

Monday, June 25

Low women in agriculture figures spark scholarship call

Following the release of figures that show men outnumber women more than two to one in Australia's agriculture industry, Hort Innovation and Women & Leadership Australia (WLA) have put the call out for expressions of interest for dedicated course scholarship opportunities.

Labour Force figures released by the [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) recently show out of the nation's 329,600 people working in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, just 30 per cent are female.

Hort Innovation chief executive John Lloyd said the figures served as a timely reminder that the organisation, with WLA, is offering 20 scholarship course positions for women with varying leadership experience, and applications are now open.

"The agriculture industry is becoming increasingly aware that diversity significantly underpins the sector's long-term growth, profitability and sustainability," he said.

"Working with WLA, and women leaders in the horticulture industry, we are working to help empower more women by giving them the tools needed to support long and profitable careers in horticulture."

He said more than 20 women in the horticulture industry had input into these dedicated courses, following feedback that women want affordable access to women's-only development programs, to expand their professional networks, boost their theoretical education and enhance their practical leadership skills.

The initiative provides three different scholarship opportunities. Each year, 10 scholarships are available for emerging women leaders, five for women working in mid-level management and five for women working at a senior and executive level.

Leticia Gosse, a soil and plant performance company executive who is undertaking one of the courses as part of last year's intake, said the experience is invaluable.

"In this industry, I am lucky to be part of our family business where myself and other women have been encouraged to step up and take on leadership roles. Only after participating in the Women in Leadership course did I realise how unique my experience has been, and the positive difference that this support can have on developing leaders," she said.

"For my sister and I, our hands-on knowledge was limited to our exposure with the family business. When it came to succession planning, we felt it was important to look externally for executive support, grow our networks, and we wanted to know more about how to build our team of people to build the business.

"The course has afforded us the knowledge, courage and support to not just take on the running of the business, but also expand our team and operations."

Both Hort Innovation and WLA will co-contribute to the scholarship for participants, which reduces the cost of participating by around 60 per cent.

WLA Program Director Suzi Finkelstein said the scholarship program is a first-of-its-kind for the industry in Australia.

"We are extremely proud to co-invest with Hort Innovation. This is a sustained developmental project that will transform the lives of many women right throughout the sector."

For more information and to apply, go to the [Women & Leadership Australia website](#). This initiative is being delivered as part of the [Hort Frontiers Leadership Fund](#).

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