



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)

BRISBANE 2026





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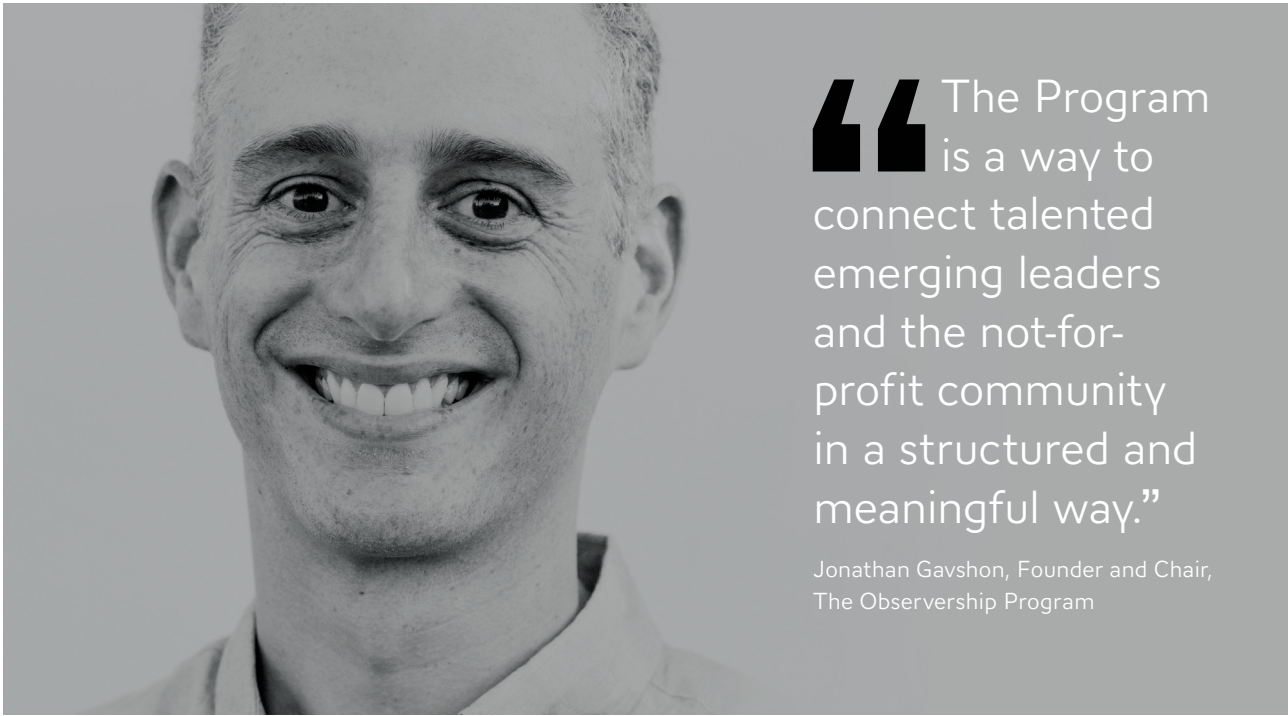
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

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 user experience and accessibility for people with disability. We will continue to evolve and improve the accessibility of our Program by listening and learning from people with lived experience of disability.



“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 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

CATHY ROBINSON
CEO

PROGRAM DETAILS

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

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.

At the conclusion 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 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, behaviour in meetings and board culture. For further information about effective engagement with your Board Liaison, please refer to The Observership Program Information Pack email.

“ 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 received from The Program Team.
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 and/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 your Program contact 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.



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 and government board 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.
- 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 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.

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 certain 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 host 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 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.

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.

“ I feel that the knowledge and experience gained throughout The Observership Program is already being put to good use at work as well as in my new role as a board director. In general, my understanding of the role of Directors is now a lot clearer as well as the role and responsibility of ARIA and the way it's run as an organisation.”

Emily Crews, Sydney Observer

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/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 that you have at any time throughout the year.



TRAINING OVERVIEW

The training program is a combination of formal education session provided in partnership with our strategic partners, the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) and The Ethics Centre, that encompassing key subject areas important for not-for-profit governance alongside networking session with high guest speakers and alumni.

“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 utilise the skills and enthusiasm of the Program participants. It’s a real win/win.”

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

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; and
- Ethics

Guest speakers with significant experience on not-for-profit 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 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.

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



Naomi Edwards FAICD, Chair, AICD

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 Ethi-call – 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.

TRAINING TIMETABLE BRISBANE 2026

Online sessions will be held from 6.00pm - 7.30pm (AEST). Face to Face training sessions will be held from 5.30pm arrival for a 6.00pm start and concludes at 8.30pm, unless otherwise advised.

DATE	SESSION	LOCATION	GUEST SPEAKER/ FACILITATOR
TUESDAY 3 MARCH	2026 Program Launch Event	In Person, AICD Offices, Lvl 9, 123 Eagle St, Brisbane	Sally Howe, AICD Facilitator
THURSDAY 12 MARCH	2026 Observer Induction Session	In Person, AICD Offices, Lvl 9, 123 Eagle St, Brisbane	Cathy Robinson, CEO and Rachel Exton, Program Lead, NSW and Brisbane, The Observership Program
WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH	AICD Duties and Responsibilities for NFP Directors	Online	AICD Facilitator TBC
WEDNESDAY 8 APRIL	AICD Finance for NFP Directors	Online	AICD Facilitator TBC
WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL	AICD Strategy for NFP Directors	Online	AICD Facilitator TBC
WEDNESDAY 6 MAY	AICD Risk for NFP Directors	Online	AICD Facilitator TBC
WEDNESDAY 27 MAY	AICD Q & A Session	In Person, AICD Offices, Lvl 9, 123 Eagle St, Brisbane	Panel of Directors
WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE	Ethics in Governance	Online	Dr Simon Longstaff AO, Executive Director, The Ethics Centre
WEDNESDAY 26 AUGUST	Theory of Change and Leadership Session	In Person, AICD Offices, Lvl 9, 123 Eagle St, Brisbane	Barbara Barkley, Leadership Space
TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER	Next Steps to Board Directorship and Networking	In Person, AICD Offices, Lvl 9, 123 Eagle St, Brisbane	Panel of Alumni
WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER	End of Year Networking event with Guest Speaker	In Person, AICD Offices, Lvl 9, 123 Eagle St, Brisbane	Speaker TBC

NOTE: *Please note dates are subject to change.

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.

Thank you for making our work possible.

PROGRAM ALUMNI

Andrew Ah Toy
Guillaume Babilie
Tomaj Bayat
Jacqueline Brewer
Mathew Camilleri
Gabrielle Cardwell
Melissa Chan
Sonya Clarke
Emily Crews
Helen Dai
Andrew Da Silva
Paul Devlin
Evrithki Diinis
Rob Dunderdale
Mary Fifita
Dr Tom Gole
Peter Graf
Anshika Grover
Rob Haggett
Rich Hall
Mateja Hawley
Phil Hughes
Tina Kazmer
Anatoly Kirievsky
Tom Levi
Aimee Lindfield
Whitney Merchant
Kym Middleton
Ben Neumann
Andrew Olsen
Andia Petropoulos
Emma Pollard
Zane Pratt
Josh Preece
Shira Raber
Hema Raman
Sophie Robertson
Alvaro Rodas Fernandez
Gemma Ryan
Kushlani Sitsabesan
Sharanya Srikanth
Sophie Stern
James Stewart
Caroline Thompson
Nick Tubb

Arthur Wang
Deuan White
(First People's Consultant)

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

Tim Beresford
Lisa Chung AM
Lisa Cotton
Jane Crombie
Alison Deans
Kate Dundas
Jonathan Gavshon
Marina Go
David Gonski AC
Dr Simon Longstaff OAM
Laurence Marshbaum OAM
Louise McElvogue
David Pumphrey
Katrina Rathie
Suzie Riddell
Rebecca Russell
Brian Schwartz AM
The late Peter Shorthouse
Joseph Skrzynski AO
Jeremy Tobias
Leanne Wallace

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

Ronny Andrade Parra
Nikita Bennett
Arnold Bloch Leibler
Art Gallery of New South Wales
BCG
Belvoir St Theatre
Crestone Wealth Management
K&L Gates
PwC
Social Ventures Australia
UBS

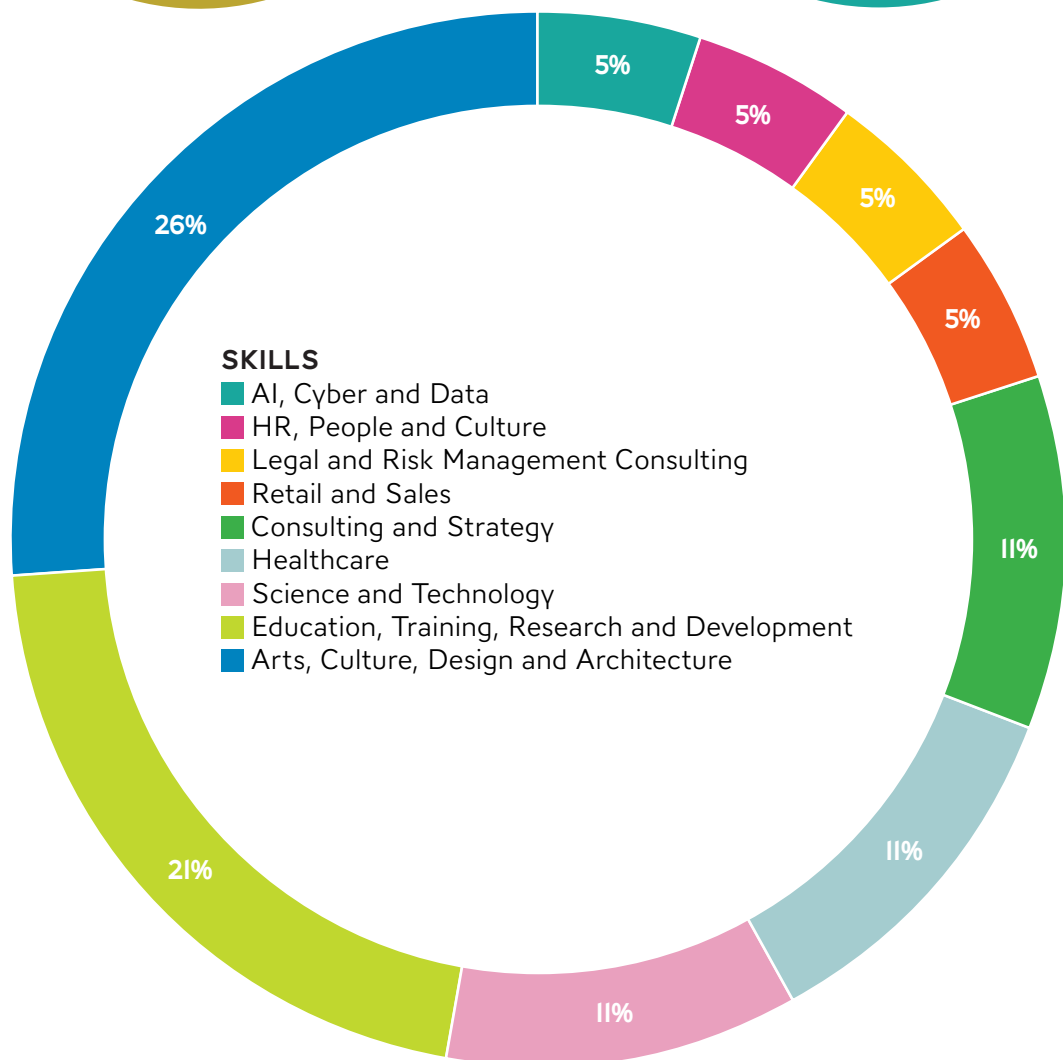
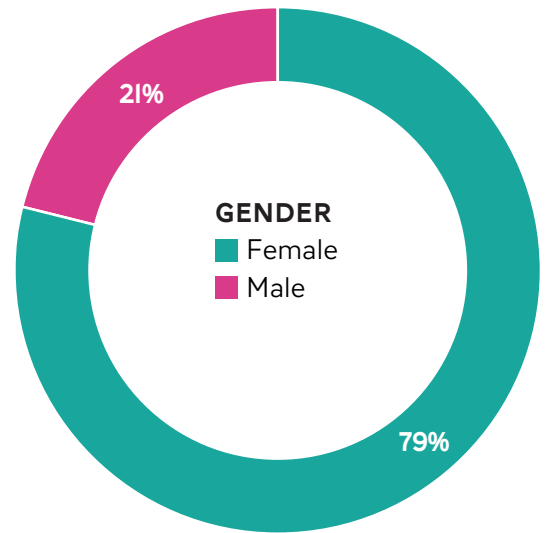
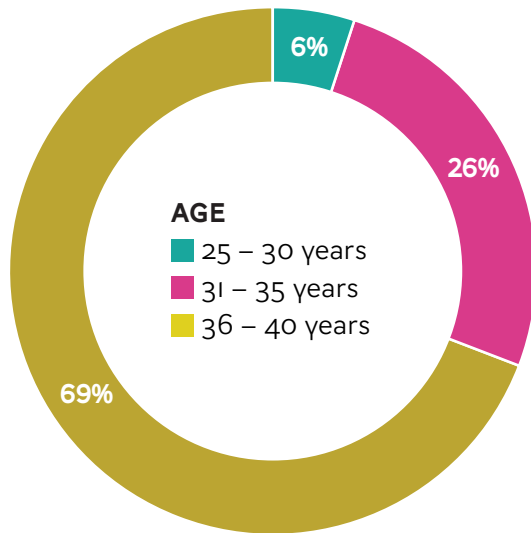
VIDEO CONTRIBUTORS

Lucy Duncan
Jacob Gabriel
Moana Leilua
Wambui Migwe
Tahj Richardson
Chris Sequeira
Callum Steele



2026 OBSERVERSHIP PROGRAM - A SNAPSHOT

THERE ARE 19 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).



CORPORATE PARTNER



PARTICIPATING BOARDS

THERE ARE 19 NOT-FOR-PROFIT BOARDS PARTICIPATING IN THE 2026 PROGRAM.



OBSERVER PROFILES



ALEXANDRIA BROWN UNITED DISABILITY CARE

Alexandria is a Legal Counsel at Seqwater, where she provides strategic legal advice on commercial and water-related matters. She is currently pursuing a Master of Climate Change at the Australian National University, deepening her expertise in sustainability and environmental governance. Passionate about mental wellbeing and inclusion, Alexandria is a facilitator and lived experience speaker with youth mental health charity, batyr. Outside of work, she enjoys cooking, travelling off the beaten path, and figure skating. Alexandria brings a diverse skill set, lived experience and strong dedication to sustainable and meaningful change to The Observership program.



JAKE BRYAR VERTAVIEW GROUP

Jake is a compliance specialist with expertise in dangerous goods management and workplace safety. He is passionate about disability advocacy and inclusion, volunteering with programs such as Campus Life and Employ:Able, supporting young adults with disabilities in developing skills and accessing opportunities. Jake has contributed to initiatives promoting accessibility and practical solutions in the workplace and community settings. In his personal time, he enjoys nature, philosophy, and spending time with his young family.



CASEY BLADES GIRL GUIDES QUEENSLAND

Casey is a highly motivated and results-oriented strategy leader with over nine years of experience driving organisational growth and performance in the health and education sectors. She excels at leveraging data-driven insights to lead organisational transformation, orchestrating comprehensive strategic planning processes, and aligning diverse teams through cross-functional collaboration to achieve critical objectives. When she's not immersed in her UQ MBA studies, Casey enjoys spending time with her young family, taking on overly ambitious renovation projects, and binge-watching crime shows.



LEONA COE BRIC HOUSING

Leona is the Workplace Design Standards and Insights Lead for BHP at Cushman & Wakefield, shaping best practice in inclusion, accessibility, and sustainability across the global portfolio. With a background spanning interior design, retail design management, and client strategy, she has delivered major workplace and commercial projects in Australia and Singapore. Leona actively contributes to the design community through CoreNet committee work and tutoring at QUT. Beyond her professional focus, she is passionate about mentoring emerging designers, advocating for women's health through endometriosis awareness, and spending time outdoors walking her dog.



CHLOE COMINO FOOTPRINTS COMMUNITY

Chloe is a registered architect working to increase the supply of social and affordable housing at one of Queensland's leading Community Housing Providers. With over 15 years of construction industry experience in Queensland, interstate and overseas, she thrives in multi-disciplinary teams. Chloe has led the design management of numerous social and affordable housing projects and contributed to the development of Queensland's Social Housing Design Guidelines. Chloe is passionate about the sustainability and resilience of our cities and is eager to contribute positively to the health and wellbeing of Queensland's community.



EVELYN KAUR DHILLON KYABRA

Evelyn Dhillon is a dedicated public servant currently working as a Service Officer with Services Australia, where she supports Medicare service delivery through client engagement. Holding an MBA and currently pursuing a law degree, she brings a unique blend of business and legal expertise. Migrating solo from India in 2008, she has extensive experience across security, building management, and government services. Passionate about community engagement, she actively participates in cultural events within the Sikh community and is raising her daughter independently. Recently relocating to Brisbane, she continues to apply her strong planning, resilience, and service skills to support others



ERIN ELLISON HEALTH AND WELLBEING QUEENSLAND

Erin Ellison is a health and disability advocate based in Cairns, Queensland. She is committed to moving beyond tokenistic approaches to consumer engagement and is completing postgraduate studies in Health Sector Leadership at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Erin is a founding member of a lived-experience disability advisory group advancing inclusive disaster preparedness and collaborates with Queensland Health and QDN on equity and inclusion initiatives. Her work bridges policy and systems reform. Outside her professional roles, Erin enjoys community education, accessible design and exploring Far North Queensland's natural landscapes.



BRIGETTE GARBIN DV CONNECT

Brigitte is a Manager in the national education practice at Deloitte Access Economics, focusing particularly on research, evaluation and policy in the schooling sector. Brigitte is also a skilled educator, having worked in secondary schools in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) as part of the Teach for Australia program. This experience has been particularly influential on Brigitte's interest in policy initiatives that are designed to tackle educational inequity. Brigitte holds a Master of Evaluation, a Master of Teaching (Secondary) and a Bachelor of Laws / Arts. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking and reading an ever-growing list of Substack newsletters.



BRIGITTE HEATH ABORIGINAL HOSTELS LIMITED (AHL)

Brigitte is a People and Culture executive with extensive experience across performance, reward, talent, and enterprise change. She is currently Head of Performance, Reward and Talent at Easygo, where she leads global frameworks to drive elite performance, aligned reward outcomes, and strategic talent deployment. Brigitte holds a Bachelor of Business (Human Resources Management) from QUT and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from AGSM, UNSW. A proud Torres Strait Islander woman, she has also contributed to reconciliation and inclusion initiatives, including serving as Co-Chair of Origin Energys Indigenous Employee Network. Outside of work, she enjoys reading, travel, good food and wine, and spending time with family.



MONAN HIGGS QMUSIC

Monan is a senior manager with broad experience in engineering, people leadership, and strategy. She is committed to advancing Australia's transition to a low-cost, net-zero emissions future and to the broader ESG agenda in her work. She also volunteers with a not-for-profit organisation as a strategic advisor to the CEO to support meaningful social impact in the disability sector. Monan holds a Bachelor of Engineering from the University of Queensland and an Executive MBA from Melbourne Business School. Outside of work, she enjoys cooking, dancing, and reading.



GEORGIA HOSKINSON BOARD OF BENEVOLENCE – HAND HEART POCKET

Georgia is a Butchulla woman, Artist, curator and educator, and is currently the Regional Liaison Officer in the QAGOMA's Learning Department. Georgia runs the award winning First Nations youth program Design Tracks, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people from all over Queensland. A Fine Arts graduate of QCAD, she has over a decade of experience in the Arts sector. Developing First Nations graduate programs from direct experience as an Aboriginal woman, and as a professional in GLAM sector, Georgia continues to platform and amplify the voices of young people with support and advice of First Nations Leaders.



JOSEPHINE OKURAME SHARE THE DIGNITY

Jo is a Postdoctoral Researcher and Co-founder of Sterich Solutions, where she provides AI, research, data, and visibility consultancy to small business owners. With Public Health degrees and a focus in biostatistics, she has trained staff and students at top universities across NSW and Canberra. She now uses her data and software expertise to deliver strategic insights and scalable tools. A contributor to UN Young Professionals NSW, WA AIDS Council, and PHAA, she enjoys mentoring and applying research to real-world business optimisation.



HANNAH ORCHARD ARAFMI

Hannah is an education policy professional with extensive experience in teaching, law, and policy. Dr Orchard has dedicated her career to bridging the gap between legislation, policy, and the lived experiences in schools; contributing to both industry and the academic field to ensure that future policy decisions are better informed by the realities they create on the ground. Dr Orchard advocates for policy reforms across agencies at both State and National levels and believes that education, while vital, is part of a broader network of support that young people need for a bright future.



BEN PATTISON QMUSIC

Ben Pattison is a Learning & Development Manager at law firm Corrs Chambers Westgarth where he leads capability initiatives and chairs the firms Abilities & Accessibility Committee. A former corporate lawyer, he brings expertise in governance, leadership and inclusive practice. Ben holds a Bachelor of Laws (Hons) and a Bachelor of Arts. Passionate about accessibility and equity, Ben has contributed to diversity and inclusion efforts at Corrs and through community legal volunteering. He is committed to supporting purpose-led organisations and seeks to broaden his impact through board service aligned with his professional experience and dedication to inclusion and social change.



WILL PAWA-OUI NATIONAL ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER MUSIC OFFICE / APRA AMCOS

Will is a musician, radio broadcaster, and founder of Pawa Haus Creative, specialising in music-centred storytelling and cultural strategy. With a background as a musician, songwriter, and producer, Will supports artists through culturally grounded creative direction as well as cultural advocacy and support. A committed cultural capability educator, he works to strengthen cultural safety for First Nations music workers across the industry. Will also hosts Let's Talk Black Arts on Triple A Murri Country 98.9FM, championing First Nations creatives and community-led narratives.



MARTINE PELLY AUSSIE ATHLETE FUND

Martine has extensive experience in digital, marketing and operations across industries including aged care, children's health, and the charity sector. In her most recent role, she oversaw software delivery of a telehealth platform for a NFP start-up. With a Bachelor of Business (Marketing and Advertising), she advocates for balancing strong business outcomes with mental health and wellbeing. Martine draws on lived experience supporting her neurodivergent child, bringing empathy and insight to her advocacy for emotional literacy and neurodiversity in the workplace. Outside of work, she enjoys golf, reading, travel, and spending time with her husband and two girls.



TOM PRITCHARD DEAD PUPPET SOCIETY

Tom is a performing arts producer based in Meanjin (Brisbane). His work supports the creation of new performances and events that expand artistic practice and elevate today's crucial stories. His practice centres artists in decision-making processes and foregrounds excellence, accessibility and truth-telling in the design of arts experiences. Tom has worked for QPAC, BlakDance, Lucy Guerin Inc and CIRCA, alongside independent arts projects both in Australia and the UK. Tom is an alumni of Creative Australia's Arts Leaders program (2023) and current participant in the AmCham Global Leadership Academy (2025). He is also a dad who loves running and cooking.



LAURA ROSS GIRL GUIDES QUEENSLAND

Laura is a Director at EY, recognised for her extensive experience leading global M&A projects and her strategic approach to M&A integrations and separations. She is dedicated to guiding her clients through the challenges of operationalising these transactions, working collaboratively with them to unlock their value. Laura is passionate about DE&I, spearheading several EY initiatives to foster an inclusive workplace culture. She also actively supports female-focused groups in the Energy and Resources sectors. In her spare time, Laura is a keen traveler, golfer and scuba diver, and an avid fan of AFL.



SAV SANDHU VERTAVIEW GROUP

Savasna is a Senior Strategic Account Executive at Microsoft Australia, where she drives digital transformation and champions AI adoption for leading mining clients. Recognised with Microsoft's Vision Award, she is committed to accessible technology and social impact. Savasna volunteers as an AI literacy advocate, runs digital skills workshops for girls with UN Women, and creates tech programs for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. She actively mentors women in STEM and is passionate about empowering communities through education, technology, and inclusion, reflecting her belief in equitable access and the transformative power of practical digital skills.

PARTICIPANT PROFILES



RENATA DANISEVSKA

Renata brings over sixteen years of experience leading digital transformation and business improvement across complex programs in the higher education and healthcare sectors. She is a successful program lead with a strong track record in delivering portfolios across primary health and education. As a member of the Workforce Subject Matter Expert Panel with the Australasian Institute of Digital Health, Renata drives meaningful change and is deeply committed to social impact and equitable access to healthcare, enabled through technology.



NICK MALHAM

Nick is an experienced executive and trusted advisor with over 15 years' leadership across Australia's most iconic brands, including Medibank, Optus, CommBank, Sydney Opera House, and World Vision. He specialises in digital strategy, customer experience, and business transformation, delivering innovation that drives commercial and social impact. An avid volunteer with The Smith Family, Nick also supports the health tech startup ecosystem. He recently served on the Special Olympics Queensland State Committee, contributing governance and strategic oversight. He is committed to values-driven leadership and fostering high-performing cultures that generate long-term value and positive community outcomes.



KERRITH SOWDEN

Kerrith joined RACS nine years ago and has seen it grow from a small community legal centre of around 30 staff to its current position of around 70 staff. Kerrith has extensive experience as an executive leader in the For Purpose and Commercial Sectors. She has been a key player in start-ups and rapidly growing organisations both overseas and in Australia and thrives on the challenge that change brings. Outside of work Kerrith enjoys ocean swimming, bush walking and the arts.

“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

“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



A NOTE FOR HOST BOARDS

We are delighted to be working with you for the 2025 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

- Observers are carefully matched with organisations based on their skills and interests for a 12-month placement.
- The Observership begins with the first board meeting of 2025 and finishes with the last.
- While Observers sign the Program's confidentiality agreement, organisations may also request these terms or require their own confidentiality agreements.
- 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.
- For a copy of the Board Participation agreement, please contact Rachel Exton.

HINTS FOR ENGAGING OBSERVERS

Here are some example of best practice and ways boards and Observers can maximise 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 non-profit sector;
- 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 1,400 "board ready" alumni pool who are actively seeking ongoing and meaningful engagement with the Not-for-Profit sector;
- 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:

PROGRAM LEAD, NSW AND BRISBANE

RACHEL EXTON

Email: Rachel.exton@observership.com.au



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 In the course of their 12 month Observership, participants 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 Profit 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, Jillian Segal AO and Peter Joseph AM are the Program Patrons.

The board of The Observership Program hosts Observers each year.



CONTACT US

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PHOTOGRAPHER Giselle Haber: 2017 – 2023 Sydney Program Launch

