Tuesday, 13 October 2026

Since joining the Diversity in Agriculture Leadership Program in 2018, AgriFutures Australia has backed women to build their leadership skills, confidence and experience. We remain committed to creating stronger pathways into leadership and decision-making roles across Australian agriculture.

Our original pledge was to:

"Continue to support women in agriculture to develop their leadership skills, experience and confidence and to work with our industry partners to facilitate their smooth transition into leadership roles including membership on our AgriFutures' Advisory Panels."

Today, this commitment is reflected in the AgriFutures Rural Women's Award and its alumni network, the AgriFutures Horizon Scholarship and our support for leadership and governance programs, including Australian Institute of Company Directors courses, the Nuffield Scholarship, the Australian Rural Leadership Program and the Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership Program. Through these programs, people build their leadership skills, grow their networks and take the next step in their industries and communities.

An independent impact assessment of the Rural Women's Award, covering the 2022 to 2025 cohorts, shows this investment is helping women lead. It drew on a survey of 115 alumni and interviews with alumni, state coordinators and AgriFutures staff. It found:

- 79% of alumni said the Award made them more confident to take on leadership roles
- 83% said it had a positive or very positive effect on their ability to take on leadership roles
- 40% said it helped them secure a board role
- 79% have worked with other alumni since taking part
- an estimated return of $6.49 for every $1 invested in the Award

Alumni also described other women in their communities stepping into business and leadership roles after seeing their success. Source: AgriFutures Rural Women's Award impact assessment, Ag Econ Australia (2026).

Our commitment goes beyond gender representation. Informed by a 2024 stakeholder mapping project exploring culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) organisations and networks, we are actively removing barriers to participation, improving the accessibility of our programs, and building stronger connections with communities that may have not traditionally taken part in our initiatives.

In 2026, AgriFutures has introduced *"Champion Her"*, a nomination pathway so people and organisations can encourage women with leadership potential to apply for the Rural Women's Award and Acceleration Grant. We are also delivering the Women on Agricultural Boards program with Australian Women in Agriculture, giving women board-ready training, mentoring and networking.

In 2026:

- 62% of AgriFutures Australia Board members are women
- 100% of our Executive are women, and we are proud to have a female Managing Director
- 31% of AgriFutures Australia Advisory Panel members are women (up from 28% in 2025)
- 45% of AgriFutures Australia Advisory Panel Chairs are women (up from 38% in 2025)
- 53% of participants in the Australian Institute of Company Directors Course and Foundations of Directorship Course were women

- 64% of current AgriFutures Horizon Scholars are women (up from 56% in 2025)
- 100% of AgriFutures Australia-sponsored Australian Rural Leadership Foundation graduates are women
- 33% of AgriFutures Australia-supported Marcus Oldham students are women
- 100% of Rural Women's Award Alumni State Chairs are women
- the Rural Women's Award alumni network has grown to 477 alumni (as at July 2025), with representation from all over Australia, rural and city based
- we are one of 22 partners supporting the 2026 NFF Diversity in Agriculture Leadership Program cohort of 12 women

Women also make up 77% of the current AgriFutures Australia workforce (60 of 77 staff at 30 June 2026).

Building on our original pledge, AgriFutures Australia pledges to keep opening doors for women to lead, govern and influence decisions across Australian agriculture. Over the next year we will:

- back women's leadership journeys by continuing to invest in the Rural Women's Award, the Horizon Scholarship and leadership and governance programs, and helping more women move into board and advisory roles
- strengthen our own Advisory Panels by reviewing how we recruit, support and appoint Panel members and Chairs, so our Panels better reflect the industries we serve, and report on our progress
- make our programs easier to reach by checking who is taking part and who isn't, including women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and acting on what we find
- measure what happens next by tracking and sharing the leadership roles, board appointments and connections that follow our programs, using the 2026 impact assessment as our starting point
- track and report the number of women working for AgriFutures Australia

AgriFutures Australia is proud to continue supporting the Diversity in Agriculture Leadership Program alongside organisations across agriculture, government, business and advocacy.

Together, we support the National Farmers' Federation's vision for Australian agriculture and recognise that diverse voices and equitable representation in decision making are important to the future of the industry.



Brianna Casey
Managing Director
AgriFutures Australia