

RASF

.....  
RAS FOUNDATION

Here for the rural and regional communities of  
Australia

*Case For Support*

---





## *Who we are*

---

The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) is a not-for-profit organisation which has been an influential force in the direction and development of Australian agriculture through competitions, education and events since its foundation in 1822.

The RAS Foundation was established in 2007 to help build strong, sustainable and resilient rural and regional communities in NSW. The RAS Foundation achieves this through a range of programs that help rural Australians to realise their potential and make a difference in their community.

The RAS Foundation has recently acquired Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status and aims to use this status to benefit these communities.

# *The need*

---



As a nation we take pride in striving to provide all our children and young people with access to quality education and opportunities, regardless of where they live. We know that it is crucial to invest in thriving rural and regional communities. Championing their success is vital for the betterment of Australia. While young people in rural and regional areas often enjoy a greater sense of community than their urban counterparts, they frequently miss out on the quality education, leadership and employment opportunities that their metropolitan peers are afforded.

It has never been clearer that a gap, fuelled by remoteness, exists in Australia. The impact of this on regional communities' economic growth and social wellbeing can be devastating. Generally, regional and rural communities experience higher levels of unemployment and fewer occupational opportunities. This, combined with rising TAFE costs and much more limited access to universities, makes further training prohibitive for young people from low-income backgrounds. We know that these factors as well as temporary hardship due to natural disasters, drought and uncontrolled circumstances can limit aspirations, access and transition to higher education for our students. Rural, and regional Australia has enormous potential, however this cannot be fully realised unless the lack of skills availability is addressed. It is this factor that is inhibiting and limiting the greater success of every industry sector represented in the regions. We seek to enable the greatest number of people possible living in rural and regional Australia to live vibrant, empowered and self-sufficient lives, in turn they are better able to contribute to the economic and social capacity of their community.

The 'remoteness gap' is not unique to NSW or Australia. Students from rural areas underperform in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reading test in almost every country in the OECD. However, the gap is larger in Australia than the average of other OECD nations, and it is larger in NSW than almost any other state or territory in Australia.<sup>1</sup>

Australians living in rural and regional areas deserve to realise their potential and achieve their ambitions. The RAS Foundation is committed to education and career opportunities for rural and regional communities in NSW to grow and prosper, supporting a strong, sustainable and vibrant Australia.

<sup>1</sup>Rural and Remote Education: A blueprint for action – NSW Department of Education and Communities, Nov 2013.

# What we do

---

Our final goal is for a stronger Australia, realised through thriving, vibrant and innovative rural and regional communities. For this to occur, these communities must have the required infrastructure and people with the skills and knowledge needed by their community.

These communities need skilled people who contribute to and play an active part in the success of regional and rural communities. For this to be realised, people need education and leadership opportunities so that they can invest their skills and knowledge into country New South Wales. Our educational scholarships give a helping hand to students from regional and rural communities wishing to pursue further study and training and bring new skills back to their community.

The RAS Foundation works to bring communities together, by providing capacity building grants to fund individual ideas and projects that will result in enhanced social and economic outcomes. The RAS Foundation is also responsive to hardship and natural causes through the provision of emergency funding and relief.



## Our priority projects

### Community grants

For almost ten years, the RAS Foundation Community Futures Grants have proudly provided much-needed support to local projects that provide long-term social or economic benefit to regional and rural communities in NSW and Australia. Each year, we help bring bright ideas to life that are driven by the community, for the community. We encourage and champion rural leadership by providing up to \$25,000 to fund a community project that addresses a need or issue in a local community. These projects deliver strong, sustained, broad community benefits because they are devised by people with a deep understanding and first-hand knowledge of the community and their needs.

### Rural scholarships

The RAS Foundation provides nationwide scholarships to help rural Australians realise their potential through education, make a meaningful contribution to their community, industry and advocate for those communities in the future.

The RAS Foundation Rural scholarships help relieve financial stress for students from rural and regional communities, better enabling them to manage their immediate economic needs and supporting their mental wellbeing and resilience during their studies. With less financial pressure, our scholarship students report they have more time and energy to focus on their studies and other extracurricular activities linked to their chosen career path. In doing so, they are afforded a greater opportunity to hone their skills and build their networks, such that they are better positioned and motivated to grow and prosper.



*Thankful, Inspired, Determined*

*"This scholarship provides me with the reassurance that there are people out there in the agricultural industry who believe in me and my potential to continue my studies and contribute to what is Australia's most crucial sector."*

*Micquella Grima, 2021 RASF Rural Scholar, Bachelor of Agriculture/Bachelor of Agribusiness, University of New England*

## Manage their immediate economic needs

Prior to receiving their scholarship only **27%** scholarship recipients felt they could manager their immediate economic needs

Increasing to **88%** after receiving a scholarship



## Stressed about their financial situation



Prior to receiving their scholarship

**86%** Of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed they felt stressed about their financial situation

Decreasing to just

**20%** Of respondents after receiving a scholarship



*Ernst and Young: measurement of outcomes and social return on investment 2019-2020*

Industry-specific scholarships such as the Sydney Royal Wine Study and Professional Development Scholarships, along with the JB Fairfax Award for Rural and Regional Journalism & Communications, encourage and support students and professionals who have a passionate interest in these areas and who are committed to forging careers that will contribute to their industry.

In addition to the work of the Foundation, the RAS has its own, long-standing educational and leadership programs such as Ag Vision and The Rural Achiever Award.

## AgVision – Encouraging young minds to become the future of agriculture

AgVision is a one-day agricultural careers expo designed to inform students and educators about the broad range of careers available in agriculture, science and agri-business. Students from Years 9 -11 have the opportunity to learn from industry experts in a practical learning environment.

## The RAS Rural Achiever Award

The RAS Rural Achiever Award is a state-wide leadership program run by the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW to recognise future young leaders who are working hard to make a significant contribution to their local community and to rural Australia.

The Award aims to acknowledge the achievements of young people (20 – 29 years of age) in primary industry and rural communities.



## Case Study – thriving community members

---

### Big Red Bus (Hastings Valley) – Community Future Grants Recipient



The Big Red Bus visits towns and villages in the Hastings Valley region including Port Macquarie, Wauchope and Gloucester. It operates not only as a youth centre but a place where all community members, young and old, can meet and connect. The bus is staffed by a number of young adults from a range of local community organisations working together as a team to offer services to improve their community. As an alcohol and drug-free zone, the Big Red Bus fosters a sense of belonging and purpose amongst the young, with sporting equipment, computer gaming technology, and a café.

The bus provides regular Beach Hangout afternoon at Port Macquarie’s Town Beach, with activities and meals at the beach for anyone who wants to drop by. Under the guidance of Ian and Jenelle Rosendahl the bus has served over 25,000 meals.

The Big Red Bus was funded in 2008 and is still going strong.

## Case Study

---

### Dennis Gordon (Armidale)– RAS Foundation Scholarship recipient

Dennis Gordon was born in Armidale and later moved to Newcastle where he has settled and immersed himself and his young family in the local indigenous community, eager to take on a role as a mentor. He has completed his Certificate III in Carpentry and is now studying a Certificate IV in Building and Construction which will allow him to start his own small building company and provide apprenticeship pathways for young indigenous men and women.

Dennis has secured work in his community and takes great pride in seeing his qualifications and skill as a carpenter appreciated by those around him. It is this sense of achievement that further motivates him to take on a role as a mentor to young men and women in his community.



“The end goal is to have my own business so I can help my community whether that be through helping affordable maintenance, builds and renovations for family or mob, putting on Indigenous apprentices, and creating opportunity for myself and my boys.”

“Just a big thank you for giving me this opportunity. It has made such a difference in my life and I know that it would have in others. It’s great to know that these opportunities are achievable for people like myself.”

## *John B Fairfax AO and his commitment to the RAS Foundation*

---

The RAS has a long history of giving back, which Mr John B Fairfax AO recognised and helped formalise through the founding of the RAS Foundation in 2007. The Fairfax family have been actively involved with the RAS since 1859. In 2007, John facilitated the seed funding, via the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation for the establishment of the RAS Foundation, as a means of extending the influence of the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW into rural and regional areas of the state, beyond the Easter Show.



“I had a desire to encourage and support young people and give them an opportunity they may not otherwise have had.”

For Mr Fairfax, the RAS Foundation plays a vital role in contributing to the broader agricultural community. “Some things give you pleasure! By contributing to the Foundation, I have had the satisfaction of enabling young people to pursue their rural studies and careers. In addition, numerous rural and regional groups throughout New South Wales have been able to embark on local projects that have benefitted their communities. My reward is in the response from individuals, some of whom express their appreciation literally in tears of gratitude.”

In 2008, Mr Fairfax took a further significant step to secure the longevity of the RAS Foundation’s impact and reach into rural communities, by personally donating one million dollars to establish the JBF Award for Rural and Regional Journalism & Communications. The scale of his contribution was such that this award will continue in perpetuity, supporting at least one scholarship of \$10,000 or more annually. Reflecting on his decision to establish the only scholarship of this kind in Australia, Mr Fairfax observed:

“We have wonderful young talent throughout Australia, and it is vital and rewarding to support young journalists. Quality reporting and thoughtful journalism are essential for informed dialogue and debates around the social, economic agricultural and environmental issues that impact our regions.”

“The Covid 19 Pandemic has put pressure on many organisations and businesses including the RAS and the RAS Foundation. It is vital that we not only stage the Easter Show, but through the Foundation, we contribute to the lives of inspiring young men and women and their communities.”

In 2022, in response to the specific challenges encountered by communities and the charitable sector throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr Fairfax has further generously pledged another two million dollars for the RAS Foundation operational fund. This leadership contribution will scaffold the Foundation’s operations, building its capacity to maintain community programs in the longer-term.





## *Why we need your support*

Rural and regional communities – often hardest hit by arbitrary forces beyond their control - are now facing economic and social uncertainty at levels unseen in decades. An existing baseline of inequitable access to education, health and employment opportunities have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, devastating bush fires, mice plague, and numerous years of drought and/or floods.

Since 2007, the RAS Foundation has invested over \$7.2 million into country NSW through its education and community grant programs. This includes over 600 educational scholarships to regional and rural students, ranging from targeted scholarships in journalism and wine, to those pursuing a career in medicine, agriculture, education and vital trades. We have a critical role to play in the community.

When you support RAS Foundation, you:

- **Support** students throughout university for the first time, easing their burden of going it alone.
- **Nurture** the next generation of dedicated professionals from regional Australia.
- **Support** parents from rural areas access the funds they need to re-train for essential occupations.
- **Support** communities struggling with drought and other environmental, economic or social hardship to get back on their feet.
- **Develop** resilient regional communities across NSW, now and into the future.
- **Support** the maintenance, renewal, regeneration and development of regional Australia.
- **Enable** greater skills diversity in the regions, facilitating the establishment of industry and business enterprises.
- **Support** rural and regional students to achieve their career aspirations.

Our Foundation Manager Cecilia Logan, and Chair, Mrs Robyn Clubb AM, welcome a conversation with you to discuss your involvement in helping to ensure that rural and regional communities in NSW thrive.



#### Our Board

- Ms Robyn Clubb AM (Chair)
- Mr Michael Millner
- Mr Grahame Sharpe
- Mr David Davidson
- Ms Jocellin Jansson
- Mr Bruce Paynter
- Prof. Jim Pratley
- Mr Christopher Hindmarsh

Please don't hesitate to get in touch.  
+61 419 020 242  
clogan@rasnsw.com.au  
clubbr@yahoo.com



# RASF

.....  
RAS FOUNDATION

