



Alpine Valleys
Community Leadership

Annual Program

.....

Alumni Impact Report





2020

Glenn Allan
Murray Bennett
Elita Briggs
Jackie Broughton
Thomas Carberry
Anita Chennell
Valissa Clarke
Trish Crockett
Jane Diplock
Alyce Fisher
Julie Hancock
Monique Hillenaar
Dave Hume
Jill James
Diarmuid Kelly
Mim McGowan
Bobbi McKibbin
Glenn Mercer
Brett Mugridge
Jack Nelson
Amy Northwood
Bronwyn Parker
Laura Sutherland
Craig Thorp
Shane Tomkins
Suzanne Vilé
Tim Wallis
Rachel Wolfe

2015

Deanne Burge
Michelle Burrowes
Jane Carney
Bronwyn Chapman
Matthew Currie
Vidura Delpitiya
Mark Ditcham
Elizabeth Ellis
Dianne Ferguson
Tahni Froudist
Jenny Griffiths
Sue Harris
Allan Hooper
Nicholas Jordan
Owen Lappin
Kirsten Lingard
Steven Martin
Bonnie McIntosh
Kerryn Mitchell
Courtney Naughton
Lucy O'Dwyer
Kevin Powell
Rigtje Raadsveld

2019

Leon Carter
Mal Clarke
Shane Crispin
Rebecca Damm
Simon Eakin
Sophie Enders
Jodi Finlayson
Lesley Forman
Kerri Imlach
Rupinder Kaur
Jesse King
Emma Knights
Liam McMahon
Jessica Oldmeadow
Rachael Richards
Rebecca Sacco
Hayden Sharp
Justine Shelton
Francine Stacey
Sue Thornton
Patricia Van De Paverd
Lucie Wallis
Trish Winzer

2014

Elisha Barry
Paul Blackshaw
Steven Burke
Lisa Cartledge
John Cavedon
Elizabeth Frazer
Jemma Galvin
Sally Hayden
Michelle Hudson
Jeanie Keeton
Richard Merton
Trish Mom
Martina Moore
Kerrie Mountford
Craig Murphy
Kyle Oxley
Will Read
Tania Weller
Anthony Wilson
Brendan White
Gary Wingrave
Elise Wood

2023

Amanda Hore
Domenica Hunkin
Gianna Verdini-Fensom
Irene Day
Jenny Corser
Kane Fitzpatrick
Kate Walsh
Katrina Pawley
Kirsty Branagan
Lauren Kelly
Lisa Turner
Maria Kraus
Matthew Hicks
Michael Savage
Paige Zamperoni
Romina McEwan
Rosie Suter
Sarah Glass
Sarimah Hellyer
Sean Barrett
Skye Rhodes-Mitchell

2022

Tegan Allen
Kristin Beggs
Steve Belli
Kate Clark
Nathan Fenton
Rho Fry
Brendan Grigg
Kerissa Heritage
Elise Hill
Rachel Hogan
Tanya Howard
Megan Hunt
Maisie Pilli
Cazz Redding
Maureen Rogers
Kellie Sutherland
Joanne Turner
Aaron Wallace
Jane Witherow
Nicholas Wright

2017

Luke Chilcott
Helen Clark
Catherine Wanjiru
Clarke
Sandra Duffy
Karen Gunner
Benjamin Hawkins
Will Jeremy
Alison Lloyd
Troy Mahoney
Katie Moore
Nicole Murphy
Richard Paschke
Chris Rodgers
Tammy Smith
Jacqueline Smith
Nicole Stephens
Kimberly Taylor
Ryan Thomas
Shane Tucker
Amy Van De Ven
Tamara Watson

2012

Jacqui Bright
AnnMaree Christian
Tracey Cooper
Garry Corcoran
Sandra Dalton
Kevin de Henin
Deb Donkers
Julie Folan
Judy Griffiths
Bridie Guy
Lauren Landman
Narelle Martin
Sara Reid
Sandra Ross
Grant Saunders
Kate Simpson
Bart Smith
Cheryl Smith
Michael Vanderzee
Karen van de Sande
Maree Warnett
Bindy Welsh
Bronwen Wilson

2021

Justin Armstrong
Tamara Barton
Laura Benson
Pahal Man Bhattarai
Anthony Cheesman
Peter Christison
Bonnie Clark
Natalie Flay
Hayley Hollis
Sally Hughes
Andrew Jones
Pia Kennedy
Peter Kenyon
Lee Manning
Olivia Noto
Melinda Pentreath
Edith Peters
Helen Sellar
Tegan Sharwood
Jennifer Sleep
Julia Vesval
Maria Wadley
Gemma Whitehead
Allison Winters

2016

Margaret Anderson
Lisa Basler
Catriona Brown
Nicola Burns
Simon Crase
Michelle Critchley
Ange Davidson
Kellie Davies
Emma Ghys
Victoria Griffiths
Lauralee Hogg
Renae Johns
Ben Kneebone
Rosie Koop
Renee Leary
Erin O'connor
Jason Perna
Carolyn Sammon
Victoria Schmidt
Allan Thrum
Courtney Ward - Jackson
Andrew Whitehead
Fiona Wigg

2011

Luke Brock
Leanne Bussell
Ashley Campbell
-Brown
Kevin Cosgriff
Karen Daglish
Pat Doyle
Adele Earl
Racheal Edis
Emma Avery
Cheryl Impink
Andrew McGranahan
Kate Marshall
Leon Newton
Austin Nicholas
Sally Rodgers
Birgit Schonafinger
Faye Smart
Melanie Walker

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History of the Program

Message from the Board Chair

Thank you for reading the Alumni Impact Report of the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Annual Program. Your interest in and support for the program has contributed to its success for over two decades.

A community that grows local leadership and invests in its future leaders demonstrates a vibrant and sustainable region. That is what we have across the Ovens-Murray Region of North East Victoria, cultivated and sustained through the Alumni of the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Annual Program.

As you read the report, you will see that the Annual Program has significantly and positively impacted the lives of our Alumni, their local communities, and the broader region.

The Annual Program and the associated leadership experiences provided by Alpine Valleys Community Leadership have only been possible due to the contribution of many people in our region: participants, Alumni, workplace funders, scholarship providers, philanthropy organisations, contractors, pro bono presenters and service providers, volunteer board members, staff and Patron John Brown AO.

We are delighted to have partnered with the Victorian Government and are grateful for their funding support.

This coordinated effort by all stakeholders since 1999 has been invaluable for enhancing our region's capacity and giving a voice to our diverse community members.

Judy Charlton, Chair



About this Report

At the close of the 2022 AVCL Annual Program, the Alumni body consisted of 485 graduates.

Evaluation and reporting is undertaken on the short and medium-term (2 year post-completion) outcomes achieved by Alumni, however the longer-term impacts and outcomes accomplished by Alumni have been largely anecdotal.

To understand and document the impact of leadership contributions by AVCLP Alumni in their communities and workplaces, an Alumni Survey was developed in 2021. The survey was designed to capture impact

and outcomes in line with the state-wide Monitoring Evaluation Reporting and Improvement (MERI) evaluation framework, as has been adopted by Victorian Regional Community Leadership Programs.

The Alumni Survey was administered to all contactable AVCLP Alumni, being 285, from September 2021 – February 2022, with a response rate of approximately **10.87%** (31.)

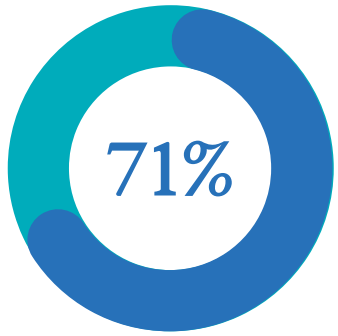
The content provided in this report is based upon the data collected through these survey responses, in addition to case studies developed for the purpose of this Impact Report.

Our Alumni

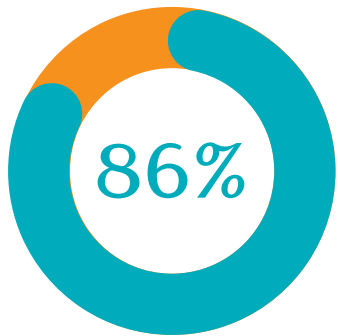
485 Alumni as at
end of 2022



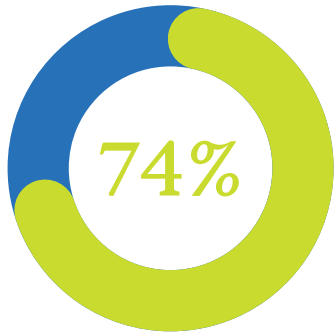
64.3% female | 35.5% male | 0.2% non-binary



71%
of Alumni have
facilitated or led a
response to a
community issue



86%
of Alumni have
encouraged others to
participate in the
program



74%
of Alumni have
taken up a role in a
professional capacity



Our Alumni are
dispersed throughout
Victoria and North East
Border Regions

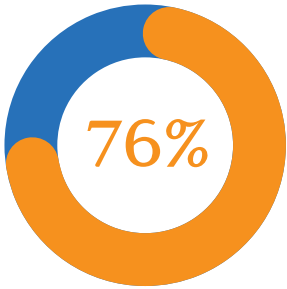
Weekly Contribution

Alumni reported a
contribution of...

10 hours
per week
toward volunteerism and
community work, on both
a paid and unpaid basis*



Alumni reported...



of roles as being unpaid,
equating to...

7.6
hours per Alumni
per week
being contributed to unpaid
volunteerism and community
work*



Annual Contribution

On an annual basis,
the entire Alumni
base represent a
contribution of...

252,200

hours
both paid and unpaid,
toward volunteerism and
community work



Of this...

191,672
hours
is on an unpaid
basis*...

Equating to annual
labour valued at...

\$8,625,240**



Investment and ROI



\$6,062,500

total direct investment
in participant placement over
the lifetime of the program^

A once off, initial
investment of...

\$12,500
per participant

...is resulting in unpaid
volunteerism worth...

\$17,784
per participant
per year



*Alumni Survey respondents reported undertaking volunteerism and community work (both paid and unpaid) of 10 hours per week, derived from median.

** Alumni Survey respondents reported undertaking volunteerism and community work (both paid and unpaid) of 10 hours per week, derived from median; 76% of respondents reported this work as being on an unpaid basis, being 7.6 hours per week, and this figure has been quantified by total number of Alumni x hourly volunteer rate of \$45, as per labour value provided by State of Volunteering Victoria, April 2022.)

^Based upon 485 program participants at end of 2022, with an average total cost of \$12,500 per participant (state government contribution + sponsorship fee.)

OUR VISION

Vibrant and sustainable communities through local leadership

OUR MISSION

Grow the leadership capacity and voice of people and communities

About the Program

Alpine Valleys Community Leadership (AVCL) is a Not For Profit provider of community leadership development and capacity building. AVCL delivers a flagship annual program, Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program (AVCLP), one of nine Victorian Regional Community Leadership Programs that each aim to develop and facilitate the emergence of local leaders; strengthen existing community leadership capabilities; and develop stronger connections between local leaders and regional development initiatives.

The AVCLP was established in 1999, and operates across the Ovens-Murray region of North East Victoria, encompassing the Local Government Areas of Alpine Shire, Albury City, Benalla Rural City, Indigo Shire, Mansfield Shire, Moira Shire, Rural City of Wangaratta, Towong Shire and the City of Wodonga.

Each year, the AVCLP is delivered over a 10 month period, with a cohort of up to 25 participants. The program delivers a variety of workshops, tailored guest speaker presentations, study tours and experiential learning where participants are introduced to key issues and decision-makers in their region, state and nation that encourage them to develop and explore their own learning and leadership styles in a supportive and enabling environment.

Participants also undertake a community focused project over the course of the program, with the intention of producing a positive outcome and impact to the region. Before participants graduate, they are supported to learn leadership skills and commit to an ongoing community leadership service by making contributions to community agencies and causes, preferably for not-for-profit agencies that are driven substantially by volunteers and provide tangible community benefits.

The AVCLP, along with the other Victorian Regional Community Leadership Programs, received major funding from the Victorian State Government, via a master contract facilitated by Regional Leadership (RL), through Regional Development Victoria (RDV). At the end of 2023, this funding will cease.

The AVCLP also received support through philanthropic scholarships, workplace sponsorships, and pro bono contributions including program day speakers (often Alumni) and venues.

Program Design & Evaluation Framework

Program Design

The Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program (AVCLP) aims to foster the development of a vibrant network of community and business leaders across North East Victoria, its border regions and beyond.

Each Program continues to build upon the collective learnings of the previous years, with a focus on building community capacity and strengthening local leaders. At a local level, community members are collectively looking for enhanced and structured leadership, in the form of practical and strategic thinking, collaboration, direction, planning, wisdom, and local knowledge.

The AVCLP creates competent and well-equipped leaders who understand what it takes to lead in a regional environment. This is achieved through a well-considered program design:

”

Rural Australia needs strong leadership in order to develop thriving, connected and resilient communities

Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Program ManagerExecutive OfficerBusiness CoordinatorAdministration Officer
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Major Funding: Victorian State Government50% workplace funders40% scholarship funders10% self-fundedContributions through donation of in-kind support
Program Days	<ul style="list-style-type: none">16 Locations10 Themes in alignment with Ovens Murray Regional Priorities44 Guest Speakers8 Contracted Facilitators
Community Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Project Management Training WorkshopTeam based project work throughout duration of projectProjects in alignment with Ovens Murray Regional Priorities2 dedicated project daysGrant application & funding process2 funding sources – Hugh Williamson Foundation & Kyamba Foundation, total value \$16,000
Overnight Retreats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">3 overnight retreatsPlace based within NE Victoria & Border Regions
Place Based Study Tour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Melbourne Study Tour
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Program LaunchGraduation Celebration
Alumni Engagement	More than 20% of Alumni give back to AVCL annually as guest presenters, interviewers of program applicants, contributors to an Alumni scholarship, mentors of community project teams and program participants, and through undertaking leadership professional development.

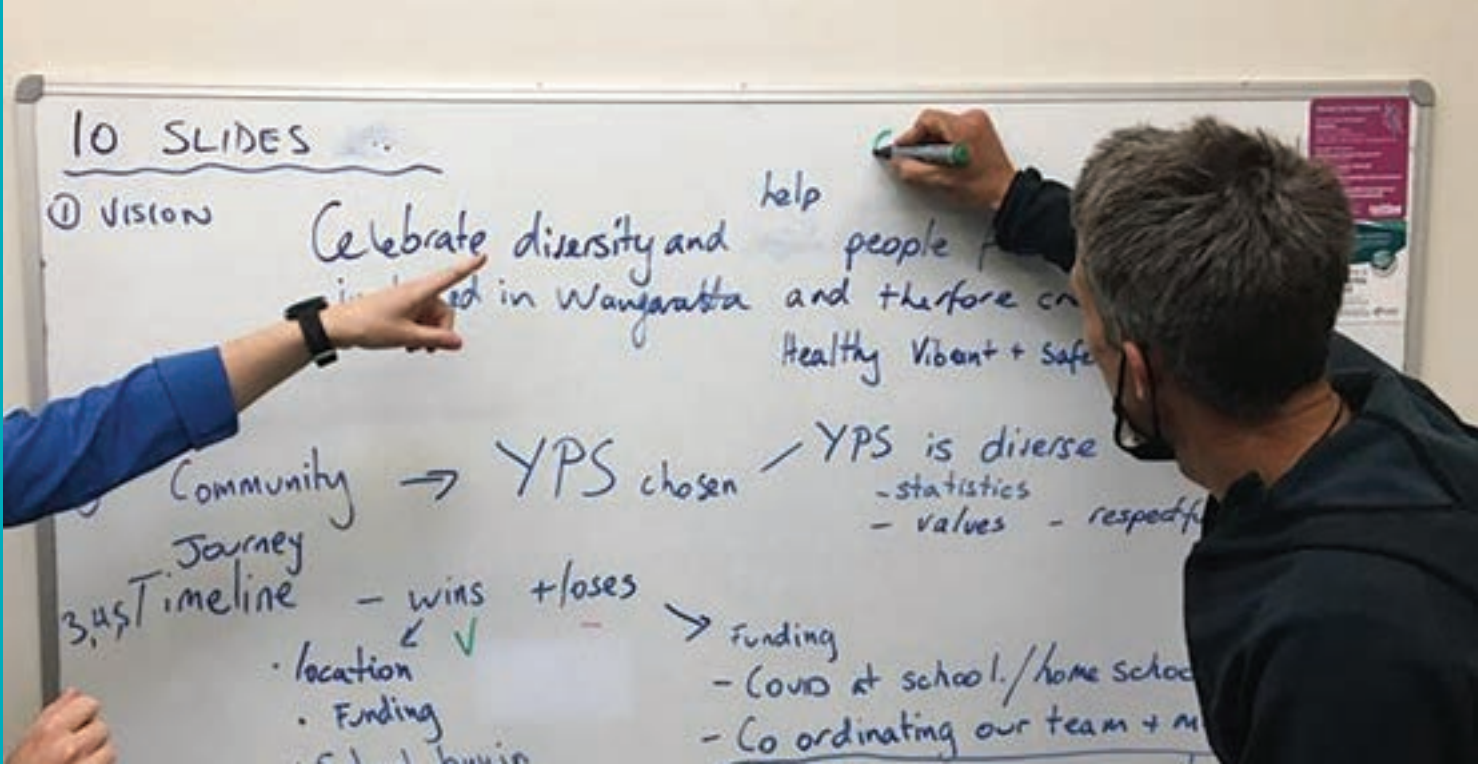
Based upon 2022 Annual Program

Evaluation Framework

The AVCLP utilises a Monitoring Evaluation Reporting and Improvement (MERI) framework as was developed in 2020, by Clear Horizon in partnership with the 9 Victorian Community Leadership Programs (CLPs), and with funding received by Regional Development Victoria (RDV). The framework is owned by Regional Leadership (RL).

The framework provides for a Theory of Change, encompassing a series of objectives (goals) which serve as parameters to evaluate the impact of graduates, and the success of the program.

Below are the key pillars of the MERI framework.



Regional Leadership (RL) Theory of Change

Goal	Regional communities are thriving, resilient, supportive and display diversity to achieve improved social, environmental and economic development				
Impact that graduates have on their organisations & communities	Communities are well connected	Communities are leading responses to community identified opportunities	More diverse groups of people involved in community leadership	Communities have greater access to empower local leaders	Local businesses and organisations are engaged as supporters and funders
Line of contribution					
Behavior changes of graduates	Graduates facilitate the identification of community priorities	Graduates facilitate solutions to issues and implementation of responses	Graduates are taking up leadership roles in the community	Graduates are building strong and effective networks	Graduates advocate for RCLPs and promote RL
Changes for graduates: knowledge, attitudes, and access to networks	Graduates have increased their leadership development	Graduates gain confidence and self-awareness	Graduates have a better understanding of their region	Graduates are connected to a network of regional leaders	Graduates are engaged in the Community Leadership sector
What RL is doing	RL collects, manages, analyses M&E data to support RCLP's decision making	RL overseas MERI, L&D frameworks, IMS, online portal, and collective alumni engagement	RL coordinates and facilitates collaboration and knowledge exchange	RL strategically identifies and promotes potential State/ National funding opportunities for RCLPs	RL builds profile and brand of Community Leadership
What RCLPs are doing	RCLPs are recruiting and advocating RCLPs to people of influence	RCLPs comply with and implement collaborative evidence-based management systems	RCLPs are collecting data and feeding back to RL	RCLPs facilitate alumni engagement with communities	RCLPs are engaging in fundraising, advocacy, and communications with their community

RCLPs contribution to outcomes

RCLPs are actively contributing and connected to regional community development

RLs contribution to outcomes

Community Leadership is well recognised, professionalised and scaled up at the national level

Theory of Change Narrative

The Regional Leadership and Regional Community Leadership Programs are designed to contribute to a broader society-level goal:

"Regional communities are thriving, resilient, supportive and display diversity in order to achieve improved social, environmental and economic development."

In achieving the main goal, RCLPs are expected to actively contribute and connect to regional community development.

The segments of this impact report are set out in alignment with those of the MERI framework.

- 1

Communities are well connected
- 2

Communities are leading responses to community-identified opportunities
- 3

More diverse groups of people involved in community leadership
- 4

Communities have greater access to empowered local leaders
- 5

Local businesses and organisations are engaged as supporters and funders

Communities are well connected

Community is many things. A geographical place, an industry, an organisation, or more generally: a group of people that come together through a common interest or shared goal. Community is the lifeblood that connects us together and fosters an environment of belonging and purpose. Critically, a community requires internal sustenance through the continued efforts of its members, in addition to external environmental factors such as funding and opportunities.

The strength of a community is made up of the sum of individuals that live and work within it. In regional areas, where townships can be quite small and resources are finite, it is essential that people can come together, increase their capacity, and be empowered and inspired to grow their communities.

Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program draws participants from a rich and diverse range of communities, including those centered on place, industry, and interests. Our participants often straddle the intersectionality of more than one community, with the interconnectedness of these varied pursuits and locales lending to the power of the Alumni group.

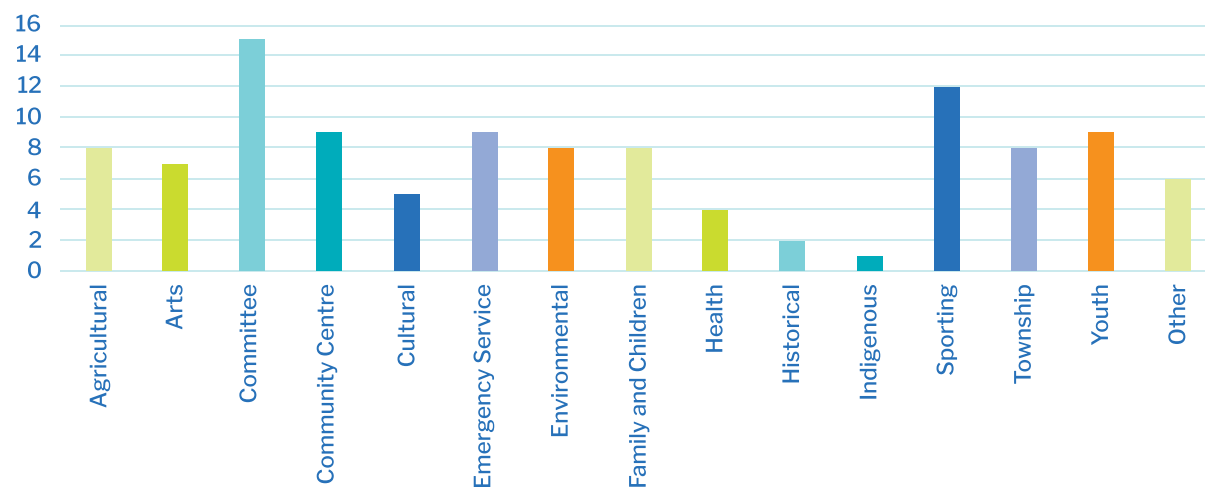
The geographical reach of our Alumni, in supporting these organisations, was primarily centered around local townships and regions in the North East

In addition to capital cities such as Melbourne and Sydney, and national and international locations.



AT A GLANCE: The nature of the organisations contributed to by our Alumni span a range of industries and interests:

Nature of organisations (community groups, volunteering or leadership roles - both paid and unpaid) supported by Alumni since completing the program



The range of roles undertaken by Alumni were extensive, including – Local Government Councilor, Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Volunteer Board Member, Committee Member, Action Group Member, President, Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary, Treasurer. Other functions included Bookings Officer, Editor, Mentor, Welfare Officer, Ski Patroller, Advisor and Coach.

Alumni reported undertaking a median number of 4 community focused roles each. Most of this work was on an unpaid volunteer basis, with **76%** of roles reported as being unpaid volunteer roles.

The median hourly contribution to supporting community organisations and initiatives, both paid and unpaid, was 10 hours per week; this equates to **252,200*** hours contributed per year, across the entire Alumni base.

Based upon **76%** of the work being undertaken on a volunteer basis, Alumni are contributing a total (based upon median) of **191,672** hours of unpaid volunteer work, per year, equating to a total annual labour worth **\$8,625,240****

Community Work - Paid vs Unpaid

24% paid

76% unpaid

191,672

hours of unpaid volunteer work, per year, equating to a total annual labour worth

\$8,625,240**

*Based upon median community contribution of 10 hours per week, both paid and unpaid, per survey respondents.

**Based upon median community contribution of 10 hours per week, quantified by calculation provided by State of Volunteering Victoria, April 2022; \$45 per hour)

AVCLP Alumni Case Study Wayne Rotherham

.....

Former detective Wayne Rotherham did all the leadership courses he could get his hands on through the police force - but none of them taught him as much about himself as the AVCLP, which he undertook in 2009.

Wayne remembers an important difference between the AVCLP and the many other leadership programs he'd been involved in during his policing career: from the beginning of the AVCLP it was clear that, no matter your background or experience, everyone in the room was on an equal footing.

"It really brought me down to a level of personal learning that I hadn't done at any other program."

Week by week, Wayne took the skills and approaches he learnt in the program back to his workplace where he says it all just clicked. He became a better listener and a more creative problem solver.

When Victoria Police wanted to run a pilot of their Big Brother Big Sister mentoring program in Wangaratta, Wayne realised most of the budget would be spent on an office for the project officer. Inspired by what he'd learnt in the AVCLP, he took the blinkers off and got creative. He suggested the project officer work from a desk in the police station. It was unheard of, Wayne says, to have someone who wasn't a sworn police officer working within the police complex. But his gamble paid off.

"The project officer interacted with all of the Sergeants and all of the operational coppers that were out in the street dealing with the young people and it just changed the whole dynamic. I think it aided in the success of the program."

Volunteering had always been part of Wayne's life, but he was even more eager to make a difference after completing the program. When he retired from the police force after 35 years and moved to Jamieson he found plenty of ways - big and small - to serve others.



"There's a lot of people in town that I support, which is the empathy that you're taught in the program. I can really look at how fortunate we are, and I have been able to use the benefits I've had over the years to give back."

Wayne has become an advocate for locals who won't, or can't, stand up for themselves. Recently he lobbied council on behalf of residents who objected to solar panels on the town's historic hall. They didn't win, but they did negotiate a compromise. Wayne's also on the Mansfield District Business Association where he's referred to as 'the small town guy' for always speaking up for the district's smaller communities.

Wayne says there's one thing he learned in AVCLP that now underpins everything he does.

"A lot of people create a solution before they know what the problem is. AVCLP taught me to find out what the problem is, and if you can try to repair the problem, then you can develop a solution. (I ask) what is the underlying problem here? Before I create a solution to fix it."

AVCLP Alumni Case Study Susan Bull

.....

Not all leaders are front and centre. At her local bowls club, Susan Bull's leadership is behind the scenes - providing ideas, 'managing upwards' and making sure everyone is given an opportunity to have their say.

Susan was working at Wangaratta Unlimited when, in 2007, she was accepted into the AVCLP. She had been asked to work on a major bike trail project where she'd be dealing with a wide range of stakeholders - from passionate community members to engineers to board members. Susan thought the AVCLP would help her better engage with those diverse groups.

The program certainly helped Susan in that role, but there have been long-lasting benefits beyond the office as well.

Susan and her husband had always been enthusiastic travellers, but ill health prompted them to look for adventure closer to home. They joined the Wangaratta Bowls Club and



Susan - being Susan - became heavily involved and is now Assistant Executive Officer.

As with all community groups, the club is made up of varied personalities and Susan credits AVCLP with helping her patiently navigate those differences.

"One of the bigger things the AVCLP taught me is that there's a whole range of different people out there and we need all of them. I just value those people, whereas I didn't before."

The biggest revelation of the program, perhaps, was when they explored different personality types and Susan came to understand her own way of thinking, doing and leading.

"I learned that I had leadership skills on the first day. I think I sort of suspected that it was bubbling under the surface, but I didn't realise it."

Throughout her life Susan had been a do-er. From solving crises in her netball team as a teenager, to organising events with the kindergarten committee, to stepping into a peer mentoring role with a community organisation. AVCLP helped her understand that what she was in fact doing was leading.

"They talked in detail about competent people. We sit back and observe and judge. And I just had no idea. That was a big revelation for me."

By identifying her own strengths and weaknesses she has been able to invest her energy into the things she does best. Like 'managing upwards'.

"I don't like being up front and centre. I want somebody else to do that. I'll tell 'em what to do, but I want them to stand up there and do it. And I think I do that well."

AVCLP also gave Susan a greater awareness of including everyone's thoughts and opinions.

"The people that you would expect less from are sometimes the people that come up with the best ideas. The simple solution. And often those people with simple solutions don't say much so you've got to give them the opportunity."

Susan is proud of the positive, can-do attitude she's brought to her community role.

"It's a lot easier to be a positive influence than a negative influence isn't it? And it's rewarding."

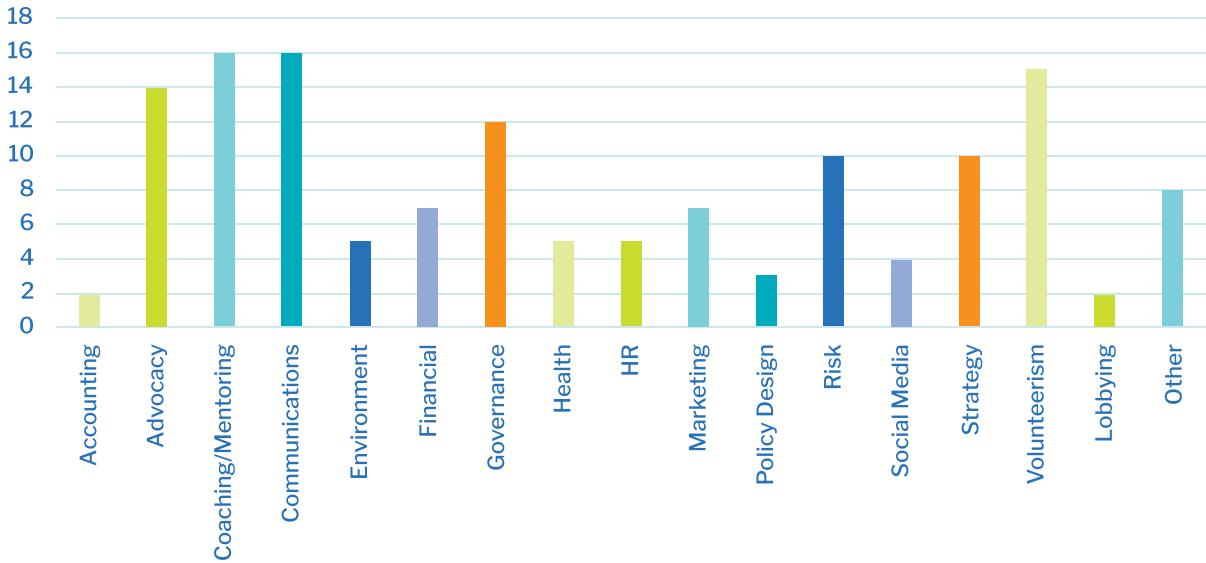
Communities are leading responses to community identified opportunities

One of the objectives of the AVCLP Theory of Change is that program participants are empowered to lead or facilitate solutions to community issues. The inputs of this aspect of the program logic include – project management skills in a community setting, grant writing workshops, guest sessions that discuss the existing problems and opportunities within the region as exemplars of solutions, understanding best practice in community lead response efforts, and developing a strong network of local leaders and peers. In addition, as of 2021, AVCLP participants undertake a community project component within the program, whereby project teams complete the end to end design and delivery of a community based project, in alignment with the Ovens Murray Regional Priorities.

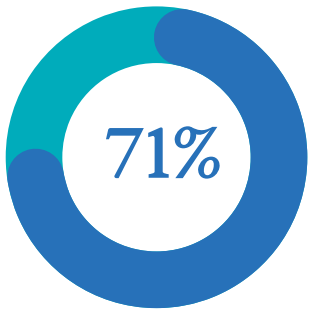
Alumni self-reported their skills and expertise across a range of areas, per the chart below; these skills aid in strengthening the self-efficacy of Alumni, in addition to ensuring their capacity to contribute to community focused outcomes.



Alumni Skills and Expertise



POST PROGRAM RESULTS



Percentage of Alumni that have facilitated or led a response to a community issue since completion of the program



65% of Alumni rated the increase in capacity of their network of local leaders and connection to peers as 8 or higher (out of 10)



75% of Alumni rated their increase in knowledge of the region as 8 or higher (out of 10)

“ The Mansfield Shire Council **RESPOND** project. I was one of the main instigators to an extremely successful project of increasing healthy eating projects within the Mansfield Community.

Jane Diplock, 2020

“ I was involved in the formation of Mansfield Community Support Register.

Michele Padbury, 2007

“ I arranged the implementation of a dog park in response to community demand.”

Monique Hillenaar, 2020

“ I formed the Rosewhite and District CWA following the 2009 bushfires to strengthen community engagement and capacity, specifically in the Rosewhite area where there was a recognised gap in connectivity. I also participated in the AVCL Landcare program and consequently became the North East Representative on the Landcare Victoria board in 2018. In that role, I have worked to strengthen collaboration amongst the Landcare Networks & Facilitators of North-East Victoria to deliver landscape scale environmental change. I now sit on the National Landcare Network Board and I am now the Chair of Landcare Victoria Inc., where one of my main goals is to improve governance amongst the Landcare community, to build capacity of the regional networks and advocate on their behalf to gain additional resources for the incredible work they do in landscape restoration and recovery.

Jane Carney, 2015

“ I contributed to the forming of Sustainable King Valley as an incorporated body. This involved facilitation of discussion with interested community members, developing a shared vision for the work of the newly formed collective then investigating governance models that would suit the group. A range were considered including staying as an informal collective, partnering with existing organisations, incorporation, reactivation of Landcare as a governance approach. The decision to incorporate was reached and enacted.

Suz Christison, 2013

“ I was involved in the formation and leadership of Biggara Community Recovery Committee in response to the 2019/20 Black Summer Bushfires: facilitating community involvement, securing funding and ensuring advocacy of the community at every level of community and government.

Faith Damm, 2002

“ I created a flexible volunteering project-including forming a working group. I also contributed to the CFA state-wide leadership scholarship project through Regional Leadership.

Michelle Critchley, 2016

AVCLP Alumni

Case Study

Ali Pockley

As a council employee, Ali Pockley knew she wanted to make a bigger impact for her community and to do this, she took the leap of faith out from behind the desk to stand for council. Not only was she elected, she went on to become Mayor - and she doubts it would have happened without AVCLP.

In the early 2000s, Ali was aware of the AVCLP and impressed by what she describes as its 'out of the box' approach. At the time, several colleagues at Indigo Shire had been through the program and Ali remembers one of them enthusing that it had "revolutionised their life".

With that ringing endorsement, in 2007, she asked if the Shire would sponsor her to participate in the program.

"You can think you have good leadership skills, but to have been absolutely soaked in developing your own skills over a year is phenomenal at digging out all these unknown qualities that you may or may not possess. I don't think I saw any of (the people in our) year that didn't develop really great skills, and that just flows on through the community."

Ali emerged from the program eager to have a bigger impact in her community. She left her job and stood for election as a Councillor instead.

"It doesn't take all that much to put yourself out there necessarily, but you just need a bit of courage and a bit of belief in yourself."

AVCLP had given Ali that extra dose of courage and belief. She served four years on Indigo Shire including two years as both Deputy Mayor and Mayor.

"I achieved everything I really wanted to, and I was really pleased to be able to do it. If it hadn't been for the AVCLP I would never have thought of standing for council. I don't think I would've had the confidence to do it, truly."

Dealing with public criticism was an unavoidable and challenging part of the job. Ali says the knowledge she gained through the AVCLP and the friendships she made with fellow participants helped her through those times.

"Being prepared to put yourself into the community, to do some of these roles - you know, the leadership stuff - not everyone wants to do it. Not everyone can do it. And having had that sort of leg up with the AVCLP, I felt as though I had a bit of a grounding in it and also had all these people I could fall back on."

Ali was also instrumental in being one of a few locals who established Totally Renewable Yackandandah, a volunteer-run organisation formed following a community energy forum in 2014. Its goal is to power the town with 100% renewable energy and its approach has been heralded nationally.

Ali's passion for serving her community continues. She's company secretary of the Yackandandah Community Development Co (better known as YCDCo) - a community-owned enterprise that now offers funding for community grants. She's also editor of Yackandandah's popular community newspaper, Yackity Yak.

Ali points out that Yackandandah, which has fewer than 2000 residents, has a staggering 40 community groups.

"They all need Chairs and Treasurers and Secretaries and people to drive them. And this is what the AVCLP is doing. It's almost providing a circulating amount of people to take on these roles."

Photo: Jason Robins



AVCLP Alumni

Case Study

Shane Crispin

When he began the AVCLP, Shane Crispin was trying to be everything to everyone, spreading himself across a dozen passion projects. By learning from other leaders, and his own personal reflection, he realised that being busy and being visible aren't the only ways to lead.

There's a proverb that perfectly sums up the sort of leader Shane Crispin was before the AVCLP, compared to who he is now: If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.

Shane was giving out a lot of fish. He was involved in twelve different projects - from community aid in Bali, to managing Victoria's Special Olympics soccer team, to being an ambassador for the Reagan Milstein Foundation which collects preloved sports gear and distributes it to disadvantaged communities. He enjoyed every minute of it, but it was exhausting.

"I really wanted to help people that need it, but in a more effective way, because I used to be the one that would give people a fish. And that's not sustainable. I'm really good at doing stuff for other people, but I've never been really great at doing something for myself."

In 2018, Shane was sponsored by Telstra Regional & Rural and his employer Ne Tracks LLEN to complete the AVCLP, and it was through the program that Shane realised if he was to achieve sustainable leadership, he needed to make quality decisions about what he was doing - and be comfortable saying no more often.

It started with his work at North East Tracks Local Learning and Employment Network (NE Tracks LLEN). He asked to become involved in the organisation's strategic planning, and he reviewed every work project through a SWOT analysis to determine exactly what value they were providing to the young people they worked with.

He also changed his approach to volunteering. As Shane puts it, he stopped "giving fish" to the organisations he was working with in Bali and "started giving them fishing rods" instead.



Photo: Courtesy Wangaratta Chronicle

"I gave them templates for setting a mission statement and their ethos of how to operate and how to do partnerships. That alleviated a lot of pressure off me."

Shane coordinates and hosts many events, and he found that delegating more tasks to others gave them an opportunity to step up.

"If I'm doing an event, I'll go 'hey can you do this for me? I'm happy to help you. I'll do some guiding stuff for you'. I think imparting your knowledge to help others grow, that's important."

Above all Shane says the leadership program made him a better listener.

"I will dig a little bit deeper with a person if they're comfortable. I have a lot more empathy for people. I wouldn't say I've got any more sympathy for people. I like empathy because empathy's a driven energy where you can put positivity into it."

Shane is now itching to put that energy and positivity into establishing his own non-profit organisation with partner Ness, who is a social worker.

"Some of my real passions are about sustainability for our communities. So I think that eventually we're going to travel around and help communities with sustainability and wellbeing. That's a real thing that we feel that we can do. And really create change."

More diverse groups and individuals involved with community leadership

The AVCLP is delivered across the Ovens Murray region in North East Victoria, encompassing the Local Government Areas of Alpine Shire, Albury City, Benalla Rural City, Indigo Shire, Mansfield Shire, Moira Shire, Rural City of Wangaratta, Towong Shire and the City of Wodonga, representing a regional population of **131,430**.*

The AVCLP brings together people from all walks of life, representing the diverse range of individuals who make up the Ovens Murray Region: generational farmers and producers from across all facets of agriculture and horticulture, newly arrived and established migrants, tourism operators and adjacent businesses, the LGBTIQ+ community, artists of all disciplines, people living with disabilities, professionals, small business operators, community focused organisations, the youth and the ageing – to name just a few.

The program is intentional in building a cohort of individuals from different and diverse backgrounds, as it is through this diversity of experience and representation, that participants can learn more about others, and ultimately, themselves. The objective of this learning is to achieve understanding and acceptance, and aid in reducing unconscious bias and misconceptions. It also fosters new ways of working with and across minority groups, and cultivates future leaders who can strongly represent their communities.

*Figure per Regional Development Victoria, 2019.



(from left) Mieke Bosland, drag queen Sarah Belle, LINE Wangaratta Inc president Allison Winters and Victorian Minister for Equity Harriet Shing. Photo courtesy Wangaratta Chronicle.



As an adjunct to the Annual Program, and in collaboration with AVCLP Alumni, AVCL has:

- > Partnered with Albury Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council (AWECC) to undertake a leadership incubator program for newly arrived and established migrants in the Border Region.
- > Partnered with LINE Wangaratta, an LGBTIQ+ advocacy group in North East Victoria, to deliver 2 leadership programs aimed at strengthening the leadership capacity of the LGBTIQ+ community in Wangaratta and surrounds. Funding for these programs was secured through the Into Our Hands Pitch Up event in 2019.

OF THE SURVEYED ALUMNI:



10%

were born in countries other than Australia



1 in 10

were members of the CALD community



3%

spoke English as a second language



1 in 10

were living with a disability or health condition



3%

identified as a member of the LGBTIQ+ community



2

participants identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

> This provided an opportunity for the AVCLP to review and understand the inclusiveness and focus of the content, to better engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

AVCLP Alumni

Case Study

Del Delpitiya

Vidura (Del) Delpitiya had been at the top of the management ladder, responsible for thousands of workers on tea plantations in Sri Lanka. But it wasn't until he moved to a tiny rural town in North East Victoria, for a job he knew nothing about, that he started to think of himself as a leader.

When Del, his wife and children arrived in Corryong for his new job as a dairy farmhand, it was like starting life all over again.

A new country, a new culture, and a new job in an industry he knew next to nothing about. Even knowing what to bring to a BBQ was a mystery!

The people of Corryong, and the wider dairy farming community, embraced the family wholeheartedly. In turn the Delpitiyas threw themselves into life in their new home. Del was soon involved in several dairy and agriculture committees as well as the local footy club, the Sri Lankan Cultural Association and the Albury Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council.

He worked his way up in the business - from farm hand to supervisor and eventually share-farmer. A trusted friend saw Del's ambition and passion for giving back to the community and, in 2014, encouraged him to apply for the AVCLP; he was a perfect fit for a Gardiner Dairy Foundation scholarship.

"We were the only Sri Lankans in the Corryong area. So from the footy club to the bus driver, the school principal to our green grocer - hats off to that community for embracing us. And the dairy community too. So that's what drove me (to apply) - that this community took us in."

In Sri Lanka Del had managed tea plantations with thousands of employees working under him. He knew he was a good manager, yet he'd never considered himself a leader - until the AVCLP. He describes that self-discovery as a pivotal moment.

"You think, the sky's the limit! I too can do some of the things that I saw through this program. That puts fuel to your engine to say, no don't hold yourself off. You can also do little things, but make a lasting impact."

A couple of years after graduating from the AVCLP, Del and his wife bought their own dairy farm. An industry downturn and drop in milk prices put pressure on the business and the family, and it reached a point where they decided it was best to sell.



Fortunately, after completing the AVCLP, Del had been fielding regular offers to work in the public sector. It wasn't long before a perfect role came up with Agriculture Victoria.

"Now what I'm doing is I'm continuing that leadership pathway. Why I took this role is, again, to give back to the community. So through this role I assist dairy farmers in Gippsland. It's about giving back to the industry that took us in."

One of the projects he inherited was to investigate how to increase the number of people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds in the dairy industry.

It resonated with Del because back in Corryong, he'd recognised that same need himself. Del had held cultural open days on his farm and hosted members of the migrant community, hoping to open their eyes to the opportunities in agriculture. This project was a perfect fit.

"You have this massive population of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers coming to Australia. So what I'm talking to industries about is that you need to talk to these communities and get them out into regions."

Del is passionate about helping the dairy industry benefit from the untapped potential of migrant talent, and in what could be described as a full circle moment, is now working with his original sponsor - Gardiner Dairy Foundation - to explore how industry and government can collaborate to achieve meaningful outcomes in this space. He's also grateful for the self-discovery, leadership skills and inspiration he gained from the AVCLP

"Coming from a third world country, you don't have those opportunities of leadership programs, capacity building. When you have an opportunity like that through the AVCLP you realise leadership is a journey. It's about, 'okay, what's next?' and that hunger to maintain that."

AVCLP Alumni

Case Study

Allison Winters

Allison Winters is paving the way for the next generation of leaders in the LGBTQIA+ community, driven by the notion that you can't be what you can't see.

Allison is President of LINE Wangaratta (LGBTQIA+ In the North East). Founded in 2019, It's a volunteer-led not-for-profit that coordinates social inclusion programs and events, aims to connect and raise awareness in the community, and supports local services and businesses to be LGBTQIA+ inclusive. LINE Wangaratta recently achieved the opening of the Pride Hub, the first of its kind in regional Victoria, encompassing a combined store front and dedicated safe space that is open to the public three days a week.

"Everything that we do, we're trying to either connect community, build capacity or improve the health and wellbeing within the community."

"If you can't see people like you doing really fantastic things then you can't imagine yourself doing them."

As LINE Wangaratta grew, Allison invested in their leadership skills - first through the AVCLP and then through a program specifically for members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

"I'd heard from a number of different people that the AVCLP was amazing and that it would change my life. I was hearing this from people within the community who I either saw as leaders and looked up to, or who I saw as community members doing really good things in their fields."



"I thought working with the community I could bring a very different perspective of community needs. I'd looked through previous cohorts and found them to be not super diverse and thought that I could bring that different perspective, and advocate from within a group of potential future leaders."

In addition, Allison's journey through the AVCLP made them even more determined to support and upskill emerging gender-diverse leaders in the community.

"Not just having more people be involved in the (leadership) programs, but having the programs evolve to meet their needs as well."

This requires safe, nurturing, trauma-informed environments.

"I've questioned a lot why we don't see more diverse community members participate in leadership programs. Is it because they don't feel like they have the skills? Why aren't they applying or why aren't they getting into programs?"

LINE Wangaratta has delivered an array of LGBTQIA+ focused programs and events, including Wangaratta's first Pride Fair Day in March 2023, attracting 500 people, 30 stallholders and a visit from Victorian Minister for Equity Harriet Shing. LINE Wangaratta has also partnered with AVCL to deliver leadership training specifically for the region's LGBTQIA+ community members.

"I hope to see more LGBTQIA+ people in leadership roles in the region. And I would love to see more role models, but I don't think you can be what you can't see. So I feel like we just have to keep trying to complete education and workshops and capacity building programs and nurture people as they're starting to step up into these baby leadership roles, so that they can carry on what we're doing."

After the AVCLP, Allison went on to complete the state government's Victorian LGBTQIA+ Leadership Program, and in 2023, Allison will be co-facilitating the Victorian LGBTQIA+ Leadership Program.

Allison believes that truly diverse community leadership won't happen without the proactive involvement of programs like AVCLP.

"We have so far to go. And that change at a community level will only be achieved if we empower people with the confidence to have their voice heard. And you're not going to see that confidence from people who have not completed some form of program on leadership, advocacy, community development or self awareness. You can't expect that just to naturally form. It has to be nurtured and supported. It's so incredibly important."

4

Communities have greater access to empowered local leaders

People are at the heart of any thriving community, creating a sustained need for individuals who are empowered to act as local leaders, taking up positions through which they can facilitate action on issues that are important to their communities. The AVCLP strengthens individuals in their ability to take up leadership roles, resulting in AVCLP Alumni pursuing leadership opportunities, in both a community and professional capacity.

We specifically asked Alumni about their participation in politics. Of the surveyed respondents:

39%

confirmed they had participated in politics (at any level).



Of those that stood for Council, **60%** were successful, with some also taking up the role of Mayor or Deputy Mayor.



Since the inception of AVCLP, Alumni have been successful in representing Local Government across all LGAs within which the AVCLP operates, with the exception of Moira Shire.



Of those that had participated in politics at any level, **42%** had stood for Council, with the other **58%** participating as either a paid or volunteer support person as part of an election campaign.



As at the time of writing, AVCLP Alumni are currently Councilors within four of the nine Local Government Areas that AVCLP operates across.



In addition to an Alumni being a current elected member of Federal Parliament.



AVCLP Alumni

Case Study

Andrew Whitehead

When his community was hit by natural disaster, a global pandemic and heartbreaking loss, Towong’s Andrew Whitehead stepped into the leadership role that his friends and peers always knew he had in him.

Andrew Whitehead likes to “fix things” - a quality he thinks has something to do with being a farmer and diesel mechanic by trade.

It was why he’d put his hand up for many roles in his Upper Murray community over the years: coach and President of the Corryong Football Netball Club, CFA volunteer and a member of the district’s Better Beef Group. So in 2015, when a friend suggested he apply to the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program, Andrew welcomed the opportunity to become a more effective community contributor.

“I wasn’t quite sure what I’d get out of it, but hopefully the ability to do what I was doing, but maybe do it a little bit better. I didn’t think I was going to have a lot more community involvement than what I (already) had.”

His leadership goals were humble, but Andrew’s fellow AVCLP participants quickly saw his potential and started casually referring to him as the ‘Mayor of Corryong’.

“I took that as a little bit of a joke because I had no intention at that stage of even getting on council, or becoming a Mayor or anything. It wasn’t until I’d finished doing the program and someone just tapped me on the shoulder and said, ‘We think you should have a go at this’ that I put my hand up to become a councillor.”

One of the most important lessons he took into the role was something he learned on his very first day of the AVCLP - that the best leaders acknowledge and accept people’s views, no matter how different they might be to their own.

“It’s the difference between knowing that they’re not thinking the same as you, and accepting that that’s alright. I can actually allow other people, whether it be on a committee or in the public, the time and ability to express their opinions, which maybe wouldn’t have happened previously.”

Andrew has since served two terms as a Towong Shire Councillor and was elected Mayor in 2021 - something he doubts he would have considered if he hadn’t been through the AVCLP.



It’s been a particularly challenging time to lead and support the community.

In 2019, the Towong Shire was devastated by the Black Summer Bushfires. Locals didn’t have much of a chance to come together and recover, as the fires were swiftly followed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this time the community lost four young men - three to suicide.

It showed Andrew just how important it is for small communities to build a depth of leadership on which to draw upon in times of crisis.

“There are leaders within the community who just weren’t able to lead at that time because they were dealing with their own devastation. We got through and we got people that put their hand up. But at times, they struggled as well. They had too much on but still thought ‘Well, I’ve gotta put my hand up because there’s no one else to do that’.”

Andrew was on the Upper Murray Community Recovery Committee that was established after the fires. It identified early on that, to build resilience, the community had to build its leadership capacity, which would aid in combating burnout and fatigue amongst the “known” leaders within the community. In response, AVCL delivered a seven-day leadership program specifically for Upper Murray community members.

Interestingly, Andrew says one of the hurdles to nurturing more leaders is the fact that many people don’t want to be labelled as such.

“I think there’s a lot of people out there that are leaders, and if they could accept that, they’d probably be a lot better leaders.”

Andrew’s fix-it mindset is evident as he talks about the challenges that lie ahead as his community continues to rebuild and recover.

“We’re not here forever, so let’s make it as good as we can while we’re here. And I guess that’s where I’ve taken this next step because I still want this community to be as good as it can be. (Asking) how can we make that happen? And what do we need to do? And yep let’s fix it to make it like that.”

AVCLP Alumni

Case Study

Irene Grant

Being excited is not unusual. Being excited about local government? That’s slightly less common. But that’s exactly what happened to Wangaratta’s Irene Grant, who can’t get enough of serving her community.

A former journalist, Irene was working as a media manager at the Department of Natural Resources & Environment when, in 1999, Alpine Valleys Community Leadership launched its inaugural leadership program. The Department was sponsoring two places in the program so, eager to explore new opportunities, Irene put her hand up.

“One of the most interesting things that I learned was ‘well, leaders can be different. There’s no, one template for leadership. That was one of the things I gained from the program - that you could be someone that was working in a school canteen and you could be a leader in that sphere as much as anyone else who was going to shape the future of the community.”

“Leadership takes all forms and it takes all sorts of people to make a community move forward and do good things. That was the inspiration I got from the program.”

Having worked in media for a long time, Irene was ready for a change. She hoped the leadership program might help her discover what that change might be.

“While working in newspapers, I used to go and report on Council and I was fascinated by the mechanism of local government. There were people sitting around the table who were making



a difference to their community, and that really impressed me. I believe the (AVCL) program gave me the idea that maybe I could do that.”

Irene let the idea ruminate and, just a few weeks after graduating from the AVCLP, she decided to stand for the Rural City of Wangaratta.

“I wanted to be someone that people could rely on. I wanted to be someone that people could talk to. I wanted to be able to make a difference. I wanted to be seen as fair and honest. I wasn’t doing this just for myself, and hopefully I would be able to make a difference to the decisions being made by Council.”

Irene vividly remembers hearing John G Brown, AO of Brown Brothers speak to her AVCLP cohort. Underpinning his talk was the need for positivity in leadership.

“Often all you hear is whining and moaning. To me, it really resonated that being positive was a much better way of being a leader. Obviously, there are issues and obviously there are problems, but if the message you deliver to the community is about negativity, then I think it can defeat you.”

Irene recalls a time on Council when Wangaratta’s major employers were in trouble; the textile mills were in decline and IBM had sold off its sites. People in the community feared the resulting job losses would spell the end of Wangaratta, but Irene could see the positives.

“A lot of those people were casual. It wasn’t regular work. And the unfolding situation forced Council to look elsewhere for employment for the community, and as a result Council became a bit more creative, rather than to assume something was going to last forever.”

Irene served as a Councillor for multiple terms including as Mayor. Then in 2013 she returned to the Rural City of Wangaratta - this time as one of three administrators appointed after the entire Council was sacked.

It was an extraordinary time for the community and for Council, and required particularly skillful leadership.

“There was a view within the community where some individuals said, you weren’t elected to this role; you’ve been appointed, and you are not representing us.”

“But we persisted with meeting anyone who had a concern or issue. Our role was to ensure the community understood what was going on and could feel confident with the decisions we were making.”

Irene’s love of local government continues to reignite over time, and in 2020 she was elected to Council once again.

Irene says AVCLP was the catalyst for her move into local government and she’s not sure she would have considered it at all if it weren’t for AVCLP.

“The program just gives you an opportunity to lift your gaze, which I think is an important thing.”

Local businesses and organisations are engaged as supporters and funders

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Investing in the Victorian Regional Community Leadership Programs has proven to have long-term impact on individuals, their community and the wider dairy industry. In being involved in the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program the Gardiner Foundation has watched as graduates have gone on to have a positive impact on their local dairying communities.

- Allan Cameron, Chief Executive Officer, Gardiner Dairy Foundation

Through to the close of 2023, the AVCLP received major funding from the Victorian State Government, in addition to support from valued workplace and scholarship funders.

Ensuring local businesses and organisations are engaged as supporters and funders goes beyond the financial aspect, as these stakeholders provide economic support to the wider community and contribute to the viability of a range of endeavors, providing opportunities for growth and underpinning many facets of community development. These businesses and organisations are key stakeholders in the strategic direction and ongoing sustenance of our communities, and it is critical they are able to participate and contribute to the development of emerging leaders who are knowledgeable, empowered and capable of leading thriving communities into the future.

WORKPLACE FUNDERS

Supporting an employee to undertake the program provides workplace funders with a return on investment, as participants can apply their learnings within their professional capacity. Of the surveyed Alumni, 74% had gone on to take up a leadership role in their workplace, after completing the program.

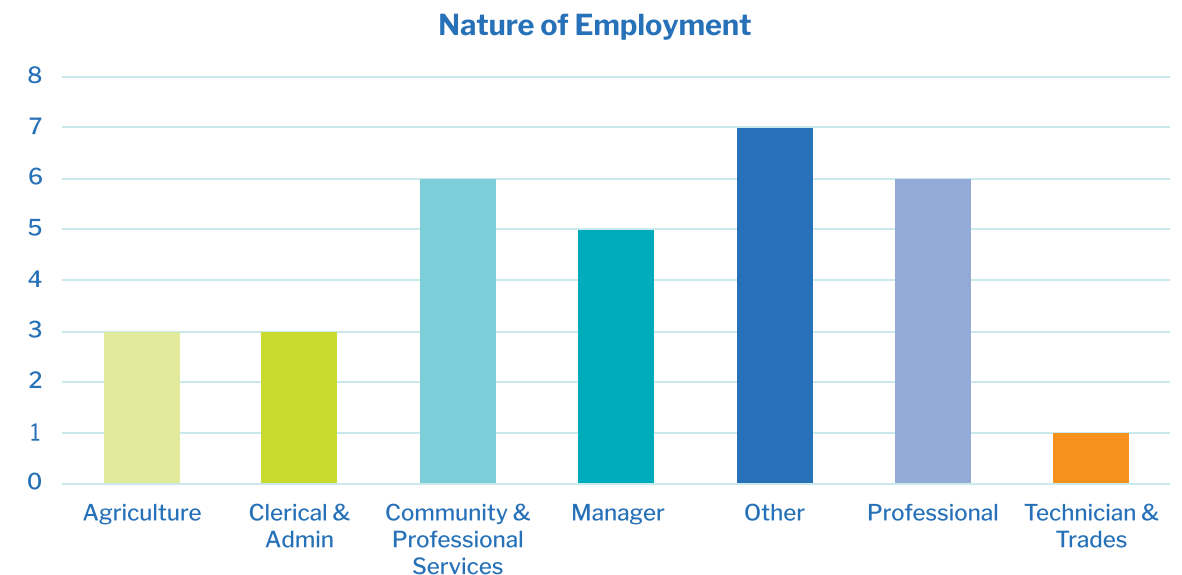
Alumni also indicated a continued commitment to professional development, with 52% of survey respondents going on to undertake further leadership or professional development, post program.

This provides a unique professional development proposition for workplace funders, in that aside from the broader outcomes achieved at a community level, undertaking the AVCLP also improves the performance of the employee, and contributes to better outcomes for the workplace funder organisation.

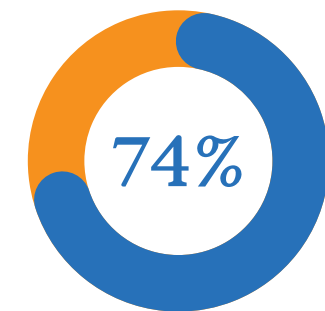
SCHOLARSHIP FUNDERS

Many AVCLP scholarship funders provide scholarships in relation to a specific industry or sector, such as the arts and creative sector, dairy industry, education sector, rural and regional townships. The return on investment for these scholarship funders is through the continued development of future leaders in their sector, often with a view of achieving future proofing outputs, such as succession planning, revitalization, and industry advocacy.

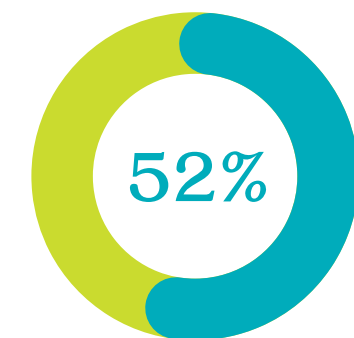
The broad range of employment across sectors increases the effectiveness of the Alumni peer network, ensuring a pool of well-equipped and knowledgeable leaders who can leverage reach and resourcing, outside of their immediate organisation.



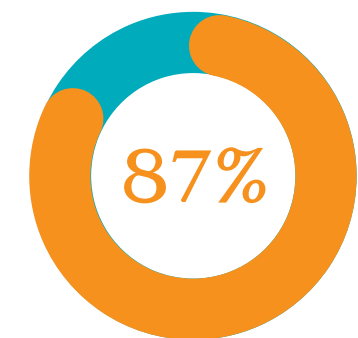
Percentage of Alumni that have taken up leadership roles after completing the program



The nature of relationships between Alumni and their workplace and scholarship funders is circular, in that Alumni go on to promote and advocate for participation and funding of the AVCLP:



of surveyed Alumni reported advocating for funding a placement in the program



of surveyed Alumni had encouraged someone to apply for the program

AVCLP Alumni

Case Study

Maria Berry

Maria Berry always used her voice to speak up for others. But after completing the AVCLP in 2018 she boldly turned up the volume, and is now a highly-respected national advocate for older Australians.

Maria Berry remembers when she first heard about the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program. She'd just lost her home in a fire, was out of work, and her father - a victim of financial abuse - had moved into aged care.

Putting her hand up for a leadership program was the last thing on her mind.

However, at a rural business women's conference in Beechworth she met former AVCL Board member Susan Benedyka who immediately saw Maria's leadership potential.

"She said I had so much to offer and she just gave me this lift of confidence and said you are a perfect candidate for the program."

Despite the many hardships in her life at that time, Maria, a former nurse, was a tireless volunteer in healthcare, aged care and her local community. She served on an advisory committee for Albury Wodonga Health, was a health consumer representative with the Health Issues Centre and contributed to the Victorian Government's Age Friendly Communities initiative.

Buoyed by Susan's belief in her, Maria applied for the AVCLP and was offered a sponsored position thanks to Into Our Hands Foundation.

Through the program Maria found the confidence to approach people and ask questions, handle difficult situations and confrontation, reach out to her network of contacts for information and support, and grab opportunities when they arise.

With the encouragement of those around her at AVCLP, Maria seized an opportunity to present at the 5th National Elder Abuse Conference in 2018.

"It opened up all the doors for every opportunity."



Podcast appearances, media interviews and guest speaking engagements followed and Maria became a sought-after national voice on elder rights.

"People will now look at me and take me seriously, and want to listen to what I'm saying. They do trust me and they do respect me, and they do think of me now as a leader. It's something I never imagined."

Of all the things Maria's done, she regards AVCLP as "one of the most amazing experiences ever." In giving back to the program that gave so much to her, Maria joined the AVCL Board in 2020, serving a nearly three-year term during which time she was a very active Board Member, with a passion to contributing to the organisation and in particular, the Alumni body.

One of Maria's goals is to attract funding for leadership programs specifically targeting elder advocacy and ambassadorship, so that more community members can develop skills to become elder rights champions.

"I think with all the things that are happening in healthcare and aged care, some of these solutions and answers have got to come from the community."

"You've got to keep trying and that was a huge learning (from the program). You just keep knocking on the door and you just keep finding other ways. Don't give up. If you think something's a really good idea, there's no harm in persevering with it."

AVCLP Alumni

Case Study

Bobbi McKibbin

Redefining what leadership looked like allowed solar industry specialist Bobbi McKibbin to overcome imposter syndrome, and instigate national change within her industry.

When Bobbi McKibbin looked around the room on the first day of AVCLP, she saw well-educated people with impressive resumes - and she felt like an imposter.

"I sat there and thought 'holy crap, what have I done? I've bitten off more than I can chew. I'm not sure I'm gonna fit in'. I finished high school socially. I really wasn't interested in school academically. I had kids early and I suppose in a way I felt as though I was finding my feet. But I sat there and said to myself 'believe in the process, believe in the process'."

Bobbi was attracted to the AVCLP because of its practical, community-focused approach to learning and, as the program progressed, she realised leadership didn't mean being the person out the front with the amazing resume.

"I think we need to reshape the traditional meanings of (leadership) because we can have 'official' leaders and they can be horrendous, and then we can have community members that are phenomenal. So leadership is more about an action as opposed to a person."

As a self-described 'get in and do it' person, Bobbi sprang into action when the pandemic hit in 2020. She collaborated with solar industry bodies to hold a series of mental health webinars for workers.



"We gave mental health a voice so people could feel they weren't alone, that they were supported (and) valued. And it was really good to do that because it brought the industry together."

It wasn't Bobbi's first time bringing the industry together either; she had been working in the male-dominated solar industry for many years, and it was as she neared the end of the AVCLP that she saw areas where action was needed.

"There were some pretty toxic things happening. We started to realise that women didn't have the confidence to speak up in forums because they were too scared of being shot down."

Bobbi and half a dozen other women formed Australian Women In Solar Energy (AWISE).

"Our primary goal is to connect women who work in our industry and help them see their worth and know that they are valued, and then develop them to be industry leaders as well."

Since AWISE began, more women are filling roles on industry committees. Every industry event must now feature gender diverse panels, and podcasts and magazines are reaching out to AWISE for stories.

"There are amazing women in our industry that haven't been given a voice before. We're inspiring other women to come through the industry. So it's pretty exciting."

"I'm incredibly proud of what we've achieved, and I've achieved that from Wodonga. You don't have to live in a metropolitan area to have great impact. You can do it from anywhere."

It's also brought another layer of empathy and compassion to her work.

"Learning to understand and identify the soft skills is invaluable. We employ apprentices so they're young people at very impressionable ages who have a whole lot of stuff going on in their lives. You need to be a whole lot more than a boss. The program helped me gain confidence in standing up more, I suppose, and assisting people."

"We know we're going to face adversity again. And if we have the toolbox with us on how we can support one another and support those through adversity we will be a much richer society as a result. So, that's what this program offers - all of those things that are so vital to connected communities."

Bobbi was sponsored by Telstra Regional & Rural to complete the AVCLP, and says the program has given her the confidence to "shoot for the stars" and not be afraid to tap people on the shoulder to ask for help. She now also embraces opportunities for lifelong learning, completing a Disaster Recovery & Climate Change Adaption Program with AVCL in 2021, and regularly puts her hand up for community focused workshops.

"What I learnt at the AVCLP goes with me every day. It's been a lifetime lasting experience for sure."

STRATEGIC PLAN
2022 - 2025

- 1 Future focused stakeholder engagement
- 2 Growth to deliver impact
- 3 Systems to support impact
- 4 Business as usual

History of the Program

In 1989 the Hugh Williamson Trustees established and funded the Williamson Community Leadership Program (WCLP) based in Melbourne. As part of his last will and testament, Hugh D T Williamson requested that “allocations be made to help individuals rather than institutions. Assistance to young people is not to be based on academic qualifications but rather on worthiness and need, as a reward for good citizenship, and for the development of leadership qualities.” Hugh Williamson December 1985.

The WCLP was originally modelled on a Chicago based program, Leadership Greater Chicago. Leadership Greater Chicago has been operating on a tested model since 1983, cultivating Chicago’s business, public and civic leaders through a deeper understanding of the issues facing their community and each other, building a better Chicago.

Following the demonstrated success of the WCLP, the first Victorian regional community leadership program was established in 1997 in the Goulburn Murray region; this program was the Fairley Leadership Program, with significant support from the Fairley Foundation.

Inspired by the Fairley Leadership Program, a volunteer Board of community leaders, lead by inaugural chair John Brown AO, delivered the first instance of the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program (AVCLP) in 1999. The AVCLP went into recess the following year, due to a lack of funding. However, the graduates of that first program valued the output of the program so highly that concerted efforts were made with the Board to achieve financial viability and enable continued delivery of the AVCLP.

The AVCLP was then successfully delivered each year from 2001 to 2023.

In 2017, AVCLP changed the name of the organisation to Alpine Valleys Community Leadership (AVCL) in recognition of the increased range of programs and initiatives that it now offers, with the Annual Program continuing to be specifically known as the AVCLP.

AVCL is now a highly regarded provider of contemporary community leadership development through programs, forums and workshops to a broad cross section of communities and industries in North east Victoria. Guided by its vision, AVCL delivers a range of fit for purpose programs, with context and relevance to the current and emerging leadership capacities and skills needs of communities across the region. In 2022, AVCL acquired full Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status.

At the end of 2023 the Victorian State Government will cease funding for Regional Community Leadership programs, including the AVCLP. AVCL will work with valued stakeholders to consider the future of the AVCLP, embracing a solutions-focused outlook to reimagine what community leadership development can look like in the North East and Border Regions in 2024 and beyond.

AVCLP
Alumni
1999-2023

2010

Mary Anderson
Jenny Ashby
Graeme Blake
Gwenda Cauty
Matthew Charles - Jones
Anthony Cole
Ross Grant
Alice Grattoon
Cherie Gottschling
Tegan Lithgow
Helen Langborne
Lauren McCully
Emma McPherson
Shane Martin
Diane Martin
Wendy Porter
Judith Samways
Charmaine Stefani
Craig Turton
Helen Vey

2009

Sue Arndt
Gillian Belle
Sandy Belgre
Brett Bevan
Malcolm Bradbury
Julia Cocks
Kym Goodman
Catherine Hattersley
Phil Horner
Paul Horton
Gayle Hughes
Brian Jones
Grant Jones
Justin King
Lisa Mangelsdorf
Chris Morris
Kelvin Neal
Matthew O’Connell
Colleen Reynolds
Wayne Rotherham
Joanne Ryan
Christopher Tate
Kristy Youman

2008

Roy Baird
Robert Bon
Felicity Brooke
Tim Clune
Kerry Craig
Shane Downie
Sarah Flamsteed
David Guy
Gwen Holford
Carolyn Humby
Melissa Ivone
Barbara Martin
Lisa McInerney
Kerry Moylan
Cristina Perra
Alison Pockley
Greta Quinlivan
Vicki Robinson
Lizette Salmon
Kim Scanlon
Celia Turnbull

2007

Helen Allan
Tracey Appleby
Susan Bull
Paul Brady
Jeff Carboon
Angela Craven
Sarah Daniell
Trish Gallagher
Leanne Harris
Anne Hiskins
Lynne Jones
Jacinta Ludeman
Sue Lukins
Jackie Mooney
Anthony Nicholson
Michele Padbury
Tony Rebetzke
Leonard Redfern
Helen Robinson
Shay Simpson
Travis Smith

2006

Neil Aird
John Antonello
Tammy Atkins
Allan Findlay
Will Flamsteed
Lynn Gibson
Paul Greaves
Anthony Griffiths
Kris Harrison
Chris Hepner
Kaye Hildebrand
Nell Kell
Catherine Kent
Jan Kowarzik
David Larkman
Renee Palmer
Elaine Paton
Mary Prowse
Judy Seymour
Caitlin Sheehan
Aaron Vanegmond
Debbie Watts

2005

Helen Al Helwani
Janet Bell
Andrew Briggs
Erin Brooks
Trish Curtis
Graham Daglish
Lauren Fearne
Kevin Freeman
Kate Green
Christine Jewell
Sue Leavold
Sonia Lewis
Sue McCabe
Gabriele Moritz
Gary Nicholls
Katie Park
Doug Paton
Hugh Paton
Sue Salau
Peter Scales
Ralph Scalzo
Paul Sladdin
Julie Wilkins

2004

Anneshka Brown
Wayne Donehue
Tracey Farrant
Phillip Gardner
Phil Garoni
Roger Gregory
Andrew Holm
Gavin Kelly
David Kidd
Carol Hill
Michele Lee
Barry McIntosh
Henry McKenzie
Colleen O’Brien
Tracy Pirie
Deb Randich
Pamela Simpson
Chloe Southern
Michelle Wilkinson
Robert Williams

2003

Mandy Allen
Owen Bassett
James Burgess
David Briggs
Debbie Corbett
Yvonne Evans
Karen Hayes
Karen Jones
Kristy McCormick
Marilyn McKenzie-McHarg
Leesa Milne
Kevin Murphy
Betty Murtagh
David Ryan
Graham Scott
MariJana Southern
John Stapleton
Tanya Tatulaschwili
Geoff Turnbull

2002

David Bell
Jenny Bradley
Jill Breadon
John Bridges
Rob Carolane
Lyn Coulston
Faith Damm
Marian Dowling
Bruce Dwerryhouse
Rick Felton
Helen Haines
Bev Hoffmann
Phil Howard
Heather Ingpen
Veronica Lanigan
Shaun Lawlor
Denis Martin
Steve Morell
Lucy Pizzini
Graeme Pollard
Jo Saggars
Rob Steel
Rainier Van Dyk

1999

Lachlan Campbell
Neil Clydsdale
Jenny Evans
Nola Evans
Mark Felton
Simon Glass
Irene Grant
Roger Haddrell
Tracey Hooper
Don Jackson
Jocelyn Lyon
Mick McInerney
Dianne Mangan
Philippa Noble
Marion Rak
Michael Resson
Grant Scale
Jon Temby
Maureen Titcumb
Shane Wright

