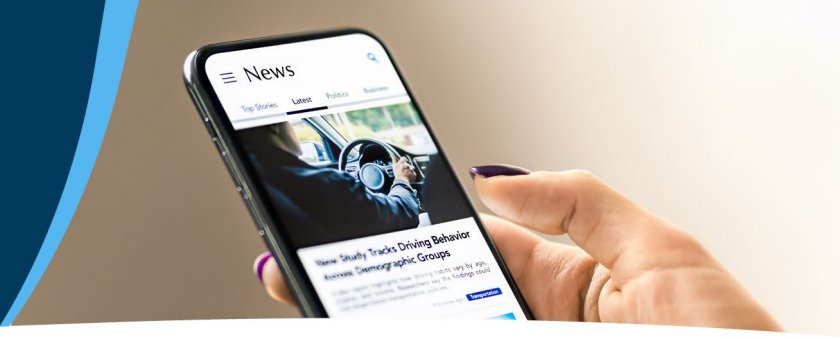
Media Release



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Observership program building the next generation of regional leaders

More emerging leaders in South West Victoria are stepping into board positions through The Observership Program.

Kirsten Diprose's recent appointment as Chair of South West TAFE highlights the initiative's success.

Since completing the program in 2020, Ms Diprose has progressed from board observer to director, deputy chair and now chair, demonstrating the leadership pathways created through the program.

"The Observership Program has been phenomenal in opening the door to an entirely new career pathway," Ms Diprose said.

"I remember starting the program, being incredibly interested in board governance and strategy, but really not knowing what it involved.

"The Observership Program gave me a window into that world and I immediately knew it was something I wanted to pursue.

"I was lucky to be placed at SWTAFE, which was incredibly supportive during my program year. Now as Board Chair, we're incredibly proud to continue to support the program and, most importantly, people in our region who are seeking board skills."

Ms Diprose is one of several graduates who have transitioned from the program into governance roles across the region, reflecting the efforts of local organisations to invest in leadership development to ensure boards are guided by skilled, community-connected directors.

Hosted in partnership between Wannon Water, South West TAFE, South West Healthcare, Brophy Family and Youth Services, Southern Stay and mPower, The Observership Program offers aspiring directors aged 25 to 45 an opportunity to gain practical boardroom experience alongside formal training from the Australian Institute of Company Directors and The Ethics Centre.

Managing Director of Wannon Water and former Board Chair of South West TAFE, Steven Waterhouse said this collaborative approach is a key strength of the program. "We're creating a connected network of boards committed to developing governance capacity and supporting leadership succession across South West Victoria.

"Participants gain valuable insights into decision-making processes, strategic thinking, and organisational oversight, equipping them with the confidence and experience needed to step into board roles," Mr Waterhouse said.

Applications are open for the 2027 Observership Program and will close on 16 August 2026.