



SUPPORTING PURPOSEFUL LEADERSHIP

SCHOLARSHIPS
REPORT 2023

**LEADERSHIP
VICTORIA**

LEADERSHIP VICTORIA

Purposeful leaders are people who care about what they do and how they do it.

Leadership Victoria's vision is purposeful leadership for an inclusive, equitable and sustainable society. We are an innovative, independent social enterprise that exists to foster leadership that inspires, connects and transforms.

For over 30 years, we have been connecting and empowering leaders with diverse backgrounds and experiences across business, government and community sectors, enabling them to exercise the leadership required to address today's complex challenges.

Beyond our programs, we facilitate powerful, enduring networks that enable leaders to amplify their leadership impact in their organisations, sectors and communities.



WILLIAMSON COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Williamson is Leadership Victoria's flagship leadership development program and was established in 1990. It's a unique, immersive year-long experience with more than 60 diverse participants. The program is designed to transform the way participants think about their leadership purpose, expanding the way they see the world and changing how they exercise leadership.

The program supports those looking to achieve impact in complex and rapidly changing environments whilst contributing to an inclusive, equitable and sustainable society.

The Leadership Victoria Foundation and partner-supported Williamson Scholarships exist to extend the impact of Williamson to those who would otherwise be unable to access the program. Not only does this support a diverse range of voices and experiences, it enriches every participant's experience and builds enduring alumni networks across sectors and worldviews that amplify individual and collective leadership impact.

The Williamson Community Leadership Program brings people together to cultivate their leadership in order to empower them to become community leaders. The heart and soul of the program come from the participants themselves, their diverse lived experiences and unique perspectives.



*Scott Ko,
Leadership Victoria
Acting Chief Executive Officer*

That's why these scholarships are vital. We have seen people who otherwise aren't able to access the program leverage the opportunity to create new networks, unlock their own potential and growth, and contribute their voices to the community.

Collectively, we are better for it.

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEE PROFILE

Alma Raheem

Alma Raheem's career was at an impasse when starting the Williamson Community Leadership Program. After three to four years in management positions, mostly in sales, Alma knew she needed to be proactive in working out her future career direction and how she wanted to evolve her approach to leadership.

By the time she completed the program, Alma had new ideas and skills about leadership and a role with Ethical Jobs that fits with her values. Ethical Jobs helps more than 8,000 Australian charities and not-for-profits find committed and passionate volunteers and staff.

"Before the Williamson program, my idea of leadership was that essentially a leader needed to know the answers to anything and everything," says Alma.

"That was not the kind of leader I wanted to be. I think the kind of leadership that is needed now is very different. People want someone who can lead them to get answers and outcomes, who is accessible and who may not have all the answers."

Alma works with a diverse team and adapting her leadership approach to fit their expectations and requirements is vital to achieve good business outcomes. She is more comfortable to sit with uncertainty, to be a sounding board for her team and to not know all the answers, but to ask the right questions to find answers.

"I also learned from the program that I need to stick to my true values and it brought to light my non-negotiables like being able to bring my whole self to work. I received a couple of job offers but I took this role because it fitted my values," she says.

A stand-out moment of the program for Alma was an hour spent alone in the depths of Barmah Forest, Shepparton. Without company and any mobile device, participants had to sit alone with their thoughts.

"Initially, I didn't get the point of it," says Alma.

"We had to be immersed in nature and the present and it was very hard to focus. Now I realise how important that activity was and now when I am in a meeting, I am present, I'm not distracted and I focus on our conversation and truly hear what is being said," says Alma.

**Alma Raheem was awarded a Leadership Victoria Foundation Scholarship.*



Photo credit: Sam Biddle

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEE PROFILE

Anton Leschen

In February 2022, Anton Leschen celebrated 20 years with The Smith Family. He saw it is a time to reflect on his contribution to the organisation and his ongoing impact as a leader.

“The Smith Family is about breaking the poverty cycle through education and we believe in lifelong learning. The 20-year mark was a time for me to think about whether I was floating with the current or paddling faster and making an active contribution,” says Anton.

The anniversary coincided with Anton successfully applying for a scholarship to the Williamson Community Leadership Program. Along with professional development offered within his workplace, the program added to his portfolio of ‘rich lifelong learning’.

“I’ve always been keen to lead from behind but I was raised in the school of control and command and that is not a contemporary way of leading,” says Anton.

Shared dialogue with his 66 Williamson colleagues was a valuable part of the program, however it was attending the Queen Victoria Women’s Centre to listen to guest speakers who’d experienced extreme adversity that proved to be one of the most pivotal experiences. One speaker was family violence campaigner, Rosie Batty.

“The event was an opportunity to realise that Queen Victoria Hospital came into existence

because of the advocacy and will of women who swam against the tide of the patriarchal times,” says Anton.

“We sat in the former hospital in a room where people had been born, listening to a mother inspire us and motivate us to be better people and better leaders while talking about the brutal loss of her child. That was an incredible experience.”

Another powerful moment was Commencement Retreat in Marysville that marks the official end of the program, but a starting point for the participants’ ongoing commitment to purposeful leadership.

“We each wrote a comment about the other people on the program – what we valued and thanked them for. On the drive home from the day, I parked my car, sat in the forest and read the feedback from my peers and the emotional energy during that year-long journey and the learnings were very clear to me,” says Anton.

“I’d learned the importance of being present, of exercising agency and of appreciating the voice of the less heard. As a senior leader, the program was a reminder to me to focus on diagnosing the issue at hand, to identify options and what other people need and to discover how I can facilitate that.”

**Anton Leschen was awarded the ANZ Community Partner Funded Place.*



Photo credit: Sam Biddle

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES

WILLIAMSON COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM 2022

**LV FOUNDATION
SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES:**

Alma Raheem
Ethical Jobs
Manager, Business Development
and Relationships

Ben Rodgers
Inner North Community
Foundation
Executive Officer

Hayley Conway
Pride Cup
Chief Executive Officer

Lara Freidin
Women's Legal Services Australia
Executive Officer

Phillip Doorgachurn
YMCA Australia
Executive Director

Stephane Shepherd
Deakin University
Professor of Forensic Psychology
and Criminology

**LV SCHOLARSHIPS SUPPORTED
BY PARTNERS:**

**ANZ COMMUNITY PARTNER
FUNDED PLACE**
Anton Leschen
Smith Family
General Manager

**EASTERN HEALTH FOUNDATION
SCHOLARSHIP**
Latarnie McDonald
L.McDonald
Consultant

**ISLAMIC COUNCIL OF VICTORIA
SCHOLARSHIP**
Noosheen Mogadam
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
Senior Lawyer, Advocacy and
Campaigns

**VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR DISABILITY SCHOLARSHIP**
Meredith Prain
Able Australia
National Head of Research and
Centre of Excellence – Deaf / Blind



SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEE PROFILE

Meredith Prain

When people first meet Meredith, many are unaware that she is legally blind and that she lives with a vision impairment. It is a fact that she herself has never dwelt on or pushed to the fore in her professional life.

The Williamson Community Leadership Program changed that.

“To a degree, my disability is invisible but during the program I asked facilitators to ask everyone taking part in the program to say their name whenever they spoke, so I knew who was saying what. I became more explicit about having a vision impairment and that raised awareness within the Williamson cohort of the kinds of things that are useful to people with disability,” says Meredith.

“I think that had a ripple effect on the cohort and I realised that I can raise awareness and increase my allyship for other people with disability, particularly vision impairment, if I name my disability more.”

Meredith took up a scholarship with the Williamson Community Leadership Program because her position within Able Australia has seen her leading on increasingly senior roles, including at international level. She has been with the organisation for more than 25 years.

“I’ve always been comfortable with leadership roles but I took a bit of an ad hoc approach rather than stopping, looking at a bigger picture

and being more strategic,” says Meredith.

“One of the great learnings for many of us on the Program was that we’d gone into management and leadership roles because we get stuff done but, in that busyness, – in the doing – you can lose the bigger perspective. The Program helped me recognise that sustainable long-term change takes time and I’ve become more comfortable with things taking longer and knowing that change can be organic and bring in different people and different voices.”

Williamson has also had an impact on how Meredith communicates with colleagues and stakeholders by highlighting the power of storytelling.

“I’ve always shied away from storytelling but I had a profound realisation of the power and value of story and how it can bring people on a journey with you,” she says.

“Previously I felt I had to be professional by showing that I knew facts and figures, but I’m now conscious of embedding story and introducing an emotive element, rather than facts alone.”

Meredith Prain was awarded the Victorian Government Office for Disability Scholarship.



Photo credit: Sam Biddle

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEE PROFILE

Phil Doorgachurn

Phil Doorgachurn's rise through the management ranks has been swift. He's held Board Director roles with Safe Sport International, Families Australia, the National Office for Child Safety and, in 2019, he became Executive Director of YMCA Australia.

"I've evolved organically as a leader but never had any formal education around leadership which is why I applied for the scholarship," says Phil.

"I've had a co-design and democratic approach to leadership – I bring people on the journey, I build and maintain relationships and I'm solutions-focused, but I wanted to evolve further."

Phil readily admits he found the first few months of the program challenging because it didn't spell out traditional leadership skills. Instead, the program encouraged Phil to learn more about himself and the role he can play in bringing organisations together to create societal change.

"I did things you'd never do on a leadership program, like get up at 5.00 am on a freezing morning and walk on a beach in Warrnambool looking at the geology of the rocks and learning about the Aboriginal people who settled there. I wondered how it was useful but by embedding yourself in those experiences you check your privileged position and realise you think you know things but you actually know very little," says Phil.

A key part of the Williamson experience is discovering and sharing your 'true north' with the group. For Phil, this process has also had a lasting impact.

"Coming from a difficult background in London, I thought money was the solution and so I got to CEO quite young. Since the program I'm rethinking my purpose going forward. If I hadn't done the program, I would still be working long hours to get to the next big thing. It is freeing to say 'I am happy with what I've done and I don't need to be on top of the tree'," he says.

Phil's day-to-day approach to leadership has also evolved.

"I am more critical in asking more about the 'why' of doing something, pinpointing the problem to be solved, and ensuring we've heard from different people in the room," he says.

"Previously, being a solutions person, I might have found a solution but not dealt with the root cause or issue. Now I want to know that we've done the work to find out whether we should be doing something and whether it's going to solve a systemic issue – or is it just a sticky band aid?"

Phil Doorgachurn was awarded a Leadership Victoria Foundation Scholarship.



Photo credit: Sam Biddle

LOOKING AHEAD

WILLIAMSON COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM 2023

LV FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES:

Anna Stephenson
Regional Australia
Institute
Education Director

Brydie Quinn
Able Australia
Chief Operating Officer

Christine Leahy
Corval Group
Head of People and Culture

Fatima Everitt
Dreamtime Art
Creative Consultancy Founder

Hisney Nowfal
Middleton Group
Senior Power Engineer

James Seow
Monash University
Research Officer/Group Facilitator

Jo Curtin
Community Broadcasting
Foundation
Chief Executive Officer

Kiran Khan
Annecto
General Manager

Rachna Madaan-Bowman
South East Community Links
Senior Practitioner
Financial Wellbeing

Samantha Read
Sexual Health Victoria
Manager, Schools and Community

Sarah Naarden
Initiatives of Change Australia
Project Manager, Trust
building with First Nations Leaders

LV SCHOLARSHIPS SUPPORTED BY PARTNERS:

**ANZ COMMUNITY PARTNER
FUNDED PLACE**
Georgie Dwyer
Berry Street
Executive Director (People & Culture)

**EASTERN HEALTH FOUNDATION
SCHOLARSHIP**
Leigh Saunders
Aborigines Advancement League
Deputy CEO

**LV ALUMNI - ABORIGINAL & TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES
SCHOLARSHIP**
Joe Murfet
Department of Transport
Manager, Aboriginal Partnerships
and Engagement

**VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR
DISABILITY SCHOLARSHIP**
Amanda Lawrie-Jones
Accessible Action
Access & Inclusion Consultant



We are thrilled to welcome 15 diverse scholarship awardees as part of the 2023 Williamson Community Leadership Program. The valuable support of our partner organisations, LV alumni and donors helps make this possible.

**SUPPORTING
PARTNERS**



We'd also like to acknowledge the fabulous work of the LV alumni who supported the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Scholarship, as well as individual donors to the LV Foundation.

"I've always shied away from storytelling but I had a profound realisation of the power and value of story and how it can bring people on a journey with you," she says.

Meredith Prain
Scholarship awardee



Photo credit: Sam Biddle

WAYS TO SUPPORT LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIPS:

DONATE TODAY

Click above to donate to the Leadership Victoria Foundation. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

CONTACT US

Click above to contact us about creating a scholarship through your company, foundation or giving circle.

LEADERSHIP VICTORIA

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