



# FOR OBSERVERS

## PROGRAM HANDBOOK

MELBOURNE 2020

“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)



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“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

## WELCOME

### CONGRATULATIONS. YOU ARE IN FOR AN EXCITING YEAR...

We want to take the opportunity to thank you. We understand that you are in a busy phase of your career and that you have chosen to give a portion of your precious time and talent to the NFP sector. We trust that you will find it a rewarding and enriching experience.



**JONATHAN GAVSHON**  
Founder and Chair



**CATHERINE REISER**  
Director, Melbourne Program

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Founded in 2014, The Observership Program facilitates the involvement of talented and energetic individuals with a diverse range of skills and backgrounds in a structured experience on not-for-profit boards. It is a powerful tool to engage emerging community leaders while giving participating not-for-profit boards insight into the next generation’s perspective. Over 500 Observers have participated in the Program, observing on the boards of over 190 not-for-profit organisations.

The Observership Program has run in Sydney since 2014 and in Melbourne since 2017.



## GENERAL INFORMATION

### THE PROGRAM RUNS FEBRUARY – DECEMBER 2020

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.

Please confirm all board meeting 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 2020 or with your attendance at your organisation's final board meeting for 2020. At the end of the Program, The Observership Program will liaise with each organisation regarding the placement of a new Observer for 2021, 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 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 us.

Please contact your Board Liaison with any questions about serving as an Observer on the board, including details for board meetings, board expectations of their Observer, behavior and board culture.



“What I valued most was that the Program provided a supported introduction to what it means to be a board member. The combination of quality boards from which to gain firsthand experience and training from the highly respected AICD is a winning one.”

Dr Sarah Wenham (McKinsey & Company). Sarah was appointed to the board of Diabetes Victoria following the 2017 Program.

## PREPARATION FOR PROGRAM COMMENCEMENT

Prior to your first board meeting or the first Observership Program training session, whichever occurs earlier, please make sure you have completed the following;

1. Police Check: Provided your proof of identity documents, upload your consent form and complete the online form following notification received from Belinda Da Silva.
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 or board liaison of any conflicts regarding board meetings.
5. Informed the Program of any conflicts regarding the training sessions.

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, the Program recommends attending the board meeting. Please feel free to discuss with Catherine Reiser, Director, Melbourne Program.



## EXPECTATIONS AND HANDY HINTS

### WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT:

- High level training for not-for-profit directors delivered by AICD and The Ethics Centre.
- A year-long program to build your experience and confidence in serving on a not-for-profit board.
- Access to experienced Board directors from both the not-for-profit and for-profit sectors.
- Possible involvement in a strategic project or board subcommittee.
- Networking opportunities with fellow and former participants 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.

### HANDY HINTS:

- 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 extreme cases, 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 a not-for-profit organisation to participate 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 not-for-profit directorship and governance, as part of a combined experience of the theory and practice of not-for-profit directorship. AICD runs more in-depth courses for those interested.

Establishing open and direct communication early on with your Board Liaison 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.

“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, Melbourne Observer 2019



### WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO 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/or by calling you directly. 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, Melbourne Director

## TRAINING

The Training Program is a combination of formal education sessions provided in a partnership with our strategic partners the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) and The Ethics Centre, that encompasses key subject areas important for not-for-profit governance and networking sessions with high profile guest speakers..

“ 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, Melbourne Observer 2018

## KEY DETAILS

There are nine sessions in the training program during the year, all held in the CBD. Sessions open at 5.30pm for a 6.00pm start and conclude by 8.30pm.

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

- Directors' duties and responsibilities;
- Finance;
- Strategy
- Risk; and
- Ethics

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

All sessions are **MANDATORY**.

If under extenuating circumstances, you 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.

Information about the Program's scheduled training sessions has been sent to all Observers. Any changes to these sessions will be communicated. Special events and sessions will be communicated separately.

## OUR TRAINING PROVIDER (AICD)

AICD develops the content and materials for The Observership Program training sessions and provides us with their expert facilitators. AICD 's vision is to strengthen society through world class governance.

Biographies for facilitators can be found on Page 11 of this Handbook. Where available, links to webinars and other course materials will be distributed via AICD's database.

AICD's principals 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 43,000 members including over 1,700 internationally. Members include directors from such diverse organisations as ASX-listed companies, government bodies, not-for-profit organisations, charities, family-owned/private companies and entrepreneurial ventures.

The AICD has agreed to waive the membership joining fee of \$220 for participants in The Observership Program. If you are interested in joining and would like to take advantage of this benefit, please contact Cathy Robinson.



Phil Butler, Sector Leader, NFP, AICD

“ 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 PROVIDER (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](http://www.ethics.org.au).



## TRAINING TIMETABLE MELBOURNE 2020

All training sessions will be held from 5.30pm arrival for a 6.00pm start and concluding at 8.30pm, unless otherwise advised.

DATE	TOPIC	LOCATION	GUEST SPEAKER/ FACILITATOR
<b>TUESDAY 4 FEBRUARY</b>	Program Launch Event	The Garden Restaurant, NGV International, 180 St Kilda Road, Melbourne	Dennis Goldner AM
<b>THURSDAY 13 FEBRUARY</b>	Duties and Responsibilities for NFP Directors	Pricewaterhouse Coopers – 2 Riverside Quay, Southbank	Dr Melinda Muth, AICD
<b>THURSDAY 27 FEBRUARY</b>	Finance for the NFP Director	Pricewaterhouse Coopers – 2 Riverside Quay, Southbank	Ros Jackson, AICD
<b>THURSDAY 12 MARCH</b>	Strategy for the NFP Director	Pricewaterhouse Coopers – 2 Riverside Quay, Southbank	Dr Melinda Muth, AICD
<b>THURSDAY 26 MARCH</b>	Risk for the NFP Director	To be confirmed	To be confirmed
<b>THURSDAY 30 APRIL</b>	Ethics in Governance	Pricewaterhouse Coopers – 2 Riverside Quay, Southbank	To be confirmed
<b>THURSDAY 14 MAY</b>	Ethics in Governance – Practical application	Pricewaterhouse Coopers – 2 Riverside Quay, Southbank	To be confirmed
<b>THURSDAY 17 SEPTEMBER</b>	Alumni Next Steps and Networking session	Pricewaterhouse Coopers – 2 Riverside Quay, Southbank	To be confirmed
<b>THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER</b>	End of Year Networking Cocktails	Pricewaterhouse Coopers – 2 Riverside Quay, Southbank	To be confirmed

## THE COURSE FACILITATORS

The AICD is rigorous in the selection and management of facilitators, all of whom have formal qualifications and experience in the subject area, have undertaken corporate governance development, hold directorships or work closely with a variety of boards and are experienced facilitators. Facilitators are evaluated by participants at the end of each session.

### ROS JACKSON – FAICD

Roslyn is a Fellow Chartered Accountant with over 30 years' experience, having worked in public practice, the NFP sector and the Australian Government. She is currently managing director of Australian Capital Training Group, providing financial framework and financial management training and consulting services to the Australian Government. Roslyn has been facilitating and writing courses on behalf of AICD for over 20 years, in both financial and governance subject areas. She has also facilitated and been an assessor for the professional year of study for Chartered Accountants Australia New Zealand (CAANZ).

Roslyn is an experienced non-executive director, having held numerous positions predominantly in the NFP health and education sectors. She has held the Chair of several Boards and also chaired Audit, Finance and Risk sub-committees. Roslyn is currently a director of Capital Health Network, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council and Chairs the Board of Health Education Services Australia. Roslyn is also an independent member of the National Blood Authority's audit committee.

### MELINDA MUTH – FAICD

Melinda is an educator and consultant specialising in personal and team effectiveness, principally with senior executives and leadership teams. She is a facilitator and guest speaker in executive education programs in Australia and has worked in Asia and the USA. Melinda is a Director of the Institute of Food and Grocery Management, a Facilitator, Faculty Adviser, and Fellow of AICD, and a member of the adjunct faculty at UNSW.

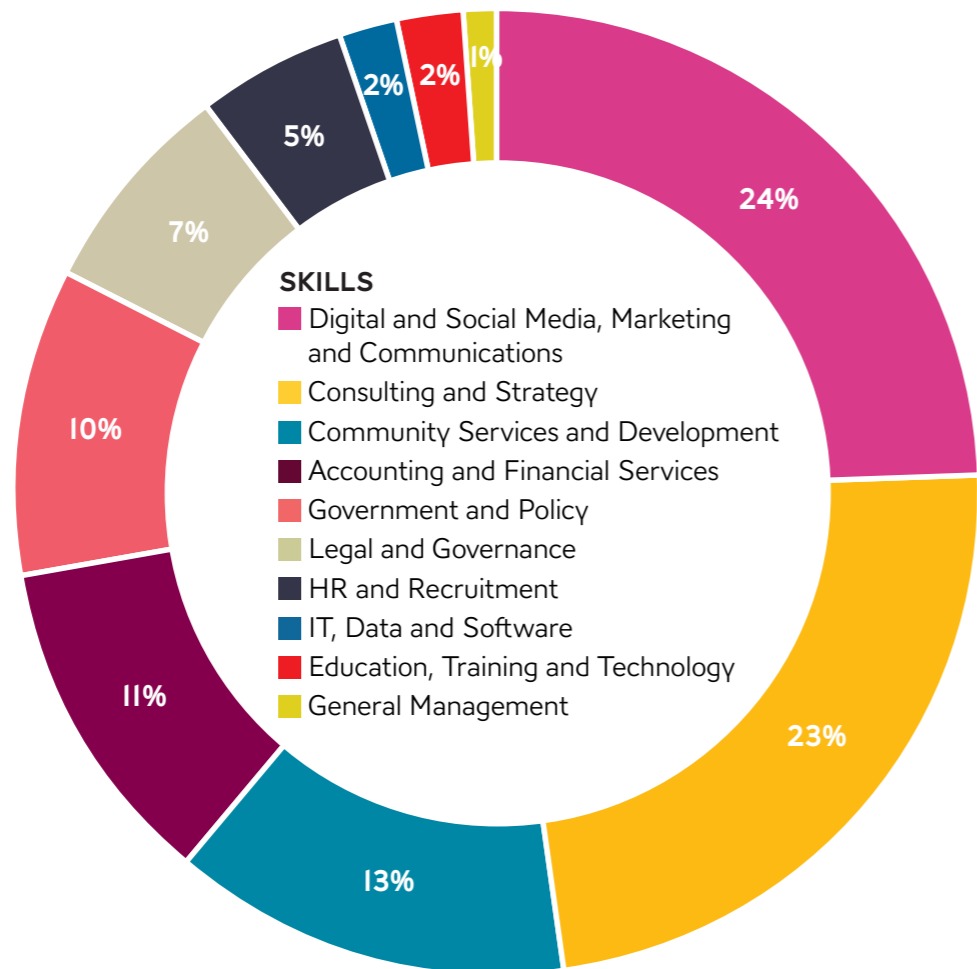
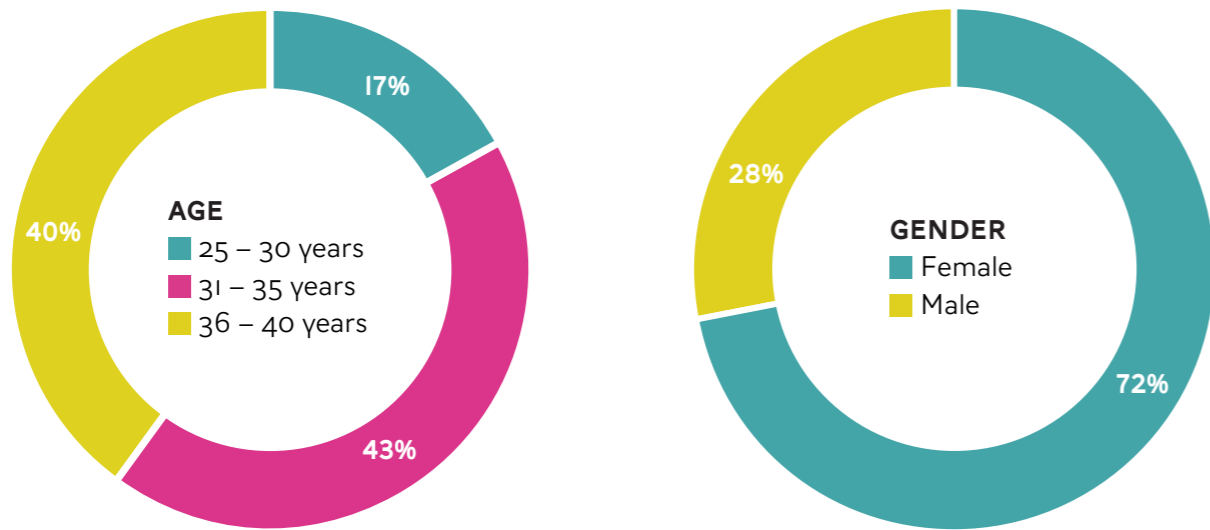
Melinda's board experience includes roles as Chair of CuriousWorks, Director of HCA Philanthropy, and Director of PTTR (Paint the Town REaD). She has previously held director roles with HeartKids NSW, the Quest Foundation, the Union University & Schools Club, and Indigenous Community Volunteers where she was Chair of the Audit & Risk Management Committee. She is a member of the Academy of Management, the Australian Human Resource Institute, and the Harvard Club of Australia.

“The Observership Program is a unique opportunity for young people to experience the complexity of governing a not-for-profit organisation whilst also offering the opportunity to utilize the skills and enthusiasm of the Program participants. It's a real win/win.”

Phil Butler, Sector Leader, Not-for-Profit, AICD.

# 2020 OBSERVERSHIP PROGRAM – A SNAPSHOT

THERE ARE 82 OBSERVERS PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM. A BREAKDOWN OF THE PROFILE OF THE COHORT IS BELOW:



## STRATEGIC PARTNERS



## CORPORATE PARTNERS



## GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



The Victorian Rural Women's Network is proud to partner with The Observership Program as part of its Victorian Rural Women's Leadership and Mentoring Program.

# PARTICIPATING BOARDS





## 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 the 12 month Observership Program, 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), Peter Joseph AM, Suzie Riddell, Mark Rohald and Joseph Skrzyński AO.

David Gonski AC and Jillian Segal AO are the Program Patrons.

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



David Gonski AC, Observership Program Patron

## CONTACT US

### MELBOURNE

#### CATHERINE REISER

Email: [catherine.reiser@observership.com.au](mailto:catherine.reiser@observership.com.au)

Mobile: 0400 454 250

### SYDNEY

#### CATHY ROBINSON

Email: [cathy@observership.com.au](mailto:cathy@observership.com.au)

Phone: +61 2 9241 6874

Mobile: 0417 700 585

### SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE

#### BELINDA DA SILVA (PROGRAM MANAGER)

Email: [belinda.dasilva@observership.com.au](mailto:belinda.dasilva@observership.com.au)

Phone: +61 2 9241 6883

Mobile: 0414 516 587

**PHOTOGRAPHERS:** Photographers: Giselle Haber: 2017 Program Launch | Cendrine Baxter: 2017 Melbourne Program Launch | Salona Chithiray: 2018 and 2019 Melbourne Program Launch.

