

## Clare Scriven MLC Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development

Thursday 25 January 2024

### **New boost to empower South Australia's future regional leaders**

The State Government has allocated an additional \$2 million in funding to extend a highly successful program fostering future leaders in regional South Australia.

The Regional Leadership Development Program (RLDP) was established in 2022 and designed to empower a broader cohort of leaders from regional communities, including recent graduate Tiahni Adamson named 2024 Young South Australian of the Year and now also a nominee for 2024 Young Australian of the Year.

The program is delivered through South Australia's Regional Development Australia boards (RDAs) and is facilitated in each region to fill the identified gaps in leadership training. This enables the program to meet the specific needs of each regional community, while also reducing participant travel and increasing accessibility for previously under-represented leadership cohorts, such as women who made up 68% of the program's participants.

By the end of 2023, the program had remarkably surpassed more than three times the targeted number of participants, with more than 1300 taking part in training across 72 regional towns.

The need for an invigorated leadership pool in regional South Australia was evident at the 2022 local government elections where 93 positions were filled uncontested, and a further 16 vacancies across 10 councils resulted in supplementary elections needing to be held.

As part of the program, seven RDAs offered courses featuring training in governance, financial accounting, strategic and project planning, marketing, and managing volunteers, as well as skills to assist with wellbeing and resilience, empowering leadership, harnessing diversity and inclusion, and cross-sector collaboration.

The program has resulted in many participants either taking up roles on community boards or committees or increasing their commitments on these bodies.

RDAs will continue to deliver the program, making further use of their extensive regional networks, local knowledge, and whole-of-region industry, community, and business connections.

#### **Quotes attributable to Clare Scriven**

*The Regional Leadership Development Program has demonstrated that it can reach a large and diverse group of emerging leaders from right across regional South Australia and*

*provide them with valuable skills relevant for their work in regional industries, businesses, and in community activities.*

*Under the management of the RDA network, the popularity of the program in its first two years has been remarkable. Designed to reach 420 participants it has reached more than three times this target (over 1300), significantly surpassing the demand that was anticipated.*

*Particularly impressive was the high representation of women in the program. At 68% of participants, the Regional Leadership Development Program has demonstrated that place-based and flexible training delivery can reach a new cohort of future leaders.*

### **Quotes attributable to Hon Rob Kerin, Regional Development South Australia Chair**

*Regional Development South Australia welcomes the Minister's announcement of a two-year extension of the Regional Leadership Development Program.*

*It's important that a wide diversity of regional South Australians are given the practical training they need to effectively lead businesses, industries, and community organisations into the future.*

*With our knowledge of regional needs and extensive relationships with existing community and business leaders, the RDA network is well placed to administer this program and have demonstrated this with large numbers of participants taking part in training across 72 regional towns.*

*I'm proud of how each RDA designed their own program to suit the leadership development needs of their regions, and I'm sure that as the program develops, they will learn from each other's experiences and adapt their own course offerings accordingly. This is a great investment in the future of regional SA.*

### **Quotes attributable to Tiahni Adamson, 2024 Young South Australian of the Year and Young Australian of the Year nominee**

*Finding programs to assist both personal and professional development can be difficult. The Regional Leadership Development Program (RLDP) encompassed a holistic approach to leadership training that fostered well-being, leading from the heart, diversity, equity, and inclusivity.*

*The cohort of participants reflected a variety of professionals at different ages, career stages, backgrounds, and leadership styles. Unlike some programs, where it is encouraged to be the loudest and boldest, this program allowed us to learn how to work with our strengths, learning when to step up, when to step back, and how to grow ourselves in ways that embody the diversity of our natural talents.*

*My favourite aspect of the training was that it encompassed First Nations leadership and knowledge and was centred around connection to Country and community. Throughout our time, a variety of First Nations leaders and community members shared their knowledge and wisdom, which beautifully shaped the experiences of all participants.*

*From the RLDP I learnt to employ new techniques and tricks to be a better leader for my community. Matthew and Katrina instilled a confidence in me that I had been lacking, and the program did an excellent job of networking us with local people and industries to help us grow our businesses and outreach. I've made lifelong friends, support webs, and am more passionate than ever to work to uplift and amplify our local regions, people, and businesses.*