

# THE OBSERVERSHIP PROGRAM

## EMPLOYER GUIDE

### 1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Founded in 2015, The Observership Program facilitates the involvement of highly motivated, talented, diverse and experienced professionals between the ages of 25 and 40 in a structured experience on not-for-profit and government appointed boards.

Over 1,400 Observers have participated in the Program, observing on the boards of over 300 not-for-profit and government organisations.

Observers are selected after an interview process and paired with a participating not-for-profit or government organisation for one calendar year. During that time, Observers attend all board and committee meetings as non-voting participants and learn about the fundamental principles and functions of not-for-profit boards, the role of board members, decision-making processes and governance priorities.

Training is provided to Observers in partnership with our strategic partners the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) and The Ethics Centre and encompasses key subject areas important for not-for-profit governance, with high profile guest speakers invited to contribute at training sessions.

“The Observership Program is in my opinion an outstanding way for the future directors of all levels of Australian Business to gain experience in what to do and indeed what not to do around the board table. I think it is so good that I am filled with regret that it or a similar program didn’t exist when I was young.”

**David Gonski AC Patron**, The Observership Program

### 2. BENEFITS TO EMPLOYERS

- Your employee will participate in the only leadership program in Australia that combines year-long practical observing of a not-for-profit or government board together with a training program to which the Australian Institute of Company Directors, The Ethics Centre and some of Australia’s leading directors contribute;
- A unique, proven, professional development and learning opportunity with tangible outcomes in leadership development, approaches to decision-making, strategic thinking, planning and collaboration;
- Support your employee in participating in a Program, which is recognised by Government and boards for its role in building board capacity and nurturing the next generation of board directors;
- Your employee will be part of pipeline for a younger, “board ready” pool of directors, highly sought after by the not-for-profit and government sectors looking for emerging leaders keen to contribute their skills and experience in exchange for a valuable professional development opportunity;
- 25% of Observers join the boards on which they observed;
- Your employee will gain a practical and theoretical understanding of the fundamentals of board governance and the role of board directors bringing material benefits back to the business, especially to those presenting to boards as part of their day job;
- The confidence and experience to take on future board roles while getting a foot on the ladder;
- Opportunities to apply the principles of good governance learned from observing a board and via the Program’s Training Program (delivered by a number of strategic partners including the AICD and The Ethics Centre), to all aspects of professional life;
- Exposure to leadership capabilities essential for success and an opportunity to be mentored by Board Directors throughout the Observership year;
- For those who wish to make a meaningful contribution to community and society, an opportunity to be part of a growing network of highly motivated and skilled like-minded peers, committed to the development of values-based leadership;

- Opportunities to contribute to the for-purpose sector beyond donating or volunteering individually or via in-house CSR Programs;

#### 4. REQUIREMENTS OF OBSERVERS

Observers are required to:

- Commit to the application and matching process from July – December.
- Commit to the full year of the Observership Program;
- Attend each board meeting of the host organisation with which they are paired
  - Board meetings may be held during work hours or after hours and may be between two and four hours;
- May join and contribute to a board sub-committee or lead or participate in a key strategic project in the event there is one underway during the Observership year;
- Attend up to (10) training sessions throughout the Observership year. Training is provided to Observers in partnership with strategic partners including the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) and The Ethics Centre. Sessions cover key subject areas important for not-for-profit governance, including the fundamental principles and functions of not-for-profit boards, the role of board members, decision-making processes and governance priorities and ethical governance, with material drawn from AICD’s Company Director’s Course, Foundations of Directorship and Directorship in the NFP Sector and The Ethics Centre’s range of offerings on ethical decision-making:
  - Training sessions are held after hours either in the CBD or online.
  - In-Person sessions: 5.30pm networking for 6.00pm start. Concludes at 8.30pm
  - Online sessions from 5.50pm dial in for 6.00pm start. Concludes at 7.30pm;
- Treat all materials, discussions and activities associated with the Program and their organisation with strict confidentiality.

If your organisation would like to consider becoming:

- a Corporate Partner
- Participating host board

Contact:

Catherine Reiser (Victorian Program)  
[catherine.reiser@observership.com.au](mailto:catherine.reiser@observership.com.au)

Rachel Exton (Sydney and Brisbane Program)  
[Rachel.exton@observership.com.au](mailto:Rachel.exton@observership.com.au)