



**INTRODUCING THE
PARTICIPANTS OF THE
2020 NORTHERN MALLEE
LEADERS PROGRAM**



Vashti Aratangi
Red Cliffs, Vic

Born in the Cook Islands, Vashti arrived in Australia in 1994 and called Melbourne her home where she studied Tourism Management and worked in hospitality for 7 years.

In 2008, Vashti made the move to the country and now calls Red Cliffs her home. In 2013 she volunteered for the Red Cliffs Salvation Army to facilitate a Hula Dance Workshop for families. After this she was promoted to the role of Children's Ministry Leader for over 2 years.

Vashti currently works at the Red Cliffs Community Resource Centre as a Volunteer Coordinator. She is passionate about her Cook Island culture and volunteers her time promoting and teaching the Aroa Hula Dance Troupe.

A proud mother to her 11 year old son, in her spare time Vashti enjoys craft and growing her own food.

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Scholarship Recipient



Brad Baker
Mildura, Vic

Brad was born and raised in Mildura. After finishing his VCE, Brad completed his Bachelor of Accounting at La Trobe University Mildura.

Brad started work as a tax accountant, a role that he was in for over 4 years, before moving into asset accounting for the Mildura Rural City Council. Brad's current role is as a management accountant at Southern Cross Farms.

Outside of work, Brad's interests are basketball and spending time with family. Brad and his wife Chelsea welcomed their first child in 2019.

This year, Brad is looking forward to the opportunity to develop community relationships, enhance his leadership skills and to give back to the community.

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Jayden Burns
Mildura, Vic

Jayden was born and raised in Horsham. Following his secondary education at Horsham College, he moved to Ballarat to attend University.

In 2008, after attaining a Bachelor of Commerce majoring in Accounting, Jayden started as a Graduate Accountant with Mulcahy & Co in Ballarat. After completing his CPA studies, Jayden progressed to Senior Accountant before relocating to Mildura in April 2019 with his wife Sophie and their young son George, taking up a role as a Partner of Mulcahy & Co's Mildura/Robinvale and Berri Offices.

In his spare time Jayden enjoys playing golf and spending time with his young family.



Rebecca Burton
Mildura, Vic

Rebecca is a proud born and bred local and has two children. Rebecca comes from a large family of small business owners, so it was a natural progression to buy into her first business at the age of twenty.

When Rebecca's first child Angus arrived she did her Agents Representatives Course and worked part time in real estate.

When Rebecca's second child Rudy was just a baby she bought a Sumo Salad franchise which she ran in partnership with her Mum for 10 years.

Rebecca has been involved in many community projects and upon selling her business in 2019 decided to follow her passion into community service.

Rebecca is currently studying at SuniTafe and volunteering with SCHS.

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Rebecca has made the commitment to invest in her own involvement in the 2020 NML Program as a self-funded participant.



Nicole Byrnes
Pooncarie, NSW

Nicole has enjoyed a long, successful career in research and extension services following completion of her PhD having worked in both the government and not-for-profit sectors in numerous agricultural projects.

Nicole is currently employed at SPAA (Society of Precision Agriculture Australia Inc.) where she provides leadership to the SPAA team and manages projects at a regional, state-wide and national level for the organisation. Nicole is also on the board of Western Local Land Services and provides guidance to SuniTAFE in their horticultural SMART Farm redevelopment plans.

Outside working hours, Nicole, her husband and two young sons run a mixed farming property near Pooncarie (NSW), where she volunteers in a number of community groups in the district.

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Suzi Daley
Mildura, Vic

Born in Broken Hill, Suzi spent her childhood and early teens in the Simpson and Strzelecki Deserts, along the Dingo Fence and red sandhills of Merti Merti before her family settled at Moomba Gasfields in South Australia's Cooper Basin.

Sent to boarding school with her two older sisters when she was 14, Suzi graduated high school four years later and has spent much of her adult life working in a diverse range of industries across Australia, from telecommunications, construction, hospitality and retail.

Suzi moved to Mildura from Sydney in 2003 and lives with her daughter. A 'nomad' at heart, she has a great love for animal welfare, nature, art, poetry and literature and is passionate about raising awareness and funds for small, local charities.

Suzi has made the commitment to invest in her own involvement in the 2020 NML Program as a self-funded participant.



Lisa Davis
Red Cliffs, Vic

Lisa was born and raised in the Mildura area.

After completing her secondary schooling, Lisa relocated to Adelaide and then Brisbane for 10 years where she pursued a career in personal injury insurance.

Lisa returned to Mildura in 2012, where she completed her Diploma of Community Services at SuniTAFE Mildura. Since completing her studies, Lisa has realised her passion for working with disadvantaged people in the community and is a strong advocate for social justice.

Lisa is now the senior worker in the Housing Access Program at MASP, working with individuals and families who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

In her spare time, Lisa enjoys travelling abroad and experiencing different cultures.

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Melissa Follett
Mildura, Vic

Melissa was born in Mildura, raised in Wentworth and has lived in Sunraysia for most of her life.

Following her secondary education at Mildura Senior College, Melissa was awarded a scholarship to study a Bachelor of Business at La Trobe University. Melissa commenced her tertiary education at the local Mildura campus before transferring to the Bendigo campus to complete her degree.

Upon graduation Melissa moved back to Mildura where she secured employment at Mildura Rural City Council. A long-term employee of Council for 18 years, Melissa has extensive experience across the areas of organisational development, human resources, corporate and strategic planning, reporting, continuous improvement, training & development and organisational and community research.

Melissa is a devoted mother to her two children Brock and Mia and together with her partner Greg, enjoy supporting their children in their interests in motorsport and dance.

Melissa has made the commitment to invest in her own involvement in the 2020 NML Program as a self-funded participant.



Mandy Gowty
Nichols Point, Vic

Whilst working for a legal firm in Melbourne, Mandy and her partner commenced a five-year journey around Australia. Mandy took on many varied roles during this time including working for an equine stud in Noosa; Fraser Island Resort in Hervey Bay; cattle stations in Queensland, before their last stop in Darwin. After getting married they then chose to come to sunny Mildura on the mighty Murray River and call this beautiful region their home.

After starting a family (four children under four), Mandy and her husband dedicated their time to establishing their own building company of which she is currently a Director and manages Accounts and Administration. Mandy now has a house full of teenagers and a business that has gone from strength to strength.

She has been actively involved in Nichols Point Inc. since 2015 and the Mildura Alcheringa Pony Club from 2016, thoroughly enjoying the challenges and rewards of both positions and being involved in the community.

In her spare time, Mandy enjoys horse riding, water skiing, camping and reading. Her favourite past-time is riding the family's beautiful horses with her girls and family holidays.

Mandy has made the commitment to invest in her own involvement in the 2020 NML Program as a self-funded participant.



Judi Johnson
Mildura, Vic

Judi grew up in Mildura, beginning her schooling at Mildura West Primary School, and completing Year 12 at Mildura Technical College.

She married, and supported her husband with his Army career, which involved many moves around the country. During her years away, Judi was a stay at home mother of six. She led a busy life, with favourite past-times being gardening, cooking, sewing and reading.

After her youngest child commenced school, Judi opened a quilt shop, which she successfully ran for 10 years. She then enjoyed various occupations; employment as a seamstress, cook at a retirement village to name a few.

Judi returned to Mildura a few years ago to care for her elderly parents. She currently works as an Assistant Manager of the Salvation Army Thrift Shop and is also a regular volunteer in other areas of the Salvation Army.

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Russell Keating
Mildura, Vic

Russell was born in Wynyard, Tasmania. Leaving Tassie at 19, Russell went on to spend the majority of his adult life in the hospitality sector. Russell began his hospitality career as a bar attendant/waiter before commencing a cooking apprenticeship and eventually working his way up to become a head chef, a position he held at a number of venues across Sunraysia over the years. Russell has recently left the hospitality sector to take up a traineeship with Cozwine. He is hoping this exciting opportunity in the wine industry will enable him to develop a range of new skills for the future.

Russell has a wonderful partner and two children aged 9 and 13, he enjoys watching football and cricket, cooking and spending time with his family.

Russell is looking forward to the challenges of the NML Program and developing new skills and networks.

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NML Alumni Scholarship Recipient



Karen Milner
Irymple, Vic

Karen has lived in Mildura for all of her adult life and is married with a six year old daughter.

After completing her schooling at Mildura Senior College, Karen went on to complete further studies at La Trobe University, gaining her Bachelor of Commerce, then on to receive her CPA. Karen then took a break from study before commencing a Masters in Project Management. Karen is a Coordinator at Mildura Rural City Council, where she has been employed for over 14 years. Karen's focus is Asset Accounting and Asset Management.

In her spare time Karen enjoys travelling, both within Australia and overseas and is looking forward to exploring different parts of the world as her daughter gets older.

Karen has made the commitment to invest in her own involvement in the 2020 NML Program as a self-funded participant.



Kady Moore
Robinvale, Vic

Kady was born in Mildura and resided in the Sunraysia area for the majority of her life. Kady attended school in Robinvale and Manangatang prior to commencing her journey with Victoria Police in 2014.

Kady has been an active participant in her community since returning as an officer to Robinvale in 2015. She has been a Director at the Robinvale District Health Services since 2017.

In her spare time Kady enjoys fitness, the outdoors and riding her horses. Kady is passionate about climate change, sustainability and the environment, which is something she hopes to focus on as a project after the 2020 NML Program.

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Maddy Morrish
Ouyen, Vic

Born in Western Australia, Maddy has spent a majority of her life in Ouyen. Following her secondary education, she completed a Bachelor of Psychological Science at Flinders University in Adelaide, followed by a Bachelor of Nursing at La Trobe in Mildura. She now works in Wellbeing at Ouyen P-12 College as well as being employed as a Registered Nurse at Mallee Track Health & Community Services.

Maddy loves being involved in her community and is an active member of the Ouyen United Football & Netball Club Committee. She is looking forward to learning ways to better use and develop her skills for the future development of her community.

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Nicole Rawlinson-Stanbrough
Mildura, Vic

Nicole was born in Melbourne in 1998 later moving to Mildura with her family.

During the final years of her secondary education at Mildura Senior College, Nicole completed her Certificate III in Aviation which continues to be a passion of hers. Nicole is currently an active member of Scouts Australia and has also been involved with Electric Light Theatre for the last eight years. Her past three of these years with Electric Light Theatre has also seen Nicole be a part of the production team/choreographer.

Nicole Commenced working for Optus Mildura in 2017 as a sales associate before moving into the store manager role in 2019.

In her spare time Nicole enjoys playing cricket, hanging out with friends and has travelled throughout the Pacific Islands. She is looking forward to exploring other parts of the world in the future.

Nicole has made the commitment to invest in her own involvement in the 2020 NML Program as a self-funded participant.



Anita Richards
Mildura, Vic

Anita was born in Tasmania and has worked in various roles in the Private Health Insurance Industry for 26 years. In 2006, she relocated to South Australia to work as a Systems Specialist Trainer sharing her knowledge to Health Funds throughout Australia on their Health Systems.

In November 2018 another relocation saw Anita move to Mildura to work for Mildura Health Fund as their Technology and Training Manager.

Her interests include car racing, golf, music and spending time with friends. Loving Mildura, Anita has a strong desire to immerse herself into the community, developing relationships and giving back to the region that is now home.

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Belinda Ryan
Nichols Point, Vic

Raised in Mildura, Belinda completed her schooling at Mildura Senior College and initially began her working career in the export of local fresh fruit followed by export of wine at Australian Vintage. She completed a Diploma of Business (International Trade) and continued further studies and employment in Rural Business & Financial Services. Belinda now works in Revenue at Lower Murray Water and enjoys working and helping rural customers including those in hardship.

Belinda and her husband Andrew have three children and are all actively involved in many local sporting clubs in both a playing and coaching capacity.

Belinda is passionate about personal/professional growth and development and is excited about the new opportunities ahead due to her involvement in the 2020 NML Program.

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Katrina Umback
Mildura, Vic

Originally from Broken Hill, Katrina moved to Mildura in 2011 with her husband and two young boys.

Katrina's background is varied. From Journalism, Office Administration, Recruitment, Court Services, a Sergeant for the NSW Sheriff's Office to a Fitness Instructor.

In Mildura, Katrina has devoted her time to raising her two boys while working as a Fitness Instructor and volunteering at her son's school.

With the death of her husband in 2019 to a heart attack, Katrina is focusing on raising money and awareness for the Heart Foundation along with establishing a Catheterisation Lab and Angiogram service in our region.

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**Melissa
Van Reyersdael**
Red Cliffs, Vic

Mel has lived in the Mallee for 10 years after moving from the Dandenong ranges. She has a gorgeous family with five children. Mel runs a family business, Smith Stump services, with her partner and is currently starting her own practice - Mallee Arts.

Mel has worked in the welfare sector for 16 + years in youth services with children who have experienced trauma and abuse.

She is currently work at Mildura Rural City Council in the Youth Engagement team part time. Mel completed a Degree with a Bachelor of Arts in Welfare at Victoria University in 2004 And most recently studied with the college of clinical Art Therapy fulfilling her dream to become an Art Therapist.

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Daniel Whitford
Mildura, Vic

Daniel was born in Geelong but was raised in Robinvale where he completed his VCE. Seeking a worldly perspective, he backpacked for a year before attending Deakin University in Burwood to complete a Bachelor Degree in I.T. Security.

After several years working in hospitality then telecommunications Daniel decided on a tree change to be closer to his family. He relocated to Mildura where he now works as a Technical Service Manager.

Daniel is a skilled professional who is mindful of the issues affecting the community and hopes that through the NML Program he will discover ways to connect issues to solutions.

He is a committee member of the Northwest Rail Alliance and has a keen interest in politics. In his spare time he enjoys archery and going to the gym.

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