

**INTRODUCING OUR  
PARTICIPANTS OF THE  
2019 NORTHERN MALLEE  
LEADERS PROGRAM**



**Louise Ackland**  
Colignan, Vic

Raised in the Wimmera Mallee, Louise completed her studies at La Trobe University in Melbourne and then began her career as a Secondary Teacher in rural areas including Mount Beauty and Red Cliffs.

Since the early 90's Louise and her husband have developed and managed large-scale horticulture properties including vineyards, stone fruit and citrus orchards, and nut plantations throughout Sunraysia, the Riverland and the Riverina.

Their two daughters have also gone on to build careers in the horticulture industry. Louise's skills lay in integrated management systems and quality assurance and she is incredibly passionate about advocating for strong representation for farmers and the horticulture industry.

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Women in Ag Vic Funded Place Recipient



**Gail Ahearn**  
Merbein, Vic

Gail's childhood was spent on a dry land farm at Powlett Plains, in central Victoria.

After completing her secondary schooling, Gail continued her studies at the Bendigo Institute of Technology which led to a career in administration.

After a ten-year break from the workforce to have a family, Gail returned to work in the education sector and completed a Diploma of University Administration, Bachelor of Business (HRM) and Cert IV in Workplace Training & Assessing.

Gail relocated from Bendigo to Sunraysia in 2002 to continue work in the education sector for a further 16 years and now currently works in administration in both a virtual and face to face environment.

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Rotary Clubs of Sunraysia  
Scholarship Recipient



**Eliza Allomes**  
Mildura, Vic

Eliza was born in Mildura where she completed a Bachelor of Accounting at La Trobe University and has worked in a local firm for the past 4 years.

Eliza got a taste for volunteering at university where she joined a group called Enactus that carried out community projects. Since then, Eliza has undertaken various roles within the Mildura Young Professionals Network, became a member of the Rotary Club of South Mildura and a Director of MADEC.

Eliza also enjoys learning about holistic approaches to managing stress in a professional environment, travelling and spending time with loved ones.

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**Linda Bennett**  
Mildura, Vic

Born and raised in Murrayville, Linda relocated to Mildura as an 18-year-old trainee nurse through the 'old' Mildura Base Hospital. She was also a fruit packer and home care worker. Linda has two adult daughters and will be celebrating 30 years of marriage later this year.

In 2010 Linda relocated to the Whitsunday's where she worked as a nurse's assistant in community care, during this time Linda completed a degree in social work and worked in Child Protection. Returning to Mildura in 2017, Linda commenced working with MASP where she is currently working with young people transitioning from out of home care to independence.

Linda is passionate about finding ways to support people who feel powerless to have a voice and ability to self-determine.

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**Paula Bond**  
Mildura, Vic

Paula Bond is an experienced operational and people leader with a career spanning 25 years in hospitality, retail and financial services across Australia and the United Kingdom.

Looking for a tree change and to reconnect with her regional roots, Paula and her family recently moved to Mildura from Sydney.

Paula has vast leadership experience and has led customer facing teams, networks of stakeholders and most recently national operational delivery in a large-scale financial services organisation. She thrives on sharing her knowledge and skills to grow and develop others and is keen to share her experience with the Mallee community.

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Mildura Deakin Rotary  
Scholarship Recipient



**Kim Brown**  
Mildura, Vic

Kim has lived in Mildura for most of her life and is married with two children.

After completing her schooling at Mildura Senior College, Kim commenced further studies at SuniTAFE, gaining a Cert II and III in Business Administration. Kim worked at SuniTAFE in Administration for the following 10 years before leaving in 2016 to begin a new chapter in her work life, taking on the role of employment consultant at WDEA Works. Kim has found that being an employment consultant is her absolute passion.

She loves helping her clients and really enjoys the rewards of changing people's lives and supporting them through their barriers to obtain gainful employment.

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**Melissa Castleman**  
Nichols Point, Vic

Melissa was born in Mildura and has lived here for most of her life apart from time spent living in Melbourne, Adelaide and travelling Australia and overseas.

Melissa completed a degree in Visual Arts at Mildura's La Trobe University and has worked at the Christie Centre for the past 12 years as a disability support worker and arts facilitator. Her work life has been varied though and even now in her current role, Melissa divides her time between ArtRageUs and Aroundagain.

Outside of her work, Melissa's interests are art, reading, gardening, playing ukulele, getting out in nature, especially kayaking and spending time with her partner Chris and their children Alice and Oscar.

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**Foundation**

Scholarship Recipient



**Ben Ezeabia**  
Mildura, Vic

Ben is a Nigerian. He studied Mechanical/Production Engineering in Enugu State University of Science and Technology, 1995.

Ben has a vast range of work experiences including: Training Maintenance Engineer in Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, Maintenance Supervisor in West African Portland Cement Company (Now Lafarge), Production Manager in Unilever Nigeria, Factory Manager in Reckitt Benckiser Nigeria, Head of Supply Chain in Orbit Chemical Industries Ltd Kenya, Plant Manager in Unilever Nigeria and Plant Manger Sesame Processing in Olam Nigeria.

In 2018, Ben moved to Australia, working in Olam Orchards Australia Carwarp as Plant Manager for Almond Processing. He is a member of the Diggerland Church at Red Cliffs.

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**Marissa Featherston**  
Gol Gol, NSW

A long-term employee at the Mildura Health Fund and a Senior Manager responsible for the Hospital and Medical Team and Audit Functions.

Marissa is a devoted mother of 3-year-old twins, and wife to Adam. She loves to experience new sights, tastes and experiences and has a passion for fitness and wellness. In her past, she has been a fitness instructor. Marissa believes personal development is forever evolving.

Marissa is originally from Broken Hill and from a farming background. This upbringing is the reason she likes to live sustainably and pass a more conscious way of living onto the next generations.

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**Parthee Gana**  
Mildura, Vic

A civil engineering professional, Parthee migrated to Australia from Sri Lanka in November 2011. He moved to Mildura in September 2014 to take up a position with Mildura Rural City Council as Technical Officer and his current role at council is now as Engineering Design Team Leader. Parthee has also completed a professional honours degree in Road Engineering and Construction at the University of Tasmania.

Parthee currently holds the position of Secretary of Sunraysia Indian Association Inc. (SIA) and actively participates in community activities that are organised by SIA. In his leisure time, Parthee plays cricket and badminton. Both Parthee and his wife have an interest in singing and dancing and have performed in several of their community events.

Parthee strongly believes that the NML Program provides an opportunity to connect to the community and is eager to grow in his understanding of how he can contribute to the community with positive change.

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NML Alumni Scholarship  
Recipient



Mildura Rural City Council



**David Gardner**  
Mildura, Vic

David was born in Berri, South Australia, but has spent the majority of his life in Mildura.

He completed a Bachelor of Commerce at La Trobe University Mildura and started work as a tax accountant for 5 years. He then expanded his accounting knowledge into management and finance accounting, working for the Mildura Rural City Council. David's current role is the financial controller of Southern Cross Farms, where his small background in agriculture has come in handy.

David and his wife Melissa welcomed their first child into their family in 2018. Along with sleepless nights, he enjoys catching up with mates, renovating (very slowly) and watching the cricket.

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**Gayle Guyomar**  
Koorlong, Vic

Gayle was raised in Nangiloc where she was educated at Nangiloc Primary and Mildura Technical School throughout the 1970's and 1980's. She has been married for 17 years within a modern family, combining his, hers and their children. Their eldest is 34 and youngest 14 years old.

Gayle comes from a family of community minded people - her grandparents were Nangiloc pioneers, committed to various boards and committee groups, and her mother a CWA Committee and Mildura Show Society committee member. Gayle feels that now is her time to act within Sunraysia.

Her work focus has been customer services, working with Mildura Fruit Juices Pty Ltd, 4 years; Mildura Independent Star, 7 years; and currently, Senior Customer Services Officer at Lower Murray Urban and Rural Water Corporation, 10 years.

From the NML Program Gayle wants to devote her time and intensity to a community project.

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**Angela Harvey**  
Mildura, Vic

Having lived and worked in Broken Hill for most of her life, Angela moved to the Sunraysia area two years ago after accepting a position in Dareton with Far West Local Health District. Now working with Sunraysia Community Health Services as Manager of the Family Violence Program, Angela is a Social Worker with a Masters degree in Social Work from Charles Sturt University.

Angela is mother of two boys, and, with her husband, has operated an air conditioning and home maintenance business for ten years.

Previous positions within the human services (25 years) include mental health, drug and alcohol, disabilities, child wellbeing and family violence.

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**James Jarvis**  
Red Cliffs, Vic

Originally from Sydney and then Goulburn NSW, James completed High School in Goulburn before studying at Australian National University in Canberra.

Afterward he spent several years at his parents family owned Park Newsagency, initially working part time and then full time, even helping to manage until it was sold to new owners. After trying a few things, he now he finds himself in the Mildura region where he has long had family ties and is looking to get into something more out of his comfort zone.

He currently volunteers at the Red Cliffs Community Resource Centre and is learning a great deal.

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Scholarship Recipient



**Jamuna Jackson**  
Mildura, Vic

Jamuna is from the minority Tamil people of Sri Lanka. In the late 1980s, civil war drove her to seek asylum in Australia. After a short stay in Melbourne, Mildura became her home. This was a big step for Jamuna, as she made the journey by herself.

Over the years she has had many interesting employment opportunities in education, retail, administration and community-service work.

Jamuna worships at Riveredge Church and God comes first in her life. It is important to Jamuna to help people from low socio-economic and migrant backgrounds, empowering the to live meaningful lives.

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NML Alumni Scholarship Recipient



**Jay Jeyakanthan**  
Mildura, Vic

Jay is an experienced civil engineer (BSc. Eng. Hons) and certified project manager (PMP and Prince 2) with a demonstrated history, working in the construction industry for more than fifteen years. He is a strong programme and project management professional with an MBA in Project Management.

Born in Sri Lanka, Jay migrated to Australia and has freshly relocated to Mildura to hold a vital position as a Team Leader for Infrastructure Development at Mildura Rural City Council (MRCC). Jay is looking forward to helping enhance the services of the Engineering Unit and in contributing to accomplish the vision of MRCC in making Mildura, the most liveable place.

He is a strong believer of understanding the community and feels that the NML Program will be invaluable to focus more on his assistance to this region.

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NMLP Pay-It-Forward 2018  
Scholarship Recipient



**Brenton Lewin**  
Mildura, Vic

Brenton was born and raised in Mildura but has also lived in Seymour and Melbourne.

He has been a member of the police force for the past 14 years, where he has performed a number of various roles.

In 2016 Brenton volunteered as a mentor for the New and Emerging Community Leadership Program. He is interested in sport and plays cricket for the Mildura Settlers Cricket Club.

Brenton is looking forward to the opportunity to develop community relationships and enhance his leadership skills, to be able to give something back to the community and drive change.

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Victorian Branch (Mallee Regional Group)  
Scholarship Recipient



**Cathy Monteleone**  
Merbein, Vic

Cathy has lived in Mildura most of her life where she attended St. Joseph's College Mildura. Since leaving school she has enjoyed working for large organisations in the financial sector.

Cathy has been studying accounting at La Trobe University Mildura and is currently the Finance Services Manager at Sunraysia Community Health Services. Cathy feels that being part of an organisation that continually gives back to the community is gratifying and rewarding.

In her spare time, Cathy enjoys cooking desserts, has travelled throughout Europe and is looking forward to exploring other parts of the world in the future.

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**Paul O'Neill**  
Mildura, Vic

Proceeding from a 15-year career in the international banking and finance sectors, Paul has drawn upon his successes as a business and investment analyst to apply these skills in an area that he is passionate about – disadvantaged communities.

Over the previous 12 years working for remote indigenous corporations, Paul has initiated strategies and delivered programs supporting self-sustainability and employment opportunities for indigenous members; increasing funding revenues, developed financial assistance programs, fostered networks and collaborations with NGO's, including Western Australian and Victorian Aboriginal bodies, Federal and State Government Departments and Philanthropic benefactors.

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**Kimberley Parker**  
Mildura, Vic

Kimberley was raised in Red Cliffs and still calls the Northern Mallee region her home.

Having recently completed a Certificate III in Childhood Education and Care, Kimberley hopes to work within the early childhood sector to create positive experiences for our local young people. Committed to developing her skills and self-confidence to maximise her opportunities, Kimberley is looking forward to the challenge of the 2019 Northern Mallee Leaders Program.

In her spare time, Kimberley enjoys dancing, singing and catching up with her friends, and is looking forward to the opportunity to learn more about our community and finding the best way for her to become involved.

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Scholarship Recipient



**Lucy Parr**  
Mildura, Vic

Lucy was born in Mildura in 1994 and has remained a resident of the Sunraysia region.

Following her secondary education at Mildura Senior College, Lucy went to La Trobe University in Mildura and completed a Bachelor of Human Services and Master of Social Work. Lucy commenced working in the Community Services Sector in 2015 within the Family Services program at Mallee Family Care. Lucy then moved into a specialist role at Mallee Sexual Assault Unit Inc. Mallee Domestic Violence Services (MSAU-MDVS) in 2017 which is a position Lucy still maintains and a career she is very passionate about.

In Lucy's spare time she enjoys spending time with her friends, her dog and going to the gym.

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**Nadia Teuma**  
Mildura, Vic

Nadia was born & raised in Mildura and following completion of VCE at St Joseph's College, she relocated to Adelaide and completed a Bachelor of Nursing degree at Flinders University. Nadia gained extensive experience in adult medical, surgical and oncology nursing and it was in Adelaide that she found her passion for working in the nursing management area.

Nadia relocated back to Mildura with her husband, working both at the Mildura Base Hospital as an Associate Nurse Unit Manager and with La Trobe University as a Clinical Educator. In 2018, a change in career with a community health focus lead Nadia to Sunraysia Community Health Services where she is currently working in the Preventative Health area.

Nadia has two beautiful girls, she is actively involved with their sporting activities, local netball and swimming clubs and enjoys spending family time by the river.

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**Sam White**  
Mildura, Vic

Sam grew up in Wollongong where he attended the University of Wollongong studying Electrical Engineering.

After graduating Sam moved to Mildura for a job as a Graduate Electrical Engineer with Cristal Mining in 2015 where he has spent the last 4 years working.

While not away at work Sam enjoys playing soccer and travelling and has taken up positions on both the Mildura Young Professionals Network and Nichols Point Soccer Club Committees.

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**Jennifer Zappia**  
Mildura, Vic

Born and raised in Mildura, Jennifer completed a Bachelor of Commerce degree at The University of Sydney. Upon the completion of her studies in 2016, she was awarded the Jack McCormack Perpetual Prize in Industrial Relations Practice.

In 2018, Jennifer was awarded an Agriculture Victoria Upskill and Invest Young Farmers Scholarship. Jennifer is currently a member on Agriculture Victoria's Young Farmers Advisory Council. The council consists of eight dynamic young people, from various agricultural industries and regions, who advise government on issues affecting young people in agriculture and on program delivery.

Jennifer is committed to fostering mentoring and collaboration amongst young farmers in our local community.

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Agriculture Victoria and Department of  
Agriculture and Water Resources  
Funded Place Recipient

## OUR VISION

Transformational leadership across the Northern Mallee.

## OUR MISSION

Developing people in active business and community leadership roles.

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