotton Australia have developed a significant and strong relationship with researchers at Cotton Research and Development Corporation and CSIRO also located in Narrabri. The five priorities of the CDRC are **Farmers** – including successful crop protection, on-farm resource use efficiency, innovations in cotton production. **Industry** – including stewardship, natural resource management, identifying and responding to threats. **Customers** – including cotton quality, the recognised value of Australian cotton, ensuring future demand for our cotton. **People** – including skilling and educating our industry workforce, creating networks and communication. **Performance** – including measuring and reporting on our industry's performance, and continuous improvement under best management practices. The first to get accredited GM was an ARLP farmer from cohort 1 which led to the cotton industry's best management practice program. Others observed that the course profoundly shaped him. The farmers are themselves actively involved in researching their practice to save more water, reduce chemical use, improve soils and biodiversity, increase yields and improve profitability. Over 24 years, the CRDC has invested funds of \$200m into research and development of cotton 'delivering an estimated minimum \$1.4 billion benefit back to growers on their farms, and twice that value to the wider community' (Sustainability Report 2016, p. 2). They have established a farm and environmental management system for the 1500 growers, to which 45% belong, to improve on-farm production and make Australian cotton industry produce economically, socially and environmentally sustainable cotton. Australian yields are three times the world average per hectare.

Like other industries, the cotton industry is now facing the need for rapid change. Common issues confronting regional communities are education, health, telecommunications, transport (distance), maintaining police numbers, and the semi-skilled labour force. Very few towns of the size of Narrabri are able to sustain growth. Going online for shopping has had a visible impact. The Murray Darling Basin Authority has attracted researchers but a difficulty is retention.

In 2016, the CRDC funded a Resilience Assessment. This assessment identified the risks and unexpected events, which can impact on the industry and community. The focus was on the complexity of the system due its many linkages. The report stated:

Complex systems are characterised by having many components, with linkages and interactions between those components. ... the cotton industry is made up of many interacting parts that include biophysical components like water and soil, transport, financial and infrastructure systems, human skill and labour. It is the combination of these components and all the interactions and connections between them that make up the cotton industry system. (Andreoni et al. 2016, p. 3)

The executive summary stated:

Agricultural production, including cotton production, is an increasingly complex business requiring continuous adaptation to changing circumstances. Resilience thinking is an approach designed to understand a complex and changing operating environment and maintain capacity to manage future challenges. It is now being widely adopted globally to help communities, industries and governments alike deal with uncertain futures.

The Resilience Report identified five key drivers of change acting across the Australian cotton industry. These are demand, policy, climate change, climate variability and cotton price. Potential shocks, which are a sudden spike in one of these drivers, relate to climate change and variability, biosecurity, policy, price and social licence. The context is one of modularity or the degree of connected/disconnectedness across the system as the priority is general resilience for the industry as a whole (Andreoni et al. 2016). The future focus therefore is to protect the advantages of high yield, superior quality and responsible production practices, but most critically, to focus on how to drive profitability through innovation which is dependent on research. Other challenges include the application of digital technologies to transform cotton production and supply chains and increased competition from manmade fibres on the one hand and the potential new use for cotton in material sciences on the other (e.g. batteries). There are moves globally with the Cotton Australia CEO attending The Cotton 2040 initiative in 2017 designed to:

... Drive change in cotton supply chains by taking collaborative cross-industry action so that more sustainable cotton becomes a mainstream commodity. We must unite around our areas of common ground, and seek a way forward together and Cotton 2040 is providing a forum to do just that. Cotton Australia's participation in Cotton 2040 is part of our continued effort to ensure Australian cotton plays a positive role in global initiatives to improve the industry, particularly as more and more brands and consumers demand environmentally sustainable and ethically produced fibres. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Executive manager, Cotton)

Through Cotton 2040, Cotton Australia is seeking to develop a framework and practical tools for brands and retailers to help them solve some of the internal barriers to uptake and more easily source sustainable cotton in their supply chain.

4.5.2 Regional impact

The cotton industry is largely concentrated within a bounded geographical region in the North West of NSW and into Queensland. Cotton is a major but not the only economic driver of the major towns and centres – with beef being a key contributor and also grain. As with all rural and remote regions, they are subject to cyclical issues with regard to weather but an ongoing related issue is access to water during the 20 years of the industry and for the region generally. One focus group respondent stated:

With irrigated agriculture on the Murray Valley system it will always be water because you know our incomes are directly affected. Same as the growers. In this past season, my income was 70% of what my full income would be, the year before was 23%, the year before that was it was 5%, so water does have a real impact. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

All the focus group members considered that 'the last 15 years water reform in one way or another has occupied a lot of people and been the sort of life blood of the industry'.

Within the region for example, there was seen to be generational change occurring. Due to the drought in the 1990s, there is now a dearth of those on the land in their 30s and 40s, but they are now seeing a younger group coming through. There was some concern expressed in the focus group that 'The calibre of applicants for ARLP is not what it was and not the number of applicants and very few grower applicants (2 this year)'. The focus groups considered that while they told people about the course and encouraged others to apply and also mentioned it on their organisational websites and in conferences that there was a need for another step. This may mean having a conference demonstrating what the ARLF alumni have done post-program to potential applicants.

We tap each other on the shoulder—we advertise it but do not sell it well ... e.g. Get someone from ARLP or alumni come and sell the program. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

They also recognised that:

... There is a dynamic about the program but there is an element out there that the course is elitist and secretive ... particularly by those who don't get to do it ... there is a bit of pushback getting younger people into it. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

Future disruptions and innovations that are expected to produce change in both the industry and region are robotics and the digital economy. Technology often reduces employment – a perverse outcome when communication technologies are highly variable across the region.

We used to have seasonal workers with hoes weeding—and these are no longer needed with GM cotton. But we would not have survived at all without GM. So now the hotels, caravan parks and police have all decreased ... it used to be a thriving economy. The fabric of the community has changed. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

The cotton industry is buoyant because of the quality of the fibre and the forward marketing over three or four years, that is, as long as there is water. This cycle has both benefits and costs for the community. The viability of these communities is reliant on the 'viability and profitability of the agricultural industries which rely on the weather'. The focus groups considered telecommunications is a looming issue because they still have to travel to use mobile phones (e.g. 8 km to participate in this teleconference focus group). One alumnus commented on role changes within the industry since completing the ARLF program:

I am in a role of Business Development within the area of southern NSW, working to understand the industries that can use rail as a transport option, interfacing with local government, rail companies, customers of rail and road freight companies, strategic planning for Australian rail and track corporation, developing a data base of information about the industries and the volume of freight. With a longer-term view of the developing inland rail, as well as the development of intermodal rail hubs. (2017 Alumni survey)

All focus group participants agreed leadership was required with regard to social issues such as attracting skilled and semi-skilled employees, youth unemployment, ice and Indigenous disadvantage. As a consequence of the volatility of rural economies many see a resurgence of social problems and antisocial issues (e.g. Moree).

Employment wise, yeah I'm not sure, we've got plenty of jobs for people and have been readily taken up by backpackers and migrants but ... there have been a lot of younger people and not so younger people aimlessly wandering around. (Interview, 2016/17, Alumni)

And they're probably just not interested in agricultural jobs, I mean it is actually quite ... you know the cotton industry is quite hard work, it's changing sites and it's watering fields in 42, 43 degree heat ... farms are relying on backpackers because they'll do their three months and get an extra 12 months on their visas and you know but they're earning \$24 an hour but they'll turn up at 6 in the morning and head off at 6 at night... Whereas to find some people who have probably had it a little too easy to work hard it is quite difficult. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

One participant cited the example of an ARLF alumnus grower who employed three local Aboriginal men who became a team that developed their careers:

And it's working quite well for those young blokes ... one of those blokes is actually now about to start managing a farm ... so the other two can see that progression and you know the house, the property that comes with that ... but there's a lot out there that just aren't willing to work, I guess, in those sort of conditions. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

It also created the opportunity for alumnus, Michael*, to use his ARLF network:

One of the Aboriginal fellows that went through the course with me ... he was great, he actually came and had a word to one of these young blokes [on my invitation] and outlined the possibilities ... the alumni's responsible for apprentices in Santos and so you do have some quite good networks from that and what works for them and you know being able to transfer that across so still talk to people about that. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

Making this connection, joining up people, ideas and resources, enhanced individual opportunities and added value to this community. These examples illustrate how ARLF networks work within and across an industry and sectors as well as with government and at multiple levels – the personal, professional and public – within the constraints of a region. In 2016 the CRDC funded a Leadership report on the CRDC Leadership Program Review. That review recommended:

The ARLP is still a valuable program to expand leadership thinking in complex contexts. This program needs better articulation of its outcomes and expectations of participants to make clearer the return on investment. The network of Fellows could also be better used to advance the cross-industry projects and engagement that is a key result area for the CRDC (p. 4).

4.5.3 Cotton industry and the ARLF Connection

The cotton industry contributes 30-40% of regional GDP in this region, higher in Moree, while beef is highest. The capacity of individual graduates of the ARLP to impact on policy and practice within an industry is exemplified in case of the partnership of the ARLF with major sponsors and partners in the cotton industry over the past 24 years – the Cotton RDC, Cotton Australia and Auscott. Cotton RDC was a foundation sponsor of the ARLP and has sponsored 18 participants over 25 years. Auscott was a foundation member of the ARLF and has sponsored 7 participants over 24 years while Cotton Australia has sponsored 10 participants¹.

The aim of the CRDC has been to develop a dynamic between all stakeholders in the industry and leadership has been a key issue in driving this change. In each instance, a critical factor required to bring about the forward strategic planning of the cotton industry is leadership. When considering the transformation of the cotton industry since 2009, key leaders are readily identifiable – the CEO of the CRDC and ARLP graduate (cohort 6) and *Tony (TRAILblazers) in undertaking strategic planning for the industry and the region together with stakeholders such as the CEO of Cotton Australia Adrian (cohort 2), the former CEO of Auscott, *Dominic (cohort 1) and others are also graduates in key leadership positions within the industry in addition to local farmer producers such as *Jeff (cohort 1).

We're in a happy situation here with a joint venture between research and producers/growers and seed suppliers. In developing GM as a grower we rely heavily on relationship with researchers. For us to stay profitable we need to keep on going up and up and we continue to make the next step improvement ... no other way to remain viable. If we hadn't moved to GM Cotton 20 years ago we would not be here—there would be no cotton industry. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

Research on GM, great pest management and biotechnology all came at the same time in the early 2000s. We were not popular because of our use of chemicals ... in 1991 we had our first industry audit to move forward. We have a good industry in terms of representation. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

As another focus group member commented that GM cotton would not have been introduced if it had not been for the research of another ARLP graduate *Luke (cohort 1) who was a scholar on rice and water.

This continuity of collaboration can be attributed not only to the success of the ARLF programs for individuals but also the ongoing presence of ARLF alumni working in and now leading the key cotton organisations as well as recruiting and mentoring others into the ARLF programs. The CRDC continues to invest in leadership capacity building, such as the Australian Future Cotton Leaders Program which funds individuals to tour and develop projects supported by mentors.

Table 12

Cotton ARLF survey respondents by program completion

ARLF Program	Count
Australian Rural Leadership Program	17
TRAIL	1
TRAILblazer	2
Graduate Certificate of Australian Rural Leadership	1
Total	20*

*denotes number of survey responses to this question from those currently working in cotton industry

Table 12 above, shows which of the ARLF programs the cotton industry alumni survey respondents had completed; the ARLP is by far the predominant program amongst this group. The impact of these ARLF leadership courses upon participants is long term. In 2017, 20 of the 22 survey respondents from the cotton industry said they had taken on an industry leadership role post-program. Of these, two are now board members of a research and development corporation, five are board members of a company involved in the industry's commercial value chain, six are either a council, board or committee member of a state or national farm lobby group and 10 are members of an industry council. Of the remaining respondents one established his own horticultural enterprise, another is President of Crop Consultants Australia, a third is a board member of CMA, another is chair of an international expert panel, another is an employee of a peak industry body and the last is a CEO.

A federal department SES, himself an ARLP graduate, commented that the cotton industry was a good example of how to build capacity: 'they were unashamedly ... picking the range of potential leaders and saying, 'Do it'' Ivan* (cohort 4). Some of the 'lab rats' in the early ARLP cohorts (1-5) are still working and leaders within the industry.

Impact could be seen at the industry level with many ARLP graduates having held influential positions in the industry itself. Former CEO of Auscott, Dominic (CEO until quite recently) is a commercial cotton producer and exporter. At the time, he went into cohort 2 of the ARLP in 1995-6 he was already considered to be a leader within the industry, having undertaken US leadership programs. His background was in production and marketing in agriculture and also working with the Cotton RDC. He joined Auscott as an agronomist, became a farmer manager, then Valley General Manager, then Chair and finally CEO of Auscott. Adrian (now chair of Cotton Australia) and a federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs were in the same cohort.

When asked about impact Adrian saw it occurring at the individual, company and industry level. Personally, 'it was a good thing for your skills and I think individuals have benefited in different ways'. For himself, as with most of the participants, the 'Kimberley shared experience really bonded a group of people together'. It was as much the thinking as the location.

You could learn how different people addressed those different issues in their industry so you got to learn what worked and didn't work ... I'm very complimentary of the program, it gives a lot of soft skills that you use all through life. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Executive manager, Cotton)

A lasting effect of the ARLP program was the focus on reflective and critical thinking:

I think some of those processes that you do, while you don't necessarily follow them through to the letter of the law, you've understood what the spirit and the concept behind them is and that helps you when you're going through decision-making or you're faced with a bit of a crisis. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Cotton)

He adopted in his own practice approaches modelled in the program such as the management tools of Myers-Briggs. Funding the ARLP for others in the firm, Dave argued, meant Auscott benefitted:

... Clearly through capacity building, a chance to take people who already understood what leadership was or who were involved in influential organisations. It was lifting them to a higher level ... You could just be good in your own organisation ... but it could also be at the company level where you do help develop people, their leadership skills in there. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Cotton)

The external industry-wide benefits from Auscott's investment in seven participants was because the program was about:

... Developing people who could take good leadership in a company and Auscott's quite an influential company in the industry and in the ag. sector. And it spun off for those of us who were involved with industry things, that that would help drive and be part of industry leadership. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Cotton)

Six of the seven alumni of the ARLP Fellows remain employed within Auscott and have been promoted within the company, which is itself indicative of the success of the program and mentoring by the earlier graduates. Anthony indicated that he noticed significant changes in many of the graduates' behaviours.

One person in particular was much more willing to listen to other people's views and think broader about the issue, not take as many things to heart. We've got one guy in one of the courses now – he's very black and white on some things – and I'll be interested to see by the end of it whether he's still black and white. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Cotton)

While he only networked with 'two of the guys that were in our cohort who were in the cotton industry so I see them pretty regularly', he also knew that other ARLP graduates in Auscott had strong bonds with their cohorts. The benefits for the company works two ways, he argued:

Getting into it in a way is altruistic ... it's about something that should be done. And secondly, you would hope that a lot of those people will pass on those leadership learnings within the company. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Cotton)

4.5.4 Enduring engagement

The strong interaction between the graduates of the ARLP and the sponsor organisations within the cotton and other industries is evident over the last 20 years. For example, Adrian was also in cohort 2 in 1995. Previously he had won significant awards including a Churchill Fellowship and Queen Elizabeth Jubilee 11. An agronomist with NSW Agriculture, he moved to the Cotton Seed Distributors in 1996. He heard about the program from a graduate of cohort 1 when on a one-year secondment in the Department of Business and Regional Development in NSW, another ARLF sponsor, and asked if he could nominate. After 1996 Adrian was involved in the Cotton RDC as non-executive Director until 2005 (funded over \$11m research) in strategic planning. He became non-Executive Director responsible for the People and Knowledge Program which involved the extension of research to growers and end-users. Over the period from 1999-2007 he was General Manager of Cotton Seed Distributors, a grower owned non-profit distribution company with an annual turnover of \$53 million and employing 60 staff. He became CEO of Cotton Australia in 2007, the peak body of the Australian cotton industry producing \$2.5b of cotton annually. Over the twenty years he has been director on boards, the Cotton Industry Council and a member of the Cotton Innovation Network.

Adrian pointed out how long it was before you realised the benefits of the program:

I think people, after they do the program, move into positions of leadership and influence in that industry and how they can influence positive change ... I guess that's hard to measure and it's hard to ask them straight after they do the course because they might not know and sometimes I think it takes, you know, 6 months, a year, or longer, for them to recognise where they fit and how they might really make a difference. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Executive manager, Cotton)

He refers to how he still uses the values based approach he gained from the ARLP in his decision-making as a CEO.

Likewise, Dominic stated that he personally benefitted from seeing the government perspective and this again was an enduring aspect of the ARLP experience for him:

And I think that rubs off to the people when you go as an ARLP graduate, when you talk to government industries, which is what I'm more involved with. In fact, I just had government people who I was going through stuff with, and that sort of experience really helps you with how you handle those people. You understand how they operate – you also understand what their constraints are how they're thinking and it doesn't mean that you stop not wanting to get your point of view through, but what it does allow you to do is better understand the process and get better acceptance ... and you can advocate better. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Cotton)

This experience led Dominic to play key roles in various agricultural organisations over the next 22 years as evident in his impressive career trajectory outlined earlier. While these positions had national significance, federally, in the early 2000s he became a member of the Corporate Agriculture Group and represented that organisation on various National Farmers Federation's committees and then as a member of the Producer's Forum – a group formed to highlight the benefits of transgenic crops and related biotechnology to Australian Agriculture. In 2012 he was appointed as a director of the Plant Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre and retains that position today and is Chair of its Finance and Audit Committee. His most recent appointment in 2016 was to the Expert Panel for Federal Governments Rural Research and Development for Profit program. His work also extends into voluntary positions such as being Chair of Career Harvests, a not-for-profit organisation with the objective of increasing the numbers of students choosing agriculture as a course of study and ultimately a Career (2012-17).

An alumni of the TRAILblazers program had just come back from the Asia Pacific. Ian's leadership experience was to run a number of teams in a number of countries – Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, with little leadership training formally. Prior to going to Asia he led a technology development team for an Australian multinational. He undertook the TRAILblazer program when he went to the CRDC with the expectation he would 're-energise and re-invigorate the Information extension team'. The CEO of the CRDC suggested it in his performance review and the time-frame of a 10-day program worked better than the ARLP in 2012. Ian considers that he became the General Manager of the RDC because they:

... Have confidence in terms of my leadership capability and abilities. Then I took over a new team after a difficult period with a couple of other managers that had been replaced beforehand – and so it was for me ... the course actually gave me the confidence and also the network because I still maintain contact with all of my fellow graduates from that course. We have a monthly hook-up and a social get together once a year to do some more personal development with that group. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazer 2013, Cotton)

The Chair congratulated Ian's team work as it was impressive in terms of 'how we have moved forward in the last three or four years in their own improvements, both in terms of presentation and the papers that are being utilised and informing the Board'. Ian put this down to moving from a 'detailed kind of restrictive type stuff to more high level governance which is precisely what the Board is looking for'. The team is performing fantastically. His philosophy is that 'my role in the leadership is to have the team perform sufficiently well so that if I'm not here they just carry on and I can easily take myself out of the equation'.

Ian concluded:

The course gave me the tools to do this – working through problem issues in definition and problem solving; engage in a critical conversation and work through with genuine interest in the person that we're talking to; where the organisation's headed, where things align well, where things don't align well; tools to think about strategic purposes, strategic intent; working to ensure that you know the team have good understanding of where we're heading, what we're trying to achieve, how do we do that. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazer 2013, Cotton)

Ian cited the strategies he has put in place: a regular but informal Monday morning catch-up 'having a cup of coffee together where we chew the fat'; formal monthly meetings to discuss strategic objectives and 'where we're heading in terms of the programs'; performance reviews on a six-monthly basis rather than yearly to provide good feedback. 'It's about engaging in a more constructive way with the team and in working together to collectively achieve outcomes and objectives and that includes personal objectives as well'. He is happy in his job, and considers capacity for the team to talk freely and improved constructive feedback is critical. He is focused on getting his team to think about the future and long term 10 year planning, 'thinking about, well what are the building blocks that we might need to be putting in place to ensure that we actually have this future'. He wants to organise a futures workshop with people outside the industry. He considers the course also led him 'better understand the potential of the industry – it's the people involved in shaping the industry that actually pave the future of the industry'. He sees in his job key individuals on committees who do the work and are shaping the industry – the change agents. On the side, he is committed to the region as he is also setting up a business – a pecan farm.

These stories are indicative of how leaders have adapted to and informed the changing nature of the cotton industry over time. The scale and scope of their work has also been extended over time as they have moved across a range of industry based activities. This growth in leadership capacity is evident in both the short and long term.

At the time of their course, many survey respondents stated that they had little confidence or knowledge in how to bring about change. Others were primarily operating on-farm, with very little exposure to other networks. Many stated that their leadership skills were minimal; some had a regional focus and were involved in the rice and irrigation industries as an active grower and participator in industry affairs, but taking on leadership roles was a secondary focus. Many had diversified farming, and succeeded in some aspects and not others: 'Not too bad. I got a few things done. I did well in cotton, sugar and environment. Didn't succeed in dairy'.

Post program, while five of the seven respondents in cotton continue to work farm properties, their influence is now at the state, regional, national and international levels as well as within their industry organisations. In part this is due to many moving into positional leadership role in key industry organisations at the national level where policy can be influenced. For example, Dallas, a cotton grower recalled:

I know from my own perspective when I first started the course in 2009 I was 35. Probably didn't have the confidence or the experience to have much of a role as far as leadership was concerned. The course certainly gave me the confidence and experience that the network grew working as an agronomist, for my own business based in St George and looking after my growers and, to take on presidency of the Cotton Consultants ... I was on the Board of Crop Consultants but then stepped up a bit further onto different committees and things and a CTA role a cotton industry council ... It was really that you do have something to contribute and it is worthwhile making an effort and you do rely on the network. There's probably four people out of 36 I still hit for advice on different scenarios and you know just their breadth of experience and contact and about 8 or 9 on other things. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

Michael (Cotton focus group and ARLP alumnus) was sponsored by the rice industry and was an irrigation farmer in the South of NSW. He had already been involved in the 'Ricegrower's Association executive ... and involved in ... water politics'. He did not have a 'blinding moment during the course' but he did move out of full-time farming and took a job working for the Gwydir Valley Irrigation Association in Moree. The course certainly helped him get that role and equipped him with certain skills in leadership, but he saw it as 'a gradual incremental thing'. He mainly used group facilitation and different understandings of people's personalities, which he continues to use. He felt attached to his cohort as 'it sort of puts you more in touch with a lot of other people in leadership roles...'. He did anticipate that 'the most value in the longer term would be the network and the networking opportunities post course. Even when you complete the course I'm thinking that'd be great but life gets so busy'.

As shown in Figure 15 (over page), alumni survey responses included similar comments about what aspects of leadership alumni gained and valued, and continued to utilise (scale 1-5 from least to extensive).

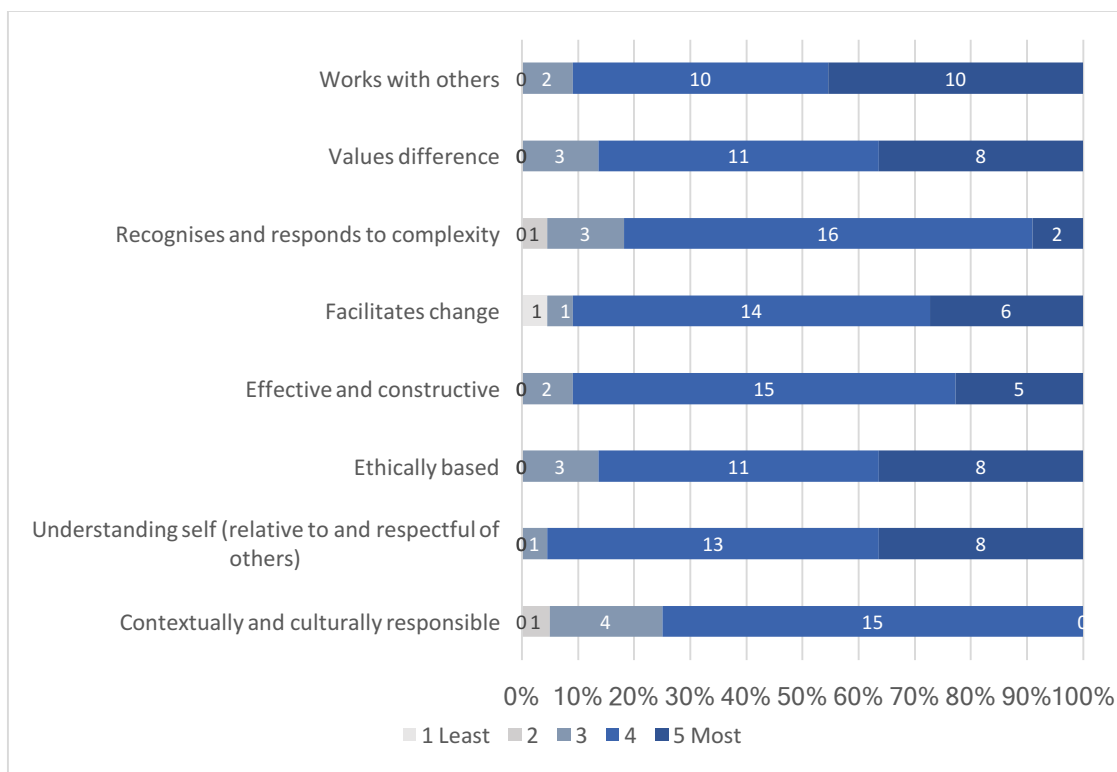


Figure 15

Respondents' self-rating of the extent to which their leadership practice reflects ARLP leadership principles

Fourteen of the 19 respondents considered they could significantly attribute their leadership to the ARLP course.

Another cotton participant in the focus group echoed the above comments. He undertook the ARLP in 2003 as deputy director of a national rural research and development organisation in farm injury prevention where he had been for 13 years since its inception. He was feeling 'increasingly frustrated' and 'very passionate about wanting to make a positive change in terms of addressing the injury rates within agriculture'. He knew about the ARLP and knew many of the graduates. Halfway through the course he made 'the biggest decision of my life' and left the Australian Centre for Agriculture Health and Safety to establish his own rural injury prevention consulting business. The course had 'exposed' him with regard to being an introvert and he was:

Really taken back by how expressive and confronting the occasions are ... but it really made me reflect on my own behaviour, beliefs and style of leadership, and the good and the bad ... really helped develop my confidence and a better understanding of how I communicate, how I act, and how people might perceive me, so I can be a good leader. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

For many, the course provided the skills and networks through which to bring about industry change.

Table 13*Specific examples of cotton industry change led by ARLF alumni*

Alumni survey responses
Coordinated integrated health care for an Aboriginal chronic disease response
Led water reform in MDB, enhancing long-term sustainability
Led an initiative to develop a national Horticulture Code of Conduct, providing transparency for transactions between farmers and wholesalers
Led new decision-making process based on scientific evidence through role as government industry advisory board member
Led introduction of an industry QA process that lowered costs and achieved higher acceptance by external stakeholders
Drove a significant triple bottom line landscape change through role on CRC and MLA boards
Facilitated greater cohesion and capacity to influence policy to achieve greater commercial outcomes for the industry through role as Chair of peak industry organisation
Drove the creation and development of a forward-looking industry vision
Created a funded national peak industry body through role as member of industry forum
Improved industry recognition of women as farmers with the first election of a female to a national industry body by peers
Achieved innovation within the wine industry e.g. developed mulching applications and also experimented with native grasses in the mid-row swards. Was also an advocate for the preservation of trees in new vineyard developments within SA

The examples below explicate the issues and roles that these leaders in the cotton industry undertook.

Table 14*Participants' descriptions of their role in relation to cotton industry change*

The significant change you were instrumental in bringing about	The impact of the change on the industry	Your role in achieving the change
Industry extension, research	Structural	Catalyst, leadership, facilitation
Assisted in getting Premier Baird to buyback the BHP Caroonna coal license	Stopped the mining of prime ag land	Played a major role in the political lobbying process, social media and public education on the issue
Encouragement of the cotton industry to use pesticides responsibly, adoption of Best Management Practices	Reduced pesticide use, reduced impact on neighbours and other industries, fewer complaints from the public	Key member of various committees to drive change
Increased attendance & satisfaction at national industry conference	Raised profile of event for existing & new industry participants/ set new benchmark	Chair of diverse, representative Conference Committee
Change in how the industry procures R&D; Development of R&D strategic Plan	R&D now better reflects Grower R&D priorities. Identification of R&D priorities is grower led	Led this change
Younger agronomists playing a more active role in the industry	Ongoing	Facilitating & mentoring
Definition of sustainable cotton production accepted internationally	Improved perception of the sustainability of Australian cotton farming	Instrumental in developing the most widely adopted (internationally) of sustainable cotton production
Development of industry vision	Forward looking	Driver for vision creation
The recognition of NSW supplementary water licences as a perpetual and compensatable right	Far greater property rights certainty for irrigation entitlement holders	I had the opportunity to draft the change as a policy for a party in opposition and then help shepherded it to reality

		when the party made it to power
More effective engagement of WHS regulatory agencies with industry	Breaking down barriers of mistrust with regulatory bodies. Improved collaboration between industry and reg. agencies	Industry advocate and WHS rural technical specialist
Water reform in our area	Bought certainty to irrigators in our area	Chairman of local water association
Successfully facilitated a large social research project	Better understanding of women in the cotton industry	Gained funding, engaged and worked with consultant and linked with industry networks

Of these 20 respondents, on a scale of 1 (least) to 5 (most), 11 ranked the ARLF program as a 4 and another three as a 5 in terms of attributing its impact on their capacity to undertake this leadership work. In particular, with regard to meeting the principles of the ARLF, they saw the program as providing them with a strong sense of confidence, self-awareness relative to others and also to be able to be contextually and culturally responsible, value difference and able to address complexity. Respondents felt they had effectively gained all aspects of the 8 ARLF leadership principles.

4.5.5 Policy activism

Respondents in the interviews and focus groups named key individuals they saw as major influencers of policy:

I think Michael for the cotton perspective probably played the biggest part and role in the cotton industry in shaping water policy. With his role in Cotton Australia he's constantly dealing with government officials and bureaucrats and trying to shape what happens to our industry and that does have the biggest impact on whether our industry grows or starts to decline. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

In response, Michael stated:

A very important part of my life and I hope the work that I do, I do better or maybe slightly more successfully, because I've done their course and I just intuitively use some of the things that I've learnt over the time. But to point to particular a example and say that happened because I did the course, I struggle with that. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

The cotton industry has a history of long-term activism at the national policy and local level. Water security is a key issue for cotton growers and throughout the 10-year water wars, Steve (a cotton grower from Gunnedah) argued the 18-month duration of the ARLP was important to him:

... Because each session – there's a gap in between and then you get back together. And I think that continues to shore up and strengthen the learnings that you've had, and the journey that you're going on together as a group. And I think that that time and that process, it just makes it very strong, and makes it a permanent learning experience, rather than just going to a day or week and getting all psyched up, and walking away and forgetting it all. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Cotton)

Post the ARLF course, most of the 22 respondents referred to how it boosted their ability and desire to be advocates and leaders within the cotton industry.

Table 15*Ability to advocate and provide leadership within cotton industry*

Alumni survey responses
My current ability is significantly stronger and more profound than it was previous to completion of the ARLP. With greater confidence, experience and quite likely enhanced credibility within both industry and amongst other key stakeholders; i.e. regulatory bodies and industry associations, I feel a greater sense of influence in creating and driving change.
Considerable ability. I am sought after for advice and involvement in my industry. I enjoy the challenges, and broad network of new people I confidently interact with.
Greatly improved and continuing to improve.
It has broadened as a result of a new part time role I now have with the MDBA as a regional engagement officer.
Certainly able to contribute a great deal more & the more industry groups you become involved in the more requests that come from that. Need to be aware of what groups you can have the most impact on rather than being involved in too many committees having very little impact.
I am more effective as a leader currently and actively seek to direct change rather than having to respond to change.

There is also significant evidence that there is ongoing mentoring even on retirement.

I have retired from my industry role but still hold an honorary position on a university advisory board. From there I can help to provide some direction but of course this is less than prior to my retirement. In my community I have become an active Rotarian and find this a very satisfying way to utilise some of the skills honed by my ARLF experience. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

For a female scientist and graduate from the ARLP, there is a strong future due to the shared focus of the various stakeholders in the cotton industry – government, nongovernment and commercial. Her point is that there is greater need now for supporting the next generation of young leaders in the industry:

I think it [ARLP] is a worthwhile investment ... I don't know how they put a value on that. Due to the drought Cotton Australia weren't able to provide the sponsorship for my course so Auscott stepped up and sponsored two thirds of my package. I have no way of repaying Auscott and they're a giant farming company who actually are a great company for mentoring young people. CRDC is developing young people within the industry hoping they will continue and stay in the industry. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

There was still recognition that there were insufficient women in the industry, although that had improved, as one focus group female alumni in CSIRO who sits on the science and diversity committee said, 'The industry generally has a good number of young females coming through than in other industries—there are a lot of initiatives and within the business unit there are programs'. It was identified by one focus group member that organisations such as the CSIRO were not flexible enough in terms of appointments as only recruiting only full time.

Adrian from Cotton Australia was particularly concerned to get more farmer producers involved.

... For a small farmer to leave their business for that amount of time is difficult so I think ... I believe that's one of the reasons why we sort of find it a little bit more difficult to attract a farmer versus other industry participants where their salary still gets paid while they're on the course ... we have got to encourage the best and brightest farmers to be part of this course. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Executive manager, Cotton)

He was also concerned about follow-up after the course in terms of what people had undertaken and committed to.

Look I think they've built the program ... they've really learnt as they've gone and they evaluate each session and try and build on it. I think they're doing a good job from that point of view. But how do they (ARLF) make sure people go back and actually make a difference in their industry or map out a little plan of what they're going to do and stick to it after the program is over? I know there's some good people who do that but someone who holds them [the graduates] to a little bit of what they plan in the future [would be good]. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Executive manager, Cotton)

This cotton industry case study indicates there is further potential for consolidating and mobilising networks at the regional level to focus on 'what community based projects can we initiate—bring participants back together—develop a collective undertaking and get a core group to get together and focus—but still be flexible'. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Executive manager, Cotton).

4.5.6 Cotton case study: Conclusion

While there were some concerns about the need to increase the diversity of expertise within the course mix in order to capture the full range of stakeholders in rural and regional communities who contribute to and from the cotton industry and because of the radically shifting terrain of Australian agriculture industry globally as well as local issues around community sustainability, there is an even greater need for leadership.

I think programs like the Australian Leadership Program and Foundation are more important than ever. I think what's really encouraging is that the voice of regional rural communities is becoming louder and stronger and much more articulate. Some of those people are just sort of home grown and I think naturally born leaders or they have some innate capacity but I think programs like the ARLP really provide opportunity to bring that confidence to sharpen their tools and to broaden and expand their networks so influence can be even spread further. It's just getting that access to politicians such as the course offers through the participants is very important and yeah so I think that just further develops peoples interest, confidence and ability to engage effectively with politicians and other key stakeholders. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

This case study illustrates how the ARLF courses have produced generations of leaders who have been key innovators and initiators of change within the cotton industry. As the CEO of the CRDC—an early alumni and now leading a sponsor organisation stated:

I see many ARLP people now in leadership—the question is: Has the ARLP shaped that? I think it is a bit of boost – you are seeing people with particular characteristics and it is enhanced. The effect is different about how you go about it—it gives you the confidence to do it. Self-reliance, self-awareness, helping others to lead and not be frightened to let others take the leadership position. Everyone has uncertainty. If you consult collectively you move forward. (Focus Group Interview 2016/17, Alumni)

4.5.7 Case study: Dairy

This case study draws on interview data from one alumnus, alumni survey data and other industry data. The focus is on ARLP alumni impact within the contemporary dairy industry.

Introduction

Natalie* is a partner owner/operator in an 850-acre dairy enterprise in rural Victoria and a relatively recent ARLP alumni. Natalie's participation in the ARLP was sponsored by Dairy Australia, an RDC funded partly by a levy paid by farmers (64%) and partly by government (36%). One of her key goals prior to undertaking the ARLP was to engage more heavily in the dairy industry. Several years following completion of the program Natalie reports that she is fulfilling that goal, describing herself as very heavily involved in the dairy industry at multiple levels. For example, she has until the most recent AGM served as a director of Dairy Australia. Natalie's decision to step down from the Board of Dairy Australia was solely to enable her to take up a position as non-executive director of Murray Goulburn, a farmer-owned co-operative that is Australia's largest dairy company with an annual turnover of approximately \$2.8b (2016). Murray Goulburn's recent financial and supplier difficulties have been well publicised and this is an extremely difficult time for the dairy industry in general with the most recent forecast highlighting lower milk prices and production and a consequent reduction in dairy farm average income in the order of \$75,000 for 2016-2017 (ABARES 2017). In taking up a position on the MG Board Natalie is seeking to make a strong and positive contribution to the future of the Australian dairy industry more broadly at a time when the industry is facing significant challenges:

I am a supplier director and so I think that it's fair to say that by virtue of the fact that nine of the directors have to be supplier directors ... there has been a limit, shall we say, to the experience, expertise, skills and qualifications that have been brought to the board in the past. And so what I'm hoping is that through the career that I have had [and] ... as a result of the opportunities that I've had both within and outside of the dairy industry, that I can bring all of that into the board table and provide for a level of diversity that may not have otherwise been brought to that board table.

Natalie is also a non-executive director of the Australian Livestock Export Corporation. The extent and nature of Natalie's industry leadership is consistent with that reported by dairy industry respondents to the alumni survey. For example, respondents reported that prior to their ARLF program/s the scale of their industry leadership was mainly at farm or regional levels. Post-program, more than half of all dairy industry respondents to the alumni survey reported leadership roles and impact at statewide level, and almost half reported leadership roles and impact at national level. One-third of dairy industry respondents reported leadership roles and impact at international level whereas prior to their ARLF program/s none had held international roles. Seventy-one percent of dairy industry respondents to the alumni survey reported that their ARLF program/s had influenced them to take on their industry leadership role/s and 100% of dairy industry respondents indicated that their ARLF program had better equipped them to be effective in these roles.

Leadership Principles

The case study is organised around the ARLF principles to discuss achievement and impact.

Contextually and culturally responsible

Natalie reports a deep commitment to social justice which plays out in her industry roles but it has also resulted in efforts at community capacity building at a very local level:

... Because I live in rural Victoria and many of ... the people ... and particularly those at a community level, haven't had the level of or the number of opportunities that I've had through my professional career to do what I've done. And so they haven't, through no fault of their own on most occasions, they simply haven't had the same exposure to a much broader set of issues, challenges, problems, opportunities, people, cultures, all of that kind of stuff. And so when I am in a discussion or something might come up about a particular issue that represents, I'm sure most people would agree, quite a narrow perspective, I can kind of join in the conversation and offer an alternative perspective that perhaps may not ever have been put to them previously. And I certainly attribute the experiences of the ARLP to me being able to do that.

Understanding self (relative to and respectful of others)

The personal benefits Natalie has gained from the ARLP are inextricably connected to her capacity to contribute to industry, government and community.

Look, I learned so much it's almost embarrassing. But I think though probably some of the most enduring things that I'm probably a lot more considered in my approach these days. So, where prior to and during the program I was very much a black and white person. I didn't suffer fools very well. I think that the program and certainly the interaction with the other participants has really taught me about the value of taking the time to really listen and to kind of step back and try and view situations and issues and personalities from a much higher level if you like. And therefore be in a much better position to be able to identify the best course of action. ... If you are able to provide a compelling enough argument that really illustrates why the course of action needs to be taken, most reasonable people are happy to do that ... But sometimes the biggest problems are only solvable by taking little baby steps.

Natalie's description of the benefits she received from the ARLP is similar to responses received to the alumni survey from those working in the dairy industry where 89% of respondents indicated that that can attribute increased personal leadership efficacy to completion of their ARLF program.

Effective and constructive/ Ethically based

Natalie's engagement at the level of government has extended recently through appointment, by invitation from the Victorian Government, to a Regional Partnership. Regional Partnerships exist to increase collaboration between communities, industry, businesses and government. The Partnership of which Natalie is a member has 'a direct line into a Cabinet subcommittee'. Despite being initially reluctant to take on this role due her other commitments, Natalie accepted this position because 'the future prosperity of rural and regional Australia is so important to me'. Her impact within this organisation has been immediate, despite the short timeframe of her involvement, through addressing the very difficult issue of vested interests:

It was quite obvious to me that it was a circumstance of the squeaky wheel getting the attention and that it wasn't necessarily in the best interests of the broader region. And going right back to the start of our conversation where I was saying how the ARLP gave me the ability to sit off from an issue and consider it from a much higher and broader perspective, I was able to conclude that perhaps there was some, what would you say, some unfair advantage being taken just by virtue of the nature of the people that were championing a particular cause. And so that was able to be circumvented as a result.

Facilitates change

Natalie's involvement in the dairy industry has not all been limited to the national level. For a number of years she was also chairperson of one of eight regional development programs that operate under the auspices of Dairy Australia. Natalie indicated that when she commenced in this role the organisation was experiencing significant challenges and its future was in doubt. Natalie reports that in addressing these, she drew directly on the ARLP:

One of the things that we did as part of the program was talking about difficult issues by way of telling a story. And at [organisation name] we had some significant challenges and I was able to confront some quite difficult matters through adopting that approach. And that was really effective because it was much less confrontational, it was very clear what the message was and as a result we were able to turn that organisation around ... not just through that of course, but by making it very clear about where it was we needed to get to and making it very clear about the expectation of contribution that was required from everybody in order to achieve it. I'm quite sure that in the absence of having undertaken the program I would not have been able to achieve that anywhere near to the level that I was able to.

Natalie sees her industry roles as key to facilitating change within the agricultural sector:

If through my involvement I can create the smallest amount of change that means Australian agriculture can be a little bit more resilient, successful and a little bit more prosperous, then I will know it was better off with my contribution than without it.

Recognises and responds to complexity/ Works with others

Natalie reports that participation in the ARLP has changed the way she approaches issues within the dairy industry. For example, previously she was more likely to be overwhelmed by the significant issues the dairy industry faces, whereas 'I now look at the challenges in a more ... considered way. So ... as a result of all of my experiences as part of the ARLP I [now] have a little bit of a roadmap as to how to negotiate those challenges':

I think that [the ARLP] has absolutely given me a totally new perspective on some of the most profound challenges that Australia faces, from a social perspective. And I think that as a result, not only has my awareness and understanding and thinking about those things been enormously enhanced, I think that I have also been able to positively influence others.

Values difference

Natalie at least partly attributes her deep, personal commitment to social justice to the ARLP:

... There's barely a week that goes by where I don't reflect on something [from the program]. And I think that probably one of the areas ... is the exposure that the ARLP provided us to matters that are quite often swept in the background a lot of time and that is matters of social justice and also matters relating to the indigenous population of Australia. ... I think that that has absolutely given me a totally new perspective on some of the most profound challenges that Australia faces, from a social perspective. And I think that as a result, not only has my awareness and understanding and thinking about those things been enormously enhanced, I think that I have also been able to positively influence others.

Importance of ARLP Alumni network

Since the program Natalie has extended significantly her networks within industry and government. She also draws on her ARLP network, although this is almost exclusively limited to her own cohort.

So, I am in regular contact with them but not all of them. So, there's kind of a smaller number of say about a dozen that I would have some kind of regular contact with. And then there would be maybe half a dozen that I have more regular contact with. And the nature of that would be mostly electronic, so either social media, email, text messaging, that kind of thing. Although two or three weeks ago we had a bit of a catch up in Melbourne. So, a number of us all met in Melbourne and we had dinner and just a general catch up and we did that two years ago as well.

Other

Natalie's commitment to the ARLP is very deep: 'the ARLP is, without any question in my mind, the leading leadership development program in Australia. But nobody knows about it'. She argues that both the ARLF and alumni must bear some responsibility for this. She is also adamant that successful program outcomes are not limited to career progression:

People may well see graduates on the television, leading a big company, AGM or something like that, but equally they will also be there working in their communities behind the scenes making amazing contributions but you never hear about them.

For Natalie, those behind-the-scenes contributions are just as important to the future strength of rural, regional and remote Australia as the high-profile success stories.

* pseudonym

4.6 Conclusion: Impact on industry

This section has shown that more than half of all 2017 alumni survey respondents currently work in 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing' with large groups of respondents also employed in 'Health care and social assistance', 'Professional, Scientific and technical services', and 'Education and training'. Within 'Agriculture, forestry and fishing', the largest groups of alumni survey respondents are currently working in 'Red meat', 'Grain (other than rice)', 'Cotton', 'Wool', 'Wine' and 'Dairy'. Almost 70% of alumni survey respondents reported that had taken on an industry leadership role since completing their ARLF program/s, a very significant majority.

Of the industry leaders, the vast majority believe they have been instrumental in bringing about significant change within that industry. Almost all of those changes involved leading large or small teams and interview responses demonstrated the nuanced understanding that alumni had developed of the importance of finding common ground when working with others. There was no evidence of the hero leader sometimes described in the early leadership literature.

Analysis reveals that overall, male participants have taken more industry leadership roles following their programs than female participants. Female ARLF graduates therefore appear to have considerably fewer opportunities than male ARLF graduates to take on industry leadership roles. Within those industry leadership roles, males are three times more likely than females to be a member of an industry council and one-third more likely to be a board member of a company involved in an industry's commercial value chain.

This suggests significant challenges for industries not only in terms of gender equity and diversity but also in terms of maximising leadership potential within those industries.

In relation to the contribution of the ARLF to industry change, just over 71% of respondents believed that their ARLF program/s had strongly influenced their decision to take on an industry leadership role and survey data demonstrate significantly increased capacity to bring about industry change at state wide, national and international levels. However, alumni were also ambitious in their vision for change within their industry in the future.

The cotton case study demonstrated the very significant roles that ARLF have played and continue to play in shaping, developing and driving that industry. Within this industry the ARLF has produced generations of leaders who have been key innovators and initiators of change within the cotton industry. Natalie's story, exemplified through the case study of her leadership enactment within the dairy industry, demonstrates the significant contribution she can make to the future of the dairy industry, at a crucial time of projected falls in dairy farm incomes. However, Natalie's leadership story is more nuanced than this, highlighting significant contributions within agriculture more broadly and also to regional and rural development. Natalie's driving commitment to social justice is notable.

Both case studies highlight the continued need for diverse and outstanding industry leadership into the future, to which the ARLF can make a key contribution. However, they also highlight the need for careful participant selection and for the maintenance of the mix of course content and delivery modes. There is clear opportunity to capitalise on ARLF networks to a much greater extent than is currently being undertaken. This will be explored more fully in a later section.

4.7 Impact on workplace

ARLF alumni and positional leadership

Positional leadership refers to decision-making authority that derives from a formal position of responsibility within an organisation, although large national and multinational organisations can have multiple layers of decision-making such as at branch, regional, state, national and international levels. That is, a particular individual may hold a relatively senior position at branch level, for example, whilst at the same time not holding any decision-making authority at international level, within the same organisation.

A comparison of positional leadership impact prior to and following ARLF program/s for alumni survey respondents, showing the change in positional impact during that period, is set out as Table 16, below. Alumni survey respondents reported that prior to their ARLF program/s their positional leadership impact was mainly at organisation (62.3%) and industry (44.3%) levels. Notably, few respondents reported positional leadership at international level prior to their ARLF program (please note respondents could select more than one option, hence the total exceeds 100%).

Table 16*Change over time in positional leadership impact*

	At doing ARLF (%)	Now (%)	<i>Change over time (%)</i>
International	4.7%	15.7%	11.0%
National	25.0%	41.9%	16.9%
State-wide	28.8%	37.1%	8.3%
Regional	37.3%	41.4%	4.1%
Industry	44.3%	48.1%	3.8%
Organisation	62.3%	63.3%	1.0%
Town or farm property(ies)	34.9%	33.8%	-1.1%

Survey responses indicated that following their ARLF program alumni experienced a significant increase in positional leadership at international (from 4.7% to 15.7%); national (from 25% to 41.9%) and state wide (from 28.8% to 37.1%) levels. Smaller increases were reported at regional (from 37.4% to 41.4%); industry (from 44.3% to 48.1%); and organisation (from 62.3% to 63.3%) levels. This shows increased capacity to bring about change at industry, regional, state wide, national and international levels post-program, with the greatest increases being at industry, national and international levels. There was no major difference in positional leadership at town or farm property level as might reasonable be expected since many farm properties are owner operated as a family business and positional leadership is not a relevant concept for these businesses.

It is noted that these findings should be read with caution as positional leadership is only one aspect of leadership and is not generally relevant to leaders who work as independent consultants or owner operators (as many ARLF alumni do) even though leaders in these fields can have significant influence within an industry or sector as a whole by virtue of other roles they hold such as membership of an industry board or committee.

Alumni were asked to describe their capacity to bring about change in their industry, workplace and community, both before and after the ARLF program/s they completed. A selection of the responses, limited to change within workplace, is set out within Table 17, below. The responses suggest that many respondents felt their capacity to bring about change within their workplace was quite limited and localised prior to their ARLF program. There are also hints that some alumni considered that because their leadership prior to their ARLF program was not at the broader industry level, this was something of a negative.

Table 17

Capacity to bring about workplace change before ARLF program

Alumni survey responses
<i>"Limited within an organisational context in a management role, one of influence rather than decision-making."</i>
<i>"Prior to the ARLP I didn't have roles outside my workplace."</i>
<i>"Able to get people on board and have been seen as a leader of my team."</i>
<i>"No confidence or knowledge to bring about change. I was primarily operating on-farm with very little exposure to other networks."</i>
<i>"Prior to the ARLP I was functioning at an operational level responding primarily to day to day requirements and emergency solutions. My focus was on demonstrating capacity and delivering strong outcomes for the organisation I work for."</i>
<i>"I struggled to make change as I could see what needed to be done but did not have the skills or knowledge in how to break it down to effect that change."</i>
<i>"Was focused at the organisation level [rather than at broader industry level]."</i>
<i>"Very limited as I was unclear about how to influence change positively in a workplace."</i>
<i>"Most impact on immediate staff and program."</i>
<i>"A manager rather than a leader."</i>

Notably, alumni responses in relation to capacity to bring about workplace change *after* their ARLF program were more positive, as is indicated in the selection of responses set out in Table 18, below. Many alumni reported that their leadership styles post-program were more inclusive and strategic and that they now recognised multiple points of view resulting in greater ownership of the change strategy by their team.

Table 18

Capacity to bring about workplace change after ARLF program

Alumni survey responses
<i>"Certainly more successful from others point of view – try to give ownership of change to others."</i>
<i>"High."</i>
<i>"Increasing."</i>
<i>"My ability is enhanced, however there are still hurdles to positional impact that re not addressed by the ARLP."</i>
<i>"Inclusive style engaging the whole team makes the change process easier to manage and more effective."</i>
<i>"I am still passionate and driven by the need to bring about change, however I believe I now see more points of view and am able to bring better collaboration to change, resulting in better buy in."</i>
<i>"I now operate at a more strategic level and am better able to see more of the components of the bigger picture. Within my organisation I am now better able to manage operations and find time to develop strategic programs."</i>
<i>"Getting through to senior staffs and try to make them understand how I deal with difficult situations on ground."</i>
<i>"Able to influence change in workplace."</i>
<i>"Moderate."</i>
<i>"I am now more able to bring about change with influence. My current work has been showcased at national level."</i>
<i>"Much improved and an appropriate level required for role in senior management, leading a team and engaging a wide range of key stakeholder groups."</i>
<i>"Strong but opportunities are limited at present."</i>
<i>"I have retired from the workplace now."</i>
<i>"Limited but less so than before."</i>
<i>"Within the organisation I currently have less capacity to bring about change because of my comparatively 'lower' position within the hierarchy ... This is not a situation I am comfortable with Stronger ability but still mid-level."</i>
<i>"Similarly, in my workplace, I am also an innovator of new technology, having improved our vineyard trellis systems for better disease prevention and flavour development and developed 2 new vineyards with new soil preparation technology and trellises."</i>

The following excerpt from an alumnus from the Agribusiness Leadership Program is typical of responses from interviewees with regard to the positive impact on workplace of capacity to bring about change post-program.

I've got a couple of really shitty situations to deal with at the moment and I was talking with my boss ... earlier today and he was very, very complimentary on how I've gone about it [bringing about the required change within the organisation]. It [ARLF program]

accelerated my development, definitely, from a leadership perspective ... I absolutely have talked to them about and I'm sure particularly my boss, the general manager, he would absolutely have seen how I've handled my role and the leadership development I've had [through the program]. (Interview 2016/17, Agriculture)

However, several respondents also expressed frustration due to difficulty in bringing about change within their workplace, reporting limited opportunities. This is especially the case within large, national or international organisations that operate with strongly hierarchical structures as is reflected in the following interview excerpts from ARLP alumni:

It's difficult... it depends where you are in the organisation, you only feed up ideas and you hope that the people who make decisions can sponsor them, take them further, that's all you can hope for really. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C18, Banking)

... It becomes a little difficult when you go through a rural leadership program which is, you know, about how you can get results and you get into an organisation and the way they're operating is the exact opposite. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C1, Executive manager, Health)

This trend was further reflected in the interview data where it was noted that change was only possible where values and priorities aligned and where alignment did not exist there was a tendency for alumni to leave their workplaces and seek something different —perhaps a new place or work or a completely new change of career.

A lot of people left organisations that they had been involved in. And so, people changed jobs. I certainly did. Because people started being more aware of what it was that they maybe wanted to focus on. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C12, Government)

[The ARLP] gave me the confidence to become the black sheep of the family, because in a family business the usual model is the first generation makes it, the second generation (which is me) lives off it and the third generation kills it; that's the standard moss for family businesses, and I'm the second generation, which means I could have had a nice life living off it, but it gave me the confidence to basically say 'look, I'll leave the family business for a higher objective ...'. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C1, Executive manager, Health)

Well, I really felt that the impact of the program was actually, for some people I had the feeling that they needed to reconcile some of the things they've done and done in their lives around family lives and their professional lives and really have it reinforced that it was all

right to have made a mistake or it was all right to do whatever they're doing, be it about retiring or be it – yeah. So it was really like giving away thorns about certain parts of what they were doing and thinking. ... I think it gives people encouragement and empowerment to just do something different. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazers 2010, Consultant)

A number of alumni reported becoming independent consultants after experiences such as this.

I reflected on what had gone wrong with that leadership exercise [in former role as senior communications manager within an organisation] and also what had gone right and then I thought about where is the best place for me to apply all of that [new knowledge] ... and so now, I work for myself because I recognise that autonomy is the really important thing in terms of being able to implement what you believe in. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C16, Consultant)

As these examples show, there were strong suggestions from alumni who were interviewed that through increased self-awareness their ARLF leadership program had prompted them to reflect on their lives more broadly and have the confidence make difficult decisions about what direction they wanted their future leadership to take, and that this was often a positive and empowering experience rather than an indicator of failure. That is, leadership success can be interpreted and experienced in myriad ways.

However, this increase in personal confidence and awareness among alumni can also have direct benefits for the workplace. For example, one alumnus, who has remained with the same large organisation for his whole career, observed that following the ARLP he was much more willing to take on challenging roles in new circumstances than before and that, in turn, this benefited the organisation directly even if they did not have the opportunity to understand that this was a clear outcome from the program:

From an organisational point of view I guess it would only be a year later [after graduating] we had a leadership void in northern Queensland ... so I said yep ... the organisation needed help and I knew I could do that, it worked out really well ... I came back and then I did a similar sort of thing in Sydney for 12 months and I also ran another region [later]. So the organisation... you know whether they see this as a direct involvement from what my learnings were from the course or what, that doesn't really matter. I know they've got all the benefits [because] I probably wouldn't have been able to do [these roles] without having the program standing behind me so to speak. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C18, Banking)

Role of ARLF alumni in facilitating workplace change in the future

Fewer alumni survey responses described desired future changes related to workplace than for other categories such as industry, suggesting that many alumni thought much more broadly than their current workplace in terms of their future leadership goals. Improving

environmental sustainability, strategic planning and thinking, organisational/workforce development and change management are common trends throughout the responses that related specifically to future workplace change.

Table 19

ARLF alumni descriptions of their desires to bring about future workplace change

Alumni survey responses
<i>"I have aspirations to bring about change in within the company I work to increase organisational accountability for social and environmental impacts. In my Board role I aspire to change the way government addresses the critical issue of the impact of agricultural industries on the Great Barrier Reef."</i>
<i>"Leadership and organisational structure."</i>
<i>"More strategic thinking outside the box."</i>
<i>"Currently I train others to sit at the bedside of the sick and dying - of any faith or no faith. As such my impact has a ripple effect no just with the students but with the patients and their families. It also has a flow on effect to the health organisation and its staff on a local and regional level."</i>
<i>"Societal and organisational cultural change, in the context of recognising the importance of diverse voices/ perspectives involved in decision making. A more genuinely collaborative, and less competitive approach. 'Mainstreaming' deep valuing of the natural environment."</i>
<i>"I would like people to go into leadership positions for the betterment of the organisation, and not just see it as a step on the ladder for their career or leadership journey."</i>
<i>"Organisational development, strategic planning and execution."</i>
<i>"Areas relating to communication, strategic outlook and people development."</i>
<i>"Decisions made through effective strategy rather than short-term politics."</i>
<i>"Workforce development."</i>
<i>"I want to bring a change in my workplace by making my team to understand the current situation now that are arises in the community and delivering services which community will understand what is my job is really about."</i>
<i>"Encourage more people to accept change."</i>
<i>"Energy and water efficiency."</i>
<i>"I have aspirations to bring about change in within the company I work to increase organisational accountability for social and environmental impacts. In my Board role I aspire to change the way government addresses the critical issue of the impact of agricultural industries on the Great Barrier Reef."</i>
<i>"Leadership and organisational structure."</i>
<i>"Within the organisation I currently have less capacity to bring about change because of my comparatively 'lower' position within the hierarchy ... This is not a situation I am comfortable with Stronger ability but still mid-level."</i>
<i>"Similarly, in my workplace, I am also an innovator of new technology, having improved our vineyard trellis systems for better disease prevention and flavour development and developed 2 new vineyards with new soil preparation technology and trellises."</i>

Extent of ARLF alumni involvement in organisational or business development

In the 2017 ARLF Alumni survey, a total of 182 respondents rated a high mean score of 4 out of 5, when they were asked to rate the extent to which they have had the opportunity to apply their leadership capacity in the area of organisational/business development following completion of their ARLF program. Participants' responses suggest that 72.5% of ARLF alumni who completed the survey are involved in organisational and/or business development to a significant extent. This is a substantial proportion of alumni and indicates that even for alumni whose work is primarily at industry level, organisational and/or business development remains significant suggesting that this is a primary focus for change management/implementation.

4.8 Case study: Agent of organisational change

Introduction

This case study considers how the ARLP has benefited the leadership capabilities of one visible achiever alumnus and how this has translated into impacts on and outcomes for the various organisations for which she has worked since graduation. The case study also highlights some significant benefits for community and industry. It draws from two extended interviews with the alumnus herself and also on follow-up interviews with three other individuals selected from organisations with which this alumnus has been or is currently associated. The aim of these follow-up interviews was to identify specific examples of the impact of her leadership, personally, professionally, in the community, and for the agricultural sector more broadly. The case study has also drawn on a range of other publicly available data.

Georgina* lives in Sydney and is a graduate of the ARLP who completed the program more than 10 years ago. At the time, she was a recently appointed and very inexperienced CEO of a state-based farmers' organisation. Both she and her employer hoped that the program would enable Georgina to develop leadership capability but also to develop a network of individuals and mentors.

Leadership Principles

The case study is organised around the ARLF principles to discuss achievement and impact.

Contextually and culturally responsible/Recognises and responds to complexity

Almost immediately after completing the ARLP program Georgina was headhunted by a larger and more active farmers' association in a neighbouring state to take up a policy advocacy role, effectively second in charge to the CEO:

It was in the thick of the millennium drought. I was dealing with very anguished farmers who were dealing with horrible circumstances on the farm. I was dealing with farmers' wives who were ringing up worried about their partners having access to firearms and prevalence of suicide. I was dealing with the sale of Telstra. So, really meaty controversial issues that were difficult in a policy sense but also difficult in a personal sense, in that people were so deeply affected by the issues we were dealing with.

A few years into the role, and following the births of her two children, the rural issues had changed markedly:

I was actually dealing with mining and coal seam gas and land use conflict, incredibly controversial high-profile issues. [The farmers' organisation] had an amazing chair ... really dynamic, incredible leader within the industry, and I was delighted in working under her for a number of years. She and I did a lot of travelling across the country negotiating with farmers, negotiating with mining and coal seam gas companies, trying to broker conversations in communities where there was just an absolute lock the gate mentality: 'stay away'. Real community angst.

Ethically based

Following her roles with the farmers' associations, Georgina served for three years as CEO of a child care association, the peak body for privately owned long day care services/centres. Similar to her prior roles, this position was primarily policy and advocacy work, negotiating directly with federal ministers around the development and introduction of a new child care package: 'back and forth to Canberra on a weekly basis'. As part of this role Georgina negotiated directly with three successive early childhood ministers and served as a member of the ministerial advisory council. The chair of the board of that childcare association confirmed that during that time Georgina also completely transformed the organisation's own governance and management so that by the time she left she had garnered:

... Lots and lots of respect people from people who felt that she was great and effective, but also just respected her as a person. In terms of her leadership though, she never had a problem turning to me and saying, 'I don't know what to do' and half the time I would say, 'I don't either' and other times I'd be like, you know, 'Try this, try that' and/or turning to our corporate governance consultant and saying, 'I don't know what to do. What's the correct procedure here? What's the ethical thing to do? Where are my boundaries?' – which is always a great part of leadership, being able to recognise when you don't know what you're doing, rather than just forging ahead. (Chair of the board, child care association).

Effective and constructive

In 2016 Georgina was headhunted for her current role as CEO of an Australian food share organisation, a non-profit which operates a federated structure with an operating presence and distribution centre in every Australian state and the Northern Territory, focusing on capital cities and major regional centres. Food Share* is Australia's largest food relief provider, serving as a conduit between the agricultural and food industries and the welfare sector. In 2016 Food Share provided food for more than 60 million meals, to both charitable organisations and schools. At the time of the interviews for this case study, Georgina had held this role for six months.

Georgina describes her overarching objective as to 'provide a voice for those who don't have a voice' a theme evident in all her previous roles. Her current role with Food Share enables her to:

... Combine a passion for social justice issues with a connection back to the land and knowing that a third of the food we distribute ... goes back into rural communities and knowing that farmers play such an integral role in the food we are able to provide – we do full breakfast programs with fresh fruit and vegetables sourced from amazingly generous farmers. For me, this is my rural communities background combining with social justice. ... It's [also] really interesting that a lot of the social justice work we did during the Sydney session of our course — we spent a night on the streets, did some work with [name] and the Salvos (interestingly he's on the board of [Food Share] New South Wales. And I was at a meeting last week and went 'I know you from way back when!') — it's really fascinating for me that a lot of the program content around social justice is actually coming to light right now for me.

Georgina describes her role with Food Share as being incredibly challenging and she sees the ARLP as integral to dealing with those challenges:

... Because culturally this organisation needs some serious work – not just our organisation, but the states as well. I'm going to be drawing heavily on what I learned in the course but have also already started the phone calls back to some of my colleagues ... going 'I've got a live one here – how am I going to handle this one?'

Despite these challenges, Georgina is already seeing the benefits of her leadership within Food Share and describes the ARLP as being integral to this:

[When I arrived there was a difficult] cultural issue that needed sorting through, and at that time [the organisation was] very flat and demotivated, feeling very much like a rudderless ship. Without wishing to toot my own horn, just in the last couple of months I feel like the staff are motivated, energised and positive, and very much on the same page as I am. That's beyond my expectations.

I didn't expect that to happen so quickly, but I really do feel that as a consequence of the course and knowing about people's behaviours — whether it be technical stuff like Myers Briggs, or just understanding that some people just need to have their voice heard, some people are never going to rock the boat, but they are going to do some damage in the background — all those sorts of things have really come into play for me culturally in terms of understanding why we are where we are [as an organisation].

Facilitates change

Georgina is actively driving change within the Food Share organisation itself aimed at achieving a broader focus and closer alignment with the social services sector:

Food Share is in a transition period where we've been very much a food in, food out, organisation, very closely aligned with the food industry very much focused on warehousing and logistics and getting food in and getting food out. We're [now] in this transition to becoming more and more closely aligned with the charity sector given that we distribute our food through two and half thousand charities but equally to position ourselves better in the social services base. So as an example we're not currently members of the Australian Council of Social Services despite the fact that ACOS is the peak body for social services and despite the fact that they are the ones doing the policy and advocacy work that relates to the people that we're supporting and the charities that deliver the food to them. So, we're really going through a period of unprecedented change and I think that that's requiring me to draw on a lot of the leadership skills that I have in bringing our board along but also in a federated structure ensuring that all of the states and territories understand the importance of the journey ... for want of a better word, and why it's so important for us to start changing the way that we do business.

An example of a specific outcome and change arising from the strength of Georgina's leadership in relationship building and negotiation was provided by a former senior manager within the farmers' association:

There was one critical point for that organisation in terms of our advocacy agenda specifically, some of the work that she was doing around the conflict over land use in [location] between farming and the mining industry — issues like coal seam gas and coal mining on prime agricultural land. It was an extremely heated and controversial issue that the organisation was facing and there was huge range of competing stakeholders. One was taking a really radical approach to opposing the mining industry. Obviously we [also] had the mining industry as a stakeholder. [We were also] dealing with all the different communities and their varying views on the issue and all the political stakeholders ... What [Georgina] did was bring together all of those different stakeholders. So we formed a coalition of all the groups, a lot of which had very different views on the outcomes that they wanted to achieve but she managed to establish a positive platform that we could all agree on, which was no mean feat.

And you know that really allowed us to navigate and achieve outcomes which wouldn't have happened unless we had someone like [Georgina] just to bring us into the same group. Otherwise we'd just be all fighting each other and wouldn't achieve anything.

Understanding self (relative to and respectful of others)/ Values difference

Georgina indicates that completing the ARLP was a life-changing experience that she draws on every day, to this day, many years after she graduated. The most significant personal benefit was increased self-awareness:

Because I was thrust into a leadership role very early, early twenties, and you take on the world, you want to change the world – you think you're much more powerful than you are. I think this was a really good reality check for me to go 'do you know what? Some self-awareness wouldn't go astray' – because sometimes the messages you are delivering are pretty blunt. Sometimes you're not thinking about what might be driving someone's behaviours to make them say or do things or achieve certain things. For me it was much more about understanding the emotions, drivers, values and philosophies behind what I did and what others were doing, to try and get that alignment happening. I still very much, in every conversation I have, every negotiation I have, draw on 'what are values and motives here? What are mine? Where's the alignment?'

Another major personal benefit was resilience:

For me, because I'm not a camper, I'm not outdoorsy, the two-week experiential learning component in the Kimberley is something I still reflect on almost daily. Even in my personal world I know, when I had my first child who didn't sleep well at all, if ever, the number of nights I sat there going 'do you know what? I managed two weeks in the Kimberley on no sleep doing really incredible physical challenges and was pushed to my mental limits, I can actually get through tonight because I've done it before.' Just simple things like that in terms of resilience and knowing that I can get past things that I didn't think I could.

The third major personal benefit that Georgina derived from the ARLP was self-confidence to negotiate, to build and leverage relationships. This is an ongoing challenge for someone who describes herself as 'extremely introverted by nature who would much rather shy away from [difficult] conversations':

We rely on 50 national donors, major food companies. We're talking all of the household brand names from Arnott's to retailers of Woolworths, Coles and Aldi, to SPC Ardmona. I'm dealing with very big Australian corporate companies to try and ensure they've donating either food or money to us. For me, having the confidence to go into a negotiation with the chairman of the board of Woolworths Limited, having the confidence to go to a meeting with the CEO of SPC Ardmona. Going in with a very clear ask and walking away with a very clear outcome – that's all driven by the skills and attributes that we talked and learned about and were immersed in through the

course. I still kick myself some days. Last week was a classic example. On Wednesday I was standing next to the CEO of Red Rooster. He and I were serving meals at a soup kitchen in Parramatta but spending the whole two hours having a yarn about what we could do into the future and what more Red Rooster could do ... Then the next day I'm on the 45th floor of a high rise in Sydney with the chairman of the board of one of the country's largest companies saying 'what can you guys do to help us? What more can you do? ...' Then the next day, I was out launching a truck in a warehouse. Every day is incredibly different, but it means it's going to require different language, different approaches, but again, all about relationship building and maintaining and enhancing relationships.

Works with others

Although Georgina indicated that the benefits of the ARLP were very broad: 'It just changed everything about me', she was also able to identify a number of specific benefits. The first major benefit from the ARLP was a more nuanced understanding of both herself and of the factors affecting issues under negotiation. Whereas prior to the program Georgina would focus on 'what's the problem, how do we fix it', she found that after the program she was able to adopt a much more sophisticated approach that involves identifying 'what are the values and motives ... – why does the problem exist in the first place. What are the drivers behind it?'. This, she finds, is a much more successful way of solving problems, through attempting to find common ground and, if this is not possible, to at least understand needs and motivations:

For me it was much more about understanding the emotions, drivers, values and philosophies behind what I did and what others were doing, to try and get that alignment happening. I still very much, in every conversation I have, every negotiation I have, draw on 'what are values and motives here? What are mine? Where's the alignment?' If we are at polar opposites, that's going to be a different negotiation – but if we're actually on the same page, let's use that as a common ground to start from.

A former staff member confirms Georgina's leadership capacities in this area:

She got this really good ability to find common ground with people. She's very good at remembering personal details about people and their lives that will sort of give her common ground with that person and enable her to foster a relationship quite quickly. She's always... interested in the everyday details of people's lives. She's a ferocious networker.

Georgina was heavily involved in policy advocacy and ministerial liaison in her previous organisational roles and this has continued in her work with Food Share where it has become a particular challenge:

I'm actually getting in the car shortly to drive to Parliament House. We've got an all-day forum at Parliament House tomorrow ... It's one of the reasons I've been put into this role – our organisation lost touch with politics quite a long time ago. I need to re-establish those connections in Canberra, because at the end of the day, the current Government is putting less and less money into the charities — we have 2,500 charities we distribute our food through. From Salvos and Vinnies through to your local church groups, and so on. The way the economy is, and the way the Government is treating the economy — all of the charities are getting less and less Government funding, which means they are less and less secure. I really need to go to Canberra and make sure I can either help encourage that investment back into those charities, or find a different way for us to get food to hungry people. Whilst [Food Share] is seen as an organisation that helps hungry people on the street, most of the people we are actually helping are the working underemployed. Families doing it tough. People who've had some sort of accident, an unexpected car breakdown or job loss or medical incident. Young families. They are the people we're helping. For me, being able to go to Canberra and tell the real story and make that emotional connection where they might have just gone 'oh here's another charity that helps people who need a hand out' well no. We provide a hand up, not a hand out. 'You guys need to step up, because we're saving tax payers a lot of money by helping these people get back on their feet, back into the work force and contribute to their community'. That's my challenge.

Importance of ARLP Alumni network

The program cohort has been instrumental in assisting Georgina to develop a network of like-minded individuals that extended well beyond agriculture and agripolitics who could help and support her in her role:

There were farmers, mayors, people heavily involved in their local communities. So, for me to have a sounding board I could go to and some mentors who were far more established in their leadership roles was just invaluable.

Georgina leverages the ARLP network heavily to this day. In relation to her program cohort, she looks for practical advice, mentoring, guidance and support and provided a specific example from her farmers' association days:

In the thick of the drought, [dealing with] mental health issues, I really leant on my colleagues ... and just went 'how do I fix this? This is such a really complex issue, and it's hitting so many people so hard, how do I actually bring some groups together and actually tackle it?' Even if they didn't have expertise, being able to just verbalise those things and talk through it and draw on their knowledge was incredibly powerful, so for me having a network of peers I could bounce ideas off and talk through ideas with – that self-awareness, but also the knowledge that being a leader can be lonely and scary and that's okay.

Georgina also draws on her ARLP cohort in more practical ways, actively seeking out fellow alumni who might have experience or contacts in an area relevant to whatever issue she is dealing with at the time. She provides a current example:

We actually rely heavily on donations from food companies but also farmers. I'm now going back to all of those contacts ... leveraging those relationships to get food donations.

From the broader ARLP network, Georgina looks for points of connection, especially when negotiating with someone she has not previously met, such as a senior bureaucrat, a government minister or a CEO of another organisation. If they are an ARLP alumni, or have been involved with the ARLP in some way (as Georgina finds is often the case), she will use the ARLP connection as a way of breaking the ice and of establishing some common ground and mutual interests.

Community capacity building

Georgina has a life-long commitment to advocacy for building capacity in rural and regional Australia, and to agriculture. This was clearly evident in her work with the farmers' associations where a former staff member reports that she had a big focus on encouraging younger people to stand for election within the organisation so that they were working towards positions of influence for the future. She was also passionate about women in agriculture, working very closely with women 'to make sure they understood how to navigate the internal structures of agripolitics and get their points across'. She continues to mentor a number of former direct reports who are now in quite senior organisational roles themselves:

She is a very important sounding board for my professional career. So whenever I'm thinking of a career change or facing a difficult circumstance in my professional life I'll always call [Georgina] to sound her out and ... she makes an incredible amount of time for me, and I know it's not only me but for a number of people, to play that role as a sounding board. She always gives very frank advice and isn't backwards in telling you if she thinks that you're wrong. For me it's been incredibly important. She's given me a lot of helpful advice over the years which has certainly helped progress my career. She's also played an important role with other people within the [agricultural] industry. She's a big supporter of mine and a lot of other people's as well and makes a lot of time in her own life to play that role. For example, our co-president was certainly someone who's benefited a lot from [Georgina's] advice over the years and [Georgina] was instrumental in helping her navigate the organisation and build her profile ... I just think overall that [Georgina] has taken her passion for agriculture with her wherever she's gone.

In her former childcare role, and her current volunteer community work, staff report that Georgina 'talks about rural and regional Australia a lot. And [as a result] we talk about it a lot'. Her commitment to these issues is 'huge, huge' ... she is 'very much passionate about it'. As a result, advocacy for rural and regional Australia remains an intrinsic part of the work in Georgina's current role:

I think particularly when it comes to food, food security is actually in crisis and people in rural and regional communities are eleven percent more likely to suffer from food insecurity even though it's commonly thought of as a city problem. So my challenge and dilemma right now is engaging in a really strong policy narrative with government as a way to highlight the crisis that's affecting rural and regional Australia and Indigenous Australia without adding stigma to it. It's a real conundrum ... There's more to this state than the CBD.

Georgina is also heavily involved in community work related to her two children. For example, she is currently in her sixth year as secretary of an outside school hours and vacation care program and is also an age-group manager for the local Little Athletics Club. In both of these roles she brings to bear her full capacity as a leader, not only through day-to-day operations but also in advocating for change. For example, the co-ordinator of the outside school hours and vacation care program reports that Georgina successfully lobbied for a change in state government regulations and that this means that 'we're no longer required to write detailed observations about each child and so our role is now more about supporting their play and life skills rather than being consumed by paperwork'.

Georgina notes:

I'm really proud of the impact that I'm having and have had in all the organisations that I've worked in. I had a friend of mine when I was leaving my last work place say to me a really wonderful thing that just meant the world and he said 'You leave every organisation you've worked for in a better place with better people'. And if I can keep doing that then I'm going to be a very happy lady.

She envisages that the future will bring greater demands on Food Share in an environment where government funding is declining. One of her greatest challenges is achieving increased public awareness:

We've got 43,000 people a month that are being turned away from charities because they don't have enough food so demand is outstripping supply and increasingly our government walks away from ... there's less and less [government] funding going to charities. There's going to be less and less [government] funding coming to organisations like [Food Share] whether it be nationally or at state or territory level, and we're going to become increasingly reliant on fundraising. And simple fundraising 101 is that people are not going to donate if they don't know anything about your brand, if they don't know anything about the work that you do or anything about your impact. So I think if [Food Share] at any level is going to start really asking consumers to put their hands in their pockets and support us then they need to know what we do and why we do it. ... Food Share needs to be a household name. I think the greatest lost opportunity that we've had is that we've been behind the scenes and we've been fine with that. We've been fine to be the outside service operating at warehouse level and not be consumer facing. In five years' time people need to understand that the reason that Salvos and Vinnies and soup kitchens and womens' shelters are able to provide hot meals or ongoing ingredients to take home to their families is because of [Food Share]. That when you donate to [Food Share] you're actually donating to 2,500 charities to make sure that 166,000 meals a day are going out to people who are doing it really tough. And if people better understand the cause I'll be very happy because I really feel that food insecurity and hunger in Australia is not well understood and the impact is not understood either.

* pseudonym

4.9 Conclusion: Workplace change

The data reported in these workplace change subsections show significant increases in positional leadership following completion of an ARLF program/s, especially at industry (+15%), national (+22%) and international (+15%) levels. When these data are disaggregated by gender they show that males report comparatively increased positional leadership at national (+16%) and international (+8%). This likely reflects reduced organisational leadership opportunities for women and, given these are self-reported data, may also be partly due to the known tendency for males to overstate leadership roles and impact. However, it is also noted that positional leadership is only one form of leadership exercised by ARLF alumni, many of whom work as independent consultants or owner operators and that leaders in these roles can have significant influence within an industry or sector as a whole by virtue of other roles they hold such as membership of an industry board or committee.

Following completion of their ARLF program, many alumni reported that their leadership styles were more inclusive and strategic and that they now recognised multiple points of view resulting in greater ownership of the change strategy by their team. It was not unusual for alumni to comment that they simply could not have taken on the leadership roles they now held had they not completed the program. However, some alumni — generally within large national or international organisations with strongly hierarchical structures — reported that they had experienced difficulty in bringing about changes within their workplaces that they had thought necessary (post-program). It was not unusual for alumni who had experienced this to have either left their workplaces and become self-employed or to have obtained employment elsewhere. It was generally felt that change within a workplace was only possible where values and priorities aligned. Having said that, almost without exception, alumni respondents did not see such workplace or career changes as a negative. Instead, they reported that it was their ARLF program that had prompted them to reflect on their lives more broadly and have the confidence to make difficult decisions about what direction they wanted their future leadership to take.

72.5% of ARLF alumni survey respondents reported that they are involved in organisational and/or business development to a significant extent. This indicates that even for those whose work is primarily at industry level, organisational and/or business development remains significant, suggesting that this is a primary focus for change management/implementation.

The case study of Georgina's* leadership is a glowing example of how one individual has leveraged what she gained from the ARLP to bring about significant change within a number of significant organisations and also to lead change more broadly at industry, government and policy levels. However, the case study is more than a story of successive increases in positional leadership and the benefits this brings. It is a testament to the lasting commitment to social justice and rural and regional Australia that completion of the ARLP helped to engender.

4.10 Impact on community

4.10.1 Community capacity building and voluntarism

The commitment of ARLF alumni to RRR Australian community capacity building through their workplace, family involvement and voluntarism is a key indicator of the success of ARLF programs. Understanding the impact of individual leaders in communities has both tangible and intangible aspects. The tangible aspects can be represented by alumni activities in community organisations, local councils, sports and arts committees, local clubs, where they take the initiative through entrepreneurialism and voluntarism. These observable community based practices are evidence of how individual Fellows impact beyond their workplace, industry or organisation. Even then, it is difficult to distinguish between work and voluntary activism with regard to agribusiness and other service providers in rural and remote communities, as work and home are often the same:

I have widened my spheres of influence to national and international level. I'm now the Mayor of my community which was my long-term goal but have also served as Chair on two national bodies. I'm a confident and inclusive in my decision-making process and have a good work life balance. (2017 Alumni survey)

The intangible impact is in the form of everyday relationships that includes the voluntary labour of mentoring, encouraging others to lead, assisting them writing applications for funding or professional development such as the ARLF, imparting knowledge about how to do things better, making connections and providing personal support—activities which are the social fabric of rural and regional community capacity building.

Success was understood broadly by alumni with regard to community based leadership:

The ARLP is about impacting communities particularly with rural and regional focus and champion their course... And it might be that someone has gone from running a very small business in a rural town and they still do it. But they've gone and taking on other community roles and particularly with people who have then gone on to great heights and all the rest of it, that's success. Some people haven't changed their job...but still can be a success. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C13, Government)

I suppose one of the obvious ones [indicators of impact] is being able to have some line of sight as to what the graduates go on to do post ARLP. I remember saying at our graduation that people may well see graduates on the television, leading a big company, AGM or something like that, but equally they will also be there working in their communities behind the scenes making amazing contributions but you never hear about them. So, I think that if we were able to get a much better line of sight on the things that the graduates have done post the course, that would be really powerful I reckon. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C19, Dairy)

The 2017 Alumni survey indicates that out of 172 participants who responded to the question about opportunity to apply their leadership expertise, more than 70.1% (average and above) consider they have the opportunity to apply their leadership expertise in voluntary work and 72.2% % (average and above) in community development in some form.

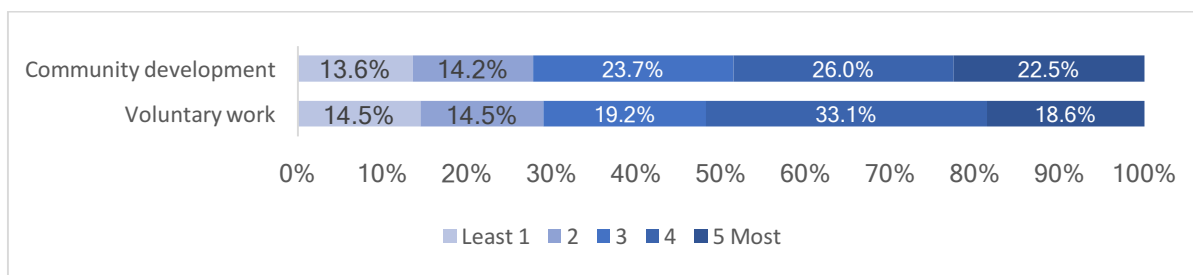


Figure 16

Opportunity to apply leadership expertise post-program in the areas of community development and voluntary work

How local communities benefit from the ARLF Fellows is wide ranging, often not observable, and deeply contextualised:

And I would argue that in actual fact in regional areas the impact people [ARLF graduate] may have on their community may actually be greater by their actions than ... things from Parliament. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Wool)

Benefits range from empowering others in multiple ways such as passing on skills; ideas; network connections; specialist knowledge; governance, financial and management expertise; offering formal and informal mentoring; communicating the bigger picture of state, national and international agri-business; and transmitting knowledge of the policy process. Alumni are active in a wide range of community roles:

Currently Chair of a farming systems group (MacKillop Farm Management Group). Also in the past have volunteered in community arts, NRM, kindy & school, town & community development, regional development. All of these roles have required some kind of leadership. (2017 Alumni survey)

There was strong evidence that in the early programs the ARLP had a disruptive impact on many familial relationships and the program now is more inclusive of family representatives. Indeed, many alumni returned with a greater commitment to family and recognition that leadership can occur within and from the family, particularly in family run business and properties:

To say look at one alumnus who's in a leadership role in parliament and we applaud her 'cause she's there for her community. [But I can't] say she's any more important than another graduate who's working on an Indigenous property, bringing kids in who are trouble in the town. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni/Staff, TRAILblazers)

Key issues confronting local communities were summed up by one alumni (Deakin Survey 2017): as being ‘training and professional mentorship; gender equality; technological improvement; participation and improvement in enterprise performance’. These could be expected to have ‘flow on benefits to community’. There was an overarching commitment by alumni to local community summed up in a few statements which saw local industry, agriculture and community development as integral to each other:

While I am a big advocate for continuous improvement at an industry and workplace level. On a community level, it is more about supporting people and groups more effectively.

Government, agency, industry all involve community in decision making.

I would like the seafood industry to portray a more professional image and the community to support local seafood producers.

4.10.2 Providing secure employment through good governance

Fundamental to community wellbeing and economic growth is access to employment. Australian businesses, workforces and markets are currently undergoing radical change at a structural level. Some communities and regions are more at risk than others due to increased local and global competition, de-industrialisation, climate change, limited natural resources (water), poor transport, technology and government infrastructure, reducing financial resources, shrinking demographics and volatile international markets. Equally significant to employment is housing affordability. Again, there were a number of alumni actively involved as volunteers in developing businesses such as tourism and working to alleviate housing shortages. Other alumni responses in the survey were:

Table 20

Alumni activity as volunteers and developing businesses

Alumni survey responses
By getting more involved in community housing discussion in a community meetings and liaising with senior staff and dealing with situation on ground.
Regionally, tourism is a major commercial enterprise, bringing in significant income that is broadly distributed across retail, entertainment etc and central to economic sustainability
Regional tourism (Board of a Museum)
Act as Chair of the Riverina Regional Development Australia Committee
Local Rural Education program committee.
State Agricultural College Advisory Committee

A key aspect of the sustainability of rural, regional and remote communities is not only employment but also good governance. This is an area in which many ARLF graduates have wide ranging experience. Many graduates also become consultants in their field working across RRR Australia after a long career in a specific industry, NGO or government role. Making this transition was dependent on them having both significant experience in business, in the industry and/or policy, and therefore proven capability and credibility:

My community based work, the overlying driver behind it is for the industry which helps people who are employed in the industry and ultimately I think it helps bring jobs and that to the broader region. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C15, Forestry)

Sound financial management and governance are key areas of influence where ARLF graduates who are now consultants have influenced decision-making:

... We have to make sure that people meet their budget because you might want to confront the company. If people don't meet their budget we're putting people at high risk so we have to make sure we all contribute to our prosperity so they can do all the good things they want to do for our people. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazers 2010, Consultant)

I think I have been instrumental in providing the appropriate leadership to bring about change in the sector. I work also in not-for-profit organisations that I play a volunteer role in, particularly around governance and high level administrative structures. (2017 Alumni survey)

Encouraging wider representational diversity and improved governance practices on committees and boards in the rural sector. (2017 Alumni survey)

4.10.3 Providing opportunities for professional development

Other graduates shifted their field of employment due to their involvement in the ARLP, or moved from government into private or volunteer work:

The specific project I was working on, community information networks during bushfire emergencies. I delivered and expanded the influence of the project due to the influence of the ARLP. I have reflected on my leadership role within government and have decided to move into the private and volunteer spheres of rural communities ... time will tell in terms of whether this will take me. (Alumni response, Kitchen Table Survey)

Working with individual aspirations through mentoring, coaching and identifying opportunities is integral to building community as it has flow on effects on both the recipient, their families and communities. This begins at the organisational level:

Every half-year we sit down and start and basically see what they feel about the job and how they're going and what their aspirations are for the next phase of their work and their life. A big part of it is professional and personal development and support.” (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazers 2010, Consultant)

Given the existence of the ARLP over 25 years, many Fellows have experienced major career changes. Many farmer producers are returning to their community because of the need to be on the land to address what is now a more difficult and rapidly changing context:

I am more localised in my endeavours to enact change, particularly in the water industry. (Alumni survey respondent, meat and livestock industry)

Some of the ARLF graduates from the 1990s are moving into retirement and seeking to promote and support intergenerational change by bringing their knowledge back into the community. These graduates, while passing on their farm/ property or business responsibility to the next generation are also because of greater flexibility and time, undertaking statewide, community and volunteer work:

I am retired from the workplace now, however I am actively involved in leadership roles in both state-wide and local volunteer groups. (2017 Alumni survey)

I have a great network I am sure I can tap into that. Although most is at the local level at present this is slowly changing as I reinvent myself. (Alumni survey, meat and livestock)

4.10.4 Diversity

The intangible aspects of community are those related to building social capital. For example, a persistent theme in the alumni survey (2017) that was not as evident in the 2008 report and the Kitchen Table data was the expressed need for greater gender diversity and recognition of what women do, as well as a strong push to get more women to participate in rural business and governance:

Greater participation by women in management of rural businesses. Increased government recognition and funding in rural, regional and remote Australia. (2017 Alumni survey)

At the community level, there are a range of women’s networks that have emerged from the ARLF cohort activity. A female graduate of the ARLP returned to her community and created a network of women from the alumni in her region:

Many alumni returned to their community to undertake leadership roles such as advocacy and personal development for rural women, president of our local Women’s Group, Volunteer for the Starlight Foundation Volunteer mentor for women in mining. In seeking social change, ‘the “game changer” is women's leadership in agricultural industries and organisations’. Below is a sample of comments regarding gender from the 2017 Alumni survey:

I will continue to work voluntarily in our community as long as possible in the areas of education, assisting women and the homeless and be a strong advocate in these areas. I believe the work undertaken with our youth is vitally important to their future and well-being. (2017 Alumni survey)

I want to see woman encouraged to develop more value adding small business enterprises, I want to see the cooperation and resource sharing of community groups instead of empire building, I want to continue to support and expand a positive relationship with the local high school to get more kids at risk into work situations where they can be mentored and taught the basic principles of a strong work ethic. (2017 Alumni survey)

Increase participation and recognition of under-represented demographics in agriculture including young people and women. Empower people to be innovative and think more positively about change. Support diversity by being more inclusive and accepting of gender and cultural differences. Empowering others to think about what can be achieved not what can't be changed. (2017 Alumni survey)

Lead policy debates in agribusiness, improve women's representation at corporate board level. (2017 Alumni survey)

Encouraging wider representational diversity and improved governance practices on committees and boards in the rural sector. (2017 Alumni survey)

I want to see woman encouraged to develop more value adding small business enterprises, I want to see the cooperation and resource sharing of community groups instead of empire building, I want to continue to support and expand a positive relationship with the local high school to get more kids at risk into work situations where they can be mentored and taught the basic principles of a strong work ethic. (2017 Alumni survey)

Increase participation and recognition of under-represented demographics in agriculture including young people and women. Empower people to be innovative and think more positively about change. Support diversity by being more inclusive and accepting of gender and cultural differences. Empowering others to think about what can be achieved not what can't be changed. (2017 Alumni survey)

There is growing recognition of the need to support men on the land as well due to mental and other health issues:

I'm a pimple on a pumpkin but I'm looking after a men's shed that's doing a positive part for our community. So that's just one little bit of a jigsaw puzzle, but if you add them all together, all the foundation members are doing along their way, that picture becomes a hell of a lot bigger and a lot more influence. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C1, Executive manager, Health)

As stated by one executive of a RDC, the most resilient communities are those that are most diverse (Focus group).

Diversity was also about recognition of non-traditional non-Western modes of leadership, Landcare and sense of community. This was a major theme in the forward thinking around how community was understood by the alumni in their survey responses:

Table 21

Forward thinking and understandings of community

Alumni survey responses
To educate and pass the knowledge of our culture, customs, our customary lores and protocols and traditions and to make sure that it is preserved for the future.
Gender equality Indigenous Australian employment and business programs
Holistic approach, transparency and accountability to Aboriginal Health and Community.
Providing Cultural and Government balanced response to Cultural issues impacting Aboriginal Health clients, staff and management.
Increase the number of Aboriginal identified and qualified senior management within the Health organisational structure, to manage Aboriginal Health issues appropriately.
Arts and culture, fishing, rolling stock (railway) emergency food relief, Aboriginal Mental Health.
I'm particularly interested in building better Departmental skills in partnering, formal partnerships and collaboration. These terms are used often in relation to Indigenous communities, but compared with international development standards and programs

Diversity within community was closely associated with agricultural diversity and sustainability.

4.10.5 Environmental sustainability

For many of the alumni, as indicated when questioned as to their future priorities, environmental sustainability was considered to be the key issue now and in the future for not only rural communities but also Australia. There are multiple examples of community activism with involvement by alumni on committees and various leadership positions. Activities alumni are involved in include Landcare, community land management (e.g. Chair, Kimberley Land Conservation District Committee; Bendigo Sustainability Group Bendigo), conservation (Co-Chair, Farmers for Climate Action), environmental and heritage preservation work in working bees and meetings (organising revegetation, tree planting, community gardens, environmental clean-up days, school ethics, school/parent participation events), organic industry representation and standards technical committee work, lobbying and advocacy work against the introduction of industrialised gas mining both within the state and nationally as well as promoting a more sustainable clothing culture:

I volunteer my time for causes that will help our wine industry grow and helped to set up a propagation supply group with new grape vine cultivars in the Adelaide Hills Wine region.”(2017 Alumni survey)

In the community, I have always been a strong advocate for Landcare in our region and we held a number of sessions on water in the environment, revegetating waterways (including an Olympic Landcare 2000 project) and promotion of native grasses and understorey plants to be incorporated into agricultural production systems. (2017Alumni survey)

I was working on a number of community projects in nature conservation and during the course I floated an idea with the rest of the course members about a nature conservation initiative which was quite unique. Could have been quite controversial and could easily have been stopped by the government or policy people ... So I talked to the other participants about the penguins at a course. This had been an idea that had been floating around for quite a few months. It was first presented to me by [name] off sider [name]. I was the responsible officer within the government for wildlife management in that neck of the woods so that’s how I became involved. After the August session where we did media training and I presented this as my media issue I actually went back to Warrnambool then started speaking to the council and a whole range of others saying look this is something that we can do and let’s run it as a pilot. We got their support ... We had everyone on board. The feedback I received from them and the support for being bold or being willing to do something different with the community allowed me to go out there and take the risk. You know I have worked with communities quite a bit as I mentioned, that was when I went to work in Emerald and other places. But this was very different in terms of what we were trying to do, and I tried to be general... not nail the issue ... without the support and encouragement from the other participants we wouldn’t have done the project which now is still running 10 years later. It’s got global recognition. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C13, Government)

4.10.6 Community organisations

The skills and knowledge gained through being in positional leadership at the national and state level often transfer back into community activities and into the NGO and community sectors. Many of the community activities of alumni have a strong social justice imperative, which in some instances draws on their experiences of the ARLP which confronted issues of homelessness. There is a significant focus on youth as being most at risk in local rural communities:

I am now 67 years of age and retired from paid work late 2016. Primarily my working life was with the tourism industry and morphed into small business and not for profit sector in the strategic planning, marketing and community engagement field. I have established two non-profit groups locally and continue to work voluntarily with these groups and others. One group I established provides funds for underprivileged youth to continue with further education and training. The other is aimed at assisting local women to achieve beyond

their comfort zones. I also assist with our areas very large homeless population. (2017 Alumni survey)

I will continue to work voluntarily in our community as long as possible in the areas of education, assisting women and the homeless and be a strong advocate in these areas. I believe the work undertaken with our youth is vitally important to their future and wellbeing. (2017 Alumni survey)

ARLF alumni brought significant skill base and social capital into their community. Their knowledge and expertise around governance was recognised and valued, as indicated by the range of organisations they belonged to, often in positional leadership in a voluntary capacity. Their roles varied from being board members on Parish Council, Friendly Society or farmer organisations or active participants in organisations such as local churches, Rotary, NSW Farmers, Mineral Society. This locally based committee and organisational work provides valuable links across and within NGO, not for profit community organisations and churches. Many of these organisations, such as Rotary, raise funds for local and other issues, ranging from refugee support through to mental health issues (e.g. Lifeline, Men's Shed).

4.10.7 Promoting community health and wellbeing

Health, as other community services such as education, is a major concern in all communities, with scarce resources and the ongoing difficulty of attracting and retaining medical and educational personnel. The access to and quality of health care is often dependent on funds, but also where the services are located. Some took on key drivers in these areas as they considered good health and wellbeing in work, communities and home had upstream impact. Three alumni were clearly committed to this project of wellbeing with the aim to:

... Decrease levels of workplace violence Improve healthcare standards in remote areas. (2017 Alumni survey)

... Regional development opportunities leveraging health and the high education sector IP skills to drive innovative and emerging industries in regional communities. (2017 Alumni survey)

...Stronger linked regions across professions and industries. My focus is on building a health workforce in and for remote and rural areas. (2017 Alumni survey)

The following examples illustrate how alumni work at local and national levels and across health and education sectors as they are considered to be interrelated in terms of their joint impact on individuals and communities. Others also saw the benefits of doing philanthropic work. One alumni is aiming 'to enhance or implement a national philanthropic endeavour providing or assisting in a practical way with social housing in rural and regional areas', another fundraising for community philanthropy and a third is working primarily state wide for a

community based volunteer organisation. Each alum has involvement in multiple organisations:

Table 22

Alumni promoting health and wellbeing

Alumni survey responses
Fund raising for cancer research and volunteering at the community radio station;
Involved in community organisations, volunteer board positions, motivational speaking, workshops and women's groups;
On the Board of international and indigenous development organisation in eye health services and doctor training, mentoring of young people, speaking to ministers about rural services at state and federal level;
Chair of school board, Director of hospital board, member Research Committee, Group Treasurer CWA;
Rotary Mental health services, Youth support services and Ambulance;
Rotary President, Board Member Northbourne Retirement Village, Coordinator of the NE Art and Craft Exhibition;
Sailing club, art group, local alumni networking events, regional development activities, and mentoring for colleagues;
Active firefighter in the CFA Rural Fire Brigade, Third Lieutenant & Community Safety;
Co-ordinator Victorian Wader Study Group Field Operations and Manager of a Community Association - Vice President; and
Board member of our regional volunteer resource centre, Volunteer West. I am the Chair of the Owners Corporation where I reside. I mentor the young woman who provides the services of the RDCO (Regional Disability Coordination Officer) in Melbourne's West.
I had opportunity to trial new approaches in my industry (was then natural resource management) at a regional level and held senior committee roles in my local community. In both cases I had successfully led others to bring about change.

Others were involved in an array of community services – community and charity committees, involving hands-on work beyond administration and strategy (agricultural/equine/indigenous) surf lifesaving volunteer, school board. Many were active in the key community services of Ambulance Officer, Rotary and Rural Fire Service. A significant number of the alumni were active in sport, for their own health and wellbeing, as coaches, with their children such as being the Board Member of "Codeswitch" Advisory Board Sub-committee Chair for Kununurra Race Committee and on the Kununurra Rugby League Committee.

Numerous community and charity committees, involving hands-on work beyond administration & strategy (agricultural/equine/indigenous). (2017 Alumni survey, Meat and Livestock)

Organising the community members for the upcoming event this year in June 2017. Keeping them informed in the process. (2017 Alumni survey)

Others, while on national bodies such as being or as President of State wide sporting organisation (Country based) and Board member of state body were 'still staying connected through grass roots work as well'

Any of the sporting clubs that I'm in, which I've been in a number of those, and I've coached a number of them and I've mentored a number of people, so I've also done a lot of things that aren't [in my bio]... I've spent a lot of time with kids that have had some drug issues ... I've been involved in cricket clubs with and I've helped them get employment and helped them with their families and just little things like that which I never would have dreamed of doing. I've actually really enjoyed helping them and helping their families and all of those sorts of things. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C13, Agriculture)

A further health related issue was care of the elderly, with some visiting aged care facilities and one being a member of various national committees relating to Aged Care Reference groups, home modifications while mentoring Occupational Therapy students. This sense of responsibility was enacted for the young generation, who were seen to be struggling with negotiating more unpredictable and unknowable futures

Building networks

A key aspect of community capacity building is providing others with access to a range of networks which they can call upon for support, strategies, advice, expertise and connections.

I also joined the Yarra City Council. They're an agriculture committee. I just did things like that, helped people who were keen to do volunteer work. I put them in touch with networks and – yeah, I suppose it's actively, more active in pursuing and supporting other people in doing things not just towards your passion, not just at work but outside of work as well. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C17, Executive manager, Government)

In times of reduced income in communities ranging from changes in retail through to inadequate transport and telecommunications, social capital is built through sport and the arts. Alumni are active in providing expertise on grant writing and developing groups across a range of community activities – sport, music, art, drama. These activities nurture a strong sense of community and are more likely to attract a diversity of people within communities, particularly young people, who can then be mentored and identified as potential leaders.

A few respondents stated they were involved with the arts and other cultural activities: such as being on the board of the Regional Art Gallery, Country Arts WA. One ARLF alumni cited in the survey how she had helped run a highly successful boutique writer's festival in the small town of Jugiong. She was also mentoring women across Australia, and giving talks to young women and well as political leadership in gaining more understanding about the rural environment. Many were involved in a number of community and work-related organisations. One was Chair of the Western Plains Cultural Centre Advisory Board, a member of the Dubbo Macquarie River Bushcare, on NSW Minerals Council Committees, on the local tennis club committee as well as Alkane Board Risk Management Committee.

Indigenous respondents were promoting cultural awareness of recognition as well as commercial activity as one graduate stated, 'through my local choir and engagement with indigenous performers at Woodford Folk festival'. Another was working to raise awareness of Indigenous issues in local community organisations, particularly Aboriginal organisations. During her time in Course 23 she had been encouraged by the Indigenous facilitator to be actively involved in the Indigenous community. Back in her community, she considers her role is to identify potential talent and organise around that. One instance was when she worked with a new community member – a professor in music from Melbourne – to win a music grant for the Birregurra community.

It's enabling all sorts of artistic competitions and music forums for all age groups ... it's invigorating the community by being able to recognise other leaders that are coming in, existing ones and making sure everyone finds a role to conduct themselves, whether it's with sport, music, school, education, community, gardens, that sort of stuff. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C23, Agriculture)

4.10.8 Working with the next generation: intergenerational capacity building

A major concern expressed by the interviewees, focus groups and in the surveys was the issue of how to build leadership capacity in the future. This was expressed by one:

I wish to continue capturing Australian stories that inspire others and to mentor young people to live to their full potential. (2017 Alumni survey)

Many local young people leave for the city even before completing secondary school to go to schools elsewhere, to travel and to study. Only a few return to their family properties and bring back the necessary skills to become involved in what is an increasingly competitive primary production export industry. Schools were a crucial aspect of what made a community sustainable (See cotton industry case study). Having good educational opportunities meant parents were more likely to invest in staying in the region. While there were few alumni in any of the courses with educational training, many alumni spoke about its significance for community and were particularly active in schooling when their children were enrolled. An alumnus from the meat and livestock industry was on the local rural education program committee and State Agricultural College Advisory Committee; another did public speaking training for high school leadership groups; a third set up language classes for the local primary school. Many were on committees such as the outside school hours care committee (secretary for the last 7 years) and Little Athletics (age manager for the last 3 years).

For some, raising children meant making long term connections with the region which were manifest largely through involvement with sport and other clubs e.g. pony clubs. This is at the same time as there is a need for dual income families to gain some financial security.

But even involvement with their own children expanded through voluntarism, such as coaching, thus influencing the next generation:

And I know when we were all doing the course, there was an interesting discussion going in our group because we were saying it's interesting ... people are giving less time to community now than they were historically. Here we are as leaders but we've still got families and ... we've got to be realistic about the knock-on effects. My situation, I've got three young boys ... I did the Rural Leadership course. I loved coaching basketball and the young guys in basketball so I did that for eight years and significantly influenced the lives of – probably 20 or 30 over the course at the time. And you've been talking about leadership and – so some of the things that you've got them in there ... you've helped people in that way. But then your kids, inevitably your kids will pick up the value of doing that. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Wool)

As parents, they volunteered in beach patrols, horse club committees and landcare groups:

I guess on a personal level, five years ago my kid started doing taekwondo here in town and it looked like fun so I started doing it as well. So I assist the kids on Saturdays and take classes and we do other things in the community, raise money for different charities. So I extend those leadership skills into that as part of that group, we have a leadership group which is of the younger kids so to give them the opportunity to be – to be in front of their peers and give them confidence and all those sort of things so I'm part of that as well. Definitely informed by leadership program. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C15, Forestry)

Others sought to capture young people's interests in the media, music and radio:

So yeah, kids' language radio is only a small program that we got just kick start funding for basically ... So it was just something I was doing as a creative outlet for the organisation and yeah, it was something that I was producing myself and obviously hosting and writing and editing ... It's definitely over and above. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C23, Arts)

Sport, because it was inclusive, and an area that was different from academic world of schools, it was also a space where alumni were with their own children and could identify kids in need and where they could mentor:

I know that in any community team or any community group whether it's a school group or whether it's sporting group there's always a wide range of kids that are involved in the team and they'll be the normal kids with a couple of parents that are doing very well, and then the other end of the scale they'll be a kid from a broken family whose mother might be struggling or father might be struggling, and I suppose I try and make myself aware of the kids background a little bit because that impacts as children and their behaviour... but I certainly get myself involved. I talked to them about their families and their backgrounds, what they're doing, what their job are, and then I probably find that I spend a bit more time on the kids that are struggling a bit and you know that's probably outside of sport. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C13, Agriculture)

My current status is working wholly in our local community. I live in a low socio-economic area with very high youth unemployment that has an incredibly big heart. The community work undertaken with our education group has seen over the last 5 years 100 local youth provided with funding for further education. Four of these youth have since graduated from university and two have returned to our community and are contributing at a very positive level through their employment. (2017 Alumni survey)

Others took the opportunity in any organisation they were involved in to bring young people, mentor them:

Mentoring supporting younger generations at any opportunity (wherever) especially our own family businesses; landcare/environmental NRM; family owned and operated rural businesses; healthy homes, people, animals and bottom line –sustainable and holistic well-being and businesses ... local tourism, markets and community groups. (2017 Alumni survey)

As summed up by one alumni ARLP (cohort 10):

At the end of the day, if we don't have active community members, either these groups fall down or they're actually going to have to pay for them. The way I see it, the more you can draw on a volunteer base in your community, the stronger the benefits right across that community. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C10, Not for Profit)

For those who have not assumed positional leadership but have remained in the community or on their farms, their contribution is encapsulated by the comment: 'All my leadership roles have been voluntary' (2017 Alumni survey). For those who stated they did not do any voluntary work, it was largely because of their work, travel demands, location or family commitments, leaving little time to be involved in the community. Their capacity to volunteer was also largely dependent on resolving the tension between family and work commitments. One TRAILblazer alumni believed that the course had enabled her to do more and create a balance:

I've shifted a bit from the running around like a crazy person trying to do everything and going I can't do everything anymore, and actually helping others move up the food chain locally. ... I've inherited that gene of that's your responsibility in rural community. I was doing it but TRAILblazer led to ... priority about family versus work versus community donation and actually, learning that I could facilitate or direct how my time was best spent. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C23, Agriculture)

Equally, some also expressed a sense of being 'worn out' after having been on over 20 boards:

But certainly, in the last couple of years I've been more involved with the para-rowing in Canberra. I'd never done any real community work as such. ... I'd been the treasurer of the

community – whatever it was, playbook or something, years ago. But I haven't actively gone out and done a lot of sort of charity work, or community group in that sense.
(Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C12, Government)

There was an evident gender disparity when it came to voluntarism.

4.11 Case study: Community capacity building through volunteerism

Janice* lives in a rural area of Tasmania and is a part-time state government employee in the field of natural resource management, working with landholders. She is a graduate of the ARLP, having completed the program a little over 10 years ago. Prior to undertaking the program she was President of the Tasmanian Landcare Association, a board member of Greening Australia (Tasmania), a member of the Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Council.

Leadership principles

The case study is organised around the ARLF principles to discuss achievement and impact.

Understanding self (relative to and respectful of others)

Janice loves her job and believes she is good at it, but her real passion is community. As a result, she has not changed employers or roles since she completed the ARLP:

And that's been a deliberate ... decision because where my passion, time and energy has [gone is] ... into my volunteering. So, I can say that — well, if you look at when I finished the program to where I am now, you'd look and think not a lot's changed. And that would probably be true.

However, Janice specifically credits the ARLP with the opportunity to develop the confidence and insight necessary to make this life choice and to follow-through:

I think part of the longer-term benefit [of the program] was being clear about what I actually wanted in life. And for me, a clarity around that I just obviously wasn't interested in trying to — yes, I call it climb the corporate ladder or whatever. I think, I actually, as part of the course when you do your reflection..., with that opportunity to say, 'Well, what do you want in life?' And for me it was to be happy, to have good relationships and make a difference in the world and I couldn't see climbing the slippery corporate ladder ...

Janice comments wryly that prior to the program she lived 'life for the day. I couldn't organise a week ahead let alone my life five years ahead. [But] ten-odd years on and I'm pretty happy with where things are at:

And when I'm dealing with tricky situations or looking around a board table or at some capacity issues I think how do I know this or how do I know how to ask these questions or to do this? Quite often I can place it back to the ARLP. So in terms of long-term benefits I

can really put it in a nutshell: skills in my backpack that I draw on and continue to add bits to.

Contextually and culturally responsible

Although Janice is conscious that her decision not to pursue more senior roles within her paid employment might be somewhat unconventional, her contribution through volunteering has been significant and substantial, both within Australia and globally. Janice is strongly committed to youth development, especially in rural areas. Within this context she is heavily involved in Girl Guides Australia, having concluded a three-year term as Australian Chief Commissioner and chair of the board of Girl Guides Australia, at the end of 2013 and now serving again in that role. In this capacity she not only leads the Australian Girl Guides movement but she also contributes directly to the continuing development of the Girl Guides movement on a global scale 'negotiating and working with people literally from all around the world'.

Effective and constructive

Prior to undertaking the ARLP one of Janice's stated goals was 'to make a difference' and she credits the ARLP with enabling her to develop the understanding that it would be through volunteering, and not through paid employment, that her life's goal would be achieved. The ARLP also had an impact in terms of self-confidence to take on broader leadership roles that were offered. In other words, the program put 'a bit of wind put under my wings and I thought, 'No, I'm okay. I can do this'. Janice also credits the program with enabling her to develop an understanding of different personalities and motivations:

... So that I was then able to – and still to this day – use that information, not to typecast people but just to understand where somebody may be coming from, and that was just huge! It was an immediate, profound impact just from understanding around personalities.

At a more prosaic level Janice has also found the skills development around negotiation, 'being able to articulate your views in some pretty challenging environments' and the media training incredibly helpful in her community work:

... So how to handle the media. [I can't count] how many times I have fronted a TV camera or had to speak on radio or whatever, or just that public speaking and not being afraid of the media. So, that was a direct benefit, that I felt far more comfortable to front the media, knew a bit more around what they were after, like hunters and gatherers and various other things that we were taught.

Facilitates change

Janice measures her own impact in terms of community capacity building:

For me, it's around the development of community which equals the development of people. And I suppose what drives me is seeing people get the opportunities to be fully who they are without barriers. And if I can play a part in getting somebody, a young person or an older person, on the trajectory to do good things, then that's where I'm prepared to spend my time.

... Making a difference in the world is when I can step back and see people doing things. And that can be even when as a Girl Guide leader, being part of a unit in a disadvantaged area and we were providing programs to those girls that just gave them a glimpse of beyond where they were. And now I can step back with pride and just say, when I meet one of these young girls who is now a young woman with a family of their own or having a career or whatever, and it doesn't matter if they're flying off to the moon [or not], it's good people doing great things and I can step back and say, 'Yep! I was part of making a difference there'.

Janice gives a specific example of an Australia-wide program she is currently leading within Girl Guides Australia that has a much bigger agenda than might first be apparent:

It's called 'Guide Your Money' which is a program aimed at increasing girls' financial literacy, pitched at different age groups. And for the older girls it's how to read a mobile phone contract and how to not get into trouble with credit cards and stuff like that. And I think, yep, that's why I'm involved, because the organisation that I'm nurturing and supporting and donating inordinate amount of hours to is part of making a difference.

In 2008 Janice was formally recognized by the state of Tasmania for her service to the community, service to the environment.

Ethically based

Janice's capacity building work is also aimed specifically at rural communities and she provides an example relating to the Australia-wide network of agricultural societies:

I want to make sure that in our rural communities young people shouldn't be disadvantaged because they're a number of a hundred kilometres from a major centre, so that's ... part of what we do with scholarships for young people and opportunities and volunteering opportunities and the promotion between the rural communities and the city and what all of that means.

Recognises and responds to complexity/values difference

Janice credits the ARLP with changing the way she thinks about rural communities and agriculture by broadening her horizons and focus, 'seeing how my little world [in rural

Tasmania] fitted into a wider ecosystem’. The trip to China that her cohort undertook as part of the ARLP was pivotal:

... The realisation that if we want to develop agriculture, or whatever, then you have to invest in people. So you can unpack everything else but unless you’ve got the connections with some young people making decisions about what fruit they buy at the supermarket or whether they buy a chocolate bar, or whatever that is, and young people choosing to enter in a career agriculture ... if we want agriculture and rural communities to thrive, investing in people [is] the bottom line.

Janice describes her community work as being aimed at making ‘safe places for people to be who they are and to grow’. Following completion of the ARLP she became a Lifeline telephone counsellor and now plays a larger role as a facilitator within that organisation. She credits the ARLP with contributing to an insight into the power and importance of listening, both on an individual basis and when in a leadership and capacity building context:

... Again through the ARLF and where I was heading and what I wanted to do, one of the skills that I really thought was critical was working to listen ... because the biggest gift you can give someone is your two ears and the power that comes from being able to really actively listen to somebody is just incredible. I just got this amazing insight into the power of listening and how to do it and how to do it well, which has had a profound impact through being able to support people emotionally but also to listen for planning purposes, to listen to conflict within certain organisations or whatever. So now quite a bit of what I do is ... facilitating sessions when people are in conflict or unsure. But it’s all around the skills of unpacking where people are at and that gift of being able to listen to somebody.

Works with others

Even though Janice has deliberately not pursued more senior positions in her paid employment, the ARLP has most definitely impacted on the way she undertakes her substantive role, both in terms of the capacity to work with and lead others but also in the areas of ‘writing funding grants, negotiating, and project management’ as well as ‘understanding governments and where they are and telling the stories that they want to hear and being able to capture all of that’:

... How often do you go into a negotiation approaching government and you’re not really sure of what your ask is or you haven’t done your research to what their ask is and just being prepared to see both sides and that they’ve got accountability, they’re wanting to do good things and how does that match [with what you want]? So yes, you can definitely say it has helped.

Janice is a passionate advocate for the ARLP, noting that she ‘would do anything to keep and maintain that opportunity for others because of what I’ve gained from it’. ‘It was a privilege to be part of it’.

4.12 Case study: International community capacity building

This case study focuses on two women, who attribute the ARLP experience as leading to personal change, which has since impacted on changes within their organisation. What is significant about this case is that both women have chosen to become volunteers within the same field as their professional work, which they indicated has allowed them to bring about changes internationally and or within Australian rural communities including beyond where they reside. This case illuminates the ripple effect of the ARLP on the individual, their organisation and for those most in need of intervention and support; women in rural communities and in agriculture. The two women were chosen also because their working lives encapsulate the core principles of the ARLP and they represent a number of the stories conveyed during other alumni interviews.

Stella has held the role of project manager within the Grains Research and Development industry; her particular focus is on climate change/adaption with regard to global food security. She has been actively engaged in National Youth Science and fundraising for children with cancer. Like Stella, Veronica is also focused on food security and agrifood issues. Veronica is a farmer who has facilitated community and agricultural development programs across Australia and abroad as a volunteer. She has coordinated projects for Regional Development Australia Wheatbelt industry and remains active as a returned member for an Australian Volunteer Network, and is a Future Farmers' Network member.

Stella and Veronica's stories around personal changes are connected to the ARLP helping them work with, in Stella's case 'failure and disappointment, [after the ARLP she] felt better equipped in terms of resilience'. For Veronica, a key element for her was increasing 'self-confidence' as a leader'.

Experiencing personal changes was also related to an increasing awareness about working respectfully with others. Veronica's increased awareness was stimulated when she got:

...Some really frank and confronting feedback about the way that I am, and perhaps some areas of growth – and I think about it almost on a daily basis. And it was that, I guess, tactful, like in a good way, I took it very proactively ... that was certainly an unexpected outcome.

Stella also recalled being more aware of:

... Elements of leadership and where people are in terms of personal development, to understand other people. I think I probably thought I got people pretty well, even while I was doing ARLP ... helped me realise that – I was probably a bit more judgmental before I did the ARLP, and it's allowed me to suspend judgment in situations ... You become aware of a lot more elements of leadership and where people are in terms of personal development. ... You feel like you've got these wonderful new skills and you want to try them out.

A significant impact to Stella's worldview and leadership she identified arose from 'seeing some of the innovations and some of the workers - the women in India, that was really inspiring, getting to see the self-help groups, which was driven by women over there, to solve some of their issues around dowry and domestic violence'.

Post the ARLP, Veronica came to the 'realisation that it's actually not about me at all, it's about everyone working together and drawing the best from each other'. She noted that her:

... Personal growth leads quite strongly into ... working with various teams in various boards ... or groups, It helps me understand why it is that something's gone a certain way, or how I react in a situation, how is that impacting the culture ... there is an ongoing legacy.

One the significant leadership changes that emerged out of Stella's India experience is how she became more contextually and cultural responsible as she recalled; it:

... Compelled me to do more not just be a passenger, but to be a scientist and ... actually contribute to the change. volunteer roles in the community. I felt really driven to understanding the gender aspects of rural Australia and got very informed and engaged in that and tried to really understand what some of the issues were.

In their professional contexts, Stella and Veronica spoke at length about how their learning from the ARLP had enabled them to be more mindful and respectful of others especially when leading change. For Stella it 'consolidated where my values and my passions lay and allowed me to be able to be more effective' and consequently her industry benefited as she is more able 'to rationalise and unpack complex problems, and that gives you focus to moving forward'. But also, Stella recalled that:

... Certainly, in terms of identifying where I could influence things. I worked for the government ... It helped me come to terms with the enormous complexity of working in agriculture in the public sector and helped me direct my focus to areas that I thought would need to change.

Considering impact as something that is related to bringing about change Stella suggested that her biggest impact has been:

... Around improving diversity and inclusion, leading to higher rates of innovation or the innovative capacity of the rural industries in Victoria, with a focus on gender and cultural diversity, which has been an overlay to what my standard duty has been, which is really strategic direction and project performance and quality.

Veronica's story similarly highlighted her professional impact is one that is responsive to very complex international situation that involves highly educated people, who are mainly male and 'burgeoning groups of women in rural (international setting) seeking financial independence'.

Both Veronica and Stella consider impact in terms of the longevity of change and sustainable differences. As Veronica highlighted:

... The ongoing impact in my role has evolved to be – a role of communicating, connecting the dots, translating - sometimes in a literal sense, but translating between disparate groups and having people come together...more intricate understanding of how humans are – what they need, in terms of change management and bringing people together, that has probably been the biggest impact. Understanding people's motivations and reading between the lines.

Facilitating change has also been synonymous with networking. Stella recalled how she began to look for networks within her industry that could assist her in bringing about change:

Because I worked for the industry as a woman, it was quite relevant that I had a whole bunch of colleagues with access to women in ag who understand their experiences and that has now turned into a few real genuine changes ... The [state] government took [my work] to the minister and the deputy secretary's office on rural women and women in agriculture ... that work will form the basis of future funding directed to women in agriculture in Victoria.

Veronica continues to engage with her ARLP network. She is advising a fellow cohort member on how to build an educational platform and working with a colleague and graduate of cohort 22 to develop new opportunities within their organisation. Like Stella, Veronica also continues to look for networks within her industry as 'I'm a fairly avid networker, so when I see opportunities – I connect'.

For these women networks are not only strategic but they also have provided ongoing professional learning. Effective networks are those that establish a strong relationships, e.g. being able to [and] having challenging conversations and really questioning their decision making, actions and interpersonal relationships at work, which both women believed helps them to remain effective leaders.

Both women are active participants on boards that are associated with Australian women in Agriculture, Veronica recalled being:

... On the board for a year, as part of the executive. And I was elevated to presidency in really unsettling times for the organisation.

Veronica's impact of being effective and constructive as the board's president she indicated revolved around it being:

Important to feel stable in your vision and your ability, even though you realise you're flawed, and a normal human, because that gives other people confidence and I guess that rippling effect of being a certain way and how that impacts really dramatically a team of people. and watching that ripple through the organisation and the people taking – them

themselves having the confidence to take on new areas of work within the organisation or feeling – I guess having that permission to act, I think is a really critical thing for the organisation. ... if I'm not feeling confident in my own capacity - then ripples out to the confidence of the board, and then you don't have permission to act. So I resigned as president in September, or didn't renominate, I should say. I left on a really, really satisfied, I guess you'd say – in August achieved in the last three years.

Stella and Veronica's stories are underpinned by high levels of commitment and engagement in food security and how it impacts at the local, national and global levels. Veronica's story illustrated her role as presenting 'to our local grower groups, women's grower groups' as 'going out into regional communities and finding myself with all these different projects or organisations, it's actually about bringing people along for the journey'. Veronica strategically uses other organisations success to help motivate others to plan for change required in their own:

In this one organisation we were very proactive in engaging people from all walks of life, and we ended up winning our little community event of the year, it was the Anzac Centenary last year. So drawing upon resources– we co-hosted events with five different groups in the community and we're a town of 750 people. We used it as an example to share with another group about the importance of working together in regional communities, because chances are we're all on the same bloody committees anyway.

Veronica and Stella advocate strongly for better supports for women in rural communities and this is enacted through their volunteerism within their communities and beyond. Stella's volunteering began when she got:

... An opportunity to work for another organisation, so I moved cities ... I decided that part of that process was to integrate [the ARLP learning] with this new environment, [which] was to sign up for volunteer work that was relevant to what I did [at work]. So, I went and did some ... environmental teaching work as a facilitator. ... I also joined the X City Council, they're an agriculture committee.

For Veronica volunteering is something she stated as being 'very motivated by serving others and by volunteering and giving back, I guess that's a product of living in a regional community, realising that none of these things happen without volunteers'. Evidence of Stella's impact is when she recollected being asked 'in the second year, they actually asked me, to design an environment module or program for implementation'. Veronica also has been recognised for her contributions to her state and 'was awarded for community service and volunteering Australian Young Achiever of the Year'. When a newspaper reported on this accolade Veronica recalled how the journalist focused on 'the presence that I possessed – I guess a force to be reckoned with... to have someone that I didn't know write that about me, and my achievements'.

From the newspaper article Veronica learnt to be accepting of those public accolades as she:

Realised that if I don't give – allow – or give myself permission to own that space, I use the term 'shine', I give myself permission to shine, it doesn't enable others to sparkle. It creates space for others to really embrace those positive things in their own lives and their achievements.

Both women's influence through volunteering is quite expansive. Stella's increased her impact by helping 'people who were keen to do volunteer work. I put them in touch with networks [to be], more active in pursuing and supporting other people in doing things not just towards your passion, not just at work but outside of work as well'. For Veronica, she has chosen to work across different rural setting and abroad. 'My work [abroad] – I've been back working there since the start of this year and I've only been back a handful of times, the ongoing impact has been most evident in the relationships I'm building with very diverse groups of people'. A leader's best chance at implementing sustainable change is as she highlighted most likely when:

... Working together can we really create solutions that are sustainable long term and Impactful. So, I think – in my dealings with – working with women to help them realise their own capacity, just be really real about it, we don't have to get caught up in ego and politics. When I was [abroad] I recognised it so I was able to work in a way that was productive, I utilised that stereotype or that gender imbalance to my benefit – being a little bit more constructive with enabling change in that area in a really contextually sensitive way facilitating – probably the youngest in the room as well. And facilitating negotiations the organisation that I work with most closely for my work there, is known for its set in their ways, and they perpetuate this through the way which they recruit It's a systemic challenge for them like it's happened as I've started working with them. So, I guess for many that have been working with this organisation for years, decades in some cases, having a young woman who is me, step into this coordination role that I have, this program oversight role that I have, can be confronting.

Stella's commitment to rural Australia led her:

... To negotiate a ... relocation within my role. And there were really important aspects to that, because this is a signal of organisations having people work in a region, and role modelling how well that can work sometimes, so it's not just about me. It's actually about setting an example for agricultural Victoria in having people living in the region and being sensitive to that.

Stella noted how she recognised that she 'could apply [the ARLP learnings] to our own rural sectors too, so when I did the work on the rural women's network, I had the self-help group model [from India] in my head a lot'. Her previous work in the city also transferred into her rural volunteering as she utilised:

... The rural women's network around the state [when she had] ran a consultation process. And so, I've got to say that really helped my network of amazing women – [a lot of farmers are, female now. But not] just farmers. I've been lucky enough to be working in this rural

women's network for nine months and two months ago I felt like I was actively contributing professionally. I just started connecting with local influential women, having coffee and talking about the issue. So, I reckon it [workshops for local women] will happen.

Veronica and Stella's story illustrates how significant volunteering is in helping bring about change in rural and remote areas. But as Veronica noted volunteering, especially in rural and remote areas is highly demanding and problematic:

... Volunteer burnout is a really big challenge for regional communities as populations dwindle, and the burden for volunteers on various communities, for example, I've been involved with delivering meals on wheels to the aged in our community, and the capacity for people in our community to be able to do those kinds of things is diminishing for a number of different reasons, but population is one.

Enacting leadership through voluntary work

Two significant findings emerged from this analysis. First, as shown in Figure 17, participants of 2017 Alumni survey in remote areas have the highest tendency to apply leadership in voluntary work. All of the participants residing in the remote areas said "Yes" to this question. This is followed by those in regional and rural areas. Participants from urban areas have had the least opportunity to apply leadership skills in volunteer work.

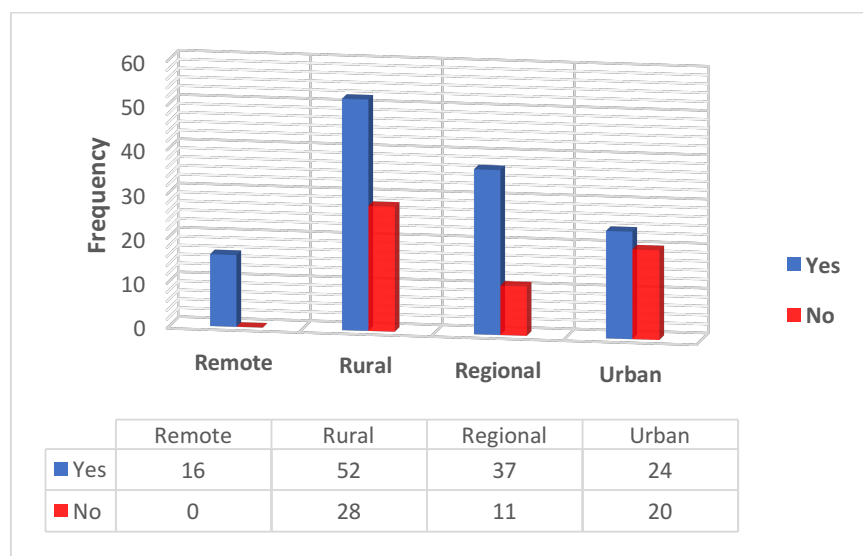


Figure 17
Alumni enacting leadership through voluntary work in RRR Australia

A second significant finding is that despite increasing female workforce participation, women continue to be more likely to volunteer than men (34% compared with 29%) (ABS 2014). Again, this is confirmed in the ARLF survey on volunteer work and gender.

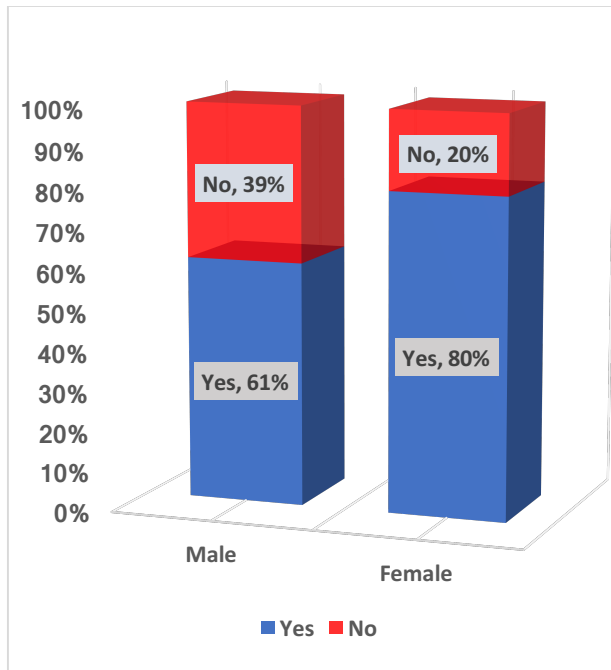


Figure 18

Alumni enacting leadership through voluntary work, by gender

Responses from 107 male and 83 female participants show a considerably higher proportion of female alumni have applied leadership in volunteer work.

The rates of volunteering in the West Australian study were also dependent on age and time, being high for people aged 15-17 years (42%), 35-44 years (39%) and 65-74 years (35%). What is important is that over a 12-month period, voluntary work contributed 743 million hours to the community. Finally, analysis of the data from the 2017 Alumni survey revealed that the age groups above 50 years have the highest tendency to get involved in volunteer work.

Frequencies of participants' responses from various age groups to the question about enacting leadership through voluntary work are shown in Figure 19.

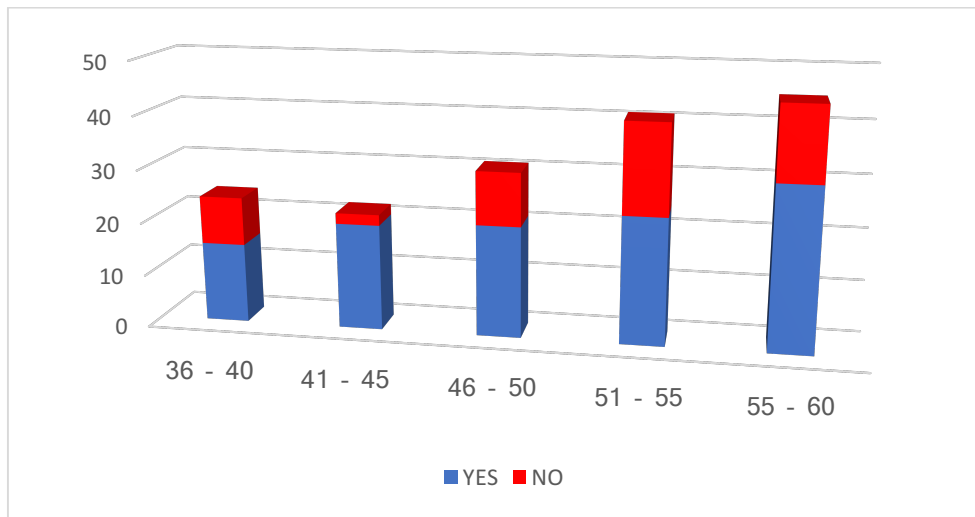


Figure 19

Enacting leadership through voluntary work by participants in different age groups

4.13 Conclusion: Leadership community impact and change

The evidence presented above is a timely reminder that leadership takes on various forms in different contexts. Voluntarism is a significant but undervalued aspect of building social capital in our communities. But there are quality of life studies and other studies which indicate that voluntarism is critical to a healthy democratic society (Coleman 1988). For example, a survey of voluntarism in WA applied the 2015 Institute of Program Management's Model of Value Creation. The model illustrates how this investment improves individual and community states of physical, human, social, and symbolic capital. This is then converted by users into a set of economically valuable outputs that impact upon the welfare of society. The report argues that voluntarism creates jobs and has health and wellbeing benefits as well as increased civic engagement. The socio-economic and cultural value of 6,000 volunteers to Western Australia in 2015 is conservatively estimated to be \$39 billion (WAVolunteering, 2015). This figure is much greater than previous estimates based on price or economic impact alone, yet is likely to be a significant underestimate given the limitations of the available data and analytic techniques 2015, p. 2).

The alumni survey and interview responses together with the case studies indicate a significant investment by individuals in voluntarism as a good leadership practice with wider social, economic benefits for individuals and RRR communities. For example, 22 of the 32 respondents of the meat and livestock industry, an industry which covers the breath of Australia communities from regional to remote, were volunteers in some form. This is a higher than average rate Australia wide. In 2014, 5.8 million people (or 31% of the Australian population aged 15 years and over) participated in voluntary work. ABS data also confirm that while patterns of volunteering differed by state and territory, and also by part of state, volunteering was more common among those living in parts of Australia outside the capital cities. The volunteer rate was 30% in the capital cities compared with 34% in areas comprising the rest of the state or territory. This was confirmed in the 2017 Alumni survey.

The alumni who responded to the survey and were interviewed, perhaps because they have a greater sense of responsibility and commitment, considered that they had a 'community responsibility' to initiate and develop 'community events' as it was 'necessary to be working cohesively for the region rather than divided'. The amalgam of responses indicates clear areas in which alumni would like to make significant changes as leaders, most particularly to 'grow our communities, e.g. jobs' and 'to constantly change and grow my workplace to be successful and be a valued part of the community'. Others sought 'a long-term planning and building of assets or infrastructure in local community education within industry'. This requires 'an increased emphasis on the human aspects of community development' thus 'increasing prospects for rural communities to thrive', which relies on a range of stakeholders in local communities- police, teachers and other service providers who are not at the moment participants in the ARLF programs. It requires leaders 'providing personal connections and service in the locations and communities' to 'make my community a 'preferred place to live' Industry' and 'increasing the understanding and capacity for facilitating effective change at the community level'.

5. Case study: Community based capacity building in the Torres Strait

5.1 Introduction

There has been a long association between the Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) and the ARLF graduates over the past 25 years. The focus of this case study is on the contextual issues and the particular benefits the ARLF programs offered Torres Strait (TS) participants, their remote communities and the region. In particular, the TS respondents spoke about the nature of their alumni leadership capabilities and relationships post program that most impacted on their communities. The case study addresses multiple and interrelated levels of impact at the personal, professional, organisational, community and regional level.

The ARLF has offered a range of programs including and focused on TS participants; the ARLP, TRAIL, the Torres Strait Young Leaders Program (TSYLP), and the Torres Strait Women's Leadership Program (TSWLP). Sixty members of TS communities have been sponsored by either or both the Queensland government and the TSRA through scholarships and specialist programs: 7 scholarship holders in the ARLP since 1992 and 3 TRAIL scholarships per annum since 2010. The TS Women's Leader Program was developed together with the TSRA as a specialist program. The YLP began with both indigenous and non- indigenous young participants (18-25). In the 2013 program, because of 'feedback from the 4 TS graduates and then those that didn't complete it' the program was revised to become a TS only program during 2014-5. Currently, the TSYLP has a small cohort participating each year².

The ARLF has contributed to supporting the TSRA's work by actively supporting graduates to become 'a considerable force for TS future leadership' (Building Resilience Through Leadership 2013, p. 119). Together, the TSRA and the ARLF aim to 'significantly develop participants' skills and capacity for leadership' (TSRA Annual Report 2015-2016, p.56). For the TSRA there are five key objectives that they have asked the ARLF programs to achieve:

1. Understanding of and capacity for engagement in governance and politics
2. Self-awareness and adaptability in their approaches to leadership
3. Leadership skills including persuasion
4. Influence and meeting facilitation
5. Confidence levels in relation to public speaking. (TSRA Annual Report 2015-2016, p.56)

These five aims it will be seen through the evidence provided have been largely achieved for the individuals who participated in each of the ARLF courses.

² Six young people completed YLP in 2016, 4 in 2015, 4 in 2013, 7 in 2012 and 3 in 2011, 3 in 2010.

The TS Women's Leadership Program (TSWLP) was developed in consultation with the TSRA as a specialist program. The TSYLP began with both indigenous and non-indigenous young participants (18-25). In the 2013 program, because of 'feedback from the 4 TS graduates and then those that didn't complete it' the program was revised to become a TS only program during 2014-5. There continues to be difficulties in recruiting and retaining TS indigenous participants in the Young Leaders program (YLP). Currently, the TSYLP has a small cohort participating each year³.

Participants for this case study were selected with the assistance of the TSRA and following TSRA protocol regarding access to the islands. The sample included: 7 participants in the ARLF specialist Torres Strait Women's Leadership Program (TSWLP), 3 participants in either the YLP or TSYLP, 1 had attended TRAIL and 2 participants were ARLP alumni. This sample of 13 participants provides a breadth of experience for TS leaders across all of the ARLF programs. The case is appropriately organised to consider whether the eight leadership principles of the ARLF program have been achieved.

5.2 Contextually and culturally responsible

The ARLF involvement commenced with a male member of the TSRA (cohort 10) being sponsored by the Queensland Department of Industry and a female (cohort 13) by the Australian Department of Agriculture for the ARLP in the 1990s. The collective impetus of seven ARLP alumni (including the Chair of the TSRA Council and two TSRA managers) is evident. One ARLP alumni promoted the idea of TSRA sponsorship of individual scholarships for the ARLP because it was difficult for TS people to compete Australia wide. This focus on building leadership capacity aligned to the 1936 'One Boat' objective for the Torres Strait Council to have more regional autonomy and self-determination. The Board 'saw this leadership program...as fitting into this journey'. The ARLP is now 'probably one of our premier programs that we run through here' (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C14).

At least three ARLP alumni are now in senior positions within the TSRA and others are in community wide positions such as Mayor. These alumni still use the networks of their respective ARLF cohorts whenever they need assistance. The presence of three alumni in key management positions within the TSRA has been critical to the strategic planning for the region and the TSRA Development Plan 2014-2018 that focuses on creating and supporting sustainable safe communities, reflecting increased participation in structured sports, recreation and healthy lifestyle activities. There is also an emphasis in the Plan on increasing employment opportunities and decreasing domestic violence.

The personal impact of ARLF courses translated into the work of the TSRA and the wider context of the TS community more broadly. For example, at the level of the TSRA, there was significant impact with regard to improved governance. When the chair of the TSRA returned

³ Six young people completed YLP in 2016, 4 in 2013, 7 in 2012 and 3 in 2011, 3 in 2010.

from the ARLP, it was obvious to the Chair's colleagues, that 'he had changed' considerably. Previously he had been very reluctant to speak out because he did not want to upset people. His colleagues reported significant changes in his approach as he gained confidence in speaking and management. Another TSRA manager, John, noted

... even us guys here could see the development in him ... the first year of his chairmanship he was very shy and he was careful on how he said the hard things, like he didn't want to upset people basically ... sometimes leadership you don't have to make ... you don't have to make people like you. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C14)

The Chair's capacity to make unpopular decisions was important as there were 'really strong players in the region' and to be elected as the chair he had to be seen to provide leadership. Having observed the impact on the Chair regarding his changed leadership inspired others to apply for the ARLP.

John*

John had been with the TSRA since 1995, moving from being a trainee field officer doing fieldwork for 2 or 3 years. He then secured a public servant level 4 position the following year and then three years after he moved into the senior project officer position. He then applied and participated in Cohort 14 of the ARLP because 'I wanted to get up there somewhere but not in the political arena...That sort of sparked that leadership journey. In order to change all of this I needed to get there to have that influence'.

All TS ARLP alumni spoke about how gaining self-confidence as individuals translated into community strengthening in the TSRA. John, TSRA administrator, commented on how they could see where the discussions on Council clashed with values of particular communities and as the TS voice on council it was necessary to speak out and say 'I respect you but disagree'. 'Nothing will change if you sit back'. The ARLP:

... expanded my sort of networking skills and confidence to get up and network but the biggest change for me was the confidence. As I was doing the course there was certain periods I was acting in a program manager position and I was scared to make hard decisions. ...With the hard decisions yeah I really struggled ... cause I could see the ongoing effect being born and bred locally and grew up, a lot of the issues that we're trying to target with our programs I experienced them personally growing up ... (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C14)

The ARLP Cohort 14 in which John participated had five indigenous participants as well as fish, grain and cattle farmers and people from government organisations. Being 'so far, disconnected from Australia, that networking side really opens stuff up for me. Like I use some of the networks today... 20 odd years on, yeah. If I get something that's a curly I know there's one or two blokes there that's done this before. Just ring them up, what did you do when you got this from course 14'. He also identified a clear change in his behaviour in management discussions. He had a desire to make a difference and is now achieving this goal:

I'm in the communities all the time. I could see a lot of challenges on the ground and coming back to the office I could see some of the programs that they were doing weren't actually hitting the mark ... I knew for me to influence some of these programs or all this stuff that we're putting into communities I needed to get into these positions that actually call the shots ... (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C14)

In the past if there was a clash with the cultural ways of the community, his response had been to 'just go quiet' particularly if he was the only Torres Strait Islander in the space.

The course increased my confidence to actually have those hard discussions with people higher than me. The respect factor sort of comes in from growing and it channels over into our work space ... Anybody with higher rank the respect is always there ... It's like learning you know, they actually put you in that situation ... it's important to these guys to know that we're doing it the wrong way, it won't work on the ground. And it sort of opened me up to look at the community more or what these people are saying, the end users. It changed my attitude from having a top down approach now even today you know when I do it's always the bottom up approach. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C14)

The impact of the ARLP is evident in terms of how the alumni within the TSRA used their capacity and authority to argue for TSRA sponsorship for more participants in the ARLP and in developing specialist programs. John learnt that it was vital to network more in order to bring about change due to the issue of remoteness. His view was that if you are in the leadership space that you have to deal with others from different places and leadership should also be inclusive of women. Another ARLP alumnus, Mary, a more senior TSRA manager, noted how John changed after the ARLP ... 'he is going through a big learning curve ... but hey he's open to it all...'. Mary worked with him to develop the specialist ARLF programmes for women and young people and reviewed their outcomes:

He plays a big leadership role in a very quiet way in community ... the younger ones looking up at him... And he'll talk them through it you know. So it's from a cultural aspect as well as an organisational aspect cause that's one of our struggles in... aboriginal communities. Our culture on the outside versus organisational culture. When you walk through the door you know you're corporate, so helping people through and differentiating between the two. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C14)

Mary cited two examples of ARLP participants who after the course resigned from the TSRA Board to return to community where they felt they could make more of a difference.

More recent recruits into the TSRA have been involved in the ARLP and TRAIL and continue to be program advocates. A current TSRA officer, Kay, previously from the Queensland Department of Health and the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), was appointed into the TSRA in 2010 through an indigenous recruitment strategy. She did the YLP in that year in order to learn about governance but also from a different cultural perspective:

TRAIL was one of my challenging moments in life...the program really, really broadened my understanding on life in general...opened my mind...how to respect other people's opinions and values... growing up you always respect your elders but I was never put in [a] situation ... five of us from here (TS) and a mainstream group from all over Australia ... they had no idea where we were from and when we tried to explain they wouldn't understand. ... So we've just got different beliefs and different ways of doing thing. But we're here to deliver the one thing, you know, become a leader and become someone in your community.
(Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAIL, Government)

The program enhanced her capability with regard to good decision-making skills. She returned to the TSRA energised:

I felt like I've changed so many things. I wanted to do heaps and heaps. So I worked hard... But that impacted on my family so then that kind of went... not downhill just that caused a lot of issues with trying to deal with my family and work. I was very hungry for management positions here. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAIL, Government)

Kay gained a permanent position at TSRA shortly after and then quickly moved up to the executive assistant position. She continued to apply for new positions, including becoming the administrative support for the TSRA Board. She then achieved the capacity building project position looking at all agreements with Councils, grants, leadership programs and scholarships including the ARLF. She found the recruitment in the ARLF programs difficult as she has worked on agreements and seen them 'fall through'. Another ARLP alumni in the TSRA, Tom, acknowledged that for some young TS islanders, being on the TSYLP did present some problems: 'They'd get homesick or found it wasn't for them, and so yeah they came back home...mixing with all these other youths from around the country they're uncomfortable, they're out of their comfort zone with those buzz words'.

'Now the program is with a new manager there can be further discussion about TS youth mixing with indigenous and non-indigenous participants, particularly as there are more applicants...' (Tom). This new manager, a TRAIL graduate, works hard to adapt the programs to be culturally appropriate, such as including the induction program to the YLP to reduce the culture shock for young TS participants, a strategy she plans to extend to TRAIL. She also wants to have a support officer to travel with the TSYLP group, to be a mentor on the side, providing support from someone who is familiar. She believes this would really assist the issues with retention for these young people.

John, as a TSRA manager (ARLP graduate), wanted to share his experience and to make a difference through the development of specialist ARLF programs for women and young people. The process was to develop a program from the ground up. The TSRA managers collectively 'actually went out to the women and said what's your challenge? Why can't you do a course? Why can't you do this'? The resulting ARLF course—the TSWLP--- aimed to develop the governance and advocacy capacity of TS women who were minimally represented on special interest groups, committees and boards. The TSWLP is focused on providing

opportunities, in what I widely described by participants to be a patriarchal society, to instil self-confidence and awareness in participants and to develop their understanding regarding the wider political issues. This focus is closely interlocked with the women's position within family and community. The ARLF was acutely aware of this and had an indigenous facilitator, Melinda, who stated:

It has to be indigenous led, and it has to be based on our indigenous philosophies and ownership and intellectual property and consciously, when we bring women to Canberra, and particularly in the last – when we brought the Torres Strait women, we deliberately got a non-Indigenous feminist advocate to come and be the person that talks with them about that, to get a different perspective on what that looks like as well, you know? (Interview 2016/17, Alumni/Staff ARLP C15, Government)

All of the five women in the TSWLP who were interviewed stated that the major impact was on their sense of self and confidence in themselves. In particular, the program developed their capacity to have courage to speak out and to communicate ideas more effectively.

The confidence was the big one for me. Confidence and one of the things was understanding others ... [it] taught me to network more. And that's really important for us up here because like I mentioned they're remote and so far, disconnected from Australia, that networking side really opens stuff up for me ... but the biggest change for me was the confidence. As I was doing the course there was certain periods I was acting in a program manager position and I was scared to make hard decisions. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

The culturally specific nature of the courses had a profound impact on the participants. It provided affirmation for many of the participants regarding their sense of cultural identity and also how that identity was represented nationally by cultural artefacts in museums. Meeting with indigenous leaders in Canberra personally affected both the women and young people. A TSWLP alumnus, Krissie:

See all the [indigenous] leaders walking around, I mean they're all proud. I mean they are in their own world, and doing this for their country or their state. And I was going wow ... I'm questioning myself, can I do that? I'm slowly, slowly trying to get my community to understand the process of not only sitting down and whinging about it, but stand up and do something. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

The experiential approach of all the course which meant visiting key cultural sites of the traditional owners was particularly powerful for Indigenous participants. One group of young people in the TSYLP program visited an indigenous artefact collection and were particularly challenged – both angry and proud- when confronted with artefacts that they did not know even existed. Now 24 years old, one young TSYLP graduate, Tom, recalled how the visit ‘uncovered history way deeper than you thought you had knowledge...All artefacts and even a book that was written in my language - and they recorded me, to add to that book...’ He felt the course led him to ‘push myself a bit more, not just be procrastinating’ and to come out of his shell. As a consequence, he sees a particular role for himself:

... you know being in this sort of generation of society I see myself as a chain that links between youth and elders. So, there is a gap I've identified...I work with the elders most importantly they will be the first contact to state and cultural tradition and elders and youth, and children...I try and organise the elders and youth day by trying to create some sort of activities that would have that connection or activity of engaging youth and elders in particular events of activity... A healing process. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSYLP)

Tom now works with young people across all the TS islands and has started a support reference group, drawing on his ARLF networks. Despite the diversity between the islands, ‘we’ve got key people in each community but have the same goal. Work together and support each other...Respect that we have we do things very differently in each community’. He uses Facebook and email to pass on news regarding the TSYLP through his network, and helped two young people write their applications for the TSYLP. He works on two Boards—the TS Regional Board and the Local Council and is considering going back to university.

The most challenging part for another graduate from the TSYLP, Jack, was going to Canberra and listening to Indigenous leaders. ‘They ...actually inspired me to do what I am now. I’m going to struggle and keep struggling but I have succeeded. Thank god I have a roof over my head’. He felt profoundly upset but the experience was also significant for him specifically as he said: ‘I couldn’t face the book that I was holding...[it] was my grandfather’s book... it’s really old but I was so upset and proud ...that was one of the valuable things from the program...’. A TSRA manager noticed significant changes in him since the program:

So he started with us and then he's gone away. He's in the arts industry so he's built himself up as an artist. He's found some passion in different areas of art. Come back, he's run workshops up here through the cultural centre and now I understand he's gone out to run an art centre ...(Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazer, Government)

Previously, Jack had a transient experience in employment: - 'acting, designing logos, mentoring young people, spent time in the navy, completing a Certificate II and fostering community art'. Throughout all of these activities he tried to work at his own art.

Now with married with a young baby, his focus in the long term is to build a house on his grandfather's land on the island where he is linked to the Community Art Centre. He is working part time in the local art Gallery which has a national and international reputation, and aims to 'enable the expression and renewal of cultural practices and to preserve and promote Torres Strait arts, crafts and culture on the Island.'

Art is a significant factor contributing to community life and work for many within the TS. Art also contributes to developing a stronger cultural identity for the young generation. A manager in the TSRA indicated that they supported three art centres on the islands because it was about 'looking at that economic base for the community as well' and community-based art as having 'room for growth'. Mura Kosker Sorority (MKS), the women's network, is also involved in cultural, arts and heritage groups across the islands. One TSWLP alumnus, Jean, works at the cultural centre and is president of MKS. Her experience in Canberra as part of the program was also daunting. She described visiting museums and meeting 'the aboriginal elders of that part of the land':

...when we went to the museum we seen our grandparents... I don't know, cause there was territory relatives named ... and then my granddad. And we went ... on the computer and all the old photos from the 40s. They printed some and gave [them to] us. They talked about each things, like the weapon and some stuff. Yeah it was sad and like amazing to hear stories. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

These activities indicate how the aim of the ARLF programs to understand cultural context broadly and locally was achieved in many instances. Specifically, the women's leadership in community voluntary work led many TS women to be nominated for the TSWLP.

While voluntarism is a dominant cultural practice, having completed the program meant there were new expectations and authority imparted to the alumni, as Fay, an TWLP alumnus reflects:

And cultural events here in the community. We've had situations where other people have run the program and they need someone to be there to run the event. We now have situations where they come up to me a fair few times and I've never said no to them. Always said yeah, I'll do that. cause I'm always... one of the skills...is empowering people, that's [the] one thing I continually did with the younger generation. For those older people, especially ... I was empowering them at different levels and [at] church as well. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

Feeling confident, being able to speak and being recognised were major gains for these women and young people in a society which was patriarchal and where elders were held in highest esteem.

5.3 Good governance and self-determination

A major theme throughout the discussions both at the TSRA and in the local communities was their focus on good governance, a term that they distinguished from leadership. This links back to the TSRA's Target 1 in the 2014-2018 Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) concerning engagement in governance and politics. In this context the determinants of governance refers not only 'to governing institutions and leadership but it also encompasses self-determination, capacity building, cultural match and resources' (SCRGSP, 2014, p.24). Furthermore, participation in decision making (wanting and feeling able to) is a crucial aspect of self-determination (SCRGSP, 2014, p.23). Governance is also one of the 12 key indicators identified as assisting in overcoming Indigenous disadvantage (SCRGSP, 2014, p.24). The ARLF programs have been assisting participants in meeting this TSRA target.

A key area identified by the TSRA was the need to develop women's knowledge of governance and increase their advocacy. The TSRA is 'aiming to increase women's opportunities to participate on boards, committees and special interest groups. In partnership with the ARLF, both the TSWLP and TSYLP were specially designed capacity building programmes to develop their leadership and personal skills, confidence and network building and specifically with the aim to increase the participation of Torres Strait women in decision-making roles (TSRA Annual Report 2015-2016, pp. 6, 50, & 55).

There was clear evidence in the discussions with individual women who had undertaken either the ARLF or the TSWLP that gaining a voice in decision-making was a crucial benefit for them of the TSWLP individually and collectively. Learning how governance worked within, but particularly beyond, their local community at the regional and national level had the greatest effect:

Learning from the governance side of things, you don't learn about these things out in the community and the authority that you can practice as well as your rights, individual community rights and stuff like that. So that sort of helped me... (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

The first TSWLP group identified women's lack of representation in governance as their focus in 2014. 'That's [under-representation] what we identified is the problem in our TSWLP project because we did some research on how many women were in leadership' (Ruth). The ARLF facilitator, Melinda, recalls:

I made them sit down and actually have a look at where the votes went – at the result. And go, 'Okay, so if this woman ran again next time, what you learn from this is a different strategy'...thus prompting people into action. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni, ARLP C15, Government)

The success of this is evident in the last council election with 4 TSWLP female alumni putting their hand up for election with the men. This unexpected turn surprised many men who 'didn't expect that when you're actually saying that [women should participate] that means I might lose my position'. Consequently, there has been some pushback:

The part that I think we still have to break through – is working with the Torres Strait Board. That's a bigger issue, because they still are in this very patriarchal space, where they feel like they're above the constituents. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni, ARLP C15, Government)

At the local level there was an increased push to be active in political decision-making, a second aim of the TSRA plan. As with all forms of governance, there are contradictions and tensions:

TSRA creates a very interesting dynamic around elected representatives, around voting processes, around community engagements– and what underpins all of that then, is this issue of nepotism and bullying against an expectation around fair and equitable voting...you have to vote for your family member because they told you have to, even if they're not the best representative, to still behaving in ways that – they're afraid of change, the Torres Strait Regional Authority has been around 30 years, so we'll keep doing business the way we've always done it. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni, ARLP C15, Government)

The Canberra experience had significant impact on the women as it did on the young people when they were introduced to politicians and indigenous leaders. Gaining a sense of the wider politics at the national level led one ARLP alumnus, Ruth, to return to their island community to take up a senior management position for the TSRA. Another TSWLP alumnus, Emma, in local government found she had a capacity to explain her role to the community.

Getting us to understand the governance through the program because of my position. I'm just working for the local government and my situation out here because of the native title thing. And I got to stand my ground, who's paying me, and get them to understand what my role I'm actually doing in the community. And that's when I... I think that's more or less telling me you've got to build the bridges across in both sides ... the last session when we got back from Canberra and that sort of gave me the boost. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

While most participants referred to how they had learnt to 'step back', this was not about not speaking out but more about listening to others and then deciding on what matters and when they were going to speak out. It was being more strategic over what they are passionate about. Through her job as a housing officer on an outer island, another TSWLP graduate sought to enact these ideas locally. Amy is in a position in which 'they respected me. I respect them all the time 'cause, I kept saying to them this is my little area here...and you are here, can you at least ... see how we're going to work together'. She also says that she is informing her boss in Thursday Island (TI) about the issues she confronts on her island when she would not have done this prior to the program. She continues to connect with her cohort on the other islands through Facebook, rings her niece (one of the ARLP alumni) for advice on governance issues and the ARLP facilitator.

A major impact of the program was meeting with Minister for Agriculture (also a ARLP alumnus) and their local MP. A senior TSRA manager on an outer island, Emma, and ARLP graduate wrote and tabled a proposal that led to the Minister meeting with her three times when he visited. He suggested they write a submission around domestic violence. The proposal, after much pressure by her, is now being funded and they are negotiating with the minister's advisor about planning the budget. She attributed her capacity to lobby so effectively to the TSWLP, which had introduced her to the Minister. Another TSWLP alumnus felt the TSWLP:

Made me more aware of the political side of things because my dad was a councillor, the chairman of the community for many years, I grew up in his shadows. Like I only understood about the political in this sector here in the smallest of group until when I did this program and did the last part of the last workshop down in Canberra then I saw wow, this is big. And like it made me to appreciate our community...It made me appreciate that because we as people we don't see the hardship and the struggle that they put in for the betterment of their communities. And when I came back here I had a lot of talk with the young people and with the women and all the men around here to stand behind our councillor because that's what he needs. He needs the back support of his community. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

The ARLF programs provided a sense of how local politics were situated within national politics and the importance of actively participating and supporting local representatives.

Self-awareness and adaptability in approaches to leadership

The key theme emerging throughout all interviews was that of spiritual leadership. One TSWLP alumni, Ruth, saw conflict between traditional and Christian values that needed to be resolved:- ‘you’ve got your traditional values and your spiritual values, they both clash in the same community. They’re got to come and sit as one and the community will go forward. Even governance’. Another TSWLP alumnus, Joan, found a similar tension.

A church mother in the leadership group is totally different to a normal leader in the community. But when I first started this course it ... like really opened my mind when I did the program... Being a church leader you deal mostly with the members, like the members of the church. ... you have to be spiritually minded all the time. And to be able to nurture them as they grow in the world of god. And to give advice and counselling. And do a lot of encouragement. And by not only that doing a job and the poor people, being behind my husband in the shadows. Like want to remind him ... to help him in the ministry. Also, being in charge of the women within the church. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

She referred to how she had extended her church activities to the community by starting up a women’s group that met every Thursday night three years ago to do sewing, craft work as ‘women’s time out’. Her husband saw the TSWLP advertisement in the Torres News and had encouraged her to enrol:

You need it if you’re going to further bring the women’s leadership... women’s group into another level. He said I’m sure you will need this program to do it. And I’m very thankful that I did somehow get in and it has helped me a lot... and now I see outside of the box. You know how this group can... expand out to neighbouring islands...it has motivated me more... I have very strong women who stand behind me in this group and I’m trying to arrange workshops to come out through the Mura Kosker Sorority. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

In this way, the TSWLP has encouraged women to draw on local resources to develop their ideas and other programs.

Many of the women interviewed were members or made reference to the MKS. One TSWLP alumnus earlier had been a member since the 1980s and her mother was a founding member and was ‘one of the voices that surrounds you’. But the focus of MK was mainly on the outer islands ‘because the women out here didn’t have much resources or much things or information or much help that the needed out there cause we were so remote’. The MKS have an annual general meeting in TI and members communicate through phone, email and Facebook as well as distributing minutes and a newsletter. They provide education and support, workshops and awareness programs especially for domestic violence. Elders also lecture about abuse, alcohol, and other drugs in workshops.

Those in management or organisational positions actively used their confidence and knowledge about how to work with people within the TSRA. One manager, Janet commented that while team work was ‘the way I work with it cause I work quite closely with the TSRA

board and the leadership'. But the TRAIL course coincided with a really controversial political debate. She reflected on how the course meant:

Learning to look at things like that quite differently. You know realising it's not you but you've got to let the debate happen ... that despite your point of view...it was about that upper level political debate ... so being able to translate that as well and not take things to heart personally ... knowing when to push and not to push ...sort of bringing everybody along with you particular with changed management that sort of thing. Yeah you know it was no good having the blinkers on because this change was going to happen regardless. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazer, Government)

Jane recognised the same emotional investment she had and that other people have in the status quo and worked to address that through a process of change management:

So my thoughts of this short term and long term as well is to help the young people in my community with what I've learnt. There's no point in holding it to myself but sharing that knowledge and skill to other people that need it. But it's a matter of mentoring all the ...if they need that help, that's just my goal. Something for me to do and to continue doing programs to get them involved. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazer, Government)

An alumna of the WLP working with young people on a smaller island considered that change was incremental due to strong cultural beliefs acting as barriers to change:

In the top part western culture is stronger ... I see that our culture in the central part of the Torres Strait fading. You won't be able to break that to get them [women] out and do things because of strong cultural belief. It will change ... It's like when a winkle starts, it goes out because we're small ... Like there's women sitting in community council you know ... through the years now we've got I think four to five ... when you put two together you will see the men and the female are strong but then back in those days it was always the male get picked. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

There was a strong theme throughout that the course encouraged people to think beyond themselves, their work and about the larger picture:

What that course did was it gave me ... it increased my confidence to actually have those hard discussions with people higher than me. ... looking at the values that are important to you, and nothing will change if you don't say anything or if you just sit in the back room and let things happen. ... It opened me up to look at more the community or what these people are saying, the end users. ... I do it's always [from a] bottom up approach.

(Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

A clear concern of all the participants in the WLP was that the cohort groups did not interact with each other as each year there was a self-determining project for each WLP cohort. It was felt this was a lost opportunity in terms of developing long term planning for change.

A TSRA manager and TSWLP alumnus on an outer island was critical that the issues raised in their first group were not carried through to the next groups:

There needs to be one vision. And then you build upon that. So, we said we would do the women's stuff and then we would go out to islands and educate and empower women to run for the elections. So, the second one came on they did something separate. Like if they would have come on and then we would have built on that and the third one came we would have all been ready for the elections. You would have had more women trying to create that gender balance on the board. We could have more like the women power thing but it was just like everybody is going... it has to be more real and there has to be an outcome, like a sustainable outcome I guess where we can pull together the women's group. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

Again, this TSIRC manager on the ground felt that the collective expertise from the first group was not called on in the second program and guest speakers were called in. Despite this, she has been able to put a successful proposal on domestic violence to the federal Minister to gain funding. Another concern held by some TSWLP graduates is that there is little connection made with local organisations such as the MKS that focuses on similar initiatives around domestic violence and women's under-representation in decision-making.

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Building capacity for leadership in persuasion and influence

The TSWLP developed out of the desire to build leadership capacity through greater female participation. A senior TSR manager, a TRAIL graduate, worked with another TSRA manager (ARLP graduate) to develop the ARLF leadership programs for women and young people:

This leadership ARLF is part of it cause being in the governance area one of the things that we've recognised within the region and Torres Strait is a male dominated society culturally but representation by women was a huge cap. It's still remains a gap but the questions was well how do we develop our women folk to be confident enough to put their hands up for elections ... (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAIL, Government)

In gaining the self-confidence to speak out, these women troubled traditional social relations of gender and power in organisations and home.

The TSRA manager observed that prior to the women's program five years ago, all candidates for the STRA council were men but that since the WLP there are:

... a lot of the women that are in the political space now ... that have done that program. So today we've got a female mayor, three female members on our board. We've got more female presidents of local NGOs. They're actually stepping up to the plate. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAIL, Government)

The female manager also attributed the ARLP programs to increased female candidates in elections and how the learning of one has translated into community action and wider participation in local communities.

The TSRA board, membership is 20 ... in the past where we might have got 3 or 4, we did increase to 10 female candidates this time although only 3 got in on the board ... women putting their hands up, it's sort of rung a few bells there. ... and 3 or 4 participants from the women's program who put their hands up in their communities. A couple of them were very shy ladies that you sort of get to know people up here yeah it was quite significant to see them... There's others who've really grabbed what they've learnt from the program. ... one (ARLP graduate) has got some political aspirations, her community input has just gone through the roof. She's done quite significant stuff with communities to increase involvement, community togetherness type activities. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAIL, Government)

The program was for women:

about being brave enough to challenge the status quo, but then having to deal with what that fallout might look like ... they need to hear that you can stand up, but they also need to go, you know, small steps, in terms of their community stuff, because the backlash can be quite brutal ... it's actually okay for women to be leading, and it's actually okay – that doesn't mean we're dishonouring culture ... that's often the card that gets played – men are the cultural leaders. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni, ARLP C15, Government)

Cultural responsibility was being redefined by these women as they came to understand their own positioning:

because our cultural responsibility is men comes first, that was part of it, so I had to deal with my husband cause it was like ... it's not fearing him that he's going attack me or anything, it's just that always had that kind of how do I tell him that I want to do this and do that... Because we've been taught under that and we've been groomed ... so it was like our lifestyle. So it was like cultural responsibility, we've got to break that you see with women. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni, ARLP C15, Government)

Given that domestic violence is about power relations between men and women, a young woman who undertook the YLP suggested the need for a similar program for men in order for them 'to understand what we're thinking' and considered that the debates (e.g. women working when pregnant) should be had with men as well as other women:

I know the world is changing now and our culture is changing and some of its lost, to make the men understand our emotions, I think it's important a place like that and we'll see how they react to that. What sort of emotions come out for them. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSYLP).

The ARLF Indigenous facilitator offers a number of programs in the community but is seen to be an outsider bringing in change, particularly by the men in community. Melinda felt her presence was:

... generating a different conversation. And now that we've got 10 or 12, or whatever it is, people who've been through the program, these men are having different conversations with women. And now we've got women lining up ready to do the next one. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni, ARLP C15, Government)

Another TRAIL graduate had also done the TSRA Ranger programme. As a ranger, the TSRA manager observed that 'she's had lots of challenges being a woman in a man's environment so to speak but she ... you know she's slowly climbing the ladder as well but meeting a lot of those gender issues as well'. All of this signals recognition that changing the social relations of gender to make it more equal is a slow and careful process but which is also inevitable. The ARLF women's programs, their facilitators and participants, are symbolic of gender change.

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... because our cultural responsibility is men comes first, that was part of it, so I had to deal with my husband cause it was like ... it's not fearing him that he's going attack me or anything, it's just that always had that kind of how do I tell him that I want to do this and do that ... Because we've been taught under that and we've been groomed ... so it was like our lifestyle. So it was like cultural responsibility, we've got to break that you see with women. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni, ARLP C15, Government)

Given that domestic violence is about power relations between men and women, a young woman who undertook the YLP suggested the need for a similar program for men in order for them 'to understand what we're thinking' and considered that the debates (e.g. women working when pregnant) should be had with men as well as other women:

I know the world is changing now and our culture is changing and some of its lost, to make the men understand our emotions, I think it's important a place like that and we'll see how they react to that. What sort of emotions come out for them. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSYLP)

The ARLF Indigenous facilitator offers a number of programs in the community but is seen to be an outsider bringing in change, particularly by the men in community. Melinda felt her presence was:

... generating a different conversation. And now that we've got 10 or 12, or whatever it is, people who've been through the program, these men are having different conversations with women. And now we've got women lining up ready to do the next one. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni, ARLP C15, Government)

Another TRAIL graduate had also done the TSRA Ranger programme. As a ranger, the TSRA manager observed that 'she's had lots of challenges being a woman in a man's environment so to speak but she... you know she's slowly climbing the ladder as well but meeting a lot of those gender issues as well'. All of this signals recognition that changing the social relations of gender to make it more equal is a slow and careful process but which is also inevitable. The ARLF women's programs, their facilitators and participants, are symbolic of gender change.

5.6 Building capacity for community engagement

Sport, health and wellbeing

Sport was also a major community activity and many of the interviewees were involved in organising events and everyday routines around health-related activities. A graduate of the ARLP had learnt about leading by being on the board of the Torres Strait Youth and Recreation Sporting Association. She saw the advertisement of the ARLP and was encouraged by the TSRA coordinator of the program and the Chair who was an alumnus. She missed out on course 21 but got into course 22. She had done a previous leadership course, which was experiential but had no qualification, which was only available through doing the JCU extension. The course led her to change how she judges people and evidence—about the needed to confirm what is accurate.

One of the TSRA managers told the story of the impact of the Young Leaders Program on another young woman who has ‘inspired people’ in her community.

A key figure who promoted health and wellbeing in the community was that of a TS alumnus who is a marathon walker. The TRAIL course pushed her to lift her game in the workplace. She's taken steps to get promotion. On a personal basis, she's also questioning, is this where I want to be ... coming from the Torres Strait to go and take up a project job down in Canberra. The TSRA manager commented that she's just changed quite a lot people's attitudes with regard to exercise and health. I mean no one used to get up at 6 o'clock, 5 O'clock in the morning to go for a run...now you see groups get up. She started programs for older ladies...On the ground here there's legacy of what she's left now being picked up by other people ... And out of that we've had another young fellow that's done the New York marathon with Robert De Castella. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C14)

A graduate of TSYLP, Tom, was a young man now back on Thursday Island. He grew upon outer island and after boarding school in Queensland and being accepted in JCU Faculty of Law, which he deferred for family reasons and returned to an outer island. He then worked as a trainee in health in 2010 with the TS Council and worked as a healthy lifestyle officer, then as a mentor coordinator in the employment service sector helping very young teenagers get better training and jobs. He returned to his community and now has a three-year contract as manager of the Torres Strait Youth Sporting Association funded by the Queensland Department of Sports and Recreation.

Environmentalism and entrepreneurship

Other Young Leader graduate, Kay, has moved into commercial enterprise. Kay saw her role within the community broadly, aiming to work with some of the women in her TSWLP course. She developed a regional women's workshop on domestic violence, climate change as well as economic development. Having an Indonesian husband and lived in Indonesia, she had seen the power of being self-sufficient in terms of growing their own produce in community rather than flying into the islands less healthy food. She was aware of the TSRA funding of a Landcare agent going to the islands to encourage growing home gardens and greater self-sufficiency as part of TSRA in their environmental management program area.

Another graduate of TRAIL, Maxine, is moving out of government position after 25 years in TAFE and the Commonwealth. She has long term plans to work with her artist husband from home where she can do the merchandise printing of his art. 'But yeah, that's a personal aspiration to put in a business plan to the TSRA to do a start-up business'. She would hopefully expand it to a tourist attraction around the art. This was a plan with her partner. 'It wasn't just because of the course, but being around people that own small businesses in the leadership course did help. It's more inspiring'.

Working with limited opportunities

A major issue in the TS is the population size of the populations together with family legacies and expectations. This can mean that an individual in the program cannot or is not employed in the few organisations offering employment on in a small island community. Limited employment opportunities in this context shaped the leadership of a TSWLP graduate, Emma. She realised she would not get employment on her island as her relatives were in key positions and recalled the ARLP facilitator saying when blocked:

'Look at it from a different angle, you know? Because it's really easy to just, kind of, go, 'Oh, this person's blocking me or that's stopping me', or whatever. ...What do you need to do to get a different result?' (Interview 2016/17, Alumni, ARLP C15, Government)

She has since the course diverted her energies towards voluntary work and sought to develop her artwork, some of which has been put on display and is sold in the local gallery. She knew of individuals who were prompted to either change employment or find employment. For her, it was time to think about doing more in terms of volunteer. 'Yes, so, I think it's just one of those things about which bit resonates with people and what will that prompt them to do?'

Another TSWLP alumni was one of the few TS women who had travelled – and she felt she modelled that you could go to Hawaii as a mediator between students and parents and staff on behalf of the Torres Strait Island Regional Education Council TSIREC.

After seeing a community university with community funds, Karen commented:

I was like oh, my god, we can do that you know. A little one here. Have like a program with little sessions like every day or something ... because once you start opening something to these people straight away it'll become their routine. You know I've got this ... and that's what I want to teach them to, lead a life of routine. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

As an elder, she was active in mentoring young people in her community as part of her role as case manager for MyPathway (the government work for the dole program for 5 hours a week). She encouraged young people to apply for Young Leaders and observed the impact of the program on them. Karen felt there was room to improve in terms of follow and advertisement more widely of applications for the AFLF programs, and not only online as internet access is limited on each island and to better use the network of alumni.

Like I'm busy but I do always find time to try and help out ... with all the islands...and keep in contact. That way you have a good progress and information ... about whether in the next two years they're still holding onto what they've learnt [from the program] and stuff like that. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

The TSRA managers were also aware of the difficulties of getting participants in the YLP and how we can make that more attractive to the youth. Kay commented:

I don't know if it's a thing of them coming out of school, losing a little bit of confidence before they take the next step or whatever but this is that the program is geared for. We have had to change the criteria a little bit, it was open to you know I think teenagers right through but we've had to put that 18 years due to the responsibility level. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAIL, Government)

The TSRA have sought to engage with schools at Years 11 and 12 to attract young people, suggesting that the TSYLP course 'may help you with your decision making, that sort of thing. I know it's a big step for some kids ... We stopped doing that ... because of the timing but it could be something we could pick up again ... I think they're more comfortable with it and we have seen them progress'. Issues confronting young people transitioning into adulthood was their vulnerability, their sense of responsibility to family, as well as their location if they returned after their schooling to their island where there were limited employment opportunities.

5.7 Valuing difference through cultural leadership

At the same time, within the TS there are distinctive island and regional (east/west) cultures and modes of governance arising from community histories. One graduate of the TSWLP who supported youth by working voluntarily in MyPathways, the work for the dole program aiming to transition youth into employment, Emma, commented:

I think with this community it is a very humble community but they're not a very outspoken people. They're very quiet. They're only certain number of us that stand up and say look we're going to represent our community only because they're very soft hearted and very calm. Not with some islanders they're very aggressive and they fight for what they want. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

She saw her role in this 'god fearing community' was to encourage speaking up particularly as they perceived a dominance of Thursday Island where the TSRA was located:

But there are certain people here that I believe we can get them all to stand up and speak... not many of the women out on the island get identified of the ability or the skills that they have to put out there ... But I believe there are women out and other leaders, young leaders, out in the communities can't cause there's no identifying who's on the island... Most of the good jobs that comes from common ordinary stuff, like that always comes through Thursday Island first and we're always the last one to stream out. So, we don't have a chance to say hey, look over here, we can do... we can stand. We can speak on behalf of the Torres Strait as well which also looks after Native Title. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

She saw Thursday Island community as being more culturally diverse and open to change, but also being favoured in terms of how the knowledge and resources were distributed. A key issue of difference was how the social relations of gender articulated differently across the islands. Another TSWLP alumni also names the differing cultural issues that women are confronted with in some islands. Emma comments:

In this island there was male dominance ... in the past and it's still strongly practiced here. And I kept saying no, we sit back and let the men do the talking ... I mean the ladies brought them into this world. I mean we do everything at home, we run education, we run budgeting, health ... and I said to [the women] if you think they're saying something wrong, please stand up and say something. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

The role of the married woman was highly constraining for others. She considered she

would have been probably leader a long time ago if I was by myself but as soon as I got married it was like you need to ... cause it was like can't do anything now you're married... cause we're trying to break that now with women. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

While cultural leadership was understood and enacted as expected, some of the TSWLP alumni who worked within their community and church as volunteers were actively promoting cultural change. The TSWLP offered them an opportunity as Emma showed:

I've been involved in mostly church groups like Sunday schools and stuff like that. I've been in roles where I've had to be the leader so look after everybody, organise everything. ... church but as well as community, cause one of my passions was reviving our cultural heritage. Like acknowledging the big days that happen and then also getting the youth involved and empowering them to continue to uphold that ... And so when this opportunity [TWLP] came up [through a friend] I saw it as a way for me to build myself like personally. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

Another aspect of traditional communities creating a tension related to cultural differences with regard to age and leadership when it came to the leadership perspective of the program:

The program I loved it ... it was about teamwork, building and stuff like that, but I experienced that some time you don't have to be athletic to be a leader ... the other thing we didn't identify was when running the women's group ... was cultural difference around leading. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP program 1)

Ruth cited the initial activity of walking in the WLP that she considered to be physically challenging in ways that failed to recognise cultural differences e.g. respect for elders, one of whom had recently had heart surgery. The discussion had been around cultural responsibility. Some argued you have to be healthy to be a leader. Ruth argued that:

When you look at cultural responsibilities 'cause we've got respect in there as well ... I was the one that kept fighting against the trainer because I wasn't agreeing ... it's not that I didn't want to do it, it's just that where I come from if an elder like falls of course I'm going to have to stop ... And I couldn't because when you meet each of the islanders either an auntie it's always a bloodline and it's very strong and I couldn't just leave her cause she was part of the family... what makes a stronger person? (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP program 1)

She argued that leadership is not just about being an athlete 'it's about body, mind and soul'. She also felt obligated to stay back with the same when they were visiting a culturally significant cave. Her disappointment increased when a Thursday Island woman was selected to continue with the JCU course and not herself. This exacerbated the sense of geographical marginality expressed by many of the outer island women:

But see the difference between ... again between TI and outer islands there are people with skills and knowledge out there than can benefit for Torres Strait but they're normally always target TI because it's all there.

Cultural issues also arose when it came to age. Her greatest challenge was as the:

Youngest woman in the group so older women they had more power...because I was young and thought she'd be smarter than the rest of us ...With older women they have a bit more like stronger opinion ... I was raised in a cultural environment where I had to respect older women ... There was times during the programs we were given opportunities to have a say and I couldn't because they ... like not overpowering, but just ... like I found that frustrating and I couldn't say that to them. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP program 1)

But Ruth learned during the program that she could and should speak out and this meant:

It was a feeling of like involvement, like I was part of the conversation and they were listening to what I was saying. That my opinions were valued. ... also like to be more strategic. It definitely did that. Like with time management and all that stuff and planning and you think very precise thing ... Seeing other people's perspectives. Like a general, like everybody ... every woman, every person is different sort of thing. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP program 1)

On returning to her community, Ruth felt that she could handle intergenerational issues better, with older men and women, as you can be more straightforward with the men. She felt that having done the program that 'I have definitely gained respect from my elders, and older women ... from my family as well as other young people in the community'.

Another TSWLP alumnus, Emma, was acutely aware of the change in relationship after the program with her husband which became more respectful and equal.

But now they see that we are equal and he attends his men programs ... they do spiritual men programs, so he's there doing that, and then it's like I've got my women's programs so we're both babysitting you know. That's him. And that's sort of like letting everybody know and even if I come down and sit with someone and we have a chat he's not going to come and say look after the kids at home. Before he used to be like that... We've got to think about the bigger picture and the long run in our next generation. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

The program therefore provoked significant critical thinking and reflection about culture, leadership and the relations of power based on gender and age. ARLF alumni through their personal relations and leadership practice modelled agency and a capacity to bring about change.

5.8 Recognises and responds to complexity

A tension with many women's leadership programs is an embedded assumption and expectation that women are supportive of other women, although Indigenous and mainstream research shows there are significant class, racial, cultural lens well as political positions and experience among women. This was evident in terms of how in the TS women had powerful familial loyalties. Familial networks had a strong role in determining opportunities on each island. In turn, these loyalties impact on how women and young people work with each other.

Within the TSRA, part of the changed way of thinking was to respect not only the abilities of others, as well as familial loyalties, but also to value the impact of teams. This view not only changed how individuals worked, but also how they changed organisational structures and processes to improve governance. Mary in the TSRA management agreed:

Team building I think I got a lot out of that but it also confirmed for me as an organisation itself particularly when it came to management of staff that type of thing, that we were on the right track. That was when program management plans were first introduced... so it gives you that sense of confidence as well, that yep, I'm in the right place, in the right organisation ... you know I suppose being in a remote sort of isolated area sometimes you do as a person question that in your mind. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAIL, Government)

She valued the physical aspect of the TRAIL Program because it 'teaches trust and particularly this is where the team building comes in really strong ... where you're thrown in a group with lots of different people, different industries, both genders ... from sugar cane, fisheries industries ... that team element was really good'.

In particular, the physicality of the experiential aspects of the programs such as walking across the land had a great impact:

It certainly – it was quite overwhelming ... But the analogy that I picked up – we were walking through the bushes and cutting down these things and looking for sure-footed ground. There's a moral to it. It's about how you do your day to day. There's always going to be obstacles. You've always got to be sure-footed ... it's more reflection there. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAIL, Government)

For her, this was not new in terms of her relationship to the land. But 'I guess the thing that I wanted more was about my public speaking, and being able to convey the message and get people to follow. And leaders follow too. Listening to our members'. Her changed behaviour – a new calmness- was noted by others, the Vice-President and also her family. She felt she was more systematic and more process driven. She had started in the new senior position during the course and it was 'scary' at the time. But after 2 years she was able to delegate a new project once a process was established and realised 'all I needed to know was to ask the key questions. She is also looking forward to her next step.

At the personal level, there was overwhelming evidence that the TSWLP changed the ways in which women understood governance and also how to work with others whether in the community as a mentor but also in community meetings. The types of skills that were developed were used in a range of ways within the family, in community meetings and as a representative on various regional bodies:

Yeah, to work better with them. ... Personally, as a team work, yeah. ... they listen to everybody. Everybody's opinion counts when I'm in the room. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

Because the body language speaks as well and it got me to identify certain people just by ... not judging them but just sitting and observing and seeing how different women older, younger, you know, cause I was like that. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

A major issue for the TSRA is how to transition young people into further education and training and then employment, such as MyPathway transition program. They see the TSYLP as one mechanism. The Regional Council is trialling a youth induction program to prepare them for the ARLF experience. But there is concern about how to recruit youth to the young leaders program, and how to prepare them for the program to ensure their full participation. Other managers have suggested a more personal recruitment process is needed. This would require past ARLF participants to advertise the program/s, on radio, at community meetings, schools and be more persuasive and encouraging.

Maxine's leadership provides an exemplar of how to work with young people in ways that led to successful outcomes.

One TSWLP, Maxine, taught a transition program that has been highly successful with 100% graduation and employment rate over 7 years at TAFE. The course leaders select at Year 10 annually two groups of 16 year 11 and 16 year 12s who are disengaged and offer them course in marine operations, the coxswain program, English communication, community studies, prevocational maths and recreational studies. She is also actively involved with multiple NGOs since she has been on Thursday Island including the Lena Passi Women's Shelter Association, the Volunteer Marine Rescue, the Torres Strait Fisherman's Association, Mura Kosker Sorority, and the Port Kennedy Rugby League. She has been involved due to her sporting abilities where she had represented Queensland and Australia and was seconded to Sports Rep Queensland for 2 years just to help the sports arena around the Torres Strait. With a background in secretarial work with the government, and through her sporting network, she has undertaken considerable development in areas of governance and has been invited to be on numerous NGO boards. Through her clientele she has become passionate about helping mainly women and children. She was nominated for the ARLP by a group of women who knew her through her involvement with community organisations and who chose her instead of themselves. When on the program, she saw different aspects of the women she had known for a long time, particularly in the outdoor activities that she enjoyed and had to be patient with women with families and also those younger women who she did not want to discourage. Maxine felt the program gave her a capacity to deal with all male environments e.g. Fisherman's Association. 'Well I guess with our men if you could stand and understand what they're all about and understand what policies you can refer to ...and you show how you can deal and put forward their issues. I was brought in to clean up governance area'. The program enhanced her capacity because she had already broken the barrier in rugby league as the first female to referee a rugby league game.

Her boss at TAFE saw the difference in terms of both her communications skills and preparedness to speak out. Other men referred to how other men were 'scared of you women' who had done the program. In particular, there were flow on effects:

Women are coming to me more now because they've seen success from other women and how I've dealt with them and how I've helped them ... when it comes to domestic and family violence and child abuse I'm not afraid to report and some women who are afraid to report just don't know how to and so helping them through all that.

(Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

There is a change within the community with regard to safety for women ... as 'only we can make the change if we want to live here forever. We've got to be the change as well'. She had worked across all the islands to empower girls through sport in the 1990s, had used her NGO and sporting activities. She has moved from being on the board of Mura Kosker onto the Lena Passi Board funded by the Department of Community which is a crisis centre that has outreach on the islands with women from all the islands on the Board. She presented to the Productivity Commission regarding the funding of the program:

The leadership program had done for all of us ... it's given us confidence to actually go up and speak to the politicians and state our issues and raise our issues to them and be able to say well, I spoke to him in Canberra ... certainly helped me with all my non-government organisations as to how to think about lobbying ... and for the women in the program it will give them that confidence because whatever they bring. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP).

She also keeps in contact with the group through Facebook or individuals who ring her.

Like in our touch football carnival we promote domestic violence and safety at sea through those carnivals ... the rugby league have also taken on board that as well and basketball usually takes on the health lifestyle ... and our promotion on the radio just explaining to the community why we're doing it. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

Despite doing the TSWLP she decided when the current head of TAFE retired she would no longer run the TAFE transition program because it would lose its integrity with another group of providers. While eligible to move up the organisation, she has decided to return to St Paul to continue 'developing it as a community'. The WLP helped her understand the issues and:

It skilled me to be able to deal with those sorts of situations and especially through the women who were involved in it presenting what they presented. You know showing their emotions and you know the struggles are still there for all of us and I think it's just sort of given me more confidence to be able to do research between now and then and be able to go back armed with a little bit more knowledge than when I left the place in '94. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP).

Common across all the women's discussions around leadership generally, as well as women's capacity to lead, were references to how culture framed their opportunities for leadership:

Our people have not really been able that tall poppy syndrome stuff and you know I guess we've always because of our parents and grandparents and big humble people they're not sort of wanted to be put up there on that pedestal ... these are things that come out in the leadership program ... as women we're ... too afraid of being off side our families, our friends, because we might end up saying too much or talking too much. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

The TSWLP did not always meet needs because it was dependent on the individual's positional leadership and prior experience, which for many women was limited.

Another graduate of the TSWLP, Emma, had worked in Ibis, the local store, in administrative positions and then moved to Queensland Health for 10 years. She largely worked in the corporate sector and was in a temporary position managing for TSRA on one of the outer islands. She had been on a TI council voluntarily as Chair for four years, but it closed due to corruption and went into liquidation. It was then she did a women's leadership program in Canberra.

I felt so empowered. Like I could change the world. So I came back to TI and I really sort of dug my heels in and really made ... you know used that positive but then I found that I was only one person with that energy and everybody else I was trying to drag them so I kind of tried encouraging other people to go and do this course. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

Emma felt the need to be reinvigorated in 2014 and so did the ARLF WLP course. But she did not gain the same sense of empowerment she was seeking. Her response to the course was clouded by the lack of communication as to what was going to happen. She was angry that she was not told to prepare herself and her family to leave the island for a week and this caused a dispute with her partner as he did not know where she was going and with whom and she could not communicate with him for a week as mobiles were banned. She remained unsettled throughout because of this and felt that the course did not reignite the fire as the first program had. She went to another leadership course with the original presenter but it also was too familiar. The group did not bond as much as could be expected. Of all the interviewees only she had felt she it had not met her expectations. But at the same time, she agreed that 'It was a good course. I enjoyed it. But ... maybe I was looking too hard ... for what I felt years ago with the room full of black women from right across Australia'(Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP). Not all programs can meet an individual's needs which are often personal, situated and also depend on prior leadership training.

5.9 Intergenerational capacity building

Common through all interviews was concern regarding the next generation. All the alumni actively encouraged others to do the program because they knew how it changed them and had observed change in other graduates:

I could see them sort of come out of their shell and be a little bit more polished.
(Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

Cause when we came back [from the program] like the families on the island were like talking to us, encouraging us, to like step up a bit and be a role model to the younger ones.
(Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

It'll change you and you'll feel and think the difference of how you're going to go against the community or go against the world. This is you, you have to change yourself and stop thinking in that little area. Think outside. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

Those who had completed the TYLP spoke of its benefits. The TSYLP program made a young male YLP alumnus, Jack, realise that 'There's more to learn and I know that I want to learn more'. He continues to mentor while working in the Art Gallery. In the short term:

One of my goals for this year is to gather all the art members around here, take them to the bush and do more landscape colouring, watercolours and that, so they can actually talk about the land and all the different seasons. Where and when to gardening and stuff. Like field trips like it's going to develop them more in a different environment ... see what's happening in the outside world ... Encourage them within the workshops that I'm doing. Different skills. Especially the young ... Tell them the basic stuff. Cause I left everything for two weeks after then I started doing everything ... I tell them to be better prepared ... Start it early, finish it off. To help them think about the future and cultural identity. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSYLP)

He is currently working with one of his peers in the TSYLP a young woman who is going to write a story and she wanted him involved. Some of the graduates of the Young Leaders were considering applying for the ARLP. But there was little connection between the TSYLP and the TSWLP with participants in each program unaware of the other even though they lived in same community.

A TSWLP alumnus, Amy, also focused on

the younger generation, I want them to be like me ... When we have meetings please stand up and voice your view ... I had to go against my cousin's brother ... he was ... degrading, more like just pointing the finger at them [young people] ... I'm like if you want their respect you've got to respect them. You come down to their level and think what they're thinking. This is what I'm doing. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

She also is encouraging young women to do the course.

I said to them you need to do this because it'll change you and you'll feel and think the difference of how you're going to go against the community or go against the world. This is you, you have to change yourself and stop thinking in that little area. Think outside. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

After doing the ARLP she organized a Christmas holiday youth program through her church to keep primary school and the teens occupied. This involved camping, picnics a community day out. For someone who lacked confidence with her literacy, the program provided skills to gain council funding. Her next step is to develop workshops that encourage mutual respect between the elders and young people as she has witnessed 'a lot of the family members abuse the elders. Just take their card, buy this and that. No respect ... and elders come from a different generation ... now it's our children and grandchildren, it's more like modernised and more American like. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TSWLP)

A senior TSRA Manager considered that the investment in the range of ARLF programs which was their sole leadership development focus was worthwhile as:

We're certainly hitting marks with but you know like from TSRA perspective is the investment doing what it should do ... I think it's mainly looking at individual's growth like I say in community, in careers, or their political aspirations and I mean even for political aspirations it doesn't mean they have to get in, it's aspiring to it. Going through that process. Understanding that electoral process ... such as who's on the electoral roll... And then learning more and more about governance, strong governance, you know best practices, all of those sorts of things. So it all goes back to community at the end of the day when they're sitting on committees or on boards or whatever so yeah really keen to see that growth in you know in people who want it. And like this is the base for you to build on your confidence level or your skills etc. what you might need out there. I know it's not going to do it for everybody but I mean you know we've already got some really good examples here. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAIL, Government)

Mary expects the participants to become advocates for the ARLF programmes. This often happens quietly amongst the women as well as within the TSRA. Talking to people is necessary to 'breakdown that fear, that barrier a little bit and yeah give it a go because that's what a lot of it is about'. They do not see themselves developing their own programs due to cost and also because of the success of the ARLF suite of bespoke programs and lack of internal expertise. She sees working with the Young Leaders program in schools and nurturing potential thereby giving the opportunity for our young leaders in the school to come and observe the board. They are considering for TSRA to sponsor a significant award to one of the outgoing seniors and possibly a tertiary education scholarship. Mary sees the key issues the ARLF programmes address are with regard to women's representation as the 'additional challenge now of the cultural side of it where you know the men were really dominant'. It is also evident with the Board where there are the younger ones coming through:

they are now starting to stand up so there is that gradual change and I think we still need to perceive with the women's one and make sure there's opportunity there for women to grow as well. We really need to do it. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAIL, Government)

5.10 Conclusion

In summary, a rapid increase in personal and professional growth has been attributed to the TSWLP. The women are engaged in empowering other women and youth for a healthier future (physically and spiritually). The Canberra experience was significant for all and this is attributed to their gaining a political network that has had ongoing benefits in terms of gaining funding for additional programs. Some alumni have set about becoming more knowledgeable about policies that effect their environment/community and now speak with confidence when lobbying ministers (State and Federal). One of the women has taught herself a traditional art form that uses natural materials, which she is hoping to reengage other women. The work has

already started receiving recognition in TS and now and they are now working towards getting this work recognised outside the region. A participant has put forward a submission to the Productivity Commission while another has put in a successful federally funded grant bid.

There is also an increased awareness of non-government organisations, which they now lobby. One alumnus has become a Justice of the Peace. Other women reported actively choosing to work in fields that had traditionally been male dominated. A number also mentioned they are more confident in speaking with leaders in the workplace because they had a greater sense of their agency. Another participant was for the first time invited to address the community at a culturally significant event. They indicated that they are now confidently applying for more senior positions, volunteering and for a few establishing non-profit organisations, in order to benefit their communities. All women reported an increased awareness and capacity to listen to different points of view, increased acceptance of others, able to break previous habits that they perceived as limiting their personal growth and professional development.

All of the women spoke about how important it was to know about governance and leadership and especially that they are different. They are aware that community members, family members and colleagues have noticed differences in them. The men are speaking about them being more proactive and they are receiving encouragement from some men. Women are going to them seeking advice/support which one attributes to their 'community being safer'. A participant spoke of standing their ground in community and building bridges. Meeting women guest speakers who were advocating for their community was a real "boost" to their own motivation and aspirations. The ARLF have with the TSRA also modified the Young Leaders program for TS young people. This has led to questioning whether this change is going against their strategic objective, which is closing the gap as the TS young people and non-Indigenous others are no longer exposed to cultural difference.

The TS Regional Council are able to document the achievements of the ARLF participants: list of achievements include engaging in further learning, becoming board members, leading women's organisations, rangers and legal advisors. Some have also taken on leadership roles within the fisheries, reconciliation, the art industries and cultural centres. Participants are also attributed with successfully establishing and maintaining the implementation of marine rescue programme, a women's shelter, and health and wellbeing community programmes (people of all ages are now more physically active), the promotion of child safety and advocacy for family safety.

On one of the islands an elder has observed younger woman wanting to be more involved in the island's council. Those that now sit on council are seen as being more outspoken as they are asking questions and engaging more in the islands governance. There is an increased level of motivation with the participants organising events and church rallies about areas of concern for the community. The participants have been promoted to positions of increased responsibility.

A key aspect that these participants attributed to increased aspirations was meeting Aboriginal people who had achieved further education and become elected State and Federal members

of government. They looked upon these people as role models. They learnt from these interactions that they too could 'learn more, travel and that they could do more' and another spoke of 'learning to have courage to do things I wouldn't normally [because of] doubting myself'. One participant attributed his involvement as 'helping [them] to stay positive, to keep on going'. The visit to Canberra was also a significant element for all participants. Some were emotionally affected by the Indigenous history component. One participant attributed the program in helping them have a 'better understanding/vision of what the community is trying to achieve at Native Title meetings'. The participants all said the program helped them (in their paid and/or volunteer work) to communicate more effectively with youth and to identify and develop programs that would benefit them.

All young leaders interviewed spoke of the youth programs that had initiated and were planning to develop. These programs ranged from sport, to art, and learning about traditional gardening in a bush context. Two of the participants are active in the promotion of art (locally, nationally and internationally) and cultural artefacts being held in their local cultural centres. While some noted that they were more confident in speaking up and asking questions, there was also a change from being a 'loudmouth' to being 'less of one'. Some have joined small business boards and others are engaged in political roles in negotiating respectful change within their communities. Learning how to listen and communicate with elders and to be heard by them was also a key change that the TSYL recognised. The participants from this program have taken on mentoring roles to younger people and they are encouraging others to undertake this program including exercise program with young children. The mentoring also consisted of helping others to complete the ARLF application forms. Mentoring was reported in one instance as having already recruited 2 more participants. Youth mentoring overall was focused on providing a 'healing process' that brings youth and elders together based on respect. For some, they recognised that their perspectives had changed that they were seeing 'a bigger picture' and were now 'assessing [their] past self'.

At the same time, many young people struggled with going away and being suddenly located in a strange environment. As an outsider involved with the other program observed 'that the program falls over a little bit ... who's delivering that program for them and, you know, their understanding of what really goes on in some of these communities and the cultural dynamics that play out'. Some of the graduates of the Young Leaders were considering applying for the ARLP.

These case studies indicated that the ARLF, both through the ARLP and the specialist programs, has had significant impact on community capacity in the Torres Strait region. Impact has occurred over the past two decades in multiple ways- at the grass level in the local communities through to senior government leadership. It has informed good governance, promoted community activism, promoted health and wellbeing, encouraged creative activities with personal and commercial benefits, and enhanced the process of cultural recognition. These programs directly align with the TSRA Development Plan (2014-18) that focuses on environment, management, governance and leadership, healthy communities, safe communities, cultural art and heritage and economic development. Having young people and women who have not had paid employment become active in the arts and enter the workforce and act as mentors to others provides pathways into other lifelong opportunities. The MOA Art

Centre in Badu indicated that there are flow-on benefits from having ARLF alumni working in the centre. There are cultural benefits in terms of developing a cultural milieu that promotes a sense of self determination.

The ARLF programmes, as indicated above, meet the TSRA five key objectives (TSRA Annual 2015-2016, p.56) with regard to those participants interviewed. The evidence is clear that these programmes develop in individual leaders the aims:

1. Understanding of and capacity for engagement in governance and politics
2. Self-awareness and adaptability in their approaches to leadership
3. Leadership skills including persuasion
4. Influence and meeting facilitation
5. Confidence levels in relation to public speaking.

The TSRA includes formal evaluation reports from ARLF against the KPI annual targets and four-year Development Plan with regard to increased percentage of youth participation or women's participation in leadership programs.

NB. All names used are pseudonyms.

6. Building partnerships

Central to the success and sustainability of the ARLF are the relationships the Foundation has with its sponsors and partner organisations. The environment is one of shrinking funds for RRR Australia and industry generally, and intensified global competition in agricultural products. An alumnus who is SES in a government department foresees difficulties of both reduced funding for RDCs and increased complexity in a rapidly changing context. In the survey of 30 sponsors past and present, 25 responded but not to all questions. The breakdown of the organisation is shown in Figure 23.

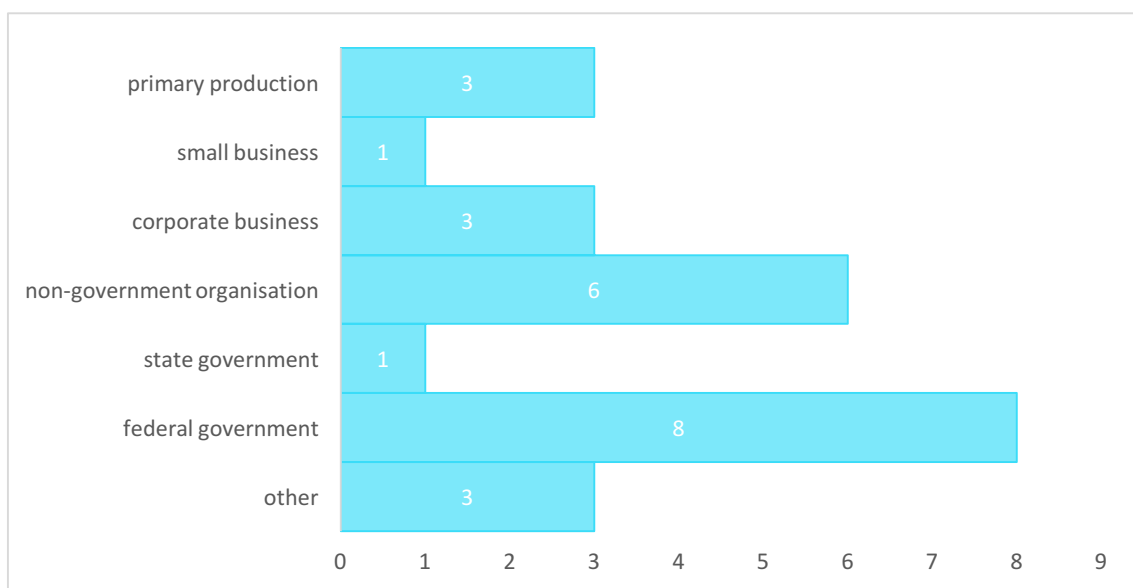


Figure 20

Breakdown of participants in 2017 ARLF Sponsors survey by type of organisation

The sample of sponsors in the survey is not fully representative of the range of programs that have been offered but did include representatives from those organisations that have sponsored the Torres Strait Women Leaders (1), Young Leaders, TRAIL (4), TRAILblazers (5), and industry specialist programs (5) as well as from the flagship ARLP (22).

Given the strong presence of alumni working in all of these organisations since the ARLF was established, the 25 sponsor/partners who responded were aware of the work and success of the ARLF largely through observation of alumni leadership and careers, word of mouth from colleagues (40%) and alumni (24%). One government sponsor stated: ‘they [alumni] are widely known in the department’. The ARLF has also worked with various organisations (RiceGrowers Association, Cotton Australia) to develop specialist programs (3). Both organisations are long-term sponsors with ARLF alumni in executive positions (see cotton and rice case studies). Finally, the sponsors receive evaluations of the specialist programs that they had partnered with the ARLF.

Other industry specialist programs developed by the ARLF for partners include Agribusiness Leadership Program and the Rice Industry Emerging Leaders. In the selection process, a sponsor organisation can nominate their own candidates to be assessed according to the ARLF criteria. Many sponsor organisations (RDCs and government) also provide general scholarships, often targeting specific groups or industries, a strategy that has increased the number of women over the 25 years in all programs. The specialist programs decide on applicants who also need to meet criteria of the program as agreed on with the ARLF. The growing number of female participants in the ARLF programs is shown in Figure 23.

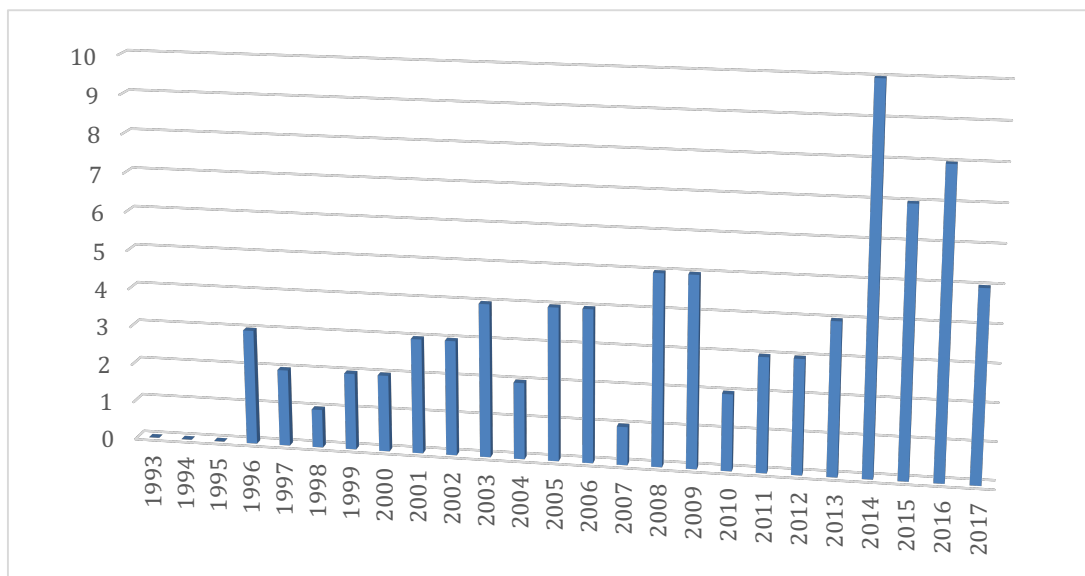


Figure 21

Female participants in ARLF programs between 1993 and mid 2017 (2017 Alumni survey)

Some alumni are concerned that the ability to maintain both diversity and quality of participants is impacted by the selection process as specific scholarships are named and often there are neither suitable applicants or none so the scholarship lapses:

What I'm trying to say is it depends on what the organisation is trying to achieve. So, if it's trying to achieve this vision for Rural and Regional Australia, and if that's its primary focus then it's limited to doing that by its sponsors because it's an expensive course and it's got to get money. If it's only got a certain type of sponsorship base, and that doesn't meet the needs of the people who are going to do the course then you're going to have a disconnect between sponsor and alumni. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C3, Agriculture)

Because the recruitment and selection process includes some alumni who work for and are in executive positions in sponsor organisations (e.g. government Departments, RDCs), these alumni as well as those who have not undertaken the ARLF programs are able to gauge the quality of the graduates as well as how the program is changing over time.

Look I think they've built the program ... you know they've really learnt as they've gone and they evaluate each session and try and build on it so I think they're doing a good job from that point of view. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Executive manager, Cotton)

The sponsors, in particular the primary funders the RDC's and government, also fund scholarships for applicants across a number of industries. The RDCs are in particular concerned about building capacity across RRR and not a specific sector or industry.

6.1 Rationale for selecting ARLF programs

The ARLF programs are part of a suite of leadership development programs that are funded by sponsor and partner organisations. These include but not only: Nuffield scholarships, Accelerate, Monash Scholarships, Horizon, Peter Cullen Trust, Young Farming Champions, bespoke industry programs, Public Sector Leadership Academy, ANZSOG programs, Australian Institute of Company Directors Course, sector specific leadership programs, RIRDC Industry Program and Corporate Program, Harvard Advanced Management, Heywire, RIRDC Rural Women's Award, Young Farming Champions. These organisations are therefore able to make judgements as to the quality and return on investment of the ARLF programs through ongoing feedback from, and observation of, alumni over time within their organisations.

It is clear that the ARLP is seen to be the iconic program in RRR leadership within the rural community of producers, researchers and sponsors. Participants' rationales for sponsoring ARLF programs were assessed using a set of indicators in a matrix question. Ratings were made on 5-point Likert scales with response options which ranged from 'not at all' to 'totally agree'. Over 87% of the sponsor/partner respondents consider the ARLF programs enhance leadership capacity in RRR and 91% view this as building capacity more broadly across RRR Australia. They also agreed that there are organisational benefits with 60% considering ARLF programs enhance current leadership skills, 78% agreeing they have motivational effects on staff and 69% considering that ARLF programs develop current and future leaders within the organisation. The sponsors/partners also consider that there are flow on effects in that 56% see the programs as leading to better engagement with RRR communities and 74% consider the programs develop access to new networks.

The benefits were in alumni survey stated as:

- The focus on the cohort and the individual rather than the industry or profession
- The higher level of the program (leaders), the cross-sector connection and the international exposure.

The sponsor/partners considered that what distinguishes the ARLF programs from other leadership were the focus on RRR, the length and quality of the program which changed patterns of behaviour and thinking, the strong industry connections underpinning the programs. The ARLF's reputation was gained due to the evidence of alumni in key leadership positions and also in communities and because they had relevant and well-developed programs covering a cross-sector in RRR Australia, including specialist industry programs, but with a reach that spread beyond the rural industry. There was also agreement that the ARLF success was due to the program pedagogy and content with the targeting of mature leaders working with others from different backgrounds, values and industries to go through an experiential learning process in order to focus on self-awareness and ethical leadership. The focus on the cohort and the individual was important and not on the industry or sector, but the mix led to realising different perspectives. Finally, there was agreement that the length and intensity of the experience, particularly the residential periods in remote, regional and urban as well as national and international locations, developed a strong global perspective.

These characteristics of the ARLF programs were reinforced in the descriptive statistics as to why sponsors selected the ARLF programs although there was a range of opinions. Whilst the programs were only considered by 45% of sponsors/partners to have moderate level value for money compared to comparable leadership programs, there was consensus (22 of the 22 respondents) that the focus on leadership and on RRR Australia was from good to a very high extent a reason for selecting the ARLF. One sponsor's comment was that they selected the program because of their 'Knowledge of effectiveness of similar program overseas (California)'. Eighteen of 21 sponsors/partners agreed to a high and very high extent that the programs benefitted the organisation and the community, 16 of 23 saw benefits to wider RRR communities and 23 from 24 respondents agreed that the benefits to the individual were high or very high (see Figure 22).

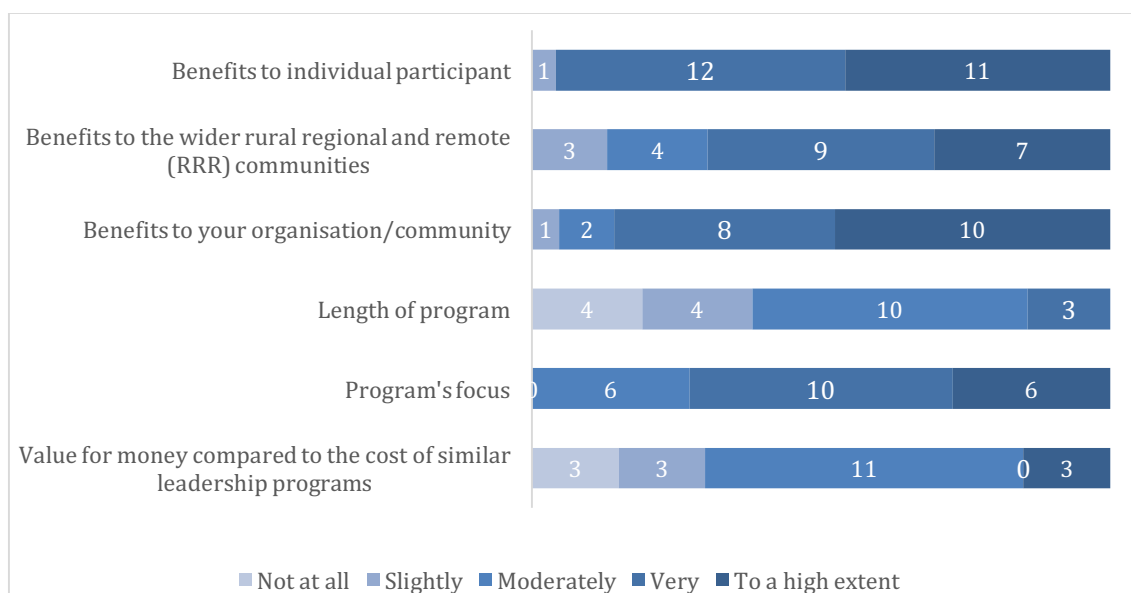


Figure 22

Factors influencing sponsors' decision to sponsor ARLF programs

Many alumni worked in the partner or sponsor organisations and observed that individual leaders had developed or enhanced capacities after the ARLF programs. In particular, 19/23 sponsor/partners identified graduates' ability to consider multiple perspectives in complex problems and act as advocates of RRR Australia. As one sponsor commented: 'Alumni have been identified as being great candidates for industry advocacy'. 21/23 considered the graduates were more competent post-program in how to address pressing issues in the organisation /community/sector. Other areas of high agreement were leading a team (18/23) and working in a team (19/23). Areas of significant agreement were managing conflict (16/23), bouncing back from adversity (16/23), risk assessment (15/23) and responding ethically (15/23). There was moderate agreement (14/23) regarding both issues of dealing with the media and working capably in policy environment. There was only one respondent who disagreed with regard to the media and policy issues and none who totally disagreed on any question, indicating an overall positive attribution of the observable impact of the ARLF programs by sponsors/partners. At the same time, these comments were made with some qualification. One partner/sponsor commented:

It is hard to separate out the effects of the ARLP from the what would have happened with those people prior to participation. Often the staff we send to participate are already well aligned with the characteristics above. The program enhances those aspects. My personal view is that participants in my cohort that were less aligned with these characteristics at the start of the program made very significant movements to improve in these areas. (ARLF survey 2017)

6.2 Leading change

Again, there was an overall positive recognition of changed leadership practices. As shown in Figure 23, the most positive outcomes were that 19/23 sponsors agreed or totally agreed that the alumni had developed a capacity to influence others through extended networks and were ready to take responsibility, 17/23 considered the alumni valued difference in others, remained positive in difficult situations and encouraged critical thinking in the organisation. One sponsor/partner commented they saw the graduates were 'more conscious about the impact on rural / regional and remote communities with more of a focus on the indigenous'. 16/23 considered the alumni encouraged others to develop their full capacity. As one commented, 'ARLP graduates have spun off more leadership programs. Many graduates are prepared to look at alternative views'. One sponsor declined to answer as they were not in the situation to make any judgement directly but responsibility for funding rested with them in their government department. 'We do not work closely with alumni of the ARLF. However, the answers provided are those that have been seen from a distance'

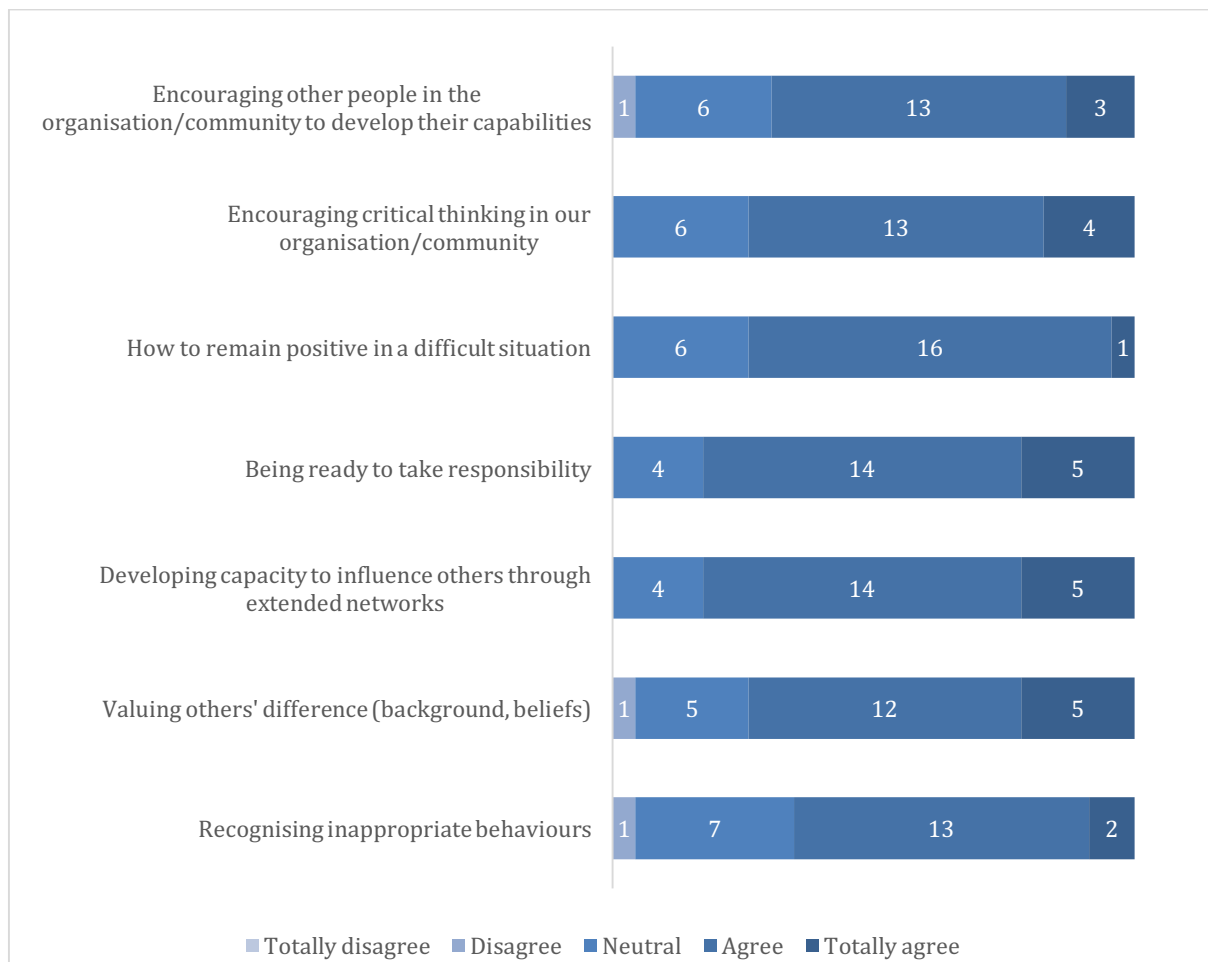


Figure 23

Sponsors/partners perception on how the ARLF alumni have developed attitudes to operate more effectively in various aspects

Others were more critical arguing that over time, some of the leadership practices in the shorter courses were not sustained, indicating the need for refresher courses:

I think that especially in the Future Leaders course - the theory of each of the above ideas was presented - but seeing alumni of this program 1.5 years later - very little seems to have 'stuck'. So - 'yes' the ARLF alumni developed attitudes - but these new-found attitudes lasted only a short time. (ARLF survey 2017)

6.3 Effectiveness of ARLF relative to expectations

Sponsor expectations of ARLF alumni including specialist programs were varied.

Table 23

Sponsor expectations of alumni effectiveness

Sponsor and partner survey responses
Be leaders in our industry, whilst fostering and nurturing the next generation of leaders
Have the ability to move into broader, more senior roles
Change in the way that they act in situations that call for leadership ability
Act as advocates of industry to the community and to influence other producers to develop leadership skills
Support and align with their sponsor- give back to the organisation that provided them with this opportunity
Be relied on to follow good process in debate around policy, acknowledge alternative views, be prepared to present a case for something based on good argument and evidence
Show better engagement and involvement
Work and live in rural communities, encouraging communities to work together to develop plans; to attract workforce and address gaps.

There were also variable expectations by sponsors regarding reporting back by alumni, an issue raised by some of the alumni who considered it their responsibility to be more accountable to their sponsor. Some sponsors, particularly the RDCs, considered their role was to develop individual leaders across the RRR and not specifically in their industry or sector. This position was stated by one of the CEOs of an RDC who did not expect to have feedback in terms of presentations or reports.

We don't really care whether they give back immediately into the rice industry—I see if they have a key role in terms of irrigation or policy ... as long as we see these people taking a leadership role in rural Australia. We don't want someone have to do something directly contribute back to us as sponsors as RDCR. The industry is not one stream—a layer of streams. (Interview 2016/17, Executive Manager, Sponsor, RDC)

When questioned regarding how they evaluated the ARLF programs (see Figure 26), 4 of the 21 respondents did not undertake any formal evaluation and 2 did, while most relied on feedback from individual participants (18), from colleagues (6), mentors (3) and other ARLF alumni (10). Three observed greater voluntary community engagement and 11 observed changed behaviour of the graduates in terms of critical thinking, collaboration, strategic thinking and values-driven leadership. A further 7 considered that there was evidence of improved organisational practices by alumni (e.g. inclusive culture, teamwork and strategic planning). Five considered there was overall improved organisational performance of the alumni and one observed better work life balance. While federal departments funded some of their own staff they also sponsored external scholarships, often indicated a targeted group (e.g. Indigenous and women). They also were less concerned about receiving feedback from these general scholarship holders.

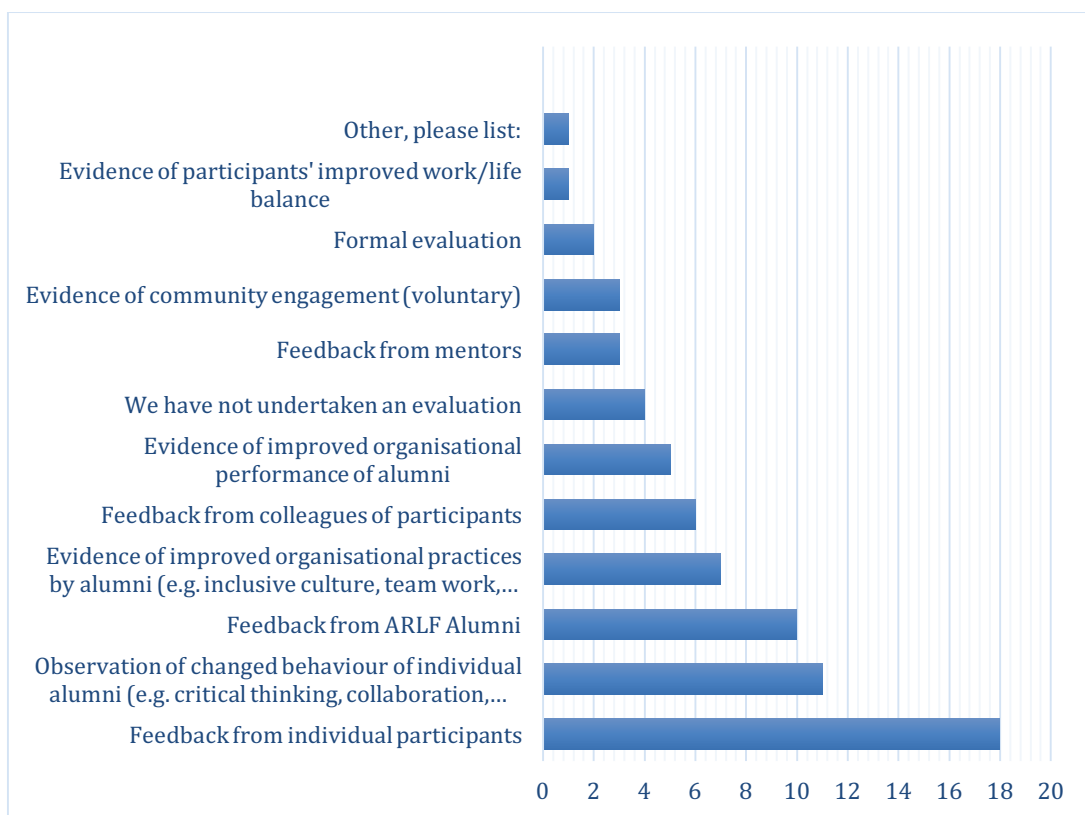


Figure 24

Different ways sponsors & partners evaluate the benefits of their organisations' involvement with the ARLF

In seeking to be responsive, the ARLF has catered for a range of leadership and professional development programs that they have negotiated with specific industry groups e.g. Emerging Rice Leaders to meet emerging needs.

6.4 Return on investment for sponsor and partner organisation

But these expectations are changing due to changing contextual factors outlined earlier across all RRR Australia including greater international competition requiring greater efficiencies, more targeted marketing, and more efficient use of limited funds internally. The shifts in context, as recognised by one alumni has meant that:

The relationship between some of the sponsors – because money's tight everywhere really – they're questioning the sponsorship ... So some of the big industries RDCs that have been involved with it ... they're saying ... what's in it for us an industry other than the bigger picture ... If we can't see the value on investing in this - If I'm a wool innovation or an MLA... every industry I've ever dealt with, leadership has always come as one of the emerging issues. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Wool)

Return on investment was considered in a number of ways by the various sponsors and partner organisations. With industry and organisational restructuring, tighter funding and new personnel in decision-making positions who have not been ARLF graduates, there is now a desire to see more evidence of impact and return on investment. In the Department of Health, the SES responsible for the sponsorship stated her expectations:

It was, you know, is this money that's necessary, or would this have happened anyway? How do you know?... because you can't actually measure something that didn't happen ...I'd be looking for someone that wanted to actively move forward ... And maybe moving up ranks or taking on other roles ... I would hope so, because I would think as a leader you've got to be out there talking to people. You can't do it on your own, so you've got to be the type of person that is willing to network in order to gain all sorts of insights and so on. (Interview 2016/17, Sponsor, Department of Health)

One government sponsor (SES) argued, as did others in government, that there is a greater need for good leadership in these rapidly changing and challenging contexts but that the level of investment relative to the income for any industry is relatively small:

Things will get a bit more difficult in the future because we haven't got any programs but around the department we've also helped, - I've been involved a couple of times on interviews ... But I like to think that if we're investing 50, 100, 150,000 dollars per cohort in sponsored positions ... I think the alumni is a vast untapped resource, and I'm not sure exactly how you best tap it. It's hard for the ARLF to anticipate what everyone does and what everyone needs, so it's hard for them to try and produce a course just in case someone wants it. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C4, Executive manager, Government)

Specialist industry groups are now more concerned about being able to see evidence of impact.

The person in charge of the MLA sponsorship was relatively new to the position but had heard 'They've (MLA ARLF alumni) all been really positive and I know a lot of people who have done

it outside of MLA and everyone is yes, very positive about the experience'. The recently appointed manager in charge of professional development and innovation identified issues for the MLA. While 'the verbal feedback that I get is very good' she was seeking to better utilise the graduates internally within the MLA:

Because we've been through some fairly serious reform in the industry and in the organisation. So, I started having a look at a lot of this [leadership development] money that was, from what I could establish, fairly tick box, yes it walked out the door and nothing ever came back again. Realised it was a fairly significant investment and we should really be doing something about that. We needed advocates for the industry and so I reached out to the ARLP graduates, who had come in at the same time as I and I started to talk about the new advocates – well, the new program, which would have been the year before last...I worked with the ARLF to do that. The ARLF supplied me with all the names and contact details for all the past scholars that we had. And, so yes, really started I suppose digging a bit deeper into that group and inviting them to advocacy workshops and events that we do and all those sorts of things, to actually try and tap into some of that talent that is already there that we don't have to necessarily retrain or any of those things. (Interview 2016/17, Executive manager, Sponsor, Meat/Livestock)

Because of limited funding, there is now an imperative to see greater alignment with organisational strategic planning:

They seem to create a very strong cohort amongst their groups and the actual recipients of the scholarship seem to be – and very well chosen ... but I would like greater input on selection as we're very much steering things a lot more in line with the meat industry's strategic plan, which is a five year plan ... a big part of my remit is to be able to identify that leadership ... I'd like to be able to have a little bit more control into streamlining them into the advocacy group and making sure that what their priorities are, those that are in line with not just the meat industry's strategic plan, but the MLA as well, which are reflective of each other, but they're not completely the same. (Interview 2016/17, Executive manager, Sponsor, Meat/Livestock)

Other sponsors within specific industries were considering how to better utilise the pool of ARLF alumni such as in rice (see case study below) by bringing them together as working groups within the organisation to consider strategies and problems.

An issue for some who have been both alumni and now involved in sponsorship is whether there is evidence of impact in the short and long term. One case put by an ex-government alumni and now RRR consultant across all agricultural sectors was:

Firstly, it's a values level, at values philosophy level. So if we're on alignment on our values and our philosophy then we understand that, yes, in tight times people want to cut but, fundamentally ... when we talk about leadership it is a long-term investment ... Long-term capability ... a whole range of stuff gets cut short-term because that's giving me nothing

tomorrow but if you don't sow the seed in the crop - in the ground - you won't get a crop in the future. So these guys in the wool industry, for example, are doing stuff now that was an investment back then ... so you're getting that return on your money today. Also, the investment is also relative to the overall output of an industry. We need good strong leaders in our industry ... so you've invested \$50,000 – let's say, in the turf industry of \$300 million? (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Wool)

Both surveys and interview data show that there was significant return of investment for the sponsor. 17 of the 21 respondents considered that the ALRF programs were effective or very effective with regard to building leadership capacity, 16 of 18 respondents considered that the programs led to networks across industries and other RRR sectors and 15 of 20 respondents considered the courses were relevant to RRR. At the personal level, 16 of 20 viewed the courses enhanced individual skills, and 19 of 22 respondents considered the programs met expectations moderately and 17 out of 21 considered them very effective and therefore a good return on investment. As one alumni, an agronomist in cohort 11, spoke from a research perspective. He is now in a position of leadership and decision making regarding the programs:

The program [ARLP] requires a considerable time investment from participants and financial investment from sponsors. The outcome of this high level of investment, in addition to significant personal skills development, is a committed network of leaders from across Australia that is a conduit and 'sounding board' for innovative ideas and potential solutions to problems. The length of the course also provides sufficient opportunity for the more subtle and possibly most powerful components of leadership to be elucidated. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C11, Cotton)

In the 2015 Kitchen table study 67.3% considered that the alumni as individuals have excellent return on investment for their time and money, and another 27.11% said return was good. This dropped with regard to how alumni perceived return on investment for sponsors, which 35.16% alumni considered was excellent and 35.3% considered was good. This drop can be explained in part by the comments repeated across all surveys over the past 10 years since 2008, that many alumni felt they could have greater connection back to sponsors, for example, through reporting, and therefore having possibly greater impact. Others were more positive with regard to their relationship with their sponsor organisations:

FRDC has done very well as I have been recognised locally, state wide and nationally for my role in the Rural and Regional community and industry and in a sense this justifies the initial investment. I have supported my sponsor through my membership on various boards and committees. (2015 Kitchen Table)

Only one of 20 respondents in the 2017 sponsor survey stated that they no longer were a sponsor as 'in house review of all capability investment led to programs being parked'.

6.5 Sponsor/alumni relationship

The relationship between the alumni and sponsor continues to emerge as one of concern for alumni and some sponsors, indicating a need for greater clarification when the partnership or scholarship is established regarding expectations from all stakeholders to contribute back to their organisation, industry and the public good:

I guess it's just how do they make sure people go back and actually make a difference in their industry or map out a little plan of what they're going to do and stick to it after the program is over. How does that happen. I know there's some good people who do that but you know yeah to someone who sort of holds them to a little bit of what they plan in the future. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Cotton)

Some felt there was a need for the alumni to be held more responsible for their individual plans that were made in their report at the end of the program with follow-up or refresher sessions.

There was significant input by the sponsors and partner organisations, which signalled that they saw an ongoing relationship with the ARLF and its role in RRR Australia. Sponsors and partners were most positive about the development of bespoke programs with the ARLF, as well as having the ARLF focus on particular target groups (see Figure 25).

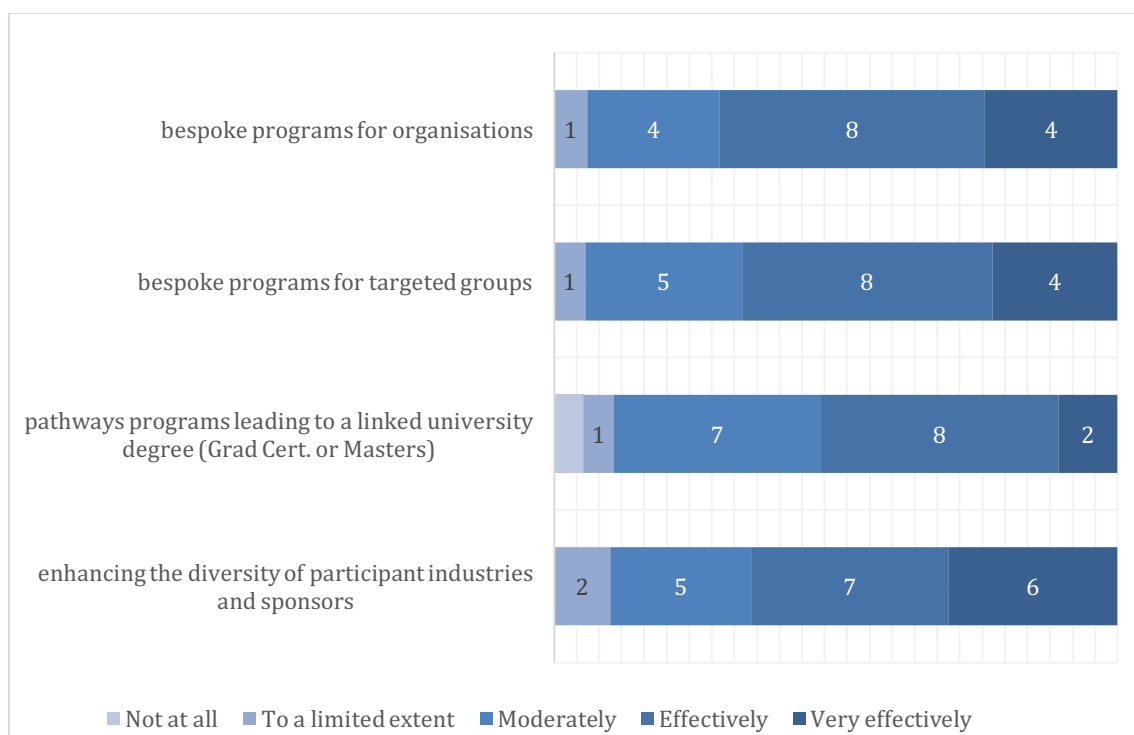


Figure 25

Rating various ways through which the ARLF's capacity addresses the needs of RRR Australia

At the same time, there were opinions expressed by sponsor and partner organisations regarding the need for the ARLF to consolidate its strengths and clarify its role prior to further expansion as reflected in these comments from the 2017 survey:

I think that the ARLF need to review how they do what they do currently before committing to additional targeted groups of leadership program participants.

Ensure that the organisation embodies the principles and values it teaches, from the board down. Provide tools for alumni to better connect.

Build on exposing course participants and graduates to more business and government leaders. Perhaps sponsor one off leadership breakfasts, lunches or dinners in both regional and metropolitan centres. Leadership Victoria does some things like this.

Also in the sponsor and partner organisation survey was a common theme around building more enduring relationships with sponsors, with suggestions about greater involvement in choice of candidate as well as a sign of ongoing program renewal.

There needs to be stronger more authentic relationships with sponsors (at the moment it feels like a 'tick and flick'), an integration of sponsors in deliberation and candidate choice and also some evidence of changes to the program - or at least evidence of research into what the rest of the world is doing / some 'new thinking.

Assist with how we ensure places available for our employees are determined in a fair and equitable way.

Potential sectors and occupations that sponsors suggested are central to RRR capacity building and who could be included in the programs:

- *People looking to transition from another industry into agriculture*
- *Health workers, including doctors, nurses and allied health*
- *Early-mid levels of government policy workers*
- *Participants in other parts of rural industries, banks, insurers, investors marketers*
- *Community members and organisations*
- *Everyone with the exclusion of white men over 55 years of age.*

One group identified by a number of sponsors who felt the ARLF could attract more into the program were the farmer producers:

I think for mine the difficult thing that I sort of see and I'd be interested in what others and what the foundation sort of see is that you know the time commitment these days for a farmer it's pretty serious... a small farmer to leave their business for that amount of time is difficult so I think ... I believe that's one of the reasons why we sort of find a little bit more difficult to attract a farmer versus other industry participants where their salary still gets paid while they're on the course. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Cotton)

Another considers building leadership from the ground up is critical for both authenticity and sustainability as there is a current 'dearth in rural leadership' (Interview 2016/17, Alumni/Staff ARLP C6, Government).

Finally, some felt there was an unrealistic expectation that all alumni will move into increasingly influential positions and also be long term advocates for RRR, and that the environment is always conducive to the type of leadership practices that have been developed by the ARLF program. All agree with one alumni and former government sponsor:

We also have to be realistic about what we're doing with the course and we're actually planting the seed. Now sometimes the environment's perfect and we get that return straight away and sometimes we've just got to wait for the environment to be right and when the environment's right, it actually starts growing and giving a harvest but not all planes take off at the same time and not all seeds will germinate. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C8, Cotton)

The way in which many thought about the ARLF was described by a manager (and not an alumni) responsible for the program in a sponsor organisation:

The point of doing these sorts of courses is to actually take the unpolished gem and have it polished, and that's where the investment benefit for us is to actually have someone who has the potential there and actually growing them out, and that way you're creating loyalty back to the organisation and the industry, and you're giving great professional development to an individual. So, it's a two-way advantage, everyone benefits. Hopefully with that professional development they get to then go off and become more successful than they would normally. They therefore sparing them up a little bit of time to do a bit more work back for industry. So, it's definitely a two-way street, and I'm very honest about that. But they're advocates that, I'm here and I'm going to give you all this training and I'm going to do all this stuff with you, but you're also going to give a bit of skin back to me.
(Interview 2016/17, Executive manager, Sponsor, Meat/Livestock)

What is clear is that these expectations for two-way exchange are possibly not clarified early in the program or carried through post-program.

6.6 Case study: Rice

The rice industry in Australia is a major export industry that generates around \$800 million revenue per annum. Rice is Australia's third largest cereal grain export, and the ninth largest agricultural export to 70 major international destinations including the Middle East, Japan and Hong Kong. Current challenges to the rice industry include water availability, the potential oversupply of Medium Grain in world markets, increased protectionism in Papua New Guinea due to proposed quota system to be implemented for PNG's domestic rice market (Annual Report, SunRice 2016). Issues confronting the industry are sustainability of irrigation, breeding rice that is high quality and water effluent protection and nutrition, improved technologies for harvesting and processing and product development and environmental impact. The rice industry has been a lead innovator with regard to biodiversity enhancement and greenhouse gas reduction strategies as well as efficient water usage. The Rice Environment Policy which demonstrates the industry's commitment to environmental sustainability and underpins the industry's Environmental Champions Program. Rice continues to be the favoured summer crop in mixed farming. Export-oriented food manufacturing businesses are challenged by spiralling electricity prices and potential taxes creating an uneven playing field.

The rice industry has been committed to leadership development over twenty years. The Rice R&D Committee (using rice industry R&D levies) sponsored with seven other stake-holders contributing between \$5000 - \$10000 each – Rice Extension, Coleambally Irrigation, Murray Irrigation, Murrumbidgee Irrigation, Murray Local Land Services, Riverina Local Land Services and Murray Darling Basin Authority. The Rice Growers Association (RGA) has recently developed with the ARLF a specialist program for Emerging Leaders in the Rice Industry that

commenced in April 2016. Mason, CEO of the Rice RDC responsible for the allocation of funds for the ARLF programs was a Nuffield scholarship holder funded by the RDC. The expectation of the RDC, in sponsoring the ARLF programs, the Nuffield and other scholarships, according to Mason is that it:

Wants people who will take our industry forward...in a broad sense—it might be an industry sponsorship but ... people get hung up on leading in the rice industry ... I think if they are leading in an irrigation company or in politics then as long as they are contributing to rural and regional Australia. Very narrow to think about a direct impact on a specific industry. The accepted view of the Board is that we] expect something back—we need people to understand politics of irrigation and water delivery, commodities ... World markets if on SunRice Board and so on. (Interview 2016/17, Executive Manager, Sponsor, RDC)

As the CEO of the RDC he is active across research, policy and production in the rice industry, and therefore provides an overview of the impact of ARLF graduates across all aspects of the industry.

I see impact all the time of the ARLP... right from the start...one graduate is CEO of Murray Irrigation which is the biggest private company in Australia and ... he makes a number of other community contributions down to the football club. Another ended up being on RRDC board and been a local mayor. Any number of guys have come through the system over time. it is not all attributable to one course ... but it set them on the path to leadership and gave them the skills they wanted to learn. (Interview 2016/17, Executive Manager, Sponsor, RDC)

The ARLF graduates are closely interconnected within and across key stakeholder industries. One member from Deniliquin was in ARLP Cohort 1 at aged 35. He was a member of the local shire council and mayor as well as being active in the RGA. He was also Director of Silica Resources Pty Ltd., which manufactures and distributes canned fruits, canned salmon, rice, vinegar, and other food products. From 1997-2011 he was Director of Ricegrowers Ltd. and prior to that he was Chairman of Rice Research Australia Pty Ltd. He retired from being a Director from the SunRice Board after 14 years. Other members of the Board include an ARLP alumnus, who is now CEO of Murray Irrigation.

Also an early ARLP graduate (cohort 7) is the current CEO of the ARLF. Luke had worked with the Meat and Livestock of Australia in Asia, running for example field days for 500 Thai farmers. Then he became the youngest livestock marketing coordinator and then moved to the RiceGrowers Association as assistant director, then executive director within a few months, by the age of 29. At this time, he was encouraged to apply for the ARLP. After 7 years, he was second in command of Murrumbidgee Irrigation, the largest private irrigation company in Australia that employed 200 people with a \$60 million turnover. From there he took on the role as the CEO of the National Farmers' Federation.

Luke considered he was recruited into these roles because he was a 'good communicator, valued relationships and was people focused'. While he considered 'knowing himself was his strength', the ARLP program meant 'while I could reflect on other people and strategy and whatever, I clearly hadn't spent time and didn't have the skill set and the wherewithal to reflect on self'. A major impact was to question his long-term aspirations to consider whether and how he would contribute more to the public good and community, both key reasons why he applied for the CEO position in the National Farmers Federation. As the CEO of RRDC commented: 'We get benefit from that even though he did the scholarship through us. Not all take that view. More for our community'.

Forbes is fairly new to the central executive of RGA as a graduate of the ARLP (Cohort 21). He is now seen to have significant input into rice policy and is interacting with other graduates such as current Deputy Chair of SunRice, where many ARLF graduates work.

SunRice is the leading Australian branded food business that re-established itself after the ten-year drought, a volatile Australian dollar and fluctuating global rice prices during the 2000s in global markets such as Japan, the Pacific and the Middle East making a \$13.1m profit. SunRice is a sponsor of the rice industry Emerging Leaders program (2010-16).

At the grassroots level, many of the ARLP graduates are farmers from three generation rice growers. For example, two ARLP graduates currently live in rural NSW (one an owner/director from cohort 2 and another a farmer from cohort 21). Both ranked the program as a 4 when asked about 'the extent to which you can attribute increased personal leadership efficacy to your ARLF program' and a 5 about whether the ARLP made them more effective leaders (1 being least and 5 being extensive).

The cohort 2 graduate from 1996 stated that the ARLP has contributed to 'my industry involvement at a high level for 20+ years' and listed how he had developed the Management Development Plan so that government recovered much less water from agriculture than was originally planned. He personally played a leadership role amongst a team of irrigated agricultural representatives that successfully lobbied for a more sensible outcome. He was also member of an industry council, board or committee member of a state or national farm lobby group and an active participant in industry committees and/or working groups at the state and national level building networks and undertaking policy work.

It was too recent for the younger farmer to have had a similar impact. He considered his scale of influence remained at the local level on a property and within the industry, although he was involved in environmental sustainability activities. The recent graduate said of the ARLP course: 'I think it was fantastic'—no need for improvement. Both were mentoring others, working on committees and boards advocating for rural and regional Australia, and considered they were undertaking community as well as organisational development.

These two respondents stated that they wanted to change in the future 'to grow our communities, through jobs' and to 'understand what the future may look like in a time extraordinary change and therefore prepare ourselves and our businesses to take advantage

of that change'. One felt his ability to influence change in their workplace, community and industry had not altered significantly as he 'already had some influence prior to the course (in 1996) whereas the younger graduate felt he

Had plenty of ability back then but I learnt that the more I knew, the less I knew. I could still bring about plenty of change but the change I delivered because of the course was much better change ... I have now had a lot more experience in influencing decision makers, understand how the process works, learnt to work on the inside, rather than just yell from the outside. (Sponsor Survey Report 2017)

These alumni were diversifying their crops (e.g. cotton and grain) which is part of the trend generally to have greater diversification in the agricultural industry to improve cash flow. In Mackay, for example, in 2015 there was a 'revolution' there are moves among sugar cane farmers considering the possibilities with rice crops. Farmacist, an agronomy business is growing the first winter-spring rice crop with eight cane growers.

An ARLF graduate and SunRice operations and technical services manager has been the public face of SunRice in developing rice in north Queensland areas, including the Burdekin 300km further north where they are testing out the possibilities and consider issues such as water management. A graduate from Cohort 21 of the ARLP, he works across key areas of rice production (water, government, farmbiz, industry) for six years providing a range of services to the rice industry and in areas of advocacy, governance, farmer engagement, R&D, media and communications. He also had 15 years of experience working on government regulation, engagement and political strategy which includes lobbying for policy change, navigating regulations, securing government funding and assisting farmers make business decisions. Both are building the rice and associated industries from the ground up.

The CEO of the RIRDC considered the ARLF was unique in its provision in that it addressed the needs from farmers through to CEOs

Some of our guys want a more hands-on experience—some have done Nuffield and then done the leadership course ... It is more a self-engaging process in Nuffield and not quite the teaching process of the ARLF. They come back with technical expertise and now they need to learn how to lead. They are complimentary programs. (Interview 2016/17, Executive Manager, RDC)

The RGA CEO stated: 'Because you've got growers who own the business, own SunRice and they need people around the board who understand the industry, that have got skill sets'. They sought to grow the industry from the inside.

And for a group of rice farmers who have actually achieved and navigated their way through the rise and fall of co-ops and changed from a co-op to the way they've got it structured without throwing their baby and the bathwater out, I attribute it to the fact that they've recognised that they need leadership and need programs.

As a NZ outsider, the recently appointed CEO RGA who is a graduate of the NZ Institute of Directors leadership course, which, as the ARLF was about 'leadership - in a very gentle but strong way, affirming deep values'. He was recruited because he was about 'people

development, systems and change management ... And so my own interest and passion has always been leadership and development of leadership'. The RGA, he considered has 'a great legacy, it's achieved a lot, it's got outstanding policy and it's got strong political recognition as an organisation, but they needed systems and a bit of structure behind the scenes'. He became aware of the ARLP and ELP as 'the two ex-presidents and many of our members have been through the program and speak very highly of it'. The RGA continued funding both because the ARLP is 'broad based leadership development focusing on the individual, allowing that person to develop their own understanding of who they are ... it takes a very broad view of what leadership is ... a very misunderstood term ... I think from what I can understand, this program brings that out and it's helping our people.

The RGA invest in the ARLP because:

Well at the ... centre executive and board this topic comes up ... we've decided to continue to support the program ... Because we see that our industry, the rice industry, has benefited from the many people who have attended ... to still have a role and an influence over the organisation ... This is something we need to support and are happy to continue to do so. And we see that as not only an investment in our industry but the Ag sector, that when you invest in the Ag sector, you're actually probably not only indirectly but directly nation building.

He cites a global corporate leadership workshop where the Australian CEO of a multinational stated: the biggest challenges facing Australia are 'leadership and leadership development.'

Emerging Rice Leaders

The RGA have with the ARLF developed the Emerging Rice Leaders Program as 'after the drought we made a special effort to fast track younger guys and girls back into the industry as we can see a leadership gap in the future as many had left'. This has been going for 10 years and 4 cohorts have completed. The aims are:

To develop a cohort of emerging leaders for succession planning and strategic contributions on boards, committees and in the rice industry and communities as a whole; to enhance the advocacy and governance capacity in the sector; and to develop self-aware, forward thinking strategic leaders who can build the industry and the region into the future. (Sponsor Survey Report 2017)

The basic premise of this program as stated is that 'Developing the ability to influence others and to contribute to the future success of the rice industry involves individual leaders learning about themselves and how they can work collaboratively with others. Participation in the Program will improve the participant's confidence and skills, which will benefit not only the rice industry but the region as a whole'. The program is designed for a maximum of 18 participants, which seeks to gain regional representation of all organisations supporting the rice industry including Local Land Services, irrigation companies, SunRice, and government organisations.

Because of a small rice crop last year, the RGA engaged with other industry stakeholders to be funding partners --the irrigation companies, local land services, the Murray Darling Basin Authority, all who had employees in the ARLP or ELP. The support for the ARLF programs

comes because there are multiple graduates in all the boards of the stakeholder industries—irrigation, rice, land – and ‘they speak highly of it’ (*Rachel). The reports Rachel, who is on staff at the RGA, gets back from other graduates are similar: ‘when you do speak to a lot of those people they do talk about how that has really... provided them with the confidence ... and the ability to step up’.

The aim of the ELP in Rice was, according to the RDC CEO, to create different networks and relationships based on shared interests of all stakeholders:

Not just concentrate on people in our neck of woods but get them to work in Murray Darling Basin Authority and State Water e.t.c. ... put them all together so that cohort will grow up together and have to work together over a long period of time. We are dependent on these other people’s decisions. This is already showing promise on linking to other parts of agriculture. Those organisations were happy to come on board...and then one of two exceptional people will want to do the full ARLP program. (Interview 2016/17, Executive Manager, Sponsor, RDC)

The process of selection of participants for the ELP is that 16 people are selected:

About half of those being individual grower members and then about another half being stakeholders in the industry who grow and have relationships ... mainly for networking and to understand the different perspectives.

The increased applications from across the seven RGA associations indicates the reputation of the program. Rachel commented that impact:

Varies a lot. Some people do talk about it but putting things in perspective for them is really helping them think about where they want to go for their life ... a younger rice grower... was quite active in the community in terms of agriculture policy and had a lot of views ... but was struggling to get it altogether ... He got a lot learning from some of the older growers in the region who had done the course years before ... he gained networking opportunities and the ability to ring up different people who he’s never met before who are doing things quite well, quite successfully. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ELP, Agriculture)

Even though the ELP has only had four cohorts go through, Mason already sees outcomes with the graduates ‘showing up in the RGA consistently around central executive table, putting their hands up at branches ... seen them take much greater interest in irrigation companies as these are core to how we operate’.

And I know as a group they (Emerging Leaders) have tried to stay connected in order to build that collegiate view of things. People like that tend to bounce off each other. We have been looking at what to do next and do with them to encourage them being together.

The RGA and RDC are also thinking on how to progress this greater interaction between related industries and strengthen what are emergent networks. There is a move within the RGA, as in other industry associations, after:

A discussion about how we've invested a bit of money in this program and we have been seen people stepping up into roles that kind of thing but we really should be trying to engage that group to think about some of the challenges facing the rice industry and to also reinvigorate that network. Perhaps a two-day forum prior to the conference with someone to facilitate it to do critical thinking about some of these issues.

The CEO of the RGA reiterated this idea and is seeking to implement this plan.

To actually try and get a forum to workshop some actions and directions which could feed into the following year's program...to use the alumni from those programs and feed into and try and encourage those attendees or the alumni to start doing something with what they've learnt ... and tap into organisations, get an inspirational speaker and probably run it over two or three days maybe. Get them to a central point, so that it doesn't affect people's jobs and what they're doing during the week. (Interview 2016/17, Executive Manager, Sponsor, RDC)

The CEO of the RGA did note that the course cohorts in ARLP do not do much together...the Nuffield has a state and national conference each year ... and for the ARLF this is the next step to reinvigorate them.

The professional development and research manager at RGA is herself an ARLF graduate with responsibility for the leadership programs. Undertaking the ELP course in 2014 led Rachel (RGA) 'to really think about what I was doing in my role [as a solicitor]'. She is now employed by the RGA responsible for the ELP. Her role is to work with the RGA central executive membership and the Board across five advocacy areas: water, farm business and productivity, natural resource management, community and building. She works with the executive as a researcher and with her legal expertise around policy outcomes and negotiates with government bodies and the peak industry body, such as National Farmers Federation.

Another course RGA are currently developing is a female focused leadership program. Rachel (ELP) is actively involved in that as well as setting up a women and leadership program in the rice industry and a geographically organised think tank of people across different areas to identity and strategise about issues. They went to 'the rice family':

So while it's not specifically leadership development, it will have a component of that. And hopefully, you know, the stuff that comes out of that, to feed it into the workshop that will follow on with the leadership program that we ran.

'SunRice have actually taken a very active position on that to actually change the balance of women in leadership and management' with its diversity inclusion strategy. This was developed because it is below its comparable organisations in baseline metrics gender diversity. Women in senior management across SunRice businesses increased to 24% up from

20% in 2015. They are working on mentoring, networking and development for women with the National Association of Women in Operations.

The CEO also was working on another initiative that was regionally based. 'The Peppermint Project' but it's more in partnership with an actual planning business in Deniliquin.

Ongoing Investment

The CEO Ricegrowers concluded that it was difficult to measure impact but they fund the ARLP and other leadership programs because:

Look something you mentioned earlier, you know, you're getting sort of relatively high performers and then kind of opening their eyes up to what's more. I would support that because then every single human being needs constant honing and polishing. I don't think the ARLF underestimates - they might not necessarily see the real benefits and often what they've achieved might not ever manifest to them, and it might never go down in history as being something that they've achieved. But I would go so far as to say there's a lot more happening than perhaps they even realise. (Interview 2016/17, Executive Manager, Sponsor, RDC)

The professional development manager stated that after feedback from participants and industry stakeholders who had engaged with the process of developing specialist programs or who had observed the ARLF program, that everyone was really impressed with the program and that's why we decided to stick with ARLF'. The selection of candidates is through the ARLF. The RDC as the primary funder are looking for:

The applicant to be able to demonstrate that they are committed to the rice industry in the future and that they will provide something back to the rice industry ... and whether they'll take up leadership roles I guess, as one of the main factors.

The RGA continues to reconsider the investment in the ARLF programs.

And I think there's a real willingness within the rice industry to try and develop leaders and that kind of thing; they see that as something that's really important. But yeah whether or not this is the right way to go about it (Ruth).

But as with the other sponsors, the ARLF is seen to be uniquely focused on leadership and community capacity building whereas the Nuffield, which they also fund, is 'very research and development orientated which is important for whereas the Australian Rural Leadership is more orientated towards I would say leadership but community and industry development'. The analogy of the rice industry group CEO felt was most appropriate to explain the work of the ARLF was:

When you plant a seed and water that seed, your goal and your dream is for that seed to grow into this beautiful plant and bear fruit. And fruit sometimes, you wouldn't have even

begun to think was possible. And I think that the leadership program is probably a bit like that. It's planting seeds with the hope that the whole of Australia and ultimately the world will benefit because people do make a difference. (Interview 2016/17, Executive Manager, Sponsor, RDC)

6.7 Conclusion

Despite increasingly constrained financial and competitive environments regionally, nationally and internationally there continues to be a strong commitment by long-term sponsors and partners to the ARLF programs. The programs are considered to complement other leadership programs that are also funded by these industry and government organisations because of its focus on leadership, on rural remote and regional Australia, its experiential pedagogy and intensive self-reflection with the focus on the individual and cohort and not the industry. Industry sponsors and partners are looking to be more strategic in both the selection and expectations as well as alignment of the graduates with their corporate goals. There are early moves to both call upon the expertise of the alumni within organisations to use as a group of critical thinkers who could inform policy and practice, and to develop programs that have greater diversity across industries in the group. There was throughout all the interviews and surveys a view expressed by both sponsors and partners that while there is recognition that not all graduates will move into influential positional leadership, that some will move out of RRR, that others will continue to work at the local level. But there is a view that they would like to see clarification of expectations, a plan of action or evidence of outcomes in some form in some form of payback by graduates so they did not just disappear.

7. Mobilising and engaging through networks

This section considers the extent to which networks established through the ARLF programs are manifested, maintained, mobilised and to what effect.

The 21st century has been depicted as one in which there is a need for a new set of capabilities in the work place—ffective, cognitive, communicative, cultural and economic. This century has also been described due to ICT and the impact of globalisation as the ‘network society’. The Internet is now the means by which people exchange ideas, provide personal support, offer expertise and maintain social contact. Networks are now considered to be central to social and economic mobility, intercultural understanding and social cohesion in terms of a sense of engagement and belonging. In what has become an online environment for many working and living in RRR Australia, working across a distance relies on a range of information and communication technologies. Individuals are nodes in dispersed and multiple networks not necessarily linked and through multimodal communication channels—face to face, video linkups, Facebook etc.

The evidence across all new (interviews and surveys) and extant data (Report 2008, Revelian Kitchen Table 2015) is that networking is important to bringing about change within communities, industries, organisations at all levels – locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Of the 139 who responded to the question as to where they have had opportunity to use leadership capacity since the ARLF program, 34 at a 5 and 48 at a 4 (where 5 is most) categorised building networks (see Figure 26). A mean score of 3.6 was calculated for participant’s responses to this question.

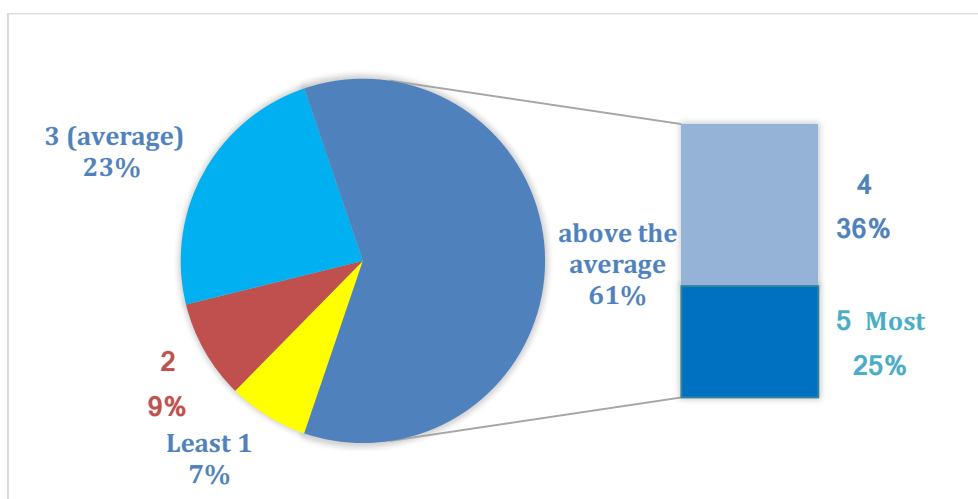


Figure 26

ARLF alumni rating of having opportunity to use leadership capacity for building networks since the ARLF program

The Urbis (2008, p. 83) saw as a priority the need to invest in the Graduate Network as 'pivotal'. Many of the alumni and sponsors refer to how the strength of networks is evident in other leadership programs e.g. Nuffield. Most alumni read the Newsletter and some have now accessed the new website.

Among current alumni the necessity to network is confirmed and indeed has become more important because of the complexity of problems confronting those on the ground. They liked networking as a key mechanism for bringing about change:

I think I had the core skills and the networks to bring about change. (Alumni survey)

The issue is more about the positioning of individual alumni in terms of the opportunities they have to mobilise networks effectively to bring about desired change. Many farmers on properties are geographically isolated, and rely on strong community, familial and localised industry related networks and less so professional networks that are cross-sectoral or at a national level.

Prior to doing the ARLP these were typical comments:

No confidence or knowledge to bring about change. I was primarily operating on-farm, with very little exposure to other networks. (Alumni survey)

Less informed / less of a framework to use in thinking strategically through change processes. Also not as aware of the power and impact of professional networks of trust to get effective change processes. (Alumni survey)

Limited by my lack of confidence and networks. (Alumni survey)

Again, gaining access to wider and professional networks was a theme of the post-program alumni responses. These respondents consider that the program meant they now had

More experience, a wider network and more seniority the opportunities to influence change is greater. (Alumni survey)

A great network I am sure I can tap into that. Although most is at the local level at present this is slowly changing as I reinvent myself. (Alumni survey)

Considerable ability. I am sought after for advice and involvement in my industry. I enjoy the challenges, and broad network of new people I confidently interact with. (Alumni survey)

Increased understanding of the process, politics, networks and personal relationships required to implement change? (Alumni survey)

Steady, long term focus and good networks? (Alumni survey)

Want to continue to grow valuable networks? (Alumni survey)

Without moving to a capital city career locations, leaders are seeking to preserve with existing capacity to mentor, skilling and network regional business with international opportunity to grow regional opportunities. (Alumni survey)

For those who remained in agriculture, there exists a strong bond within cohorts although taking up the option of meeting is reliant both on the cohort dynamic and also opportunity. An alumnus from Cohort 1 still meets up with cohort members 'as soon as we get back there, it's just like we haven't finished a conversation, we just get on with it'. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Cotton)

A key aspect of the ARLF alumni is the social networking of the cohort groups that relies on coincidental meetings and convergences in travel.

I don't necessarily keep up with my cohort, other than a couple of guys in Newcastle so when I'm in Newcastle we catch up with a drink and that's where ... [cannot decipher].... When we're doing the Northern Queensland stuff we just rang up the guys and went out to dinner. You know I run into people at the airport ... I'm not a social media person at all, I hate every form of it. but I have no problem ringing up any of the other 30 guys in the course now and just say hello and be back to where we ... there's an amazing bond you build on this. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C18, Banking)

Some referred to how as a cohort they tended not to contact others after three or four years, although nearly all continue to access the ARLF website, the new member portal, and read the newsletter.

7.1 Peer-to-peer professional networks: Critical friends and coaches

Within cohort groups there were strong bonds and connections made, often for a lifetime. Peer to peer networks within cohorts among alumni, usual dyads, were primarily used as sounding boards or critical friends—an important aspect of leadership. A typical response was:

I interact with a small number of fellow ARLP graduates from my and other cohorts on a regular basis. We discuss relevant emerging issues with regards to our specific industries and broader leadership matters. These discussions help form our individual approaches to issues. (Alumni survey 2017)

The literature refers to the significance of critical friends or coaches (generally paid consultants) in leadership in terms of improving decision-making and addressing ethical issues.

In terms of the day-to-day professional stuff, I know that there are issues that I need to discuss, or I need help or advice, I can pick up the phone to anyone who's done the ARLP, irrespective of whether they were in my cohort or not. Introduce myself ... and say, 'Look, I'm looking for some honest feedback or information,' and I will get it. And I've had two people contact me that way ... Or they'll pass me on to someone who can genuinely help. And because it's so broad, it can be anything from just about printing through to any sector in agriculture. I know doctors, I know bankers, I know leading government people, I know politicians, you know, all of that stuff. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C12, Government)

Critical friends as do coaches have less investment in an issue, provide clarification, ask difficult questions, provide a different perspective, provide emotional support, listen to and talk through strategies and offer advice. Peer-to-peer professional support based on trust cannot be underestimated and is often neglected in the leadership literature and professional development. A selection from the 139 alumni are indicative as to the significance of networks:

- I pay it forward and connect others
- Friendship support and guidance
- I am still in close contact with a number of participants from my cohort
- Short cuts and hacks to solving problems, engaging others for a cause.
- Catching up on things with participants helps remind me of the things I learned
- Previously - extensively - to promote farmers, fishers and natural resource managers to prepare for their future.
- To gain further insight and to qualify points of view
- Regular interaction, advice and mentoring
- Have kept in close contact with those that inspired me. Am keen to use new member portal to make links but it is not yet populated.
- Regularly draw on the ARLF network to help in decision making process on the direction we need to be taking in major issues
- Trusted sounding board. Even if I don't know a person but they are an ARLF Alumni it is like a trusted friend who I know will provide robust feedback
- Personal support and validation of ideas.
- Ideas forums, public speaking
- Keep others informed of relevant info and activities, touch base to discuss challenges and share ideas
- I have always used extensive networks and ARLP has expanded those networks to a more diverse group
- I use them when needed to do something. Recently I raised money for Cancer Research so used my networks to raise funds. (Alumni survey 2017)

There were also significant but fewer number of responses that stated alumni used the ARLF networks 'very little now,' 'not as much as I should', 'sometimes', 'occasionally', 'limited to a few' and 'socially'. Others who have little contact with ARLF still 'Google stalk' when they are meeting new people. 'If I do see that they are a graduate, that's always the first common ground I lead off with – 'oh, I see you did the ARLP – what course were you – how did you go in the Kimberley', it's that kind of ice-breaker'.

For others there have been more structured networking, particularly where there is a geographical concentration of alumni (see cotton case study). Individuals often take it on as their responsibility to maintain the connections of cohort groups.

I'm a bit of the glue for our cohort. I organised the catch-up for everyone this year. I catch up with probably only a handful, a couple that are based in Perth – Some of them I will provide advice. For example, one in my small cohort, the Kimberley group, he's developing a educational platform and I provide him advice around the areas of expertise that I have, and we have very frank conversations about how our personal life is going. It flits between personal, professional and those kind of frank conversations. In a more professional capacity, one of the ladies who started with us but graduated through course 22, she is based about 500 kilometres with me and I catch up with her on the phone probably every few months, and we were recently talking about an opportunity for organisations that we work for. Another one is based in Perth, I catch up with at various networking events, and I guess talk about the state of affairs and I guess that's more in the Women in Ag space. Others I catch up because I do a fair bit of travel across Australia and overseas, PNG...I'm catching up with a few next week when I'm in Melbourne. I'm a fairly avid networker, so I think I see opportunities – I connect. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C21, Consultant)

7.2 Industry networks

Some industries, due to their geographical concentration, have stronger and larger face to face networks e.g. cotton and rice.

In cotton you know we've got a number of growers and industry people that have done the course, there's sort of a strong network there as well as the cohort from the programs around the time I did it. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C2, Executive manager, Cotton)

As with the peer to peer networks, industry networks are strong.

I am a strong networker but mainly within my own industry? (Alumni survey)

I use my networks to promote and facilitate change in the industry that creates broad advantages. The effect is greater collaboration. (Alumni survey)

Leveraged broader industry networks in northern Australia - beef, mining, regional development regional women to high effect. (Alumni survey)

Built personal relationships with network to influence positive industry outcomes. (Alumni survey)

Developed new networks on a needs basis to address technical or professional needs. (Alumni survey)

Information and data, spread of intelligence and data, general networking. (Alumni survey)

Networks are used on an as needs basis to facilitate delivery of my industry's objectives. (Alumni survey)

7.3 Regional networks

There is a desire by many to meet with alumni in their regions but not necessarily their own cohort, as they feel they have had the same experience of the ARLP and this creates the bond and basis for trust.

I have changed roles and locations in the last 2 years and have quickly established my networks to effectively position my new employer as a key player in the region. (Alumni survey)

Mainly State based contact to keep in touch. Some contact with my year group. (Alumni survey)

The TRAILblazers have a similar desire to meet and many maintain connection online but:

Certainly haven't had time to get together, but I travel quite a lot with my Kakadu plum project with government, so I am lucky enough to catch up with the majority of them in Perth or in the Pilbara or South Australia. Wherever. I'm at the Tasting Australia or something, you know, I am good like that, and I've kept in contact with - it was sort of pre-Facebook excitement, but we've sort of set up a group and we keep in contact and stuff. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C23, Agriculture)

These networks are also used to position alumni and enhance their leadership nationally and internationally.

Still use the ARLN. For instance, in the current design and delivery of an international conference that will take place in Australia later this year. (Alumni survey)

Idea exchange, professional responses, shared learning, promotion of greater agriculture (not sector specific). (Alumni survey)

At a regional level of impact, the following alumni ARLP cohort 22 talks about how he understands his own capacity to bring about change.

My feeling is that the skills that I have developed have enabled me to enhance my networks, and through enhancing those networks and strengthening communication, allowing shared voice, and being able to have robust dialogue, are very critical. Because my focus is Northern Australia Development, I work with over 2,000 people across the north, 200 organisations. And my feeling is that the course has actually really enabled me to link with a whole range of people I probably wouldn't have linked with previously... To create those networks beyond outside of your central state. And most of us work in sectors. And we're probably pretty limited in those sectors, so you're either government bureaucrat, or you work in pork or sugar or ag, and while maybe ag isn't a good example, so maybe come from a sugar or a pork or a beef background. Now those guys probably don't communicate that regularly amongst themselves, and occasionally you're lucky to have sectoral, an industry based or a sectoral base sort of agenda setting exercise ... But how does ag actually engage with state government bureaucracy, or bureaucrats, or regional development, or banking for example, beyond the transactional relationships. And I suppose you know, while it's very difficult to really drill down on what is the evidence, my observation is that what it does to create insight and relationships and networks which are broad in just itself, and sectoral interest. So you know, those links have been I think for me really critical, and while it's pretty hard to establish an evidence, to say look that's resulted in that tangible outcome, I think they have been very valuable in understanding how all these - understanding of actually what works in this space so that there's a value-add and a shared agenda across those who are broadly not-engaged because of their sectoral alliances. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C22, Health)

7.4 Future thinking

While there is strength already existing in terms of peer to peer professional support, there are opportunities already arising from the member portal to expand professional networks through mentoring.

Provide a matched mentoring linkup for post program support. (Alumni survey)

Greater facilitation of post-graduation refresher training and networking. (Alumni survey)

I was not able to find a mentor/support network within my group. (Alumni survey)

It is at the regional level that there appears to be the greatest need to develop network connections.

It would be really lovely to know who else in my geographical area done it and you know there could be someone in the next office to be for all I know in another organisation but I wouldn't know and that's a shame because you know everyone who's been through it you're almost got a bit of DNA mixed up together ... I shouldn't blame the organisation, I could have done something about it but I haven't. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C18, Banking)

Just more active networking that's relevant to participants and rural issues. (Alumni survey 2017)

Perhaps more regional networking and support opportunities. (Alumni survey 2017)

I think the networking is to city based and each state should state a Network program. (Alumni survey 2017)

Some felt the need to engage across cohorts more and to have some enabling structure or process, such as an annual conference.

Aligning graduate networks more effectively along industry development lines to develop a common professional interest. Each year graduates are not formally introduced and have little knowledge of the real capacity of previous years graduate potential, network capacities are lost in the processes of life. ARLF is best placed to facilitate these communication and network introduction processes to the graduate networks. This requires a dedicated human resource to commence these functional networks as each years participants graduate into the ARLF Alumni. (Alumni survey 2017)

There is ongoing discussion among alumni, ARLF and sponsors about how to better use the ARLF alumni as a resource for building RRR capacity. The issue is the extent to which networking is left to individual leaders to exploit and develop and how this can be facilitated by the ARLF and the potential role the ARLF may play better utilising alumni networks to facilitate their capacity to enact change.

Seeing is believing and there needs so much more "getting people out" for experiences in our own alumni networks ... that could be beneficial/enriching? (Alumni survey 2017)

The Australian Rural Leaders Network was great but it died. A pity. (Alumni survey 2017)

That I think one of the things the organisation doesn't do so well is to link its alumni into the actual program ...I 'm coming from an Aboriginal perspective – my philosophy is the only way we can change some of the preconceived ideas of Indigenous Australia, is that we actually have to put Aboriginal people where they don't expect us to be. (Alumni survey 2017)

The organisation has not really focussed on the alumni, it's sort of a loose network and it hasn't actually been terribly active in actually thinking about how the alumni could actually

add value in terms of a policy agenda or building a broader civil society ... the traditional way the Foundation looked at it, is we will create them, they will go out to do something good. I actually think there's a broader responsibility... to develop and support engagement in civil society. But it does require structure and process. So I think there's individuals, but every individual is really busy ... but do you get the best bang for the buck by just letting them run free. (Interview 2016/17, Board)

This also raises the issues of personnel and resources for the ARLF.

The major blockers identified to more enhanced networking by the alumni are time, cost, mobility due to career changes and moving out of the agricultural sector. Interest in maintaining connections reduces if not lapses over time for many of the cohorts

Within the cohort there's a Facebook group so people can communicate that way through the group. And then the course council, we've had telephone conferences. We've got another one today. We have – there's a couple of girls from Adelaide who I've caught up with. And then last week or the week before, one of the guys from Townsville was in Adelaide for a conference. I went and had breakfast with him, just to catch up. And – but we met everyone in Darwin. So that was face to face. We met everyone in Darwin and then we were all in the Kimberley together. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni ARLP C23, Wine)

We networked in the first probably three years and then it stopped and I think it was just initially because we had such an intense shared experience it was quite important to stay in touch ... people have moved on with their lives...and the real intense communication probably died off. (Interview 2016/17, Alumni TRAILblazers 2010, Consultant)

Networks are shown here to be part of the everyday personal, professional and community life. Their value is best summed up by the comment from one alumnus that the ARLF networks are 'to organise, to inform, to seek advice, to have fun, to act as mentor by one'.

7.5 Conclusion

Impact can also be understood as influence and also engagement. Engagement can take the form of working collaboratively on a project, seeking or passing on information. There is significant social cohesion within cohorts and groups created through the experiential approach of the ARLF programs. Loose social networks such as those created by the ARLF organisation by cohort tend to produce small group networks structured as dyads or triads. There is significant activity initiated and occurring through these small groups of alumni because of their participation in the various ARLF programs that have a flow on effect but which are difficult to track. These small group connections also rely on a sense of purposeful activity around a common issue, information exchange or emotional support. These connections are sometimes infrequent and at other times intense, but both can have a strong impact on individual behaviours ideas and actions. It is unrealistic and not practical ongoing whole-of-group interaction by a large group of thirty of disparate and different individuals over time form particular cohorts. This is despite their shared commitment and interest in RRR.

This data illustrates through the stories of these alumni the flow on effects of network leadership on individuals as professionals and also on industries. There is potential for the development of more regionally based cross-sector networks being developed through the member portal, as this is not reliant on geographical proximity.

8. Implications of research for ARLF going forward

8.1 Development of evaluation framework

This retrospective study of the programs of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation (ARLF) considers the Foundation's capacity, performance and relevance historically and contemporaneously. The focus on the impact and influence of ARLF programs aims to inform strategic planning and provide a framework for program evaluation, expansion and the identification of new partnership and funding opportunities.

The evaluation framework is structured around the processes and priorities outlined in the vision, mission and values of the ARLF 2015-18 Strategic Plan together with the ARLF leadership philosophy and principles inform development of this framework:



Figure 27

Vision, mission and ARLF priorities and values from 2015-18 Strategic Plan

Our framework aimed to:

- Ensure credibility through an impartial, systematic and rigorous approach.
- Ensure transparency - generating an 'audit trail' of findings.
- Be efficient - building layers of data, seeking to reduce reporting burden on individuals.
- Ensure utility - building organisational learning through an iterative process and accessible reporting.
- Be incisive - through a focused methodology, which provides concise reporting to 'tell the story' of an organisation's current performance (MOPAN online.org).

There also needs to be a distinction made regarding the dual purposes of the evaluation.

1. Evaluation of impact and effectiveness (summative evaluation) that is more about accountability to Board, alumni and sponsors and which focuses on one-off and explicit outcomes.
2. Evaluation that is about improvement of practice and achieving specific aims of building leadership capacity (formative evaluation) that is ongoing.

Accountability to sponsors focuses on efficient use of resources within a timeframe and against indicators and the latter tends to focus on developing an account of what has happened and how that can be improved through storying. What is distinctive about the ARLF is its potential to create capacity to develop a pro-active network of individuals who also belong to other organisations and networks. At the same time, the distinctive nature of the ARLF programs on leadership creates issues for the ARLF.

1. The amorphous nature of leadership capacity building nationally as opposed to more focused (technical/research) professional development programs (cf. Nuffield) or more localised programs (e.g. Williamson Leadership in Victoria).
2. How to illustrate improvement when there are few measures of improvement when it cannot necessarily be tracked back to individuals already identified as leaders.
3. What constitutes good leadership is subjective and about perceptions regarding enhancing relationships and not fully invested in individual leaders.
4. Any individual leader is located in an organisational or community and context where what impacts on capacity growth (or decline) can relate to multiple factors.

An evaluation framework that also seeks to consider impact/influence/contribution of the ARLF as an organisation as well as improvement of their programs over time therefore is constrained by the above factors.

8.2 Evaluation framework

The framework provides a process by which to undertake a meta-evaluation of the various aspects of the ARLF and its programs. It indicates differing evaluation approaches to each aspect of the ARLF's stated aims in the Strategic Plan. It is a self-evaluation framework that the organisation can use to consider the achievement of its own objectives and those of its specific leadership development programs for RRR Australia. The framework provides a process that can include critical friends including alumni to inform the evaluation.

Given the aims and capacity of the ARLF, the framework seeks to address the following issues:

- **Relevance:** Does the ARLF have sufficient understanding of the needs and demands they face in the present, and may face in the future?
- **Efficiency:** Is the ARLF using their assets and comparative advantages to maximum effect in the present and are they prepared for the future?
- **Effectiveness:** Are ARLF's systems, planning and operations fit for purpose? Are they geared in terms of operations to deliver on their mandate?
- **Impact:** personal, organisational, industry, community.
- **Sustainability:** Is the ARLF delivering and demonstrating relevant and sustainable results in a cost-efficient way?
- **Return on Investment:** Is the ARLF able to provide evidence as to the personal, organisational, industry and community benefits (social, economic, cultural and political) for the investment made by individuals and sponsors?

(Betterevaluation.com)

The framework works at multiple levels to inform the overall planning process that will:

- Identify achievements and impact of individual alumni personally, professionally, within their community, organisation and the public domain;
- Evaluate the impact of each program relative to its objectives;
- Consider the effectiveness of the ARLF relative to its core mission.

Table 24
Evaluation framework questions

Questions	Indicators of impact	Data	Analysis
How does the individual recognise increased personal efficacy post-program?	Short-term (within 5 years post-program) Alumni self-evaluation of leadership efficacy Application for promotion Moves into a more senior position(s)	Short-term Exit self-reports on impact Individual plans for future leadership activities Write self-efficacy narratives (See template)	Short-term Annual evaluation of programs to include an impact section Analysis of exit reports and plans on completion of program
	Long-term (post-program 5-year intervals) Changes workplace Changes occupation Changes field of work/industry	Long-term Alumni impact survey five year intervals Annually identify a representative sample of individual exit plans from alumni to interview or request CV 1. 5 years earlier 2. 10 years earlier 3. 15 years earlier 4. 20 years earlier	Long-term Compare sample of exit plans with enacted leadership over 5, 10, 15 and 20 years Identify enabling and disabling factors with regard to self, personal life, occupation, location and industry

		Individual Alumni narratives highlighting trajectory of self-efficacy post program and what can be attributed to ARLF (after 5 years)	
How does the individual gauge their impact as a leader at different levels – industry, workplace and community, post-program (both short and long term)?	Short-term benefits identified for individual alumni: <i>Work</i> - How many alumni have sought and moved into positional leadership? - Observations by sponsors / partners of alumni <i>Industry</i> - Alumni presence in positional leadership in industry organisations - Board membership across rural and regional sectors <i>Community</i> - local committee membership - involvement in community organisations	Short-term Alumni impact section in annual survey Alumni (Kitchen Table) Individual reports on achievements from online profiles contributed by alumni or invited by ARLF Alumni impact survey (every five years) Sponsor/partner survey	Short-term Analysis of alumni responses as they self-report on their positional and informal leadership 5 years post-program Comparison between exit plans and leadership 5 years post-program of a sample across industry Identify exemplars from survey to interview

	Long-term Change in scope (of activities) and scale (local, regional, national, international) of alumni leadership <i>Workplace</i> - Retention of alumni in organisation - Evidence agency to bring about change <i>Industry</i> - Retention in industry sector - Positional leadership on national industry organisations <i>Community</i> - Location in rural region - Positional and informal leadership in community organisations	Long-term Alumni impact survey (every five years) Industry and sponsor impact survey (every five years)	Long-term Analysis of alumni responses as they self-report on their positional leadership at 5 yearly time intervals post-program Analysis of impact on individual leadership practice identifying perceived facilitators/barriers of enacting leadership
What is the evidence of leadership impact and change post-program within workplace, industry and community (short and long-term)?	Short-term Examples of - leadership of change in workplace, industry and community within 5 years post-program - examples of informal leadership - participation indicating greater diversity of industries	Short-term Exit self-reports /interviews on short-term plans Individual plans for future leadership activities Partner evaluations of specialist programs where available	Short-term Analysis of select sample of alumni exit plans against achievements 5 years out

	Long-term • leadership of change in workplace, industry and community within 10, 15 and 20 years post program • sponsor retention • new partnerships for specialist programs • wider range of specialist programs • external inquiries for expertise • alumni inquiries	Long-term Sponsor/ Partner Survey (every five years) Online contributions and updated profiles of alumni Projects undertaken in communities and identified through updated profiles of alumni on ARLF website and LEADnetwork Evaluations of industry specific programs (supplied by industry where exist) Industry focus group (comprising peak industry organisations and agri-businesses)	Long-term Analysis of select sample of alumni achievements at 10,15 and 20 years intervals Identify exemplars for vignettes of impact in workplace, industry and community Identify criteria of successful industry partnerships Identify potential new industry partnerships
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8.3 An organisation that lives its values

The evidence from the retrospective study that considered all stakeholder perspectives suggests the appropriate approach is one of organisational self-evaluation or assessment. This study is timely because of the relatively new CEO, need for further financial support and desire to upscale nationally and internationally. The data indicates a 'culture of readiness'.

8.3.1 Inside the organisation

The Board and ARLF personnel wish to use the results of organisational assessments to support their efforts in strategic management or organisational change and clarify roles and responsibilities as they are prepared; to work together and to commit the resources (people, time, money, and technology) needed to conduct the self- assessment and put in place systems to provide the information needed to complete the data collection and support the self-assessment.

8.3.2 Outside the organisation

Sponsors, other partner organisations, as well as alumni indicate they are willing to provide feedback to support internal change.

8.3.3 Developing a self-assessment matrix

Self-Assessment Matrix

Identify Major Performance Issues	Evidence?	Method	Action
	Is this a turning point? Stakeholder dis/satisfaction	SWOT analysis Kitchen table Analyse cohort reports, evaluations Compare costs ARLF programs relative to other leadership PD	

1. Environmental scan/scoping exercise (triennial) which takes into account political, social, economic, ecological, technological, stakeholder and legislative environment.
 - a. How is the economic, political and social context different
 - b. What are the needs of the stakeholders (sponsors, RDCs, professional organisations, prospective participants)
 - c. What is ARLF offering that is distinctive from other leadership development programs
 - d. What can the ARLF contribute to these stakeholder groups?
2. Undertake a SWOT analysis of the organisation. This should take into account:
 - Context and mission;
 - Current objectives:- relevant, responsible and doable;
 - Does organisational profile mirror the educational aims of the ARLF

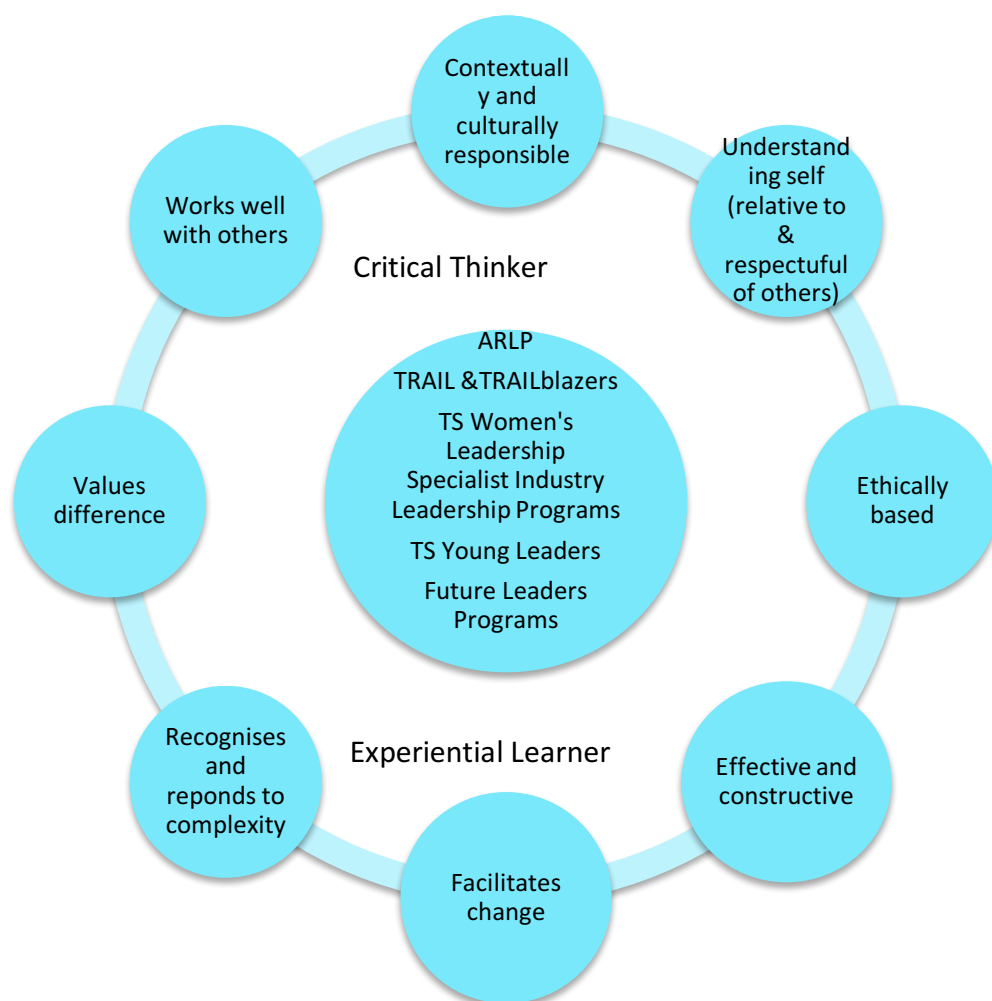


Figure 28 ARLF leadership development philosophy core principles

9. Conclusion

The broad objective of this retrospective study is to identify the influence of the ARLP and other Foundation programs upon the leadership of program graduates and consequently the impact of their leadership within RRR Australia over time. This report has recorded and analysed these achievements through a qualitative study including descriptive quantitative analysis with the intent of demonstrating how ARLF graduates contribute to:

- industry (including industry clusters such as RDC's) across sectors and within communities;
- community through voluntarism
- change processes and practices.

The study illustrates that leadership impact of the alumni of the ARLF programs needs to be understood broadly – leadership impact can be within organisations such as working in teams, developing programs and leading change. There are multiple indicators of impact at the organisational, industry and community level. These include patterns of retention within the rural sector, an industry or an organisation and membership of local committees, community organisations and industry or government boards. Career paths lead to movement between sectors, industries and organisations and often from rural into urban locations. The issue therefore is more about commitment to rural, regional and remote capacity building which may not change, or may take on a different form.

This study indicates that the ARLF continues to be the node in networks of alumni regardless of their location. There were significant examples and evidence of how ARLF alumni influence, for example, policymaking and enact their leadership through engaging with others as mentors or developing networks.

The evidence as presented confirms the body of available research that the association between individual leadership practices and organisational, industry and community outcomes is complex, tenuous and difficult to track least of all measure. It is equally difficult to claim attribution to an individual least of all a professional development program for changes in an organisation or community, a point with which many of the stakeholders agree.

The study certainly confirms the ARLF's position that leadership is a relational practice, context specific, and that the impact of leadership can be seen through a values and process driven approach. Certainly, there is evidence of distributed leadership across organisation, industry and community networks that usually involves multiple stakeholders and teamwork.

It needs to be recognised that survey and interview data in this study is both self-reported and also the result of self-selection of participants, and this could skew the results more positively towards the ARLF because of the nature of the questions e.g. what impact did they have. Those less likely to feel they have not had an impact may not respond.

Furthermore, by selecting particular individuals who have already displayed leadership in some form, there is a greater likelihood that the learned aspects of leadership derived from any leadership program are more likely to become embedded in that individual's ways of seeing the world and leading where opportunity arises.

Impact on individual leaders

The study indicates that the ARLF programs are fit for purpose in terms of building the leadership capacity of the selected individual leaders. For the respondents in this study and prior studies and evaluations, the ARLF programs have had a significant if not life changing effect. There was overwhelming agreement as to the quality of the program in terms of individual self and leadership development and its long-term impact on their lives and careers.

Preparing leaders for such complexity and uncertainty and having them realise the significance of how they need to understand and respond to a constantly changing context is in itself a major achievement. What this study shows is that leadership is a relational practice and that one cannot attribute, as all stakeholders have recognised, a particular 'change' to an individual as within organisations, communities, and industries as there are multiple inter-related factors at work.

Despite these qualifications, this study as with previous ARLF reports (2008, 2003), shows that the greatest impact of the course is on the individual in terms of their own self-confidence and self-awareness, which other research indicates is where leadership development has to begin. While many but not all ARLP graduates referred to it as a transformative experience, they also recognised the ARLF philosophy that leadership occurs in different ways and in different circumstances depending on position, and they came to respect the range of leadership practices. Nearly all participants have in all extant and recent studies agreed that the ARLP focus on experiential learning and critical reflection led them to re-evaluate their values and leadership behaviours and clarify their sense of priorities at work and in their life. For most it enhanced many of their leadership capabilities – this included learning about how to undertake organisational change, leading as emotional management work, improved communication, being more sensitive to issues around gender and indigeneity, building intergenerational capacity through teams, leading from within rather than from in front, being more self-reflective and open to others ideas and less competitive, as well as being prepared to admit failure.

Impact on rural regional and remote Australia and the public good

There was a clear and overt commitment expressed by the respondents and interviewees to work for change in rural, regional and remote Australia using available resources, capacities and relationships. Again, the alumnis' aspirations for the future were about ongoing capacity building including striving to bring in longer term planning in terms of infrastructure and community assets, investing in local community education, increased collaboration across local and regional organisations.

There is a desire for more regional collaborative efforts on common issues, both industry and cross-sector based as can be seen from the aspirations of the respondents in answer to the question where they would like to focus their future change agency (See Appendix 7).

Impact on industry and workplaces

Many of the ARLF alumni are now in key leadership positions across the rural sector but also in national and state organisations where they can be advocates for the rural sector. For some there have been transformational changes and they are now in highly influential positions. A majority of alumni indicated that since completing their program they had taken on an industry leadership role and that as a result of the ARLF program they were more effective in these roles. Furthermore, their sphere of influence had scaled up to national and international levels. But there were varied opportunities depending on industry and place. Many alumni found they were blocked because their leadership practices were no longer aligned with that of their organisation or industry and so they left, often to become self-employed.

The self-reporting of individuals and observations of others indicates that graduates returned to their positions in organisations renewed with a new sense of purpose and commitment to leadership principles of the ARLF and to the rural sector. Changes in their personal stance and leadership practice were evident to others. Such changes included being more sensitive to issues around gender and indigeneity, building intergenerational capacity through teams, leading from within rather than from in front, being more self-reflective and open to others ideas and less competitive, as well as being prepared to admit failure.

There was a trend evident in the responses of all stakeholders towards working towards the cross-sectoral issue of environmental sustainability. Across the RRR sector one gains a sense that some industries are undergoing a period of significant crisis e.g. dairy.

Some industries are initiating their own in-house capacity building and leadership programs drawing on ARLF alumni (Meat and Livestock and also Rice industries).

Community and volunteer work

Studies indicate that community and volunteer work produce significant social, cultural and economic benefits to regions. It is therefore a mistake to assume that positional leadership has greater social, economic and political value. It was also evident that women undertake more voluntary work.

It is clear that among the alumni respondents that there is an enduring commitment to broader social justice in rural and regional Australia and this is evident in the extent and nature of voluntary work undertaken by alumni. Data shows greater voluntarism in the more remote communities where there are fewer community resources. There was overt awareness and commitment that was profoundly to do with the ARLF program regarding Indigenous and disadvantaged members of community. An untapped resource with regard to community

capacity building and potential opportunity for ARLF is in the field of the arts and sports, particularly in the TS region.

The TS case study

This case study illustrates how a leadership program can advance the development of communities and a region through its alignment with regional policy and planning in order to build local community capacity by investing in individual leaders. Community development for Indigenous people is about investing in bottom-up leadership and ownership of change. The positional leadership of ALRP alumni within the Torres Strait Regional Authority has facilitated improving governance but also produced enabling policies and planning frameworks. The negotiated specialist TS leadership programs have been appropriately revised and adapted.

Sponsors

The sponsor organisations (RDCs) and industry organisations consider the ARLF offers a distinctive set of programs which are of high quality. While they may not be able to measure financially the benefits of this investment for the organisation, most sponsors agreed with the alumni that while the greatest benefit is for the individual, they also considered that this has long term and wider benefits to the organisation, the industry and RRR communities. The RDCs are under pressure regarding government funding. A few are questioning long term sponsorship due to constrained finances and considering whether to invest with in house professional development for more staff. Long-term sponsors in industries such as rice and cotton are committed to continuing funding to the ARLP. There is an increasing need among existing partners for short term specialist programs as part of the wider suite of leadership development they undertake. These are shown to have equivalent impact on alumni leadership practice at least in the short term and are a resource which can be capitalised on within organisations and industries.

Networks

The greatest sense of cohesion derived from the ARLF curriculum and pedagogy based on cohorts and intensive group sessions. From this, the most enduring aspect of the ARLP program over time are the networks that were developed and sustained between small clusters or groups of individuals who, while not necessarily having similar interests or politics, shared a high level of trust and respect for different perspectives and the capacity to offer fair and open advice. There is little connection made between the cohorts in each program other than individuals seeking to gain assistance from someone with particular expertise or at events from the ARLF or on the website. Consequently, people identify more with their cohort than the ARLF. Many of the alumni expressed a desire to have the opportunity to 'give back' to the ARLF and their sponsors. But the networks that are formed are important in terms of how they have serial effects over time when sustained. Networks provide the type of coaching and affective support that is critical to well informed and ethical leadership work whether in organisations or in communities. This cannot be underestimated. All stakeholders agreed that ARLF network remains as a largely untapped resource.

Changed processes and practices

The analysis indicated that most alumni were committed to social economic and environmental change that would benefit RRR Australia generally. Alumni utilised a range of strategies and forums to do this including lobbying government, publicity, or even changing jobs.

The vast majority had taken on a leadership, either a positional or informal role, since the program which provided them with opportunities to enact their leadership practice. The case studies and responses indicated how leadership practices were context specific and how context (industry, location, organisational position) limited or provided opportunities for individuals to undertake change work. The majority believed they had contributed to bringing about positive change whenever possible as part of leading teams. The individual leaders mobilised networks and used them to build capacity in their organisations, communities and life.

The study indicates that leadership capacity has in most instances been enhanced by ARLF programs. Attribution regarding capacity over time is difficult, as individuals grow and develop new skills and capacities through experience. Likewise, attribution of change to individuals over time is complex. While sponsors were not prepared to attribute a specific outcome to the ARLF programs, each could attribute to individual alumni an idea, setting up a process, forming a network, leading a community group, lobbying a politician, writing a policy etc. Individual alumni have been able attribute to specific courses certain aspects of leadership that they continue to call upon over time such as considering the big picture, reflection on practice, raising ethical issues, and preparedness to listen and to step back rather forward. Most of the respondents agreed that their leadership practices were enhanced by the ARLF and that the program had contributed to them being more effective leaders in their organisations, communities and industry.

9.1 ARLF philosophy of leadership

The eight principles of the ARLF philosophy of leadership that are embedded across the programs, as well as the focus on the experiential and self-reflection, were perhaps before their time in the 1990s as it drew from research that was critical of the hero leader and of leadership as an inherent set of skills with which some individuals are, and by default, others are not, endowed. The critical relational perspective that recognizes the significance of context, culture, opportunity and that leadership is constituted in relation to others is now mainstream in both the leadership and change management literature which recognizes complexity, uncertainty and the need to develop resilience.

What we can state is that the ARLF programs significantly developed and enhanced particular leadership capacities, which were then used to better manage or initiate change within their organisations or communities. For some, the principles espoused by the ARLF philosophy are

enacted daily or called upon at particular times over the graduate's life span. The major impact of the program was to shift focus from themselves as hero leaders towards the importance of recognition of others' expertise, the need to create common ground from which to move forward, while respecting and recognising others views and values even though they may be different. We can say that individuals had a perception that they had impact that was in many instances confirmed by colleagues. Whether any changes or impact is enduring or how it can be measured cannot be ascertained other than through self-reporting.

Diversity

A major theme arising from the survey and interview data is the issue of diversity. All considered that the diversity of experiences and industries in the cohort groups of the ARLP was a key strength of the course. Some rural agribusinesses are working to develop a leadership base within their organisations drawing from a range of occupational backgrounds that are in rural communities. Yet the ARLP program, for example, does not reflect a wide representation including the various public-sector services in health, education, police who are significant contributors in rural, regional and remote community capacity building.

Real and evident concern by all stakeholders was for the need to get greater diversity and recognition of contribution of women. Many noted and commended the ARLF for the courses becoming more inclusive of women and Indigenous participants through targeted recruitment and sponsorship over time. A key impact on individual alumni was their raised awareness of the issues regarding gender and race within RRR Australia. At the same time, the focus groups and interviews acknowledged that within the agricultural sector and associated industries and organisations, that gender equity was still considered to be a major issue when it came to positional leadership, a pattern that is evident across executive management in Australia generally. The RIRDC Ealy report (2008) *Leading the Way* considered factors outside the programs which impact on why women are not (as could be expected) given the investment in 'equipping women with leadership knowledge and skills'. Ealy's (2008) study of 200 rural women as others (e.g. Blackmore 2010) argue that while increasing the supply of capable women leaders is now occurring and is the focus of policy, there is little discussion around demand for this talent pool. Recently, there is more consideration regarding the role of unconscious bias. The ARLF is effective in leadership development for women, but this study indicates that some industries are not as prepared or able to recruit. Positional leadership of women is also a major issue for the Torres Strait region which is a traditional more patriarchal society and where gender reform is incremental and slow, but evident as indicated in the case study.

Finally, it is evident that there is little diversity around NESB background and that the ARLF participants are from a mono-cultural background with little linguistic diversity. While this represents the demographic of most RRR communities, there is potential around early leadership development here.

These factors are intergenerational issues, one where a rural leadership program such as the ARLF can have significant further impact. There is now significant empirical evidence that

shows that diversity of people, opinions and expertise in leadership positions, particularly on Boards, produces more effective decision-making.

9.2 Summary

The quality of the ARLF programs cannot be disputed nor can its impact on individual leaders. This study shows that the alumni of the ARLF courses are in positional and informal leadership positions across major multinational agribusinesses and in local and regional communities. Their capacity to enact change from their location and position, whether in government or in a family property, is enhanced by the ARLF programs. The stakeholders including government sponsors consider there is significant personal return on investment, but there is also evidence indicating return on investment in agri-businesses, rural, regional and remote communities through the dispersed leadership of ARLF alumni.

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics approvals

Human Research Ethics

Deakin Research Integrity
Burwood Campus
Postal: 221 Burwood Highway
Burwood Victoria 3125 Australia
Telephone 03 9251 7123
research-ethics@deakin.edu.au



Memorandum

To: Prof Jillian Blackmore
School of Education
B

cc:

From: Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (DUHREC)

Date: 15 December, 2016

Subject: 2016-366
Australian Rural Leadership Foundation - Torres Strait

Please quote this project number in all future communications

DUHREC considered the application for this project at its meeting held on 12/12/2016 and found it to comply with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

DUHREC has granted approval for Prof Jillian Blackmore, School of Education, to undertake this project from 15/12/2016 to 15/12/2020.

The approval given by the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee is given only for the project and for the period as stated in the approval. It is your responsibility to contact the Human Research Ethics Unit immediately should any of the following occur:

- Serious or unexpected adverse effects on the participants
- Any proposed changes in the protocol, including extensions of time.
- Any events which might affect the continuing ethical acceptability of the project.
- The project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
- Modifications are requested by other HRECs.

In addition you will be required to report on the progress of your project at least once every year and at the conclusion of the project. Failure to report as required will result in suspension of your approval to proceed with the project.

DUHREC may need to audit this project as part of the requirements for monitoring set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

Human Research Ethics Unit
research-ethics@deakin.edu.au
Telephone: 03 9251 7123

Appendix 2: Ethics approvals

Human Ethics Advisory Group



Faculty of Arts and Education
Geelong Waurn Ponds Campus
Postal: Locked Bag 20000,
Geelong 3220, Victoria, Australia
Telephone: 03 5227 2368
Facsimile: 03 5227 2260
Email: kyliek@deakin.edu.au

Memorandum

To: Prof Jillian Blackmore, A/Prof Andrea Gallant,
Dr Julie Rowlands, Dr Mark Rahimi & Dr Shirley Spiteri
School of Education

cc:

From: Faculty of Arts & Education Human Ethics Advisory Group (HEAG)

Date: 03 October, 2016

Subject: HAE-16-158
Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Program

Please quote this project number in all future communications

The modification to this project, submitted on 28/09/2016 has been approved by the Human Ethics Advisory Group on 3/10/2016.

Approval has been given for Prof Jillian Blackmore, A/Prof Andrea Gallant, Dr Julie Rowlands, Dr Mark Rahimi and Dr Shirley Spiteri, School of Education, to continue this project as modified to 13/09/2020.

The approval given by the Faculty HEAG is given only for the project and for the period as stated in the approval. It is your responsibility to contact the Faculty HEAG immediately should any of the following occur:

- Serious or unexpected adverse effects on the participants
- Any proposed changes in the protocol, including extensions of time.
- Any events which might affect the continuing ethical acceptability of the project.
- The project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
- Modifications are requested by other HRECs.

In addition you will be required to report on the progress of your project at least once every year and at the conclusion of the project. Failure to report as required will result in suspension of your approval to proceed with the project.

The Faculty HEAG and/or DUHREC may need to audit this project as part of the requirements for monitoring set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

Kylie Koukoudinas
HEAG Secretariat
Faculty of Arts and Education

Appendix 3: Plain language statements and consent forms

Dear ARFL Alumni

The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation has contracted Deakin University to undertake a research project that reviews ARLF leadership programs and, consequently, the impact of graduate leadership within regional and rural Australia over time.

This email is being forwarded to ARFL alumni with the intent of inviting you to participate in an online questionnaire prepared by and accessible only to the Deakin research team. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete and your input would be very much valued. The ARLF will not have any access to completed questionnaires and will not know which recipients have participated and which have not.

Prior to completing the questionnaire we are asking you to read the attached Plain Language Statement prepared by the Deakin research team so that you are fully informed about the project and your role as a participant. If you agree to participate, please click on the link below and complete the questionnaire. Please note that completion of the questionnaire means that you giving your consent to participate.

Some alumni have already contributed to the ARLF research project by participating in an interview and we appreciate the time and effort you have put in. We do not expect you to also participate in this survey but obviously we would be very appreciative if you do.

LINK TO ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE HERE

If you require further information, you can contact the principal researcher, Professor Jill Blackmore (email: jillian.blackmore@deakin.edu.au) or Dr Shirley Spiteri (email: s.spiteri@deakin.edu.au), Research Fellow.

Regards

Dr. Shirley Spiteri, on behalf of Professor Jill Blackmore, Associate Professor Andrea Gallant, Dr. Julie Rowlands and Dr. Mark Rahimi

Faculty of Arts and Education
Deakin University

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM



Plain Language Statement

Date: 8 March 2017

Full Project Title: Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Program

Principal Researcher: Professor Jill Blackmore

Associate Researcher(s): Associate Professor Andrea Gallant
Dr. Julie Rowlands
Dr. Mark Rahimi
Dr. Shirley Spiteri

Dear ARLF alumnus,

The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation has contracted Deakin University to undertake a study that identifies and evaluates the influence of the ARLP leadership program and, subsequently, the impact of graduates within regional and rural Australia over time. The outcomes of this research will be to assist the ARLF to develop and enhance regional and rural leadership programs aimed at initiating and facilitating change for the wider public good.

We are inviting you to participate in this project by completing an online questionnaire, which asks about the ARLP program you completed, benefits you derived from the program, the benefits to your organisation, community and industry groups, how your participation was funded, why you participated and some questions about you, to help interpret the information. It will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Please note that participation in this study is voluntary on an opt-in basis and completion of the questionnaire means that you giving your consent to participate. If you agree to participate please click the link provided in the email.

Approximately 1000 ARLF alumni are being invited to participate in this project by completing an online questionnaire. The ARLF will have no access to completed questionnaires and will not know which recipients have participated and which have not. Your relationship with ARLF and Deakin University will not be jeopardized if you decide not to participate.

The ethical aspects of this project are approved by a human ethics panel at Deakin University. If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:

The Manager, Ethics and Biosafety, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway,
Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 03 9251 7129, research-ethics@deakin.edu.au

Please quote project number HAE-16-158.

If you require further information or if you have any problems concerning this project, you can contact Dr. Shirley Spiteri, Research Fellow by phone on 03 5247 9606 or by email s.spiteri@deakin.edu.au

Thank you for your time.

Regards

Shirley Spiteri

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM



Plain Language Statement

Date: 31 January 2017

Full Project Title: Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Program

Principal Researcher: Professor Jill Blackmore

Associate Researcher(s): Associate Professor Andrea Gallant
Dr. Julie Rowlands
Dr. Mark Rahimi
Dr. Shirley Spiteri

Dear ARLF Partners

The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation has contracted Deakin University to undertake a study that identifies and evaluates the influence of the ARLF leadership program and, subsequently, the impact of graduates within regional and rural Australia over time.

The interview will be on [insert date and time] at the [TSRA room details]. We are requesting that you put one hour aside to participate. Interviews will include questions regarding how you understand leadership, how you view what constitutes 'success' with regard to a professional learning program, and what feedback, processes or data would you value that would lead to ongoing support.

A Torres Strait Islander who is also an alumnus and has been selected by the Torres Straits Regional Authority will accompany the researcher from Deakin University at interviews. Interviews will be audio taped and later transcribed. Pseudonyms will be used for reporting purposes. In other words, Deakin University researchers will not reveal your personal details and identity in any written reports or verbal presentations.

Interviews and transcripts will be stored in a password-protected file on the Deakin network for five years after the project is completed. Only the research team will have access to this data. The data will then be destroyed via secure means in accordance with Deakin record disposal policy.

Participation is voluntary and your relationship with ARLF and Deakin University will not be jeopardized if you decide not to participate.

If you agree to participate can you please complete the consent form below and forward to Dr. Shirley Spiteri.

Participants may withdraw from the project and request that any information they have supplied not be used providing this occurs prior to data analysis.

A human ethics panel at Deakin University approves the ethical aspects of this project. If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, then you may contact:

The Manager, Ethics and Biosafety, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway,
Burwood Victoria 3125, Telephone: 9251 7129, research-ethics@deakin.edu.au

Please quote project number 2016-366.

If you require further information, wish to withdraw your participation or if you have any problems concerning this project, you can contact Shirley Spiteri, Research Fellow by phone: 03 5247 9606 or email: s.spiteri@deakin.edu.au

Thank you for your time.

Regards

Dr. Shirley Spiteri,
Faculty of Arts and Education
Deakin University
Building ic, Room 3.115
75 Pigdons Road, Waurn Ponds
Victoria 3216



PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: Dr Shirley Spiteri

Consent Form

Date: 31 January 2017

Full Project Title: Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Program

Reference Number: 2016-366

I have read and I understand the attached Plain Language Statement.

I freely agree to participate in this project according to the conditions in the Plain Language Statement.

I have been given a copy of the Plain Language Statement and Consent Form to keep.

I agree to be audio taped and for the interview to be transcribed. The researcher has agreed not to reveal my identity and personal details, including where information about this project is published, or presented in any public form.

Participant's Name (printed)

Signature Date

Please email or mail this form to:

Dr. Shirley Spiteri,
Faculty of Arts and Education
Deakin University
Building ic, Room 3.115
75 Pigdons Road, Waurn Ponds
Victoria 3216

Email: s.spiteri@deakin.edu.au Phone: 03 5247 9606



PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

TO: *Dr Shirley Spiteri*

Withdrawal of Consent Form

(To be used for participants who wish to withdraw from the project)

Date: **xx xx xxxx**

Full Project Title: **Australian Rural Leadership Foundation Program**

Reference Number: **2016 -366**

I hereby wish to WITHDRAW my consent to participate in the above research project and understand that such withdrawal WILL NOT jeopardise my relationship with Deakin University and ARLF.

Participant's Name (printed)

Signature Date

Please mail or email this form to:

Dr. Shirley Spiteri,
Faculty of Arts and Education
Deakin University
Building ic, Room 3.115
Pigdons Road, Waurn Ponds
Victoria 3216

Phone: 03 5247 9606

Email: s.spiteri@deakin.edu.au

Appendix 4 Personal interviews and focus group interview questions

Group	Question
Graduates interviews	What program did you attend and when?
	How was your participation funded (do you know funding source/s)?
	How did the funding enable your participation and any resultant outreach?
	Why did you wish to participate in the ARLF?
	What personal benefits did you derive from the program? Give us an example of how you are doing things differently over the time you have been involved in the program?
	What are the short term benefits of being involved that you are aware of - to yourself, your organisation or the community?
	Did you leave the program with a plan as to what you were going to do differently?
	What resources (people, time, work) will you call upon?
	What supports do you need?
	In the longer term, how will you extend their influence e.g. networks.
	How do you think you have/will try and should interact with your local community (how do you define your local community?) (Community interaction, outreach, bringing in others, examples of collaboration, supporting colleagues' resilience)
	How do you think you have/will try and interact with your local community (how do you define your local community?)(Community interaction, outreach, bringing in others, examples of collaboration, supporting colleagues' resilience)
	Has your participation changed your thinking about your industry (name it...) and what you might do in your organisation? (contribution to industry, leadership, professional development, sustainable financials, environmental, advocacy for industry, engaging in policy making)
	Do you see yourself more prepared to engage with government and other NGO or business organisations i.e. collaborations etc
	Are you inclined to call on the alumni you have now met through the program? How?
	In what ways can you see yourself being involved in volunteer or other work if you have not done so before? If you have, what will be different? Wider public good(e.g. Community renewal, organisational renewal, organisational renewal, new programs, rural development and health and wellbeing, sense of collective responsibility, collective action leads to innovation)
	Inform policy (examples of being in consultation, on boards, policy texts).

	Benefits to organisation, community and industry groups?
	Have any of your family members become involved with one or more ARLF programs? Who and to what effect
Focus group	Individual workplace (how you have applied what you have learnt in your own workplace, how do you measure your own impact, have you seen your ideas or approaches being taken up elsewhere?)
	Local community (community interaction, outreach, bringing in others, examples of collaboration, supporting colleagues' resilience)
	Industry (contribution to industry, leadership, professional development, sustainable financials, environmental, advocacy for industry, engaging in policy making)
	Business (e.g. how alumni are feeding into relevant government and non-government organisations, how alumni are working collaboratively with other industries)
	Wider public good (e.g. community renewal, organisational renewal, new programs, rural development and health and wellbeing, sense of collective responsibility, collective action leads to innovation)
	Inform policy (examples of being in consultations, on boards, policy texts).
Impact and cost benefits: sponsors	How do you think we can understand (measure) the benefits /impact/ influence of the ARLF programs? Social, economic?
	Will you continue to sponsor the ARLF—why?
	What other leadership development programs have you funded?
	How do you compare the ARLF programs in terms of costs and outcomes relative to these?
Board members	Why did you wish to participate in the ARLF?
	How did you come to be a Board member?
	What program did you attend and when?
	What do you see the role entails?
	What expertise do you bring?
	What do you see the role of the ARLF is?
	Do you think it is successful in achieving its aims?
	How do you judge an organisation's /networks success? What criteria do you use?
	How do you know?
	What other evidence would you consider is important for you to have to facilitate the ARLF?

	What criteria do you use in judging effectiveness of a leadership program, given that it is difficult to link leadership directly to outcomes in a large organisation or network?
Partners/sponsors	Describe; - Your current position - Work of your organisation? - Industry?
	How did you come to be involved with ARLF? Have you personally or someone in your organisation undertaken a program with the ARLF?
	Why did your organisation decided to sponsor ARLF or ask the ARLF to develop a industry specific program?
	How did you judge the impact of the program, if it was the latter? Give examples? What type of evidence do you want in addition?
	How do you judge the success of the ARLF in general?
	What criteria do you use in judging effectiveness of a leadership program?

Appendix 5: Role of alumni in bringing about significant change within their industry

ARLF Principles	Examples of alumni roles in leading change within industry
Contextually and culturally responsible	Coordinated integrated health care for Aboriginal chronic disease response
	Facilitated links between community policy and on-ground service delivery through government role
	Provided greater certainty to irrigators within a region through role as chair of water association
	Facilitated localised education and support for young farmers in the region
Understanding self and respect of others	Achieved stronger communication skills within senior team through improved understanding
	Developed greater confidence in capacity for positive input through understanding of others' capabilities
	Induced collaboration through making others more aware of their skills and capacity to make a greater contribution
Ethically based	Led water reform in MDB through informed social and economic assessments, enhancing long-term sustainability
	Led campaign to achieve government buy-back of prime agricultural land from mining
	Contributed to governance reform achieving enhanced strategic decision-making
	Led an initiative to develop and negotiate with government a national Horticulture Code of Conduct, providing transparency for transactions between farmers and wholesalers
	Achieved more focused board meetings through assisting others to better appreciate fiduciary obligations and responsibilities

	Contributed to greater farm safety awareness through whole-of-community involvement
	Lobbied local and state governments in ethical international medical staff recruitment to consolidate retention of medical workforce in rural communities
	Led pilot programs to develop new ways of thinking and strategising for community based nature conservation
Effective and constructive	Facilitated cultural change leading to better recognition of the role of a specific organisation within industry and enhanced trust
	Adoption of CIS practices and actions for timely response to staff and families
	Through role as government industry advisory board member, led new decision-making process based on scientific evidence
	Led introduction of an industry QA process that lowered costs and achieved higher acceptance by external stakeholders
	Contributed to establishment of new organisation to facilitate collaboration and innovation in a previously under-represented industry through role as board member
	Developed regulatory changes for greater focus by growers through role as board member
	Facilitated greater cohesion and capacity to influence policy to achieve greater commercial outcomes for the industry through role as Chair of peak industry organisation
Facilitates change	Developed and extended link between science and industry through highly successful on-farm research
	Led improvement to business and international competitiveness by increasing harvest and haul
	Industry spokesperson for detailed research and submission to change food legislation

	Designed and implemented the restructure of a national industry program
	Member of industry and government panel that negotiated unbundling of water rights to allow trading and enhanced risk management
	Through various official roles, guides and supported development of an organisation to create a national lobbying voice for industry
	Drafted changes to water policy to help shepherd the recognition of state supplementary water licenses as a perpetual and compensable right
	Broadened the focus of an industry to bring about wider relevance through role as an advocate for change
	Achieved increased investment and policy development for rural health and health workforce through role as Chair of the board
	Made significant improvements for profitability of the industry through role as change instigator and leader
	Provided technical specialist advise to gain formal training skills recognition for industry workers
	Drove the creation and development of a forward-looking industry vision
	Created a funded national peak industry body through role as member of industry forum
Recognises and responds to complexity	Led the reform and operational of an industry body to achieve stable industry representation in a fractured environment
	Brought about broader acceptance and ownership of wider industry collaboration and diversity for successful strategic planning
	Led the streamlining and restructure of the organisation to respond to industry change through role as chair of the board

	Brought about significant reforms in drought, land clearing and land use conflict through role as policy advocate (meetings with and between government, farmers and media)
	Brokered the stabilisation and continuity of a government industry extension activity through role as chairing of strategic planning group
Values difference	Mentored professional developments to look beyond current thinking resulting in a highly successful writers festival
	Chaired a diverse and representative national industry conference committee, raising profile of event and increasing attendance and participant satisfaction
	Improved industry recognition of women as farmers with the first election of a female to a national industry body by peers
	Led the development of a proposal for improved social acceptance through an industry-community charter
Works with others	Chaired a successful restructure of Murray Diary operations – other sister organisations subsequently followed the model
	Chaired a peak industry body to drive cohesion and address issues of equity in quota allocation
	Led the thinking on CRC and MLA boards to drive a significant triple bottom line landscape change
	Established a new organisation to give voice to an industry sector through role as member of team
	Led a program to foster the leadership in others to bring about significant change in relationships and collective decision making
	Encouraged reforms, created cultural change and mentored next generation of leaders
	Achieved positive feelings of support amongst team by driving greater communication and awareness of the needs of others

Appendix 6: Alumni survey responses describing aims for future industry change

	Survey responses
Build Capacity	Australian Agriculture significantly lacks financial sophistication and the financial services sector lacks innovation in agricultural capital deployment. I would like to create change in this area that underwrites greater financial literacy, viability and therefore growth of agricultural development and technology
	Developing industry pillars
	Leadership in specific sector currently involved with commercial arrangements in wine grape growing and wine industry. Agri-chemical and market access issues
	Best practice redevelopments
	Introducing additional prioritised investment to the sector
	The area that I want to bring change is to reduce freight cost, reduce emissions, create better working conditions for road freight users, reduce the impact on local government roads. This change will be slow as the stakeholders have a large equity investment in their industry, and cost will be the driver for that chance to take place.
	The manufacturing industry is a very demanding workplace and I am working to continue the development of a leadership and personal development culture.
	Acceptance of the value of all opinions and input to resolve issues Improve communication in all aspects of my industry
	Collaborative structures for cross sector benefit and regional growth; recognising synergies between sectors and interest groups
	Opportunities for younger farmers to enter industry - too costly
	I would like to assist the pork industry to become more transparent about modern farming methods to rebuild trust with consumers and improve our industry's ability to attract and retain talent within production to build capacity and resilience in our workforce
	I want to expand the 'Grow our Own' partnership model for rural and regional workforce development by building capacity of other regions to build on the pilot my team have developed in the Western Riverina. I want an increased proportion of young people from regional Australia to be able to access higher education locally via the Cloud, and to pathway their career journey with local employers who have struggled to attract and retain graduates
	Productivity, succession, career development for staff, critical industry event input nationally, R&D focus nationally for industry
	More efficient IT systems at a regional and state level. Improve collaboration and collective goals at a local level
Community Benefit	Long term planning and building of assets or infrastructure in local community education within industry
	Continue the reform/change agenda in water to benefit society, environment and individuals
	Leadership - better skills, knowledge and capacity in decision making for the long term success of agri and rural and regional communities. More skilled people on boards
	I want Australians to consider the benefits of improving the lives of more even if that means some personal loss. I feel that we have become too self centred and are loosing the sense of looking out or each other which ahs made us a successful economy to date. I want greater willingness to be innovative
	Stronger linked regions across professions and industries. My focus is on building a health workforce in and for remote and rural areas
	I am a big advocate for continuous improvement at an industry and workplace level. On a community level it is more about supporting people and groups more effectively

Community Involvement	Holistic approach, transparency and accountability to Aboriginal Health and Community. Providing Cultural and Government balanced response to Cultural issues impacting Aboriginal Health clients, staff and management. Increase the number of Aboriginal identified and qualified senior management within the Health organisational structure, to manage Aboriginal Health issues appropriately
	How government, agency, industry involve community in decision making
	I would like the seafood industry to portray a more professional image and the community to support local seafood producers
	Regional development opportunities leveraging health and the high education sector IP skills to drive innovative and emerging industries in regional communities
	To assist my industry to be vibrant and successful
Diversity	The 'game changer' is women's leadership in Agri- industries and organisations
	Encouraging wider representational diversity and improved governance practices on committees and boards in the rural sector
	Greater participation by women in management of rural businesses
	Increased government recognition and funding in rural, regional and remote Australia
	Increase participation and recognition of under represented demographics in agriculture including young people and women
	Empower people to be innovative and think more positively about change
	Support diversity by being more inclusive and accepting of gender and cultural differences
	Empowering others to think about what can be achieved not what can't be changed
Education	Education about possibilities for the industry sector, engagement of farmers to trial and grow the crop, establishment of a co-operative, construction of an effective levy scheme for growers
	After ARLP, now changed to a mentoring role to enable others to facilitate process change
	Address and raise awareness of 'unconscious bias', esp. in ag organisations. Involve more younger generation of industry's people in decision-making positions
	I want to see woman encouraged to develop more value adding small business enterprises, I want to see the cooperation and resource sharing of community groups instead of empire building, I want to continue to support and expand a positive relationship with the local high school to get more kids at risk into work situations where they can be mentored and taught the basic principles of a strong work ethic
	Making greater in-roads into addressing food insecurity in Australia Ensuring food relief encompasses education as well as the provision of food and groceries
	Increased community understanding of our industry. Provision of strategic thought into programs to enhance industry profitability
	Awareness of an industry and the positive impacts it can have on the environment and communities. Greater capabilities for rural communities to manage change and dealing with government bodies and regulations
Environment	Renewable timber industry for Tasmania like Europe
	Irrigation water usage is the biggest topic in our area. I am engaged with a member owned company to facilitate actions to keep water for local agricultural use.
	I'm currently interested in cost shifting for local government and the suitability of this sector
	I want to improve people's understanding of the important role agriculture provides and how prime ag land should be protected from extractive industries destroying agricultural land
	Environment and climate change awareness, agri industry support, sustainability and development
	Attitudinal shifts about catchment management at the system level - specifically improving the understanding of causal relationships between management practices and natural resource condition/risk. Also, increasing the understanding and capacity for facilitating effective change at the community level
	Continue the industry's world leading animal welfare initiatives, decoupling industry as much as possible from the regulatory environment to a co-regulatory environment where possible

Health & Safety	Industry culture, safety culture, change leadership
International/Economic Development	Improving trade and market access for the agriculture sector, maintaining and improving Australia's international reputation for clean, green and high quality produce
	Individual behaviour change, industry-wide change, international change
	Systemic (whole of system transformative) change of food and agricultural at national and international level
	Without moving to a capital city career locations, leaders are seeking to preserve with existing capacity to mentor, skilling and network regional business with international opportunity to grow regional opportunities
Policy Change/Political	HECs style funding for individuals to upgrade truck licence. Introduce change to road contributions charges to farms wanting to value add their products on farm. Review of alcohol tax for breweries
	Decreasing red tape for our industry and getting more collaboration across Northern Australia, particularly in the beef industry, we are stronger working together
	For now I remained focus on maintaining property rights for cotton growers and irrigation entitlement holders, however, in the future I would like to be involved in a wider field of interest.
	Lead policy debates in agribusiness, improve women's representation at corporate board level
	Sustainability and social license to operate in fishing related activities
	Australian farmers policy effectiveness on big issues such as climate change social change
	In ag. sector (organic specific) - greater professional cohesion and impact and influence at fed political level - with requisite dilution of "idiot factor" and rent seeker elements impacting instead. In renewables sector similar to above
Other	Red meat and government service delivery
	I want to use my leadership skills in an industry/ region I have passion for and I would like to do more in agribusiness in future
	Impact on the industry in general and its place in society
	Land use, social cohesion, welfare delivery, industry assistance, general leadership
	Equality for ALL - retain common sense and respect

Appendix 7 ARLP Cohorts by Year

ARLP Cohorts	Year
1	1993 - 1994
2	1995 - 1996
3	1996 - 1997
4	1997 - 1998
5	1998 - 1999
6	1999 - 2000
7	2000 - 2001
8	2001 - 2002
9	2002 - 2003
10	2003 - 2004
11	2004 - 2005
12	2005 - 2006
13	2006 - 2007
14	2007 - 2008
15	2008 - 2009
16	2009 - 2010
17	2010 - 2011
18	2011 - 2012

19	2012 - 2013
20	2013 - 2014
21	2014 - 2015
22	2015 - 2016
23	2016 - 2017
24	2017 - 2018

Appendix 8: Word cloud for ‘most significant change in participants’, extracted from qualitative data analysis of Kitchen Table survey



Appendix 9: Word cloud for Kimberley, extracted from qualitative data analysis of Kitchen Table survey



Appendix 10: Industry by type of program: Survey respondents

	Cotton	Rice	Wool	Red meat	Poultry	Pork	Fish & seafood	Dairy	Sugar	Wine	Grain	Forestry	Other	Total
Graduate Certificate of Australian Rural Leadership	1	0	3	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	1	6
Australian Rural Leadership Program	17	3	11	28	2	4	2	8	5	8	20	5	16	88
TRAIL	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	2	7
Torres Strait Women's Program	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TRAILblazers	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	5
Industry tailored	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	1	3	3	0	1	7
Torres Strait Young Leaders' Program	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	20	3	13	31	2	7	3	9	6	11	24	5	20	105

Glossary

AALP - Australian Agribusiness Leadership Program

ARLF - Australian Rural Leadership Foundation

ARLP - Australian Rural Leadership Program

CCB - Community Capacity Building

CRDC - Cotton Research & Development Corporation

ELP - Rice Grower's Association - Emerging Leaders Program

NATSILP - National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leaders Program

MDBA – Murray Darling Basin Authority

MKS - Mura Kosker Sorority

MLA – Meat and Livestock Association

RGA - RiceGrowers' Association

RIRDC - Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation

RLP - RIRDC'S Rural Leaders Program

RRR - Rural, Regional and Remote Australia

SCRGSP - Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision

SES - Senior Executive Service

TRAIL - Training Rural Australians In Leadership (Emerging young Leaders)

TS - Torres Strait

TSRA - Torres Strait Regional Authority

TSYLP - Torres Strait Young Leaders Program

TSWLP - Torres Strait Women's Leadership Program

WFLP – Wine Future Leaders Program