YOUThrive
VICTORIA

A legacy of Helen Macpherson Smith

OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

FROM BRUCE ANDERSON CHAIR OF THE BOARD:

The past few months have been filled with activity and achievements. Most notably as an outcome of the effective Branch Out Mentoring programs by our staff we received in excess of 350 applications for the 21 University Scholarships on offer. This is an increase of more than 100 over 2025 figures.

Ultimately this number was reduced to 34 interviews from applicants across the state with additional interviews to occur in regional locations for specific local scholarships. I have been involved in the interviews, with every single applicant worthy of a scholarship creating much discussion amongst the interviewers to award the appropriate number. The successful applicants will be announced in December. Interviews will start shortly for the Rural Chances Scholarships and we wish applicants all the best with their 2027 studies.

Several months ago, our CEO, Andrew McGuckian, advised the Board he would not seek to extend his contact beyond the agreed 3 years and would step down from the role in early 2027. The search for a replacement has begun with interviews underway. It is anticipated an announcement will occur this year with the new CEO to begin in early 2027. I will have more to share of our appreciation for Andrew at that time.
Our best wishes to all our scholarship applicants and tertiary student alumni in successfully completing their studies in the weeks ahead.

Bruce Anderson

OFFICE MOVE:

We have moved!

Youthrive has officially moved! Last you heard the Youthrive office was leaving its long-term location in Creswick and has settled into the new office at Federation University TAFE Campus in Central Ballarat. The new location has brought new excitement and opportunities for collaboration and increased connection with young people, staff and alumni. It will give the Youthrive office the ability to host events with greater capacity and offer more accessibility for Youthrive Alumni and partners with increased access via public transport in a central location. A bigger space will pave the way for bigger things, and everyone is looking forward to seeing what the next few years will bring!

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE YOUTHRIVE TEAM:

We're thrilled to welcome two new team members to Youthrive Victoria! Read on to get to know them as they introduce themselves.



Aileen, Personal Development Programs Coordinator at Youthrive Victoria

"Hey Everyone! I'm excited to have joined the amazing team at Youthrive Victoria in the new role of Personal Development Programs Coordinator. My role will focus on supporting and further developing Youthrive's personal and leadership development programs in close collaboration with alumni."



Marnie, Communications Officer at Youthrive Victoria

'Hi All, I'm super excited to step into my new role as Youthrive Victoria's Communications Officer! Having already been part of the team as a REC, I'm thrilled to continue working alongside such an amazing group of people in this new capacity. I am looking forward to learning and growing in the role, and can't wait to see what we can achieve in this space.
Please feel free to reach out and say hey, I'd love to hear from you!"

ALL THINGS SCHOLARSHIPS:

It has been a busy, but wonderful year. Our scholars are doing well, with many of them currently completing assessments, exams, beginning placements, moving into the next year of their apprenticeships or nearing the end of their courses.

The mentoring program has progressed, with the addition of Group Loops, which are campus/institute specific groups designed to connect scholars and alumni in an informal way, on campus. 1:1 mentoring partnerships have also been established and are proving to be successful and valuable for all parties involved.

This year we received over 350 scholarship applications form across the state. We have seen an increase in the reach, which is directly linked to the increase in capacity of the Rural Engagement team. Following the shortlisting of applications, we have recently conducted 34 interviews to determine the awarding of our 2027 University Scholarships. Stawell and The Hepburn Shire interviews will be finalised over the coming weeks. A huge thank-you to all the alumni, scholars and board members who have volunteered to assist with this process, your input is highly valued. We will be awarding 21 University Scholarships to young rural Victorian's commencing University study in 2027, the most awarded to date.

Rural Chances applications have recently closed. We are looking forward to reading applications and interviewing the incredible applicants. Interviews will be conducted online throughout November.

BRANCH OUT MENTORING

That's a Wrap for 2026!

With term 3 coming to an end, so too does another year of our Branch Out Mentoring program. This year we have seen BOM being delivered across Victoria in terms 1, 2 and 3. We refreshed our content and our 6 topics this year had lots of positive feedback and saw some fantastic participation in the program.

"It has been amazing meeting so many rural students throughout the program this year, many of whom have been highly engaged in the sessions. It's been fantastic to see their enthusiasm, curiosity and willingness to ask questions and has been incredibly rewarding to know that the program is making a difference for our local young people."
Marnie, Rural Engagement Coordinator for Shepperton and District Hub.

Although program delivery has wrapped up for the year, our BOM team are working busily behind the scenes evaluating and reviewing the program to help shape 2027 program delivery. Our annual BOM review will take place on the 5th and 6th of November in Ballarat, bringing the team together to reflect on the year, share insights and explore opportunities for improvement. We're looking forward to seeing the outcomes of this review and hearing the fresh ideas that will help shape our 2027 program.

Research Project Update

Throughout the year RECs have been working closely with Nadine from Federation University as she completes her Masters, supporting her with interviewing Branch Out Mentoring students.

"*The evaluation of the Branch Out Mentoring Program is progressing well as part of my Master of Philosophy research project with Federation University and Youthrive. To date, I have interviewed 13 young people from participating schools across rural and regional Victoria, alongside the collection of survey data. Analysis is currently underway, with thesis writing already in progress, and the project remains on track for completion in March 2027."*
Nadine, Master of Philosophy by Reasercah Candidate, Federation University.

GROWING ALUMNI PERSONAL & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Introducing new Personal Development Programs Coordinator role

We are very excited in welcoming the new Personal Development Program Coordinator Role to Youthrive Victoria. This role was created based on feedback from alumni for more personal and leadership development opportunities and designed to enhance Youthrive's capacity to be youth led and ensure youth roles are well supported. Funding for this new role has been supported by a portion of the Warren Mills bequest, for which we are incredibly grateful. We have also been incredibly fortunate to have received significant funding for the next 3 years from Jan Souter to support the continuation and growth of the Personal and Leadership Development programs and we extend our heart felt thanks to her. Having people so invested in the development of the incredible rural young people we work with is amazing. We are very excited to see the growth within this space and know Aileen will be a fantastic edition to the team.

Young Rural Leaders Program (YRLP) Gearing Up for 2027

Preparations have started for the 2027 YRLP January Camp, taking place 11–15 January at Lake Dewar Discovery Camp in Myrniong, Victoria.

We're excited to announce that long time alumni member and Alumni Committee President, Andy Pritchard has commenced in the role of Camp Coordinator!

Recruitment is underway for YRLP Camp Coaches and it's fantastic to see strong interest from 2026 participants wanting to come back as Coaches. Seeing participants take the next step into leadership is a great reflection of the connections, confidence and leadership that YRLP continues to build.

Expanding Personal and Leadership Development in 2027

We're excited to be working with alumni to develop new ways for the Youthrive alumni community to continue learning, growing and building their leadership capabilities. Based on alumni feedback, we're exploring two new opportunities for 2027: an extended leadership development program delivered across several months and a range of one-off personal development workshops for alumni.

These proposed programs would sit alongside the Young Rural Leaders Program (January Camp) and mid-year Summit, expanding the range of development opportunities available across the Youthrive community. As with our existing programs, alumni will be at the heart of the process, involved in shaping program development and supporting delivery.

STRAIGHT FROM THE ALUMNI

Alumni Update

Over the past few months the theme for the alumni has been friendly competition. During the mid-year Summit, alumni put their cooking skills to the test in the Alumni Committee's YouCook challenge, with judges and chefs alike being able to share a home-cooked feast together afterwards. In the winter holidays the alumni warmed themselves up with some social indoor volleyball followed by a relaxed board game day at the end of August for those wanting to flex their strategic minds. With many of our alumni currently on the study grind and the summer holidays in sight, the Alumni Committee is hard at work getting ready to end the year with a roar - planning an end of year celebration at the Melbourne Zoo.











RECENT EVENTS:

Live for Life

Over the past 5 months a couple of members of our team have been working with a group of 7 young people from Live4Life to design a Leadership day for year 9 Crew members across the state.



"Working with past Live4Life Crew members to design the Leadership Day at Parliament House has been an incredible experience. Seeing the young people grow in confidence, step outside their comfort zones and bring their ideas to life has been incredibly rewarding. It's been a privilege to support them throughout the process and see their leadership grow."
Charlie Bracey, Programs Manager.

The event saw 45 young mental health leaders from nine rural and regional Victorian communities come together at Parliament house on the 30th of September to build their confidence, strengthen their advocacy skills and connect with one another. The skills they gained will now have flow on benefits for their local communities. We are incredibly grateful to have been able to partner with Live4Life and Parliament Victoria on this event

Youth Round table discussion at Parliament House

On the 23rd of September, we were super lucky to have five Youthrive Alumni from regional Victoria participate in a round table discussion at Parliament house with The Hon. Luba Grigorovitch MP.

We would like to express our gratitude to the Minister for Youth for inviting us to the event and giving us an opportunity to raise relevant issues such as mental health support, bullying and cost of living crisis that are continually impacting our rural youth.

"It was great to have the opportunity to be with the Minister for Youth and we hope we can continue to have conversations about what's important to rural young people"
Stephanie Hartshorn, Youthrive Alumni.

We are grateful to see that our Parliament has a vested interest in developing solutions and listening to the youth firsthand.





Supporters Event 2026



The Annual Supporter's Evening was held in July at Equity Trustees in the CBD. It was an outstanding evening with much of the feedback from supporters, scholars and partners overwhelmingly positive. The authenticity and humility of each of the speakers is at the heart of what makes the event so special.

Emceed by 2024 Scholarship recipient and Alumni member Ariel Marie, event guests were addressed by current Scholars, Rural Engagement Coordinators, Members of the Board and fellow Youthrive supporters.

We would like to thank scholarship recipients and Alumni members Eli Blackmore, Emily Hedt and Imogen Eddy for sharing their stories on the night. Hearing directly from young voices is exactly why nights like these exist and their contributions were appreciated and resonated with everyone in attendance.

Additionally, we would like to thank Jane Westney from the Daylesford Foundation for speaking about the partnership with Youthrive, Bruce Anderson for speaking on behalf of the Youthrive Board of Directors and Cass Roberts for her Acknowledgement of Country.

Our sincere appreciation to all of the speakers and all of those working behind the scenes. The evening wouldn't be what it is without your input.

Youthrive Rural Summit

In June Youthrive hosted their third Rural Summit at YMCA Mt. Evelyn Discovery Camp. The Program engaged Youthrive Alumni from all years, in a weekend filled with presentations, workshops and activities.
During the summit, participants heard from a series of influential young rural people making meaningful impacts in their communities and personal lives. This included young advocates from regional Victoria, returning Youthrive Alumni and workshop facilitators. The program was aimed at encouraging connections and relationships among the Youthrive alumni and community and sought to achieve the overall aims of community integration, personal development and connecting with rural and youth identities. One of the program coordinators Kat Wagner shared that:

> *"We really wanted the program to facilitate friendships and connection among the alumni members and also provide them an environment to develop professional and personal skills that they can bring back to their communities as well as study or work. Each presentation and workshop was picked with that in mind hoping to inspire every alumni member in attendance."*

The workshops and presentations had recurring themes of inspiring active change in our communities and lives and providing alumni with skills to take into their personal and professional lives.

Youthrive would like to thank Alumni members Poppy Combs, Lydia Reiske, Raihana Hashimi and the Alumni Committee for their contributions to the event.