



PROGRAM HANDBOOK

“ 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.”

David Gonski AC (Patron, The Observership Program)

VICTORIA 2026

 The
Observership
Program™

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The Observership Program acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and emerging. We also accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart to walk together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

The Observership Program is committed to ensuring accessibility for people with disability. We will continue to work to improve the user experience for everyone and increase the accessibility of our Program using the relevant accessibility standards.



“The Program is a way to connect talented emerging leaders and the not-for-profit community in a structured and meaningful way.”

Jonathan Gavshon, Founder and Chair, The Observership Program

CONGRATULATIONS

WELCOME TO THE 2026 OBSERVERSHIP PROGRAM

Congratulations on being selected for The Observership Program and welcome to a community of emerging leaders who are shaping Australia’s future through more diverse and representative boardrooms. Through your involvement in the Program, you’ll gain firsthand board experience and develop practical governance capabilities that will open pathways to future leadership roles and allow you to make meaningful contributions to Australian boardrooms.

This guide has been developed to provide information to help you prepare for the journey that awaits and to ensure that your experience is rewarding and enriching.

We trust the year ahead will be an exciting and rewarding journey.

JONATHAN GAVSHON
Founder and Chair

CATHERINE REISER
Director, The Observership Program, Victoria

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Since 2014, The Observership Program has connected talented and accomplished individuals from diverse backgrounds with boards seeking fresh perspectives and contemporary skills. Through structured 12-month placements, the Program cultivates emerging leaders while enabling boards to benefit from next-generation thinking.

More than 1,700 Observers have gained valuable boardroom experience across 410 organisations throughout Australia. Starting in Sydney, the Program expanded to Victoria in 2017 and Brisbane in 2022.



GENERAL INFORMATION

THE PROGRAM RUNS FEBRUARY – DECEMBER 2026

Participation in The Program requires you to attend all training sessions, board and subcommittee meetings. You are an ambassador for The Observership Program and failure to demonstrate adequate commitment jeopardises opportunities for future candidates and participating boards.

Please confirm all board meetings and other key dates directly with your organisation and diarise meetings accordingly.

Please notify your employer of your participation in The Program to ensure their support when leaving the office early to attend training sessions or board meetings.

Your placement as an Observer will conclude at the beginning of December 2026 or with your attendance at your organisation's final board meeting for 2026. At the end of The Program, The Observership Program will liaise with each organisation regarding the placement of a new Observer for 2027, so any further involvement with your organisation will be based on mutual agreement and outside of the formal Program.

BOARD LIAISON

Each participating board is asked to identify a Board Liaison/contact who is responsible for being the point of contact for the Observer and for The Observership Program.

If your board has not identified one for you before your first board meeting, please contact your Program Director.

Please contact your Board Liaison/contact with any questions about serving as an Observer on the board, including details for board meetings, board expectations of their Observer, behaviour in meetings and board culture. For further information about effective engagement with your Board Liaison, please refer to the starter information and video.

“The pay-offs of this program are enormous. Not for profits need access to ready-made board members and like every organisation, they need diversity around their tables. Within that, they need wise younger heads alongside wise older heads so the sector will prosper and beneficiaries of this training and experience will profit...and the skills that they acquire will be taken into their careers, further board appointments and volunteering, as a win for the broader community.”

The Honourable Linda Dessau AV CVO, Former Governor of Victoria



PREPARATION FOR PROGRAM COMMENCEMENT

Prior to your first board meeting or The Observership Program's first session, whichever occurs earlier, please make sure you have completed the following:

1. Police Check: Provided your proof of identity documents, uploaded your consent form and completed the online form following notification provided by The Program.
2. Familiarised yourself with the confidentiality terms of The Program.
3. Diarised all board meetings and training sessions for the year.
4. Informed your board Chair/Board Liaison of any conflicts regarding board meetings.
5. Informed The Program of any extenuating circumstances preventing attendance at any training session.

If a board meeting and training session are scheduled for the same time, please inform The Program and your board contact. In case of this conflict, while the final decision will be yours to make with your board, The Program recommends attending the board meeting. Please feel free to discuss with Catherine Reiser, Director, The Observership Program, Victoria



2024 Observer cohort with Catherine Reiser, Director and Jeena Fernando, Operations Lead, Victoria.

FOR OBSERVERS EXPECTATION AND ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT:

- High level training for not-for-profit directors delivered by partners including the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) and The Ethics Centre as part of a program that includes networking sessions with high profile guest speakers and alumni.
- A year-long program to build your experience and confidence in serving on a not-for-profit board or government board.
- Access to experienced board directors from both the not-for-profit, government and for-profit sectors.
- Possible involvement in a strategic project or board subcommittee.
- Networking opportunities with fellow observers and alumni in the Program. The Observership Program will connect you with the previous year's observer on your organisation's board.
- A rewarding professional development experience that facilitates your contribution to society in a meaningful way.

Establishing open and direct communication early on with your Board Liaison/contact is the key to a successful Observership. Take responsibility for asking questions, clarifying expectations on both sides and in the event of any issues arising or advice needed, please contact your Program Director.

NEED TO KNOW:

- Discussions that occur at board meetings are confidential. It is essential that Observers understand and respect this confidentiality. As part of your application to The Observership Program you accepted a confidentiality agreement and it is essential that you abide by the terms of this agreement.
- Please handle your role with sensitivity and only speak if either the Chair invites you to contribute or if it becomes clear that your opinion is welcome in general boardroom discussion. We encourage you to check in with the Chair or your board contact person prior to your first board meeting to discuss expectations, content and delivery of your contributions.
- Your presence at board meetings is at the discretion of the Chair. There are some circumstances where it will not be appropriate for you to attend or participate in a board meeting or discussion. We have agreed with each Chair that in certain circumstances, the Observer may be asked to leave. Please handle this request sensitively.
- We encourage you to ask the Chair or board secretary to minute that you are attending each meeting by invitation in the capacity of Observer.
- Do NOT vote in any voting matters even if asked to do so by the Chair.
- Make it clear in all dealings that you are an Observer. For example, it is recommended that when contributing to discussions you highlight your role in the following way: "In my capacity as Observer, I think that..."
- While being offered a formal board position at the conclusion of The Program can happen, it is not a pre-requisite for not-for-profit or government board participation in The Program and should not be an expectation of Observers.
- Our training course is designed to provide an overview of the key topics relevant to board governance, as part of a combined experience of the theory and practice of board directorship. AICD runs more in-depth courses for those interested.

“My time as an Observer was one of the most productive professional development experiences I have ever had. The ability to gain an insight into a Board operation and to be so well looked after and mentored by The Chair will absolutely stay with me as I progress professionally.”

Tara Prowse, Observer, Victorian Program



PLEASE CONTACT US IF:

- You are having trouble fulfilling your obligations to attend training and/or board meetings
- There is anything untoward, including inappropriate behaviour that occurs at your meetings that is cause for concern
- You are being asked to excuse yourself from meetings on a frequent basis
- You are not receiving a full set of materials
- You have any general concerns about your participation

We will treat the matter with utmost confidentiality and contact the organisation on your behalf to resolve these matters if appropriate.

FEEDBACK

Throughout the year we will be conducting feedback via online surveys, during the training sessions and via scheduled feedback calls to check your Observership is on track. We appreciate your provision of any feedback requested in the specified time. Your feedback is critical for the future success of The Program. We will do the same with the participating organisations.

We also encourage you to contact us directly with any specific feedback or questions you have at any time throughout the year.

Catherine Reiser, Director, The Observership Program, Victoria

“The training program was fantastic, and I have been highly recommending it to friends and colleagues. The content was relevant and timely and enhanced the board observation. The training has also been relevant for my day job and provided me with a new perspective and approaches to consider in my work.”

Evelyn Du Mont, Observer, Victorian Program

KEY DETAILS

The training program consists of eleven sessions throughout the year, including the launch event. In-person CBD sessions run from 6:00pm to 8:30pm (arrival from 5:30pm), while online sessions are 90 minutes, starting at 6:00pm.

Training sessions encompass key subject areas essential for not-for-profit governance, including:

- Directors' duties and responsibilities;
- Finance;
- Strategy;
- Risk;
- Ethics; and
- Theory of Change

Guest speakers with significant board experience on not-for-profit, government and for-profit boards are invited to share personal and professional insights with Observers at training sessions.

All sessions are **MANDATORY**. A Certificate of Attendance will be provided to those Observers who complete the training program in full.

If due to extenuating circumstances, Observers are unable to attend any of the sessions please contact us. This includes arriving late or leaving early. Access to the training venues after hours can be restricted so latecomers will not always be able to enter easily.

We will send you details of all training sessions and notify you of any changes. Special events will be communicated separately.

“It is the theoretical, tailored training component, added to the practical experience of sitting on a board as an Observer for a year that makes The Observership Program unique in this country.”

Cathy Robinson, CEO,
The Observership Program

OUR TRAINING PARTNER (AICD)

AICD develops the content and materials for The Observership Program training sessions and provides expert facilitators.

AICD's purpose is to strengthen society through world class governance and to be the independent and trusted voice of governance.

Where available, links to webinars and other course materials will be distributed via AICD's database.

AICD contributes to The Observership Program as a Strategic Partner.

AICD's principal activities include:

- Education;
- Conducting professional development programs and events for boards and directors;
- Producing publications on director and governance issues; and
- Developing and promoting policies on issues of interest to directors.

The AICD has more than 51,000 members. Members include directors from such diverse organisations as ASX-listed companies, government bodies, not-for-profit organisations, public sector entities, family-owned/private companies and entrepreneurial ventures.

To find out more about the AICD, visit www.aicd.com.au

OUR TRAINING PARTNER (THE ETHICS CENTRE)

The Ethics Centre is proud to contribute to The Observership Program as a Strategic Partner and a provider of specialist ethics training for the Observer cohort. The Ethics Centre is a non-profit organisation founded 30 years ago to raise the ethical standards of Australian business. The organisation has grown to encompass a broad spectrum of activities including consulting, education and training, counselling, thought leadership and major events. They've provided ethics tools and training to the military, primary schools, trade unions and non-profits. Many of Australia's largest companies have called on The Ethics Centre for specialist advice and insights.

For the past decade, The Ethics Centre has presented the popular IQ2 debate series and the internationally renowned *Festival of Dangerous Ideas*. The Ethics Centre operates Ethicall – a free helpline available to anyone struggling with an ethical dilemma – and they recently launched a new corporate membership program, The Ethics Alliance. To find out more about The Ethics Centre, visit www.ethics.org.au



Naomi Edwards FAICD, Chair, AICD



VICTORIA 2026 TRAINING TIMETABLE

Timing for our training sessions are below: (Except for the Launch event)

IN PERSON SESSIONS: 5.30pm arrival for networking and light refreshments for a 6.00pm start. Session concludes at 8.30pm, unless advised otherwise

ONLINE SESSIONS: Log in at 5.50pm for a 6.00pm start. Session concludes at 7.30pm

DATE	TOPIC	LOCATION	GUEST SPEAKER/ FACILITATOR
THURSDAY 26 FEBRUARY	2026 Program Launch Event	The National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), St Kilda Raod	Helga Svendsen OAM
WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH	2026 Observer Induction Session	In Person, PwC Melbourne	Catherine Reiser, Director, Victorian Program
WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH	AICD Duties and Responsibilities for NFP Directors	Online session	AICD Facilitator, TBC
WEDNESDAY 8 APRIL	AICD Finance for NFP Directors	Online session	AICD Facilitator, TBC
WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL	AICD Strategy for NFP Directors	Online Session	AICD Facilitator, TBC
WEDNESDAY 6 MAY	AICD Risk for NFP Directors	Online session	AICD Facilitator, TBC
WEDNESDAY 20 MAY	AICD Q & A Session	In Person, PwC Melbourne	Panel of Directors
WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE	Ethics in Governance	Online session	Dr Simon Longstaff AO, Executive Director, The Ethics Centre
WEDNESDAY 9 SEPTEMBER	Theory of Change	In Person, PwC Melbourne	Elise Sernik and Barbara Barkley, Leadership Space
WEDNESDAY 28 OCTOBER	Next Steps to Board Directorship and Networking	In Person, PwC Melbourne	Panel of Alumni
WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER	End of Year Networking event with Guest Speaker	In Person, PwC Melbourne	Guest Speaker, TBC

THANK YOU

The Observership Program relies on the generosity and support of our network for every aspect of our work: current and former Observers; company directors, philanthropists, foundations, businesses, not-for-profit organisations and social enterprises who share our commitment to create a passionate, motivated and diverse community of future leaders.

PROGRAM ALUMNI

Ronny Andrade Parra
(Accessibility Advisory
Committee)
Hugo Bieber
Nadina Brockhurst
Sonia Clarke
Victoria Crane
Paul Devlin
Siba Diqer
Ibrahim Elsoukmani
(Accessibility Advisory
Committee)
Andrea Fernandez
Bianca Goebel
Justin Greenstein
Kim Groizard
(Accessibility Advisory
Committee)
Kei Ho (Accessibility
Advisory Committee)
Kin Jing Ly
(Accessibility Advisory
Committee)
Imran Khan
Christopher Kong
Ursula Lepporoli
James Moulton
Lotti O’Dea
Laura Parr

Giselle Pinto
Anna Pitt
Tahj Richardson
Chris Sequeira
Kate Stewart
Tyson Taylor
Bwe Thay
Glenn Turnham
Duean White
(First People’s
Consultant)
Valerian Zaitsev

COMPANY DIRECTORS; PHILANTHROPISTS; SOCIAL ENTERPRISES | GUEST SPEAKERS & PANELLISTS

Ro Allen
Tasneem Chopra
The Honourable
Linda Dessau AV CVO,
Former Governor of
Victoria
Kathryn Fagg AO
Claudia Fatone
Jonathan Gavshon
Marina Go

Dennis Goldner AM
Peter Holdsworth
Dr Simon Longstaff AO
Janet Matton AM
Leonie Morgan AM
Lucinda Nolan
Grant Powell
Llewellyn Prain
Greg Ridder
Anne Robertson
Morgana Ryan
Joseph Skrzynski AO
Mike Sum
Helga Svendsen OAM
Helen Szoke AO
Michael Ullmer AO
Moana Weir
Michele Williams
Kee Wong

NOT-FOR-PROFITS; BUSINESSES; GOVERNMENT | HOSTING PROGRAM TRAINING & EVENTS

Deloitte Australia
Government House,
Victoria
Koorie Heritage Trust
Microsoft Australia

National Gallery of
Victoria
PwC Australia
Quin & Lina Scalzo,
Foods and Family
Investment Trust

VIDEO CONTRIBUTORS

Dr Ronny
Andrade Parra
Nikita Bennett
Lucy Duncan
Jacob Gabriel
Moana Leilua
Wambui Migwe
Tahj Richardson
Morgana Ryan
Chris Sequeira
Callum Steele

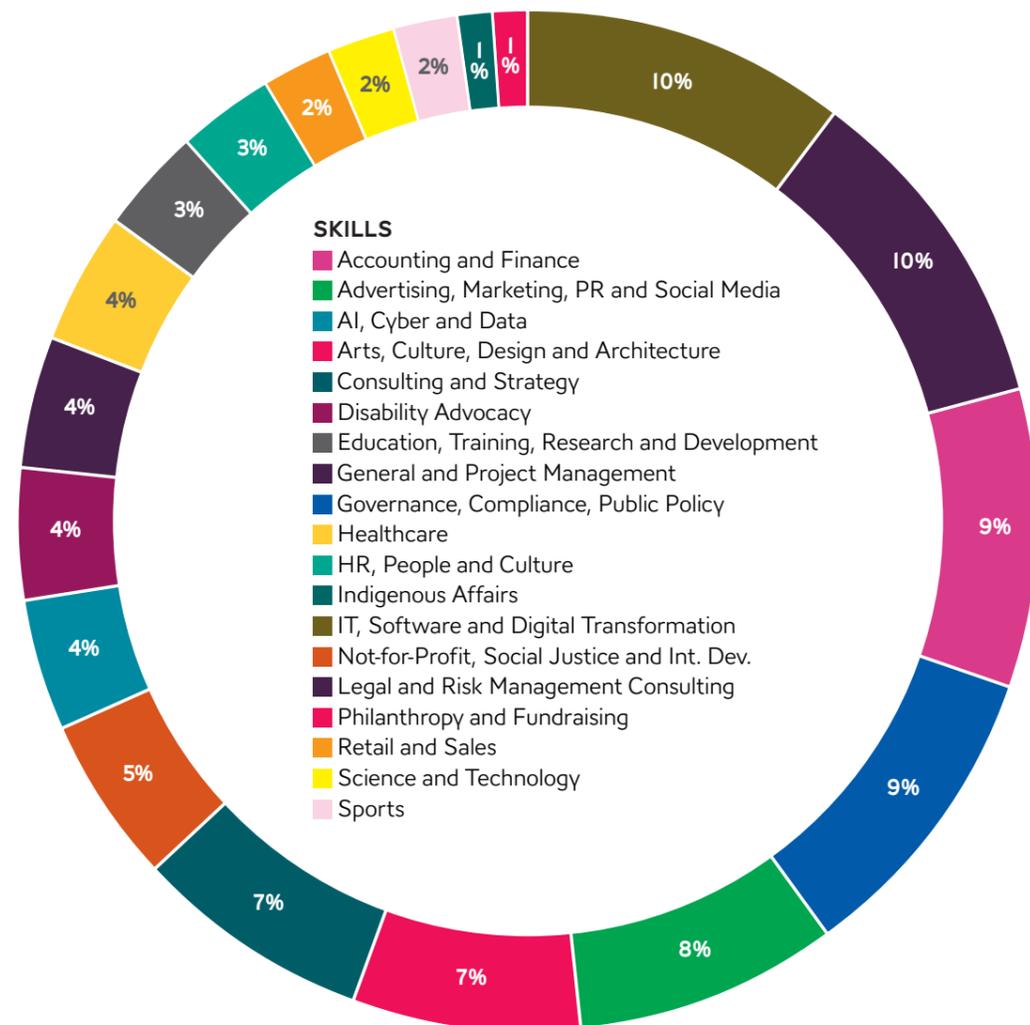
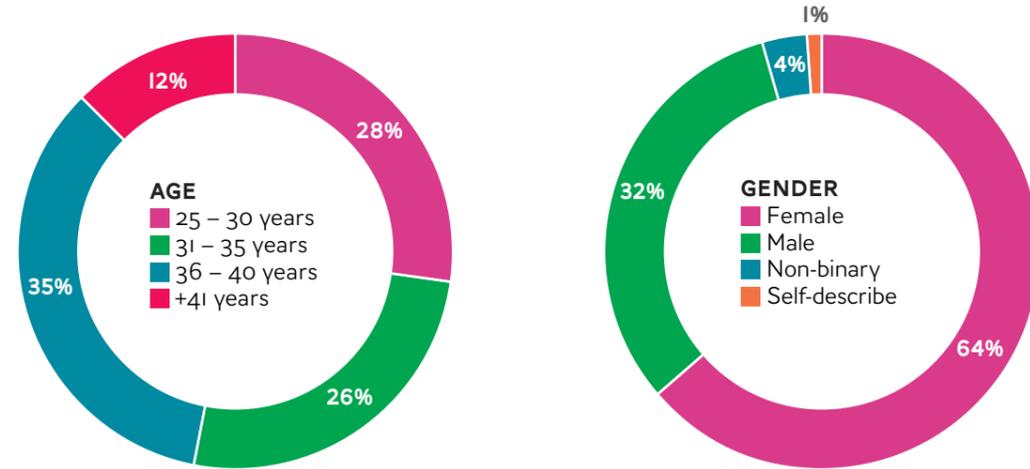
ALUMNI MENTORS

Susan Benedyka
Tom Levi
Leonie Morgan AM
Emma Olivier
Leanne Wallace



2026 OBSERVERSHIP PROGRAM – A SNAPSHOT

THERE ARE 113 OBSERVERS PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM. A BREAKDOWN OF THE PROFILE OF THE COHORT IS BELOW.



STRATEGIC PARTNERS

FIRST NATIONS DIRECTOR SCHOLARSHIP 2026

This program offers First Nations leaders and directors the opportunity to enrich their understanding of organisational governance as they shape the future from the boardroom. It is a partnership between the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD), the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute (AIGI) and The Observership Program, funded by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA).



SUPPORTED THROUGH PHILANTHROPIC FUNDING, THE OBSERVERSHIP PROGRAM AND AUSTRALIAN DISABILITY NETWORK ARE IN PARTNERSHIP TO SUPPORT OBSERVERS WITH DISABILITY TO DRIVE GREATER REPRESENTATION ON BOARDS.

CORPORATE PARTNERS



The Program gratefully acknowledges PwC Melbourne for hosting the training sessions in 2026.

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS

WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE PHILANTHROPIC FUNDING FOR THE PROGRAM'S PATHWAYS TO BOARD DIRECTORSHIP INITIATIVE TO ASSIST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES INTO BOARD ROLES.

WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE THE SKRZYNSKI FOUNDATION'S SUPPORT FOR THE ALUMNI AND BOARD SEARCH PROGRAMS.

PARTICIPATING BOARDS

THERE ARE 97 NOT-FOR-PROFIT AND GOVERNMENT APPOINTED BOARDS PARTICIPATING IN THE 2026 PROGRAM.



FOR NOT FOR PROFITS/ GOVERNMENT BOARDS

We are delighted to be working with you for the 2026 Program. This information is intended as a helpful summary of what's involved for a board participating in The Program. It also offers ways of maximising the value of participation for organisations and extending learning and development for Observers based on the experiences of boards participating in The Program over a number of years. We hope you find it useful.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

- Organisations are paired with Observers for a 12-month period. Observers are selected and carefully matched with organisations, based on nominated skills, profiles and interests.
- The Observership begins with the first board meeting of 2026 and finishes with the last.
- As part of the application, Observers agree to the Program's confidentiality terms. Organisations are at liberty to request a copy of the terms and/or to ask Observers to sign the organisation's own confidentiality agreement.
- All Observers undergo a Police Check, and are advised that organisations may require additional screening such as Working with Children Checks.
- During the Observership year, organisations facilitate Observers attending all board and any relevant subcommittee meetings as non-voting members so they can both contribute and learn about fundamental principles and functions of boards, the role of board members, the decision-making process and governance priorities.
- Where board meetings move between cities and or countries and board members are supported to attend these meetings in-person, we request that Observer attendance is facilitated and supported by the host organisations.
- Observers participate in a training program alongside their board Observership. AICD facilitates four sessions and The Ethics Centre, one session. Further training sessions are facilitated by The Program and feature keynote speakers. Opportunities for networking among Observers and peer-to-peer learning are provided via the in-person sessions. All training sessions are mandatory. Please refer to page 10 for an outline of the training program.

HINTS FOR ENGAGING OBSERVERS

Here are some examples of best practice and ways boards and Observers can maximise their contribution and governance learning throughout the Observership year.

- The Chair/Board Liaison meets their Observer prior to the first board meeting to induct the Observer into the organisation and the operations of the board;
 - If a board induction pack is available, do share with the Observer. A formal or informal induction, advising on both your board culture and expectations of your Observer's participation in meetings prior to the first board meeting is essential for learning and engagement;
 - Please discuss areas of potential contribution either prior to, or in the early stages of the Observership to set expectations and lay the foundations for the best possible Observership experience for all parties;
 - Joining a sub-committee and/or special strategic project at the beginning of the year provides an opportunity for the Observer to engage with meaningful work undertaken by the board and supports their engagement with and contribution to the organisation.

- It is at the board's discretion to solicit input from the Observers during meetings. All Observers are briefed to contribute once invited to do so on the terms provided by the organisation. These could include:
 - As and when invited to do so by the Chair;
 - As and when the Observer feels they have something to offer;
 - Some boards set aside time at the end of the meeting for the Observer to reflect on discussions and to share perspectives.

THE PROGRAM STIPULATES THAT:

- Board minutes note that Observers are present in the capacity as Observers and not as directors. When a vote is taken, please make clear that Observers do not vote;
- Where a training session clashes with a board meeting, Observers are advised to prioritise Board meetings;
- Feedback calls with Observers take place early in the Program cycle to check everything is on track;
- A call will be scheduled with the Board Liaison for feedback on your Observer and to ascertain ongoing participation of your board in the next year's Program;
- Board Liaisons are asked to contact The Program if any issues arise, including any non-attendance other than due to extenuating circumstances for which an apology is received.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:

- Participate in developing the next generation of leaders in the not-for-profit and government board sectors;
- Inject a younger, diverse perspective into the boardroom;
- Looking at the year ahead, strategically select an Observer with a particular skill set eg: new technology, data analytics, digital marketing/communications, social media, law, finance, government policy etc. to assist with specific areas of board work;
- Engage through the "matching process" with a diverse pool of emerging leaders with a view to addressing any areas of board underrepresentation;
- Involve your Observer in a hands-on strategic project to deliver concrete benefits to the organisation;
- Invite your Observer to contribute in areas relating to their skill set through subcommittee involvement;
- Strengthen your board renewal strategy with no ongoing commitment to retain the Observer at the end of the 12-month Program;
- Retain the option to invite your Observer to join the board at the end of the 12-month period and/or invite them to stay on in an advisory or voluntary capacity;
- Recruit from the Program's 1,700+ alumni pool who are actively seeking ongoing and meaningful engagement with the not-for-profit and government board sectors;
- Use The Program as a tool to develop the organisation's own leadership stream by encouraging emerging leaders from within the organisation to apply to be placed with other not-for-profit boards.

Please contact:

DIRECTOR, THE OBSERVERSHIP PROGRAM, VICTORIA:
CATHERINE REISER

Email: catherine.reiser@observership.com.au

OBSERVER PROFILES



HELEN ARGYRIS THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS (ICAN AUSTRALIA)

Helen is a Policy Officer for the Australian Government with extensive experience in international affairs, human rights and environment. Helen is committed to helping communities facing socio-economic disadvantage and amplifying the voices of those who cannot be heard. Helen holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of International Relations from the University of Melbourne, specialising foreign policy. She currently studies her Master of Laws at the Australian National University, specialising in International Law while undertaking her Public Leadership Credential with Harvard Kennedy School of Government. She enjoys star-gazing and learning foreign languages.



JAKE ATKINSON CLIMATE FOR CHANGE

Jake leads the Climate service line of Edge Impact, a BCorp consultancy. He is a fellow of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants and sits on its Global Forum for ESG. He is passionate about the role the accounting and finance sector plays in the transition to a zero carbon and socially just world. Prior to joining Edge Impact, his career has spanned consulting, policy and accounting. He previously worked for the Climate Disclosure Standards Board as its European Policy Manager, advocating for best practice climate reporting and influencing national policy in climate change.



PAUL AYALA SOUTH WEST TAFE

Paul is a Quality Coordinator at South West Healthcare, responsible for Standard 4: Medication Safety and Standard 8: Recognising and Responding to Acute Deterioration. A medical doctor by profession, he brings extensive experience in patient safety, risk management and continuous quality improvement, developed through leadership roles both in Australia and internationally. Outside of work, he serves on the worship team at Extreme Life Church and is passionate about mentoring others in patient safety and quality improvement practices.



LAUREN BALBATA MELBOURNE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Lauren is a passionate finance leader with broad experience across financial services and infrastructure. She is known for delivering commercial results and building high performing empathetic teams. Lauren currently leads the Finance, Data and Analytics team for Financial Services at REA Group which includes providing critical finance and performance insights to over 1,000 Mortgage Choice brokers. Lauren is a Chartered Accountant and holds a Bachelor of Business (Accounting). She is an avid reader in her spare time and enjoys classical music and playing the piano.



STELLA BARTON CEREBRAL PALSY SUPPORT NETWORK

Stella has a Bachelor of Arts (Sociology) from Swinburne University. In 2024, she competed in the Paris Paralympics in the Grade 1 Para Dressage, finishing 7th out of 22 competitors. In 2025 Stella was appointed to the Victorian Government's Disability Advisory Council. Stella is dedicated to working to create equal opportunities for disabled people and is an active participant in this community. She is eager to leverage her skills and lived experience to promote accessibility and create meaningful change in the community. Stella understands the power of the arts and sport to develop community.



MAIKE BAUMEISTER MADDIE RIEWOLDT'S VISION

Maike is an equities research analyst with extensive experience in the energy and utilities sector at UBS. She has worked internationally across Europe, the US, Africa and Australia, bringing a truly global perspective and strong stakeholder engagement capabilities. Maike has supported social enterprises in Kenya with project management, financial modelling and impact strategy, demonstrating her strong commitment to purpose-driven work. She combines a commercial and analytical mindset with cross-cultural experience. Maike holds a Bachelor and Masters in Economics from the University of Cologne, specialising in Energy Economics and Econometrics. She enjoys being active, playing beach volleyball and Australian Rules Football.



SHERRY-ROSE BIH WATTS (NSW) CENTRE FOR MULTICULTURAL YOUTH

Sherry-Rose is a purpose driven changemaker, leader and public speaker with a professional background in International Relations, Community Development and Social Impact. She's worked with organisations such as YLab and Parliament of Victoria, where she pioneered the women's leadership program, utilising her expertise in program development, strategy and co-design to build impactful projects. She's been a previous Vice-Chair of the Victorian Government's Youth Congress and Victorian Australian Youth Representative to the International Commonwealth Youth Parliament (CYP). A multi-talented, multi-faceted woman of impact, Sherry-Rose seeks to encourage others to become active collaborators for systems change and inspire others through her journey.



NADIA BOYCE VICTORIAN OPERA

Nadia is a communications and digital leader driving change in the sustainability sector. As a former journalist, she is passionate about telling stories of change from for-purpose organisations and bringing their impact to life to support public trust and accountability. Nadia has built her career in the for-purpose sector and believes in the power of savvy reputation management, digital transformation and accessibility for the sector to keep pace with changes in the modern world. She has a personal interest in ballet and classical arts, high performance sport and photo-journalism.



NATALIE BRYDEN AUSTRALIAN JEWISH FUNDERS

Natalie is a cybersecurity project manager with a strong foundation in secure software development and IT strategy. She has led the delivery of cybersecurity and digital uplift programs at the State Government and private sector. With experience across software engineering, strategy and risk governance, she is committed to leveraging technology to building a safer digital world. She holds a dual degree in Engineering and Arts from the University of Sydney. Outside of work, she mentors young women in STEM and enjoys travel, art and hiking.



VANESSA CALAFIORE ALL THINGS EQUAL

Vanessa is the Founder and Creative Director of Upside Down Creatives, a boutique production agency specialising in storytelling and values-driven campaigns. She is also a recognised public figure and keynote speaker, using her platform to challenge perceptions of disability, inclusion and representation. With over a decade in administration and community services, Vanessa brings lived experience, creative leadership and a commitment to building inclusive cultures. She is passionate about connecting creativity with social impact and shaping environments where diverse voices are seen and heard.



HANNAH CASEY AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEERS INTERNATIONAL (AVI) AND STAND UP

Hannah is a purpose-driven leader. She has held diverse roles across Commonwealth and State government, as well as in the for-purpose sector, in Australia and internationally. Her work has included anti-corruption and governance improvement in the Caucasus, promoting women's participation in government in Mongolia and working to end family violence in Australia. She holds a Bachelor of International Studies and a Master of Evaluation. She enjoys learning and continues to study languages in her free time, learn new recipes, and read widely. She also enjoys getting into nature and hiking.



MADISON CASSADY ABORIGINAL HOSTELS LIMITED (BRISBANE)

Madison is a Nywaigi and Manbarra woman from North Queensland who works and lives on the lands of the Bunurong people in Naarm. Madison is a PhD Candidate (Clinical Psychology) at Monash University and a provisional psychologist.



ARNAUD CHARLIER CLIMATE FOR CHANGE

Arnaud is a data and technology leader with extensive experience in digital transformation. He is passionate about leveraging technology to drive operational efficiency and deliver mission-aligned outcomes in the for purpose sector. Arnaud has overseen major system implementations and process improvements across a range of community-focused organisations with a strategic, people-centred approach to his work. Arnaud holds an Executive MBA from Quantic Business School and a Masters in Computer Science from Supinfo. Outside his professional role, he is Vice President of the Black Rock Underwater Diving Group and enjoys good food and time outdoors.



ALEX CHASELING LEARNING FOR LIFE AUTISM CENTRE

Alex is an experienced compliance and audit professional with a passion for community, creativity and the arts. Born in regional Victoria and growing up in Sydney, she was raised with a love of music and a sense of community responsibility. Through her involvement in various community and arts initiatives, she has seen first-hand the positive impact of connection and expression and believe these are important values for a thriving society. In her free time she is a member of a choir, an avid runner and regular attendee of galleries, theatre and live music.



BRIDIE COCHRANE-HOLLEY WRITERS VICTORIA

Bridie is a law graduate with extensive experience in disability advocacy in the tertiary education space. Bridie is passionate about developing the capacity and confidence of organisations to engage in meaningful disability access and inclusion through practical solutions, a human-rights framework and a social model perspective. She was recently involved in the University of Melbourne's SEDS Review Panel, contributing to a total support re-design. She holds a Bachelor of Arts and Juris Doctor from the University of Melbourne, and enjoys painting, crafting and visiting art galleries and museums.



MICHELLE CRILLY CONSUMER ACTION LAW CENTRE

Michelle is an experienced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program Lead and Registered Paramedic with a strong background in cultural engagement, leadership development and healthcare delivery. She has a proven ability to foster relationships, drive strategic initiatives and champion workplace equality. Michelle is skilled in stakeholder management, operational leadership and continuous improvement.



EMMA CROTT LUCY GUERIN INC.

Emma is Chief of Staff and Company Secretary at the Australian Research Data Commons, a not-for-profit providing digital infrastructure for Australian researchers, where she provides strategic leadership and governance capabilities. Emma's career spans academic research and the arts, holding a PhD in Art History & Theory specialising in photography and representations of conflict. She is passionate about social justice and applies her advocacy skills in voluntary roles in the arts, aged care and for-purpose sectors. In her spare time, Emma enjoys Melbourne's vibrant arts culture, yoga and women's literature.



NIKKI CUFFE FAMILY LIFE

Nikki is a values-driven leader with over 20 years' experience spanning marketing, communications and business operations. Passionate about purpose-led work and empowering organisations to deliver public value, Nikki currently works as Head of Operations & Marketing at Cube Group, a consulting firm that works exclusively with public purpose organisations. She has supported not-for-profits supporting foster youth advocacy and women's health and is excited to grow her contribution through future board service. Outside of work, Nikki loves travelling to sunny destinations, reading fiction, experimenting in the kitchen and exploring Melbourne's vibrant food culture.



KATHERINE CUMMINGS CANCER COUNCIL VICTORIA

Katherine is a Canadian-Australian project and change manager working in the health sector. Katherine dedicates her time to improving the lives of patients and carers through digital health initiatives. She is currently uplifting fundraising and consumer capabilities at Breast Cancer Network Australia and was instrumental to the success of HealthPathways Melbourne's adoption of Optimal Care Pathways. Katherine went on to lead the modernisation of systems at Access Health and Community and graduated top of her MBA (Healthcare Management) class at Deakin University. She enjoys downtime with her husband and greyhounds, reading and going to community events with friends.



LUCY DAVIES GEELONG ARTS CENTRE

Lucy (she/her) is a senior leader at a regional public library service. She oversees an archive collection and heritage service, developed the first Heritage Services Strategy for Geelong Regional Libraries and is leading her organisation's Reconciliation Action Plan. She has worked in community heritage and public art in local government and as a researcher and teacher in various universities. She holds a PhD in history and received an award for an outstanding thesis in her field. Lucy enjoys running, gardening, reading and lives with her wife and two cats in Wurundjeri Country.



SHANI DAVIES MELBOURNE ARTS PRECINCT CORPORATION (MAPCO)

Shani thrives in fast-paced environments, solving problems and focusing on what matters most to clients. With experience across operations, maintenance, electrical and systems engineering, Shani brings a practical, solutions-focused mindset and international perspective. She's led process improvements and delivered quality outcomes on time and on budget. Her MBA sharpened her commercial and strategic skills through real-world projects across various industries. She's passionate about delivering smart, sustainable solutions on large-scale programs while managing safety, financial and delivery risks. She believes in adaptive leadership - backing the right people in the right roles to create long-term success and meaningful impact.



CARLIE DAVIS STATE SCHOOLS RELIEF

Carlie is the Director of Strategic Policy and Engagement at the Australian Education Research Organisation, where she leads national work to connect education research with system policy and practice. She has a background in school and system improvement and has held senior roles in government and schools across NSW and the Northern Territory. Carlie has led work on teacher education reform, literacy strategy and evidence-based teaching. She has a longstanding commitment to educational equity and previously ran large-scale student volunteering programs. She enjoys hiking, live music, refurbishing antique furniture and mentoring early-career teachers and policy professionals.



MATT DE MASI ABLE AUSTRALIA

Matt is a Business Solutions Analyst and Accessibility Coordinator at Australia Post, with a background in IT and a passion for inclusive technology. Born profoundly deaf, his lived experience drives his advocacy for accessibility and equitable design. He has led initiatives to improve digital inclusion and volunteers with the Salvation Army - Shield Appeal and Cancer Council - Relay for Life. Matt is particularly engaged in the ethical technology use of AI and is committed to driving social impact through innovation, community engagement and inclusive digital practices.



ANNELIEKE DE WIT WATERAID AUSTRALIA

Annelieke is a sustainability-focused generalist with experience across strategy and management consulting, academic research, business development and technology commercialisation. Annelieke worked across Europe, New Zealand and Australia, giving her a good understanding of different perspectives. Her professional skills and interests centre around enabling alignment and collaboration to drive strategic climate-positive outcomes and a just and equitable transition. Annelieke holds a PhD in biochemistry and a MSc in biotechnology. She is an avid scuba diver and enjoys sourdough baking, knitting and yoga.



ZAC DEMOPOULOS THE PERSONNEL GROUP LTD

Zac is a seasoned social worker with over a decade of experience across community services, disability and allied health. Holding a Bachelor of Social Work with Distinction from Deakin University, he is an Accredited Member of the Australian Association of Social Workers. Zac has held senior roles overseeing clinical teams, building new services and embedding governance frameworks that ensured quality, compliance and sustainable growth. He has successfully led teams through periods of expansion and change while maintaining high standards of practice. Zac enjoys family adventures with his wife and two young children, and is an avid learner.



KEVTI DESAI FOOTSCRAY COMMUNITY ARTS

Kevti is a first-generation Indian-Australian woman migrant and Senior HR and Talent Development Leader with two decades of global experience in HR transformation, capability, organisational development and strategic talent management. She co-founded "Indian Professionals in Victoria" empowering new Australians to overcome employment barriers, demonstrating her commitment to social equity. Her impactful leadership in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) includes increasing Women of Colour representation in leadership roles through coaching and mentoring. An aspiring poet and a dancer, Kevti volunteers with the Australian South Asian Community nurturing cultural exchange. Fuelled by the under-representation of Women of Colour in Boards, she champions a more inclusive Australian society.



ACHIN DHINGRA BREAST CANCER NETWORK AUSTRALIA

Achin is an engineer, currently a Tech Product Manager at Transurban, with 18 years of experience leading technology initiatives across telecom, financial services and infrastructure. Recognised with a national nomination in digital leadership, she brings strong strategic, customer-focused digital expertise. Achin is passionate about equity, education, and community belonging. She has mentored various women in career development and transitions and has served on the board of governors at a childcare centre. Achin has a collaborative, goal-driven leadership style and a mindset to identify solutions for greatest of obstacles. She loves building connections over a good cup of coffee.



MARGIE DIMECH CHAMBER MADE

Margie is a creative and strategic storyteller who excels at using communications to simplify complex ideas and drive behavioural change. With experience in Melbourne, London and New York, she has worked across the university sector, creative consulting and most recently at Transurban - a leading, ASX-listed transport company. She recently led the development of Transurban's award-winning integrated corporate reporting suite and has previously managed the organisation's brand and creative services function. A master in the art of multi-tasking both at work and at home, Margie balances her successful communications career with the joys of raising twins.



ADNA FARAH WILLIAM BUCKLAND FOUNDATION

Adna is a Senior Project Officer at the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO), with a focus on public health and community engagement. Adna has co-founded Muslim Public Health Professionals and is committed to promoting health equity within communities. She has successfully led culturally tailored health initiatives and advocates for inclusive healthcare practices. Adna holds a Master of Public Health and a Bachelor of Biomedical Science. Her personal interests include exploring cultural diversity, engaging in community service and advocating for social justice. Adna is passionate about creating positive change and fostering inclusivity in public health.



JAKE FEHILY KADIMAH JEWISH CULTURAL CENTRE & NATIONAL LIBRARY

Jake is the Programs Manager at VicSRC, where he leads the design and delivery of statewide initiatives through co-design, strategic partnerships and meaningful community engagement. He has extensive experience working in schools and previously supported the design and delivery of educational programs at the Alannah & Madeline Foundation. Jake brings a strong understanding of the not-for-profit and education sectors, with a focus on collaboration and strategic partnerships. Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with his dog and making his way through an ever-growing list of podcasts.



JUSTIN FENWICK THE SUBSTATION

Justin is an experienced leader in Indigenous employment, media and creative industries. As Indigenous Employment Manager at the ABC, he has led the development of the ABCs first Indigenous Employment Strategy. With a strong background in cultural engagement, stakeholder collaboration and national program delivery, Justin combines strategic vision with practical execution. Alongside his professional role, he is also a playwright and producer.



MARIO FERREIRA KARDINIA PARK STADIUM TRUST

Mario is a senior operations and marketing leader with over 15 years of experience in the property development industry across Australia and the UK. He is currently Global Head of Operations for an architectural visualisation firm, overseeing business functions across five international studios. Mario has led community-building initiatives on major urban renewal projects internationally, supporting grassroots organisations with funding and marketing. He mentors students at Monash University and has volunteered with animal rescue services. Mario recently completed his Executive MBA with distinction and received a Dean's Excellence Award. He is passionate about inclusive leadership and driving impact at scale.



ALLY FINNIS STAND LIKE STONE

Ally is a disability inclusion training facilitator and peer connector with experience in disability, youth mental health and healthcare consumer advocacy; co-design and consultation; training and workshop design and delivery. They are committed to collectively shaping a world where we are all valued and heard. Currently employed by JFA Purple Orange, Ally has also worked with headspace, Consumers Health Forum of Australia, Local Government Association of South Australia and the South Australian Department of Human Services. An inveterate history lover who is easily fascinated, Ally enjoys art, science, exploring, visiting galleries and museums, experimental cookery, sharing stories and collecting antiques.



CLAIRE FISHER REFUGE VICTORIA

Claire is Social Inclusion Lead at Moonee Valley City Council, where she develops LGBTQIA+ policy using community-driven approaches and manages Rainbow Tick accreditation. Previously, as National Research Manager at Relationships Australia, she led digital platform development reaching 150,000+ users annually and managed multiple advisory groups. Claire holds an Advanced Masters in Anthropology from ANU and completed the Australian Progress Fellowship. With lived experience from regional Australia and expertise in co-design, knowledge translation and stakeholder engagement, she combines strategic thinking with authentic community connection. Claire is passionate about translating research into accessible resources that serve diverse communities.



ROSH GHADAMIAN STATE LIBRARY VICTORIA

Rosh is a Venture Creator at the University of Melbourne, helping researchers and founders turn ideas into investable ventures. He has catalysed over \$82M in early-stage investment and contributed to initiatives spanning education, Indigenous entrepreneurship and the arts. With a background in emerging technologies and innovation strategy, Rosh brings a cross-sector perspective to complex challenges. A former ABAC staffer, he has strong cross-cultural and civic experience. He has served on the Faculty of Business and Economics Alumni Council and mentors widely. Outside of work, Rosh enjoys time with his daughters, exploring art and culture, and supporting purpose-driven ventures.



ELISE GILES PROUD 2 PLAY

Elise is the Head of Government Affairs at Swisse. Elise has extensive experience in government relations and a proven track record in successfully achieving tangible trade and policy outcomes for the organisations she represents. Elise was recognised by peak body, Complementary Medicines Australia, as Industry Contributor of the Year in 2023. Throughout Elise's career, she has volunteered in Indonesia supporting a local not-for-profit with social development initiatives, and in Vietnam supported a youth leadership platform. Outside of work, Elise is an avid road cyclist and recently took up the thrill of track cycling.



CASEY GILL LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

Casey is a digital marketing specialist focused on business development and sustainable growth. She is known for strategic thinking, innovative business planning, data analysis, creativity and collaboration. She has experience working with start-ups across USA, UK, EU and AU/NZ. Casey currently works at a digital agency in Melbourne and was recently named one of the top 100 paid search specialists in the world. She also works as a consultant and strategic advisor to AI and cyber security businesses. She has a background in wellbeing and she is hard of hearing, influencing her support of accessibility and inclusion for all.



ADAM GOODRIDGE CEREBRAL PALSY SUPPORT NETWORK

Adam has lived experience with cerebral palsy, uses a wheelchair and is non-verbal. He is an IT professional with a lifelong passion for technology and holds a Bachelor of Information Technology. Adam has contributed to a research program at Deakin University, focusing on topics related to people with disabilities. He is keen to observe processes and help identify the most suitable solutions for each situation. He values inclusion and integrity and enjoys travelling and boating.



CIARA GRIFFITHS AUSTRALIAN MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES ASSOCIATION VICTORIA (AMAGA)

Ciara is an emerging young professional in the cultural sector, living, working and learning on Woi Wurrung (Wurundjeri) land. She has a special interest in ethical governance and youth engagement within cultural heritage institutions. Ciara is completing a dual award program, with a Master of Cultural Heritage and Museum Studies from Deakin University, alongside a Master of World Heritage Studies from Brandenburg University of Technology. Upon completion, Ciara will explore how ethical governance principles can guide sustainable models of practice for the sector, towards fostering meaningful and long-lasting collaborations between cultural heritage, community organisations and young people.



TIM HANNAN RSPCA VICTORIA

Tim is a strategist, innovator and behavioural scientist leader in the for-purpose sector. Tim has broad professional experience, having worked as a consultant at PwC, a behavioural science specialist in the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, an innovator and strategist at Oxfam Australia and a transformation leader at Oral Health Victoria where he currently works helping with the mission of getting free health care to communities in need. Tim is committed to designing strategies that initiate change to improve lives. Outside work, Tim loves hiking, fossicking for sapphires and connecting with his regional roots with his pet dog, Myfanwy.



JESS HARRIS CENTRE FOR NON-VIOLENCE

Jess is a Chartered Governance Professional with extensive experience in enterprise risk, internal audit and crisis management practices. Jess is passionate about supporting current and emerging leaders to systematically identify and manage risks in complex and uncertain landscapes. She recently became the first female in her family to complete a higher education qualification by completing a Graduate Diploma Applied Corporate Governance and Risk Management. She has worked in the Victorian disability, emergency management and education sectors, and currently works with Swinburne University. Jess supports mental health advocacy. She loves hiking, kayaking, rock climbing and overseas backpacking with her family.



DANIELLE HARSANYI COHEALTH

Danielle is a senior advisor with extensive experience in health and housing sector policy. Danielle is committed to delivering evidence-based policy reform that is led by lived-experience and sector partnerships. She recently led the development of Homes Victoria's First Peoples Home Ownership Program. Danielle holds a Bachelor of Health Science from Monash University, specialising in Health Promotion. She is an avid hiker and enjoys baking, live music and yoga.



SARAH HATAM RELATIONSHIPS AUSTRALIA VICTORIA

Sarah is a well-rounded business professional with experience across strategy, sales, marketing and category management within the Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) industry. She spent her early years training as a medical scientist, driven by a passion for helping others. As a first-generation immigrant, Sarah understands firsthand the importance and impact of NFP organisations such as Foodbank, in which she volunteers regularly to support the fight against food insecurity. She is also a proud advocate for diversity and inclusion to empower business and people. Outside of work, Sarah enjoys spending time with her family, learning new hobbies and exploring Melbourne's endless list of cafes.



JEM HECHT PUBLIC GALLERIES ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

Jamie-leigh (Jem) is co-founder and communications lead for brandkind community, a social enterprise, and Communications Lead at Australians Investing in Women. She holds a Bachelor of Global Studies, majoring in Law and minoring in Communications and is pursuing a Master's in Counselling and Psychotherapy. Jem has a strong background in strategic communications, operations and community building across venture capital startups and social enterprises. She has managed large communities, led communications for Australian venture capital firms and supported mission-led organisations with fundraising and marketing projects including masterclasses and workshops. Outside of work, Jem enjoys yoga, hiking and connecting with people.



KELSEY HENDERSON PLATFORM ARTS INC

Kelsey, born in Tauranga, Aotearoa, is an Executive Assistant to the Executive Director of Performing Arts at Arts Centre Melbourne (ACM), supporting the delivery of major cultural programming through high-level stakeholder engagement and project coordination. Her earlier roles including Duty Manager at ACM and Venue Supervisor at Melbourne Arts Precinct Co. have honed her leadership, operations and patron-first approach across arts venues. She also contributes backstage to CLOC Musical Theatre and volunteers at Sacred Heart Mission's South Melbourne location, demonstrating her commitment to arts and community. Outside of work, she enjoys learning languages, art, board games and cultural storytelling.



JASMINE HERMIZ MELBOURNE POLYTECHNIC (TAFE)

Jasmine is a Workplace Relations, Health and Safety lawyer at Clayton Utz. Jasmine is committed to educating and advising clients industrial relations, discrimination, executive remuneration and diversity. She is actively involved in the firm's pro bono practice, recording the most pro bono hours nationally in FY24. Jasmine co-founded the Melbourne Cultural Diversity Steering Group and is passionate about diversity and inclusion initiatives, particularly to improve equality and inter-sectionality. Jasmine holds a Bachelor of Laws and Science (Biochemistry) degree from Monash University. Jasmine enjoys hiking, playing team sports, volunteering and exploring Melbourne's food scene.



EMILY HOLDING COMMUNITY BROADCASTING FOUNDATION

Emily is a diversity, equity and inclusion practitioner with experience in the arts, public health and social advocacy. She works to remove barriers to participation for under-represented communities through creative, empathetic and strategic design. At Arts Centre Melbourne, she leads initiatives across gender equality, LGBTQIA+ inclusion, and racial and cultural equity. Emily has volunteered with the Victorian Women's Trust and is a radio announcer at PBS, where she champions diverse music and voices. She is passionate about inclusive leadership, community-led change and the role of the arts in driving meaningful social impact.



DEAN HORINIAK NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN OF AUSTRALIA VICTORIA

Dean is an Assistant Manager in the Corporate Restructuring team at McGrathNicol, with experience assisting distressed companies to navigate complex financial and operational challenges. Dean is committed to helping organisations determine the most appropriate steps forward, especially during difficult times. Dean recently completed the Young AICC program, enhancing his leadership and professional development. Dean holds a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of Commerce from Deakin University, majoring in Accounting. Outside of work, Dean enjoys traveling, playing pickleball and attending football games.



TESSA HUGHES SAVE THE CHILDREN AUSTRALIA

Tessa is an international development practitioner currently working with the World Scabies Program as a Senior Program Officer. With over 10 years' experience in project management in global health, international development and community development in the refugee space. Tessa supports organisations through team leadership, program planning, stakeholder engagement and community led development and engagement. Tessa loves to travel and has had the privilege of working in Australia, the Pacific, Southeast Asia and the UK. Tessa is passionate about health and gender equity and enjoys volunteering. Tessa holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies and a Master of International Development.



LUKE ISAACS BROTHERHOOD OF ST LAURENCE

Luke is the First Peoples Partnership Lead at SEC Victoria, where he leads strategic initiatives, embedding Aboriginal self-determination in the renewable energy transition. He has held senior roles across government and community sectors and contributed to national conversations on First Peoples energy equity. Luke serves on RMIT's Centre for Urban Research Advisory Board and has held board roles with The Substation and Golf Australia's Indigenous Golf Advisory Board. He holds a postgraduate certificate in Human Resource Management and qualifications in First Peoples leadership and treaty-making. Luke is a proud Wadandi Nyungar man, husband, father and active community member.



TARSHA JAGO VICTORIAN PRIDE CENTRE

Tarsha (Tarsh) is a proud Palawa woman and the Principal Truth and Treaty Adviser in Victoria's health sector, with a background in policy reform and advocacy. She has contributed to key initiatives including the Medically Supervised Injecting Room and public intoxication law reform. Tarsh is also an award-winning comedian, having been runner-up in the 2023 Deadly Funny national final and has performed at major festivals and written for television. Passionate about equity, culture, and storytelling, she brings a unique blend of lived experience, strategic insight, and creative leadership to her work across government and the arts.



ZOI JAHAU VICTORIAN OPERA

Zoi (she/they) is a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion professional, where they lead initiatives to create safe and inclusive spaces for diverse communities. Drawing on their lived experience as a queer, neurodivergent person of colour, Zoi specialises in intersectionality and organisational culture change. A graduate in Music Technology and Popular Music, they previously worked with the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival in the UK. Zoi is passionate about arts, culture, LGBTQIA+ advocacy and creative community initiatives. In their spare time, they like to host game nights for friends.



NEHAL JAIN CLIMATE FOR CHANGE

Nehal Jain is the Co-Founder of After, a sustainable textile recycling startup that has diverted over 12 tonnes of textiles from landfills. She is passionate about systems change and the circular economy, and is initiating Trishlaa - a clothing swap movement. With extensive corporate experience, she has grown a community of technology startups at Microsoft and built SaaS products at Atlassian. Nehal also managed product initiatives at Phantm, a climate tech company. Her extensive corporate experience is complemented by her involvement in various NFP initiatives over the years, including TechFugees and Planet Ark. She enjoys cooking, dancing and travelling.



CHRISTINA CJ JONATHAN RISING MELBOURNE

CJ is a disabled, autistic/ADHDer, queer, nonbinary, first-generation migrant from Indonesia. They have spent the last decade working in arts co-ordination, programming and producing at highly respected not-for-profit arts organisations in Naarm such as Melbourne Fringe, the Wheeler Centre, Arts Centre Melbourne, and Arts Access Victoria. Currently, they are focusing on building a sustainable career as a NAATI-certified Australian Sign Language (Auslan) interpreter, working predominantly with Deaf students in education settings and with Deaf refugees. CJ holds degrees in creative writing, visual communication, interpreting and Auslan. They speak four languages and are re-learning French.



WAANUNGA KELLY-NAGAS TAFE GIPPSLAND

Waanunga is a Policy Officer working within justice sector, with comprehensive experience in policy and legislative reform and has personal passions for advocacy and driving social change. As an Aboriginal man, Waanunga works to ensure that his community has the right to self-determination when consulted about the policies and legislation that impact this community. Recently, Waanunga has progressed legislative reforms to the Spent Convictions Act, working with key stakeholders to ensure that this legislation addresses the barriers that historical and minor convictions pose to the access to housing, training and employment. Waanunga loves playing music, painting and progressing home-improvements on his house.



STEPHANIE KENEZ ART GALLERY OF BALLARAT

Stephanie has worked for philanthropy teams in higher education and cultural organisations since 2016. She is currently a senior prospect researcher at the University of Melbourne where she provides donor insights to inform strategy and maximise giving potential. Stephanie was previously the inaugural prospect researcher at Arts Centre Melbourne, establishing the function's key capabilities. As Vice President of Apra Australia, Stephanie helps lead a professional body for prospect research specialists in Australia and New Zealand. Stephanie has varied volunteer experience across the animal welfare and mental health sectors and she enjoys reading, going to the theatre and restaurants.



SAAD KHALID VICSCREEN

Saad is the Community Relations and Strategic Communications Specialist at OurDNA, a national health research program improving equity in genomics. He has led outreach to over 10,000 multicultural Australians and produced award-nominated documentaries exploring migration, identity and belonging. Saad has served in voluntary roles across ethnic community broadcasting, youth leadership and public health and was a Finalist for Young Australian of the Year. He currently sits on multiple national boards and is passionate about inclusive governance, community storytelling and supporting emerging migrant voices in civic life.



ALI KHAN ASYLUM SEEKERS RESOURCE CENTRE

Ali is a corporate lawyer at Gilbert + Tobin whose journey from unaccompanied minor to Mergers & Acquisitions lawyer shapes his commitment to equity and inclusion. His lived experience gives him a rare ability to bridge technical governance with on-the-ground community impact. He co-founded the Deakin Centre for Refugee Employment, Advocacy, Training and Education (CREATE), building pathways for newly arrived Australians to rebuild their careers. Ali's leadership is collaborative and values-driven, focused on sustainable change. Passionate about the power of diverse voices, he seeks to bring his legal expertise and personal perspective to strengthen not-for-profit governance.



ANDREW KHOO AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE MOVING IMAGE (ACMI)

Andrew is a Senior Associate at PwC, where he advises on Merger & Acquisitions transactions through financial due diligence, leveraging his business acumen, financial analysis, critical thinking skills honed during his audit career. Recognised for his strong work ethic and leadership, Andrew achieved two accelerated promotions as an auditor at RSM and he holds a Bachelor of Business from the University of Technology Sydney, awarded through a full scholarship. He actively contributes to the community by volunteering with Empower Australia to address food relief issues. A creative at heart, Andrew is an avid songwriter, blending his professional insights with artistic flair.



KIM KOHLMAN ALKIRA

Kim is a Disability and Neurodiversity Liaison in the Australian Public Service, specialising in workplace inclusion, accessibility and staff wellbeing. She has led initiatives to strengthen workplace adjustments, inclusive leadership capability and data-informed diversity strategies. Kim has served on her children's school council for four years, including one as President, leading community engagement and communication improvements. A former teacher, she brings extensive experience in education, coaching and systemic inclusion. Kim enjoys camping, creative art and craft projects, and exploring social and marginalised histories. She also loves reading speculative fiction and quietly soaking in the sun.



DILETTA LEGOWO APHIDS

Diletta (she/her) is an independent designer, producer and educator with a practice committed to a freer world where more of us feel at home in our bodies, places and with each other. She leads Small and Scale, a design company specialising in culturally safe, collaborative approaches to systems change. Her work spans partnerships with public-interest organisations, social innovation stewards and community builders. Diletta serves on the board of APHIDS, teaches yoga in Melbourne's inner north, and is Creative Director of Nongkrong Festival, a community arts initiative celebrating evolving Indonesian diaspora identities.



JENNY LEISHMAN VICTORIAN COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE (VCOSS)

Jenny is the Financial Controller at Aluminium Stewardship Initiative (ASI), responsible for financial and management reporting, budgeting and forecasting, compliance, risk management and control. She brings over 15 years of finance experience gained in Melbourne and London, working in industries such as banking, commodities trading, healthcare and education. Jenny also served as Treasurer at a community not-for-profit pre-school for three years where she supported the Committee of Management with strategic decision-making. Jenny is a Certified Practising Accountant (CPA), and holds a Bachelor's degree in Business (Accountancy). In her spare time, she enjoys hiking, gardening and spending time with her family.



JAKE LIBERMAN ROZANA AUSTRALIA

Jake Liberman is the co-founder of Giving Tree Advisors and Grant Savvy, where he has helped secure over \$40 million in funding for more than 100 not-for-profits, social enterprises and early-stage ventures across Australia. With a background in medical research, commercialisation and grant strategy, Jake brings deep expertise in funding systems and policy translation. He is currently completing a Juris Doctor at the University of Melbourne and works part-time as a paralegal. Outside of work, he is passionate about endurance sport, community leadership and access to opportunity - recently completing a Half Ironman and mentoring emerging founders through government start-up programs.



EUGEN LIM FLINDERS QUARTET INC.

Eugen is an Executive Director in Advisory & Capital Markets at UBS. He is hoping to transfer his experience providing advice to the Boards and management teams of corporate clients on transactions (e.g. mergers & acquisitions, capital raising) to the non-profit sector. Eugen has worked across a broad range of different industries including infrastructure; financial services; healthcare; chemicals; gaming; chemicals and general industrials. Eugen holds a Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) from the University of Melbourne. Outside of work, he is an avid road cyclist and hiker and is interested in economic policy.



DANE LINDE BROPHY FAMILY & YOUTH SERVICES INCORPORATED

Dane is a water industry professional and former solicitor based in Warrnambool, South-west Victoria. With degrees in Law, Psychology and Economics, he brings a multi-disciplinary perspective to strategy, risk and governance. At Hunter Water, he spearheaded the digital water metering pilot and led operational teams through transformational digital projects, driving innovation and cultural change. Now at Wannon Water, his focus is long-term resource planning, community engagement and sustainable service delivery. He has helped establish sound governance for a not-for-profit organisation and volunteered as a Lifeline crisis counsellor. Outside work, he's a keen golfer and passionate cook.



BEN LINGARD FOOTSCRAY COMMUNITY ARTS

Ben is the Managing Director, APAC at Ashling, a global Automation and AI consultancy. He has led large-scale digital transformations across Australia and North America, working with iconic brands and public sector agencies. Ben is a member of the Community Advisory Board for the Sunbury Community Arts and Cultural Precinct and a passionate advocate for inclusive leadership and regional cultural development. A lifelong supporter of the arts, he is also a member of the National Gallery of Victoria. Ben lives in Sunbury with his husband and young son and enjoys theatre, travel and audiobooks.



MADELINE LONG CIRCUS NEXUS INC

Madeline is an AI product engineer at Canva, where she builds and ships core AI features that empower millions to design with ease. With a strong grounding in software engineering and a keen eye on emerging AI research, she integrates cutting-edge technologies into user-facing products. She brings a strategic lens to product development, ensuring the team prioritises high-impact innovation in Canva's fast-paced environment. A former strategy consultant, she has supported major organisations on data and tech transformation. Madeline also co-founded a social enterprise delivering inclusive STEM programs and volunteers as a coding instructor for refugee students.



ILYA MAER VICTORIA LAW FOUNDATION

Ilya is an accomplished lawyer in Australia, specialising in legal technology and operations. With a strong commitment to social justice, Ilya excels in providing accessible legal services to marginalised communities. Ilya's achievements include leading initiatives to enhance legal processes and streamline service delivery and volunteering at Youthlaw and the Southport Community Legal Centre, advocating for those facing systemic barriers. Passionate about not-for-profit work, Ilya strives to empower individuals through access to legal resources. Outside of their professional pursuits, Ilya enjoys exploring the outdoors with his family and supporting community-driven projects.



RAMI MASEROW COMMUNITY SECURITY GROUP

Rami is a corporate lawyer at K&L Gates, specialising in public and private merger and acquisitions, capital markets and corporate advisory. Rami works with clients across diverse industries and sectors. Rami is passionate about the Jewish community and runs Zooz, an organisation that focuses on enhancing Jewish engagement for young people. Rami is also committed to disability inclusion through his long-term volunteering with Flying Fox, which supports young people with disabilities. Outside of work, Rami is a keen reader, runner and soccer player and enjoys attending Carlton matches with his wife and family.



PRUE MAY THE BRIDGE INCORPORATED

Prudence (Prue) is a transformation and finance leader currently serving as Business Transformation & Optimisation Lead at World Vision Australia. With over a decade of experience spanning strategy, finance and product delivery, she has led enterprise-wide change programs and complex technology implementations. A Chartered Accountant and Executive MBA graduate, passionate about purpose-led work, she is driven by values of equity, impact and continuous improvement. Outside of work, she enjoys powerlifting, walks with her dog, cooking up a storm in the kitchen (and making a mess) and crafts such as crochet and cross stitch.



SARAH MCARTHUR MONTSALVAT

Sarah is a lawyer at Gilbert + Tobin, specialising in corporate law with a focus on public and private mergers and acquisitions, equity capital markets transactions and general advice. Sarah is a strong advocate for rare colorectal diseases and malformations. She is a member of The Royal Children’s Hospital’s Colorectal Care Consumer Advisory Group and is co-founder and President of Colorectal Champions, an auxiliary supporting The Royal Children’s Hospital Foundation. Sarah holds a Juris Doctor and Bachelor of Arts and Commerce from the University of Melbourne. She has been recognised as ‘Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch’.



KIRIA MCNAMARA REBECCA JANE FOUNDATION

Kiria is Director of People & Culture at Swisse Wellness, where she has led the organisation to five consecutive years on the ‘Australia’s Best Places to Work’ list. Recognised as AFR’s BOSS Young Executive in 2024, she champions DE&I, implementing progressive policies and reducing the gender pay gap. Kiria’s connection to community includes fundraising for numerous charities including Red Nose and Oxfam and volunteering for the Yes campaign. She recently begun advocacy to reduce the painful silence around baby loss. A proud mum to Hugo and in memory of her daughter Billie, she is passionate about community and social change.



SIRANI MCNEILL ARTS ACCESS VICTORIA

Sirani is a disability advocate and board member with a background in accessibility, digital inclusion and consumer rights. She currently serves on the board of Disability Justice Australia and has held advisory roles with Women with Disabilities Victoria and other health and disability-focused organisations. In addition, Sirani has been involved in co-design, policy consultations and inclusive governance. She recently completed a Certificate IV in Cybersecurity. Sirani enjoys arts and crafts, storytelling and advocating for cultural spaces that centre disabled voices and lived experience.



ELLEN MCOMISH CONSUMER ACTION LAW CENTRE

Ellen is the National Trade Operations Manager at a leading FMCG business, with a strong background in driving operational transformation and strategic initiatives. Her career has been shaped by a commitment to continuous improvement, inclusive leadership and delivering meaningful outcomes across complex environments. Ellen’s key strengths include building strong, effective relationships with internal and external stakeholders, underpinned by a commercially astute mindset and a pragmatic, solution-oriented approach to problem solving. She holds a Bachelor of Laws and Arts from Flinders University. Outside of work, Ellen keeps busy with a young family.



LAUREN MILLER SOUTH WEST HEALTHCARE

Lauren is a commercial lawyer now working in higher education, where she provides strategic support for large-scale research and innovation initiatives in areas of national priority. She values fostering collaboration, a future focused approach and navigating the priorities of diverse stakeholders to advance impactful research. Lauren has previously served as a Director of the Barwon Heads Community Bank. Lauren holds a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of International Studies from Deakin University.



PHOEBE MOODY SWITCHBOARD VICTORIA

Phoebe is a risk and compliance professional who has worked with a number of not-for-profit organisations in Victoria. Phoebe has a passion for improving risk and compliance culture at all levels across organisations and believes in creating and implementing processes that work for and with the organisation. Phoebe is a qualified lawyer and prior to finding her place in the NFP sector, she worked at a number of law firms and in the banking sector. She enjoys expressing herself creatively and has a number of creative hobbies including painting, pottery and most recently, wood carving.



CASSIE MOORE SACRED HEART MISSION

Cassie is an experienced health operations manager who has experience in both the not-for-profit and public sectors. Having worked across the health sector, Cassie has led the implementation of programs that have removed barriers and improved access to health care. To strengthen her skills and expertise in health operations, Cassie also has experience in quality, risk and compliance. In her current role at Monash Health, Cassie is leading a significant transformation of the Specialist Consulting service that aims to lead industry reform and improve access to care. In her spare time, Cassie quilts, bakes and walks her golden retriever, Sundae.



FABIEN MOOTHOO LATROBE HEALTH SERVICES

Fabien is the Communications and Engagement Manager at the Committee for Gippsland where he works on regional priorities including the energy transition, workforce development and industry growth. After a successful career in commercial organisations, Fabien transitioned to the not-for-profit sector to focus on purpose-driven leadership and community impact. He has helped host round-tables with state and federal ministers, regional forums and business events; completed the MindfulAus Mental Health First Aid training and actively supports initiatives promoting gender equity and mental health awareness. Outside of work, Fabien enjoys exploring Gippsland’s natural landscapes and spending time with friends and family.



JOSHUA MORGAN INFOXCHANGE

Joshua is the Diversity and Inclusion Lead at the Brotherhood of St Laurence, where he drives organisation-wide initiatives to create a more equitable and accessible workplace. As a blind leader, Joshua is passionate about shifting societal attitudes and removing barriers to meaningful employment. He has contributed to several not-for-profit and disability advocacy projects, including work with local councils and national networks. Joshua is a member of the Senior Leadership Team and collaborates across departments to embed inclusion in practice. Outside of work, he enjoys playing guitar, strength training and boxing, which reflect his focus on discipline, resilience and creativity.



VINO NAIR DOCKLANDS STUDIOS MELBOURNE PTY

Vino is a strategic advisor specialising in AI, data and digital transformation across the Australian landscape. She has over 16 years’ experience working with health, finance, infrastructure and government sectors. A former trauma surgeon turned technology strategist, Vino is passionate about ethical, inclusive AI and making big data accessible. She has led programs generating over \$30M in value and was a finalist for Digital Transformation Leader of the Year. Vino also delivers pro bono training for women returning to work and consults in aged care. Outside work, she enjoys classical Indian dance, piano, hiking and community advocacy.



YUHUI NG-RODRIGUEZ GEELONG ARTS CENTRE

Yuhui is a Singaporean performance-maker and arts manager based in Geelong, working across creative practice, arts management and cultural policy. She is Sector Development and Membership Manager at Theatre Network Australia - a national peak body for the performing arts. She was on the Artistic Directorate of Next Wave (2024-25) and was a member of the G21 Making Change Strategy Creative Reference Group (2024-25). As an artist, Yuhui conceptualises, facilitates, directs and performs in projects that are led by site, place and community. Recent creative work includes projects with Platform Arts, Back to Back Theatre and Geelong Arts Centre.



ALI OAKDEN PROUD 2 PLAY

Ali is the Director of Inclusion, Diversity and Wellbeing at IFM Investors. Ali is a purpose driven leader with experience across funds management, property, and professional services. She is deeply committed to inclusion, diversity, wellbeing and social equity. Ali brings global experience, having lived and worked in New York for 5 years. Ali is deeply passionate about making a positive difference and brings with her deep strategic leadership skills and experience in designing and delivering cultural change programs. Ali is an avid runner and mum of two young children.



LIAM O'CALLAGHAN PANDA

Liam is a lawyer specialising in technology and commercial law, performing advisory and transactional-based work across a variety of sectors including healthcare, technology and consumer goods. He acts for domestic and international clients in various matters concerning contract drafting, privacy, regulatory compliance, intellectual property and general commercial law. Liam is also a Committee of Management member at Mitcham Community House, providing social services in the local community. Liam is a graduate of the University of Melbourne, Bachelor of Arts (2012 - 2014); Juris Doctor (2016 - 2019). Liam enjoys writing fiction, travelling and spending time with friends and family.



LACHLAN O'NEIL RELATIONSHIP MATTERS

Lachlan is a program lead passionate about applying AI and analytics to core business challenges. He has a broad background across government, manufacturing and technology - leading teams, projects and programs with impact. He established the first data science team in CSIRO's energy division and later helped develop BlueScope's global data strategy. He holds a combined Bachelor of Computer Engineering and Mathematics from the University of Newcastle. Outside of work, he enjoys sharing his love of games and sport with friends and family and is interested in how technology can promote fairness and strengthen community.



ARTY OWENS CASTLEMAINE STATE FESTIVAL

Arty (they/them) is a creative producer/coordinator for youth programs at Arts Access Victoria. Their work focuses on addressing the gaps for emerging Deaf and Disabled artists and creating pathways for them into the arts. They recently led a three-year program addressing isolation and inaccessible education. They also advise industry and councils on accessible practises. Previously, they worked in marketing and communications at places like RMIT and Disability Sport & Recreation. They are a proud queer and disabled artist who has a writing practise. They have a love of mythology, film and all things storytelling.



KRISTINA PALERMO STATE SPORT CENTRES TRUST

Kristina is a risk and strategy consultant with extensive Victorian government and public health experience. As Risk and Planning Manager at Western Health and West Metro LHSN Program Manager, she takes a pragmatic approach to risk management, bringing an understanding of strategic, operational, regulatory and compliance priorities to inform decision making. With a Bachelor of Biomedical Science and a Master of Business, Kristina combines a scientific background with business acumen. A former musician, Kristina played vibraphone in the all-female, Melbourne Women's International Jazz Festival Student Superband. She enjoys good food, playing tennis, travel and cheering on the Collingwood Magpies.



SARI PALTIEL COMMUNITY SECURITY GROUP

Sari is a digital fundraising professional with nearly a decade of experience in the not-for-profit sector, helping charities develop and implement effective, best-practice digital strategies. She has worked both agency-side and in-house and currently leads digital fundraising at Cancer Council Victoria, where she has driven 25% growth in two years. Passionate about purpose-driven work, Sari brings a strategic mindset and deep sector knowledge. Outside of work, she's a proud wife and mother to two boys and enjoys reading, nature and travel.



TANAYA PARADKAR STATE SPORT CENTRES TRUST

Tanaya is a project and risk assurance specialist with over a decade of experience advising large organisations across banking, government and consulting. She currently leads risk and assurance work at NAB on the integration of Citi's unsecured lending business. With previous roles at KPMG, PwC and Telstra, she has delivered complex transformation and assurance projects across financial services, education and health sectors. Tanaya holds a Master of Science in Management from the University of Colorado Denver, an MBA in Finance and a Bachelor of Engineering. Outside work, she enjoys Indian classical dance, exploring new cuisines and the arts.



SONAL PREMI LEARNING FOR LIFE AUTISM CENTRE

Sonal is a business-focused technology leader, with deep expertise simplifying complex problems, shaping technology strategy and driving transformation initiatives. She has 20 years' experience bridging technical, strategic and risk domains, across industry sectors, spanning large enterprises and mid-sized organisations, with a career footprint that reflects cross-cultural adaptability and an international global perspective. Sonal is passionate about challenging the tech culture and is an active community builder. She has co-founded the Analysis, Design and Architecture Conference (ADACConf), and domain-driven design Australia meet-ups, which have grown into inclusive and thriving communities. She enjoys philosophical conversations, board-games and binge watching stand-up comedy.



ABHIJITH RAMACHANDRAN NAIR SCOPE GROUP

Abhijit is a data analytics professional working in financial crime model validation, with experience across major Australian banks in fraud detection, credit risk modelling and Generative AI. He has contributed to impactful projects that improve financial system integrity and reduce risk. Abhijit is an active member of the Australian Labor Party, advocating on issues such as disability access, cost-of-living relief and equitable immigration policy. Overcoming significant personal challenges, he now lives independently and is passionate about using technology and lived experience to empower others. His interests include politics, technology and advancing social and economic inclusion.



KELLY SAVANNAH CANCER COUNCIL VICTORIA

Kelly is a Sales Director at Databricks, specialising in Cloud, Data and AI Platforms. She has over 17 years' experience leading complex and strategic technology programs across Enterprise, with a focus on stakeholder engagement, governance and innovation. Kelly previously led the Diversity and Inclusion team for Microsoft's Melbourne office and actively mentors women in technology, supporting career development and leadership growth. She has completed the AICD Company Directors Course and has an MBA. Kelly enjoys reading, hiking, cooking and travel.



TOM SCARBOROUGH MPOWER

Tom is the Program Manager of Quality Water for Wannon at Wannon Water, leading a \$52 million program to improve the taste and quality of drinking water in the Southwest Victorian communities of Portland, Port Fairy and Heywood. With over 15 years' experience in water and environmental management, Tom is passionate about delivering work that improves equity for regional communities. From Warrnambool, he values his strong connection to the region. Tom serves on the Merrivale Primary School Council and spends his spare time with family, surfing and fishing along the southwest coast.



MICHELLE SEARLE KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST

Michelle is the Executive Manager of Corporate Services at Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative, where she leads strategic reform across finance, HR, IT and facilities. A proud Aboriginal artist from the Awabakal Mob, Michelle's work has been exhibited widely, including in the Koorie Heritage Trust's Blak Design Stitch'n Stories exhibition and the Geelong AFL Sir Douglas Nicholls Round guernsey design. She has contributed to not-for-profit governance through regional leadership groups and cultural initiatives supporting vulnerable families. Michelle is passionate about cultural safety, community-led change and using art to promote healing, pride and reconciliation across South West Victoria.



GIDEON SHAPIRO PENINGTON INSTITUTE

Gideon is an experienced strategy and performance improvement consultant. His professional focus has been on public services, particularly health and aged care but with expertise across a range of organisations and professional contexts. He has almost 15 years' experience in consulting and project management in the UK and Australia, working with NHS hospital trusts, local government councils, not-for-profit entities and commercial businesses. In his current role as a director in KordaMentha's consulting practice, he plays a critical role in health practice and contributes to the broader business achieving long-term, sustainable success.



NIKITA SHEWANDAS OXFAM AUSTRALIA

Nikita is a public policy and strategy consultant with extensive experience across the health and human services sectors. She specialises in policy design, program evaluation, strategic planning and translating complex data into clear, actionable insights. Nikita has led large-scale evaluations and reviews for government and not-for-profit clients that inform funding decisions, improve service delivery, and enhance program impact for government and not-for-profit clients across Australia. As a strong advocate for social and economic inclusion, she has worked and volunteered with ygap, Good Shepherd, the Australian Red Cross and UN Women Australia. Outside of work, Nikita enjoys running, baking and photography.



DIANA SO EASTERN COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE

Diana is an Associate Software Engineer, passionate about leveraging technology for meaningful problem-solving and societal betterment. With a background in food safety, her diverse career spans regulatory compliance, risk management and strategic thinking, honed through comprehensive auditing and stakeholder engagement. A dedicated advocate for social inclusion, Diana has committed six years to raising service dog puppies for Guide Dogs Victoria and Assistance Dogs Australia, empowering individuals with disabilities. Her personal experiences include navigating hearing impairment and fostering a unique perspective on accessibility and empathetic leadership. Diana also actively engages with software engineering communities to champion women in tech.



SOPHIE SOUCHON CARE AUSTRALIA

Sophie manages the Infoxchange Digital Transformation team and has over eight years' experience in the not-for-profit sector across Australia and the Asia-Pacific. She began her career in business and finance before discovering her passion for not-for-profit (NFP) technology while volunteering with an edtech NFP in India. Sophie has since led major digital transformation initiatives and supported scores of NFPs through capability-building programs. She is deeply committed to advancing social impact, particularly in women's and children's development, and is passionate about how emerging technologies can strengthen governance and amplify purpose-driven outcomes.



SARAH STYLES PUBLIC GALLERIES ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

Sarah is an accomplished and mission-driven executive leader with a proven track record of combining systems strategy and execution to drive meaningful and lasting change. With more than 18 years' experience in leadership and advisory in high profile organisations including Cricket Australia, the Australian Sports Commission, the Champions of Change Coalition, Medibank and Macquarie, Sarah is known for delivering transformational systems, cultural and organisational change programs in complex environments. A former director of Stillbirth Foundation Australia and Gender Equity Victoria, Sarah is known for engaging boards, ministers, CEOs, executives and communities to reshape policy, culture and performance.



AKASH SUTAR IGEN FOUNDATION

Akash is a marketing and communications professional with experience across education, startups and community-focused organisations. He is currently completing a Master of Marketing and has worked in roles spanning marketing strategy, student engagement and stakeholder communications. Akash has been actively involved in the not-for-profit sector through volunteering, mentoring and board observership experience, with a strong interest in youth participation, inclusion and governance. He brings a thoughtful, systems-oriented perspective shaped by lived experience and professional practice. Outside of work, Akash enjoys reflective writing, travel, long walks and coffee-led conversations.



ALEX TARGETT RAWCUS

Alex is an Employee Relations Specialist with expertise in employment law, workplace strategy and inclusive leadership. She has led enterprise bargaining processes, conducted complex workplace investigations and advised on workforce change and compliance in both private firms and a member-based organisation. Alex holds a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) and Bachelor of Arts from Monash University. Outside of work, Alex is passionate about Melbourne's arts and culture scene, with a particular interest in arthouse film, queer literature, poetry and theatre.



MATT TERAN MINUS18

Matt is a business development professional with extensive experience in social services, health and government. Matt helps organisations secure funding from diverse sources by identifying growth opportunities, building strategic partnerships and developing value propositions. This includes government tenders, grants from philanthropic trusts and foundations and corporate sponsorships. At Uniting Vic. Tas, Matt drives growth and sustainability by designing compelling business strategies, proposals and service models. His broad skill set includes strategic planning, service design, design thinking, co-design, impact evaluation and project delivery. He holds postgraduate qualifications in social work and public policy and enjoys writing and visiting art galleries.



KATE THOMPSON HOLMESGLEN TAFE

Kate is a strategic marketing consultant with 20 years' experience helping organisations navigate growth and transformation. She has held leadership roles at Clemenger BBDO and Hardie Grant Media and marketing positions with NAB and IOOF. Now running her own consultancy, Kate specialises in brand strategy, communications and customer experience, supporting organisations to strengthen trust and deliver long-term value. Holding a Graduate Diploma in Psychology and a Bachelor of Business, she brings a systems-thinking approach and a commitment to developing future leaders through mentoring and education. Kate also lectures in marketing at RMIT and enjoys travel, live music and the arts.



STEPH THOW-TAPP WORKPLACE INJURY COMMISSION

Steph is a proud Pennemuker and Ngāti Porou woman with over 17 years' experience in Aboriginal health. She currently leads health promotion at VACCHO, supporting community-led initiatives across Victoria. Her background spans grassroots healthcare, workforce development and policy advocacy, all grounded in Culture, Community and self-determination. Steph is completing the University of Melbourne's Poche Indigenous Health Leadership Program and has undertaken governance training through the Kickstarter Board and Geelong Leadership programs. She is passionate about reshaping systems to centre Aboriginal voices and is committed to building a future defined by equity, cultural strength and community leadership.



CAITLIN TOBIN NEAMI NATIONAL

Caitlin is a policy advisor in the Victorian public service, with experience in health, governance, public administration and legislative reform. Prior to joining the public service, Caitlin worked as a lawyer, specialising in Workplace Relations & Safety. Caitlin now volunteers as a lawyer with Refugee Legal. Caitlin holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from the University of Sydney and a Juris Doctor and Graduate Certificate in Advanced Public Administration from the University of Melbourne. She is an avid reader and enjoys hiking, running, learning new languages and exploring new parts of Melbourne.



ARI TSOULAKOS ROZANA AUSTRALIA

Ari is a motivated professional and problem-solver with an entrepreneurial mindset, having founded creative ventures from a young age. His diverse experience spans public policy, advocacy, data analysis, stakeholder engagement and project leadership. He has worked extensively with government bodies, organisations and not-for-profits, offering strategic advice on multicultural health, youth engagement and policy-based solutions. Believing in the power of collaboration to drive social change, Ari excels at building impactful relationships. His strong work ethic, attention to detail and ability to navigate complex challenges ensure meaningful and sustainable outcomes.



TASHI VAN DER WAERDEN MELBOURNE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Tashi is a strategy director with 12 years' international experience in brand communication, programming and design. With a background in market research, graphic design and behavioural psychology, she helps organisations turn insight into impact. In the not-for-profit sector, Tashi has consulted with Art Against Knives, The Equality Institute, Good Flock and Good Nugget to drive social progress by amplifying voices across gender, race and age. She has presented at Melbourne Design Week and The Future Laboratory and advised brands including Moët Hennessy, Unilever and La Trobe University. Outside of work, she loves food history and creating dinner table rituals.



ELLIE VIRTUE OVARIAN CANCER AUSTRALIA

Ellie is a PhD-qualified translational scientist and former start-up CEO with experience in infectious diseases, diagnostics, agtech, drug development and medtech across human and animal health. She holds a Master of Applied Finance and has worked in commercialisation and business development within the university sector as well as in biotech, pharma and US-based start-ups. Ellie brings commercial acumen, strategic insight and creative problem-solving, shaped by cross-functional leadership and collaboration with boards and executive teams. Passionate about innovation, governance and impact-driven work, she is building a board career grounded in purpose. Outside work, she enjoys family, travel and adventure.



DANIEL WALDRON MAYFLOWER AGED CARE

Daniel is a seasoned health strategy executive and ex-consultant who has delivered real world results for some of Australia and New Zealand's biggest health and aged care organisations, including private health insurers, private and public hospital systems and leading healthy ageing operators. He has a wealth of experience covering enterprise strategy, complex business transformation (both organisational and digital), innovation, mergers & acquisitions, and corporate partnerships.



BEN WEINTRAUB APHIDS

Ben is a commercial lawyer with over eight years' experience across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors, both in Australia and internationally. He has worked across a broad range of industries advising on complex legal and strategic matters. Ben is deeply passionate about the arts and believes in its power to foster connection, challenge ideas and drive social change. In addition to his legal work, he is committed to supporting a vibrant, inclusive and sustainable creative sector; most recently through his role on the board of APHIDS, an artist-led organisation producing experimental contemporary performance.



JANELLE WILLIAMS HEYWOOD RURAL HEALTH

Janelle is a proud Gunditjmara woman from South West Victoria with a strong connection to my culture and community. She works at the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape in the Tae Rak Café, where she has built confidence, leadership skills, and experience, including stepping into the role of temporary Operations Manager. She is passionate about cultural weaving, creating jewellery and baskets to help keep our traditions strong and alive. Her greatest achievement is being a dedicated mother to three beautiful girls and a supportive wife, raising her family with love, strength, and a deep respect for our culture and heritage.



JOSH WILLIAMS WANNON WATER

Josh is an Agribusiness Executive at CBA, a commercial banking role focused on supporting farms and agri-business clients across South West Victoria. He works with a variety of primary producers and regional businesses, helping them invest and grow sustainably. Josh has over a decade of experience in forestry where he managed high risk and environmentally sensitive projects before transitioning into finance. He holds a Graduate Certificate in Business Administration from Melbourne Business School and is completing a Master of Applied Finance at UNSW. Josh is a CFA volunteer is also working towards his private pilot licence and enjoys flying.



NIKKI WISHART PHONOGRAPHIC PERFORMANCE COMPANY OF AUSTRALIA (NSW)

Nikki is a Music Curator at QSIC, where she leads strategy and curation for national clients including McDonald's, 7-Eleven and Mecca. She specialises in shaping customer experiences through data-driven music design, underpinned by strong partnerships with artists, labels and industry bodies. Previously, Nikki worked with Inherited Cancers Australia, a not-for-profit focused on awareness and research, where she advanced communications, fundraising and community engagement. A lifelong musician and active supporter of the Australian music scene, Nikki has delivered national campaigns, fostered cross-sector collaborations and championed opportunities for emerging talent. She brings creativity, commercial insight and a proven record of impact.



IRENE ZHONG ARTS ACCESS VICTORIA

Irene is a Hakka-Chinese songwriter and disability support worker. Irene greatly values cultural equity, accessibility in workplaces, and meaningful community impact. Irene has prior experiences as an industry advisor for Creative Australia and a co-designer of Songsmiths, a pilot d/Deaf and disabled songwriting workshop supported by Accessible Arts. Irene holds a Bachelor of Music (Honours) from Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and is currently studying a Masters in Music Therapy at the University of Melbourne.

“ Diversity is a key element for good governance, yet too often people with different education, skills, lived experience, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds don't have the pathways to gain board experience. The Observership Program has an outstanding track record of sourcing and matching highly skilled, diverse, candidates to NFP and government boards. It's a brilliant program, building the next generation of Directors!”

Morgana Ryan, Director, CARE Australia, former Chair Infoxchange

“ The Australian Ballet has participated in the Observership Program for three years and has found the quality of the candidates presented to us for consideration to be outstanding. We have been fortunate to have two Observers to date and both bring a range of skills, experience and diversity to our Board. As a major performing arts company, this program has proven to be an excellent way for us to contribute to the development of talented future leaders and to increase the diversity of viewpoints available to us.”

Libby Christie AM, Former Executive Director, The Australian Ballet



“ We received approval from the Victorian Government to appoint Anna Pitt, our 2019 Board Observer to the Victorian Opera Board. Anna stayed on our Marketing Committee in 2020 after her official Observership ended and she has continued to attend Board meetings as an Observer since that time. Based on her skills and contribution, we decided earlier this year to propose her to the government as a full Board member. We are delighted that her appointment was approved and are excited to welcome her to the Board. We have been very happy with the quality of our Observers since joining the Program in 2017.”

Grant Powell, Board Director, Victorian Opera



“The support and professional development the Observers receive over the course of the Program is invaluable and cannot be accessed anywhere else. The selection process is very strategic: it ensures organisational fit. Our Observers have demonstrated real diligence and commitment to their role: they have brought valuable experience and expertise to the board table, including during the current Covid-19 crisis.”

Victoria Marles AM, Former Chair, Consumer Action Law Centre, Chair, Abbotsford Convent Foundation and Former CEO, Trust For Nature



Observer and Board Directors, Sacred Heart Mission

“I am really impressed with the philosophy of the Observership Program to encourage young professionals to get a deep understanding of governance

practices in the not for profit sector. This is an area of real need and one where they can make a great contribution. What surprised me in our first year of participation was the quality of the candidates offered to the MSO – highly motivated individuals, each with strong credentials and importantly, in our case, a passion for music! The Observers receive a comprehensive, structured training program facilitated by the AICD, so they come to the table well prepared to broaden their understanding with practical experience. I encourage all not for profits to seriously consider participating in the program.”

Michael Ullmer AM, Former Chair, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO)

“The Program is a wonderful opportunity for personal development as participation exposes you to a diverse community of NFP leaders who are regularly making decisions that have a broader impact on society. The knowledge and skills that you pick up as an Observer can't be taught in a classroom. By observing boards in action, you will learn how to be a better leader, a better listener and have a broader array of skills through which to apply when making decisions in any sector. The formal training program is comprehensive in nature and when applied alongside the practical observing of a board, is the perfect catalyst for a person to want to make a difference in whatever leadership role they are pursuing.”

Kate Stewart, Observer, joined FareShare following her Observership





LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY AS AN OBSERVER

Each organisation has been encouraged to review its directors' and offices' insurance, including potential coverage of you as an Observer.

The Program has sought legal advice on the potential liability associated with serving as an Observer and whether this role could be considered akin to the role of a shadow director under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) (the Act).

SHADOW DIRECTORS

In the ordinary course, a director is a person who has been formally appointed to act as a director of a company or a body. However, the definition of a director under the Act extends to a shadow director.

A person who is not validly appointed as a director will be a shadow director if they either act in the position of a director or if the directors are accustomed to act in accordance with that person's instructions or wishes. A person is not a shadow director merely because the directors act on advice given by the person in the proper performance of functions attaching to the person's professional capacity, or the person's business relationship with the directors or the company.

When determining whether a person is a shadow director, regard should be had to a variety of factors including whether:

- (a) there is a causal connection between the instruction or the wish of the person and the directors acting on it, though it is not sufficient if the act that was specified in the instruction is something the directors would do irrespective of the instruction;
- (b) there is "habitual compliance over a period of time"; and
- (c) the directors collectively are accustomed to act on the person's instructions or wishes.

ARE OBSERVERS SHADOW DIRECTORS?

In the course of their 12 month Observership, Observers are not appointed to act as directors of the companies or bodies that they are paired with.

Given that an Observer has no voting rights and only attends board or committee meetings to observe the workings of a board as a learning experience, it is unlikely that an Observer will be found to be acting as a director of the partnership, company or body.

Additionally, the word accustomed implies that there must be a pattern of conforming to the wishes of the person, rather than a single instance.

Given that the extent of the Observer's relationship with the board will be confined to a 12 month period, it would appear unlikely that the Observer would be able to exert a pattern of influence such that the directors who are formally appointed to the board would be in the habit of complying with the wishes of the Observer. Accordingly, we have received legal advice stating that in the absence of any additional facts, an Observer would not be considered to be a shadow director and thereby exposed to any liability that follows from being a director under the Act.

OUR GOVERNANCE

The Observership Program is a company limited by guarantee with an independent board and is registered with the Australian Charities and not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

BOARD DIRECTORS:

Jonathan Gavshon (Founder and Chair), Alison Deans, Conor Foley (2017 Observer), Dennis Goldner AM, Ronny Andrade Parra and Joseph Skrzynski AO.

David Gonski AC, Peter Joseph AM and Jillian Segal AO are The Program Patrons.

The board of The Observership Program has an Observer each year.

Finance, Risk and Audit Committee:

Conor Foley (Chair), Dennis Goldner AM, Phil Hughes (2018 Observer), Jennifer Matson (2024 Observer)

Accessibility Advisory Committee:

Catherine Reiser (Chair), Ronny Andrade Parra (2023 Observer), Ibrahim Elsoukmani (2023 Observer), Kim Groizard (2023 Observer), Kei Ho (2025 Observer), Kin Jing Ly (2025 Observer)



David Gonski AC, Observership Program Patron

“As an Wailwan and Kamilaroi man concerned about the need for Indigenous representation in the board room of our organisations, the Observership Program gave me the foundational knowledge I need to be comfortable stepping up into these much needed roles. It's been as beneficial to me as it has been to our organisations. I implore our future leaders and community organisations to use this valuable program and secure the future of Indigenous organisations run by our communities, for our communities.”

Blayne Welsh, Observer, appointed to Ilbijerri Theatre Board following his Observership

“I want to express my gratitude for an outstanding Program. It has been truly life-changing... The ‘Finance for the NFP Director’ session was a masterclass in distilling complex financial concepts into accessible insights for new directors. As a Chartered Accountant, I was particularly impressed with the facilitator’s ability to articulate key financial ratios and trends in a way that resonated with those unfamiliar with financial statements. It was a standout example of the high-quality training provided by the AICD, which is such a valuable part of The Observership Program.”

James Moulton, Director, Corporate Value Advisory, PwC, appointed to Melbourne Chamber Orchestra following his 2024 Observership

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