# Building stronger and more resilient farming communities in rural Australia



Active Farmers Profile

### Active Farmers takes health and wellbeing activities to small farming communities

Our Vision and Mission commit us to building stronger and more resilient rural communities by providing a proactive program, designed specifically to be routinely on the ground in small farming districts that often have little more than a public hall and sports oval. By coming together through regular group fitness participants improve their physical health, social connection within their communities and naturally improve their mental health as well as build community resilience.

### Governance

Active Farmers is a limited liability company and became registered as a not-for-profit health promotion charity in March 2018.



Too often people living outside major centres lack ready access to services and facilities taken for granted in towns and cities. Active Farmers regular group fitness classes and workshops where people live are contributing to improved health and wellbeing in small farming communities.

A word from Marliese, Acting CEO

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# What we do?

Active Farmers - providing group fitness classes in small farming communities

**Established** in 2015 at Mangoplah, NSW and now a registered health promotion charity, Active Farmers runs regular group fitness classes in over 35 small farming communities with limited or no access to other health and well-being services. Our classes are facilitated by a dedicated team of qualified personal trainers who are on the ground at grassroots level making a difference every week.

Active Farmers averages **600-700 regular monthly participants** in over 35 small farming communities stretching more than 4,000km from **Hughenden in Queensland** to **Borden in Western Australia**, and then down to **Campbell Town in Tasmania**, with many additional communities in the pipeline.

Like farming, class attendance can be seasonal, and our stats show **OCTOBER** was a bumper month:

### We ran 239 classes

Had an average of 5 people per class Over 1,100 participants





3

community. We also ran larger events such as

> The amazing power of this group in a difficult time is about being friendships, gaining information on how best to cope in this difficult weather event and the feeling that you are not alone. With the benefit of getting your endorphins pumping and helping you to feel good. Participant of Eugowra NSW

We finished the SPRING INTO SPRING

program in Temora and Eugowra. This

program was for farmers, community members and families located in small farming communities affected by drought and comprised of free fitness classes for 4 weeks & a health workshop in each

part of a group. Building

In September we introduced the **RIDE FOR RESILIENCE BIKE RIDE:** 36 riders, 408+kms over 3 days between Forbes - Young - Temora

& Mangoplah.

These events also provide a source of revenue to invest into our existing and new communities.





In addition to our regular group fitness classes, we have evolved to run small health related workshops in our communities (such as mental health first aid, nutrition and mindfulness) to provide learning opportunities to our network and additional opportunities to get together.

our ACTIVE FARMERS GAMES in March, with over 80 participants!

These larger events help us raise awareness of physical and mental

connectedness, and provide an

health, and community

opportunity for people to

participate in something

challenging and fun.

### 2019 highlights from CEO

As 2019 draws to a close it has been wonderful reflecting on another fantastic year at Active Farmers and our progress towards achieving our vision of building stronger and more resilient farming communities. THIS VIDEO has been put together to showcase our highlights of 2019!

Each month our class numbers and participation are growing, however we do know there are many community members out there who could benefit from our classes and therefore our work is not yet done!

In addition to our delivery of group fitness classes, we have continued to evolve and incorporate many terrific events into our program. To enable all of the above happen there are many people who help out! We have a Board of 8 Directors, a fantastic Executive Assistant & Event Co-ordinator Jess Stevenson, a dedicated team of 27 qualified personal trainers, 5 volunteer committees (marketing, fundraising, audit & risk, Active Farmers Games and Ride for Resilience), many one-off volunteers and several generous patrons, partners and sponsors. This is a HUGE family of over 100 people who are all working together to achieve our vision - thank you so much!

As an organisation we face many challenges:

- finding personal trainers (and hanging onto them for as long as possible!),
- increasing average class sizes,
- · continuing to raise funds,
- poor physical & mental health in the bush, and
- not to mention the ongoing drought affecting well over half of the communities we service.

These challenges are real and recognised and will continue to be at the forefront of my mind as current CEO, board member, personal trainer and committee member, and I look forward to working with the incoming CEO to continue to think of new and innovative ways to tackle these challenges head on.

### What's on the cards for 2020?

As many of you know my husband Andy and I are expecting our third child in January and it is with mixed emotions that I head off on 12-months maternity leave. Active Farmers truly feels like my very first baby and it will be difficult to step back for a while, however I want to assure everyone that you are in very capable hands with the incoming team!

After 29 applications of a very high calibre we are excited to welcome Marliese Heffernan as acting CEO. Jess will work with Marliese and is absolutely crucial to our team!

Lastly, to ensure our events continue to run smoothly we have welcomed Alison Skinner to our team as an Event Manager!

In 2020 this amazing team will continue to expand our service to new communities, support our existing network, facilitate our major and local events and bring a new boost of energy and innovation to our organisation!

I have thoroughly enjoyed another year of Active Farmers and look forward to following the Active Farmers journey in 2020!!!

Ginny Stevens CEO & Founder

## **Active Farmers Communities**

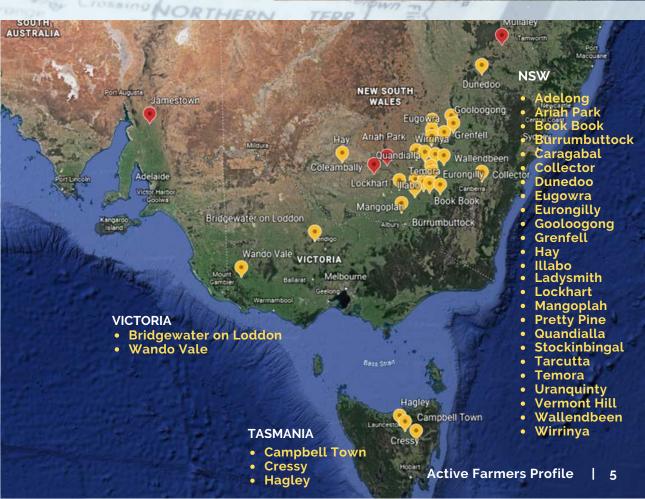
In 2019 there were 38 Active Farmers communities around Australia, with expressions of interest from more than 100 other locations.



Active Farmers classes in these communities were facilitated by a team of 27 qualified personal trainers Communities coming soon



QUEENSLAND



# **Growth, classes & participation**

During 2019 we went from 26 to 38 communities. One trainer discontinued the program, affecting the loss of 2 communities, resulting in a total of 36 communities at the end of the year.

While community loss for 2019 was 10%, growth was more than 35% which included expansion to 4 communities in Western Australia (soon to be South Australia).

Currently we run over 200 classes per month for over 1,000 attendances, for approximately 700 registered Active Farmers. Average class attendance is between 4 & 5 people per month, with class attendance ranging from 1 - 15.

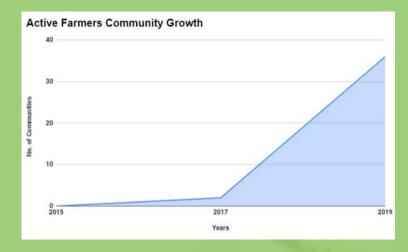
### Welcomed in 2019:

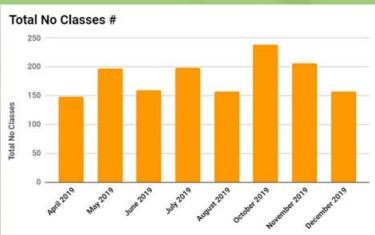
- Borden, WA
- Hyden, WA
- Williams, WA
- Gairdner, WA
- Wando Vale, Vic
- Hay, NSW

- Adelong, NSW
- Vermont Hill (moved from Condobilin), NSW
- Pretty Pine, NSW
- Wallendbeen, NSW
- Temora, NSW
- Campbell Town, Tas

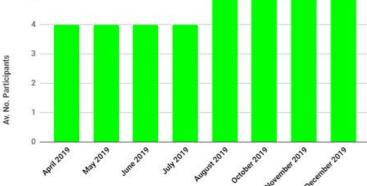
It's a reason and chance for myself and others to get off the farm to socialise and talk crap other than farming, ohh and get some fitness in as well.

Participant of Hyden WA





# Average No. Participants per Class #



## **Active Farmers Trainers**

Our program is heavily reliant on qualified personal trainers. We have a team of 27 personal trainers who are all embedded within their communities from a grass roots level.

They take classes for their community/s each week and are very passionate about the health and well-being of their community. In some instances, we have run remote classes where a community can download a video and play it for a group of people. This has worked, however, having a personal trainer on the ground is the far better option.

Finding and retaining gualified personal trainers is one our biggest challenges and behind the scenes we are working on enhancing our support of the trainers, plus avenues of assisting interested community members to become a qualified personal trainer.







### Our communities and their trainers #

- Ariah Park, NSW - Julie Mills
- Adelong, NSW - Brodie Palmer
- Book Book, NSW - Alison Skinner
- Borden, WA
- Bridgewater, Vic - Claire Harrison

- Boyd Rae

- Margie Heard

- Skye Plane

- Tracey Mathews

- Haylee Redfern

- Marliese Heffernan

- Burrumbuttock, NSW Allana Hayes
- Campbell Town, Tas Margie Heard
- Caragabal, NSW - Kim Broomby
- Collector, NSW - Kristy Quigg
- Cressy, Tas
- Dunedoo, NSW
- Eugowra, NSW
- Eurongilly, NSW
- Gairdner, WA
- Gnowangerup, WA - Boyd Rae
- Gooloogong, NSW - Haylee Redfern
- Grenfell, NSW
- Hagley, Tas
- Hay, NSW
- Hughenden, Qld
- Hyden, WA
- Illabo, NSW
- Ladysmith, NSW
- Lockhart, NSW
- Mangoplah, NSW
- Quandialla, NSW
- Stockinbingal, NSW
- Tarcutta, NSW
- Temora, NSW
- Uranguinty, NSW - Bri Spence
- Wallendbeen, NSW - Glenn Stewart
- Wando Vale, Vic
- Williams, WA
- Wirrinya, NSW

#as at 31/12/19

- Kim Broomby - JJ Pullinger
- Jade Auldist
- Mel Neilsen
- Jenna Mouritz
- Marliese Heffernan
- Alison Skinner
- Jayde Hounsell
- Ginny Stevens
- Kim Broomby
- Annie Nichols
  - Gus MacLeod
    - Julie Mills

  - Sardie Edgar
    - David Read
    - Kim Broomby

- Vermont Hill, NSW
- - Bec Watt

# **Mentor Program**

Since August 2019 we have been piloting a Mentor Program with Boyd Rae in Western Australia. The aim for this program is to enable growth via existing personal trainers. Given the CEO has 27 personal trainers reporting in, plus several other duties, the amount of time available to invest into supporting the personal trainers is becoming spread very thin.

By empowerng the existing trainers to onboard new trainers will provide the new trainers with more support, and the ability for a more sustainable growth patter (new growth will be less likely to sacrifice existing communities).



# Workshops & Events

Another big part of our service is offering health related workshops to the communities we service, such as mental health first aid, nutrition and mindfulness.

This year we have provided the trainers more empowerment to choose their annual workshop, driven by the community needs and desires.

The following workshops have been facilitated this year, and on average 15 people attended each workshop.

'We talk to each other regularly instead of just waving as we pass each other on the road. We are more connected.' **Participant at Wando Vale VIC**  'We all meet, chat, laugh and keep and eye on each other during this tough drought and personal challenges.' **Participant at Collector NSW** 



NUTRITION Held: 3 Where: Burrumbuttock, Deniliquin & Ladysmith/Book Book

HEALTH EVENING (mixture of health professionals) Held: 3 Where: Eugowra, Grenfell & Caragabal

### CHRISTMAS PARTIES

Held: 9 Where: Ladysmith/Book Book, Mangoplah, Collector, Hagley/Cressy, Ariah Park, Temora, Bridgewater, Bremer Bay, Eurongilly/Illabo

### MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

Held: 3 Where: Condobilin, Dunedoo & Jindera

YOGA Held: 2 Where: Ladysmith/Book Book & Eurongilly

**SPRING INTO SPRING** Held: 1 Where: Eugowra



BREMER BAY PRE-HARVEST SESSION Held: 1 Where: Borden/Gnowangerup/Hyden

# **Chair report**

It's with pleasure that I report this year has been a fantastic year for Active Farmers, which has grown substantially in the last 12 months.

Our communities, trainers and classes have grown, our participants have grown, and our impact has grown.

Our supporters have also grown with over 100 people now in support roles. Importantly our awareness in the community has grown.

I think our main challenge is the average number of attendees at classes. We have developed a system that allows us to monitor and report these numbers. It will remain a focus for the Board to try and grow these numbers, and to maintain them.

During the year we held the first Active Farmers Games which were a great success and will likely become an annual event and possibly be expanded to other areas. This event adds a different perspective to our weekly classes and appeals to a slightly different cohort. It is a shorter and sharper event which may appeal more to male participants as it is competitive and doesn't require attendance for a long period.

We also ran a summit for Active Farmers trainers which was a great success. These trainers are the lifeblood of our organisation and the more we can do to support them the better. They networked well together and are now able to support each other.

Ride for Resilience was also a great success, not only raising substantial amounts of money it was also an excellent way to raise awareness for Active Farmers. Once again it looks like being an annual event with a different appeal.

This year we have employed Jess Stevenson as Executive Assistant and she has been an invaluable help to the CEO and the Board. She has also made a great contribution to the trainers and events. I would like to thank the Board for their contribution this year. Different members contribute at different levels depending on their particular skills and needs at the time. I think the spread of skills of the board members is part of the reason that we have had such a successful beginning. Having said that I would like to thank Nerida and Fred particularly for the input they have had this year.

In acknowledging board members, it is also noteworthy that Bec has been a great help with the bike ride and was responsible for the concept.

I also thank Emma for becoming a patron.

I would also like to say a huge congratulations to our outgoing CEO for a wonderful year with Active Farmers.

We welcome Marliese to the role as CEO and look forward to working with her to continue to grow Active Farmers.

### John Hewitt Chair

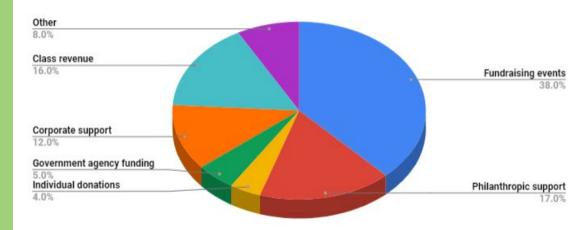


# Revenue 2018/2019

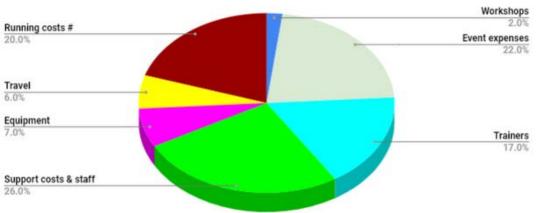
Active Farmers is a not-for-profit organisation and relies heavily on fundraising and donations from the community, patrons and foundations, in addition to class revenue to enable us to service Active Farmers communities.



### Active Farmers Revenue 18/19 \$255K



Active Farmers Expenditure 18/19 \$245K



# Running costs include venue hire, marketing & promotion, office expenses, communication & insurance

### Investing in rural Australia's health and the challenges we face

The Australian bush is one of the best places to live in the world, and home to some of the most genuine people you can find, but living here comes with challenges. We face isolation, climatic and seasonal risks, commodity price risks, financial stress and limited access to health services. We also face some frightening health statistics. For example, the rate of suicide is almost double in areas outside of major centres and that needs to change for the long term sustainability of our AgriculturalIndustry and community vibrancy.

**RFDS Looking ahead..to 2028,** a recently published Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) report highlights some of our challenges and health concerns in the future.

The RFDS report projects that, compared to major cities, there will continue to be significantly fewer services in country areas and significantly lower health workforce provision. At the same time, the disease burden due to cancer, CVD and disorders of mental health in rural and remote areas is expected to continue surpassing that of metropolitan areas.

The first of three RFDS recommended areas for action is Additional health prevention and early intervention activities to minimise and respond to growth in cancer, disorders of mental health and CVD.

Active Farmers plays a role in broader health prevention and early intervention activities through its regular group fitness classes and health related workshops in the dozens of small communities where we operate.

What is driving Active Farmers as an organisation? "there are communities out there that haven't yet experienced the benefits on one's well-being. Hoping you'll get there" Active Farmers survey respondent and Active Farmers participant

### 2020 goals

Our strategic plan for 2020 highlights some key areas of focus to strive towards our vision of building stronger and more resilient farming communities;

- 1. Getting more people to our classes
- 2. Attracting and retaining qualified personal trainers
- 3. Enhancing our funding base
- 4. Building and improving our event offerings
- 5. Enhance our impact and outcome evaluation

On average, Australians living in rural and remote areas have shorter lives, higher levels of disease and injury and poorer access to and use of health services, compared with people living in metropolitan areas. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare October 2019

# A word from Marliese Heffernan Acting CEO

Hi Everyone!

I'm so pleased to be continuing my journey with Active Farmers as Acting CEO in 2020. I know I have big shoes to fill, however, with my love and passion for Active Farmers and with the support of an amazing team in Jess, Alison and all our trainers, I know we will continue to achieve so much over the next 12 months.

I'm really looking forward to a full program of events and initiatives over the next year that will continue to have a positive impact on the communities we service.

I'm also very much looking forward to on boarding new trainers and new communities and being a part of the continued growth of our amazing organisation.





Marliese and trustees of the C&K Toy Memorial Trust, which is supporting Riverina Active Farmers communities in the Spring into 2020 program.

At the time of going to print, there are many people across Australia who have been significantly impacted by bush-fires, including Active Farmers communities. We are working towards supporting these communities through our program.

There is no better time than now for the presence of Active Farmers in your community. The sharing of our vision is assisting our communities to experience a sense of connectedness with the added benefit of improved overall health. In tough times, what a wonderful and tangible way to instil a sense of hope for the future of our farming communities!

Marliese Heffernan Acting CEO Active Farmers

# Partnerships

### **Foundation Partners**





200 years proudly supporting Australia



### **Active Farmers Summit Sponsors**



Southern Division





# **Partnerships**

### **Active Farmers Games Sponsors**



### ACTIVE FARMERS PATRONS

#### GERARD HINES

Active Farmers first patron - 2019 Gerard has been a supporter of Active Farmers from the very beginning, and we are extremely grateful!

### Why did you decide to partner with Active Farmers?

As our company are the founding Sponsors of Active Farmers, I felt that to best reflect our companies and my commitment to the cause, and to ensure Ginny had enough support and ability to fundraise effectively into the Agri sector, especially during the Not For Profit (NFP) establishment phase, it would be a very worthwhile thing for me to be involved in and to further contribute to.

#### What do you love about Regional Australia?

I love the authenticity, diversity, sense of humour and resilience of rural people. Farmers and rural communities are very innovative, have a deep and strong commitment to not only being a critical provider of food and fibre, but are passionate about the communities they are a part of, genuinely care for each other, and are trusting and honest people striving to make a difference for their families and communities.

# Why is it so important that Regional Australians have access to services that are abundant in the city?

There will always be a trade off between what's possible from a services perspective in a large city, that also comes with all its intensity, stress, affordability and other issues, compared to living in the relaxed,



peaceful regional areas with reduced infrastructure and services. The main reason Ginny created Active Farmers was to recognise and address the rising prevalence of a declining mental wellness and the prevalence of rural suicide which is on the rise. Farming is getting more and more isolated with increased automation and improved technologies, which is great for efficiencies, but detrimental in some ways for health, fitness and emotional wellbeing. Its very important to recognise the pressure points, and to find ways to fill the gaps where possible in these rural and remote areas to help address this trend by providing qualified support and resources around fitness and well-being.

"Just bringing people together regularly with a common purpose so they can communicate and discuss their issues is a major step in the right direction, and Active Farmers is one such initiative that is making a difference".

#### **EMMA ROSSI**

BA, MMgt Active Farmers Patron - 2019

Emma feels passionately about regional and rural Australia. There is a lot of research that those in remote and regional areas have reduced access to healthcare and high rates of ill health.

It's such a joy to be involved in Active Farmers because it has the blessed triumvirate: exercise, community and stretching our brain.

#### What do you love about Regional Australia?

I could ride a horse before I could ride a bike. My family had a farm in the Pilliga and that's where I learnt to conserve water, ride muster and preg test a cow.

I attended pony club and have encouraged my kids to do the same, including week long live in camp. I love the smell of the bush, the sounds of bird warnings, cattle bellows and frogs in freshwater creeks.

Most of all I love the people: their gentle ribbing, innovative thinking and generosity of spririt.

# Why is it so important that Regional Australians have access to services that are abundant in the city?

I live in Sydney and there seems to be a gym in every second block in the city. In the country? Very little. That's where Active Farmers group fitness classes are so terrific because they get us moving, while bringing people together in wonderful physical networks. The mental health improvements are a brilliant bi product!



#### Why did you become a Patron?

I think what Active Farmers is achieving is so important. I decided on more than a one off donation. I hope to enable Ginny and team to have confidence to grow and prosper.

#### To those thinking of becoming a Patron:

Just do it. We know that regional Australians are hurting at the moment. Active Farmers is doing practical daily things to alleviate the regional need, while building community and improving mental health.

> "It's such a joy to be involved in Active Farmers because it has the blessed triumvirate: exercise, community and stretching our brain".

### **Active Farmers Board Members**



John Hewitt

Rebecca Milliken

Fred Lester

Ginny Stevens

Nerida White

Pat Barrett

Emma Rossi

#### John Hewitt - Chair

Director & Shareholder, Ruralco Property Tasmania John grew up on a working farm in northern Tasmania and has worked throughout the rural industry in Victoria and southern NSW with both national and international companies, in a range of agricultural enterprises. John is currently a Director and shareholder of 3 unlisted dairy companies.

### Fred Lester - LLB LLM After growing up in northern Tasmania, Fred

studied law at ANU and was admitted to practice in 2006. Fred practiced as a barrister and solicitor for 12 years in ACT and Tasmania, and 7 years as principal of his own firm. Fred now sits on a number of boards with a particular interest in education, mental health and rural and regional affairs since retiring in 2018.

#### Rebecca Milliken - BA MHR

Head of HR, Delta Agribusiness Bec grew up on a commercial sheep and cattle propery on the Hay Plains and after graduation from the Australian National University has worked in a range of roles for leading recruitment firms before joining Delta Ag. Bec sits on the Ag Industry Advisory Board to the Federal Minister for Agriculture and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

### Ginny Stevens - Founder & CEO

BAgSci, Cert. III & IV Fitness Ginny grew up on a farm in Tasmania and has always been passionate about agriculture and keeping active. She founded Active Farmers in 2015 and after 7 years in agribusiness banking in southern NSW, decided to expand the Active Farmers network and services.

#### Nerida White - BA, GradDipEd AAICD

A University of Melbourne graduate, Nerida worked in education and politics before nearly two decades as a communications and regulatory affairs executive with a fortune 500 company. Raised on a cattle, wheat and sheep property at Tocumwal NSW, Nerida retains strong rural connections in NSW and is actively involved in the operation of a small mixed farming partnership in western Victoria.

### Pat Barrett - B. Commerce LLB

Director & Solicitor, Walsh and Blair Lawyers, Wagga Wagga

Pat grew up in Wagga Wagga, spent time jackarooing at Carrathool, attended university at Armidale and joined Walsh and Blair in 2008. Through his practice, and living and working amongst farmers, Pat has developed a passion for rural communities. and the real need for people to meet and exercise in an environment that is encouraging and social.

### Lyn Angel - GAICD

Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Science, Charles Sturt University

Lyn has lived in the Wagga Wagga/Tarcutta area for over 60 years, and is a long standing member of the Charles Sturt University community as a student, research assistant and academic. She held the position of Head of Biomedical Sciences (2002-2014) and Deputy Dean (2014-2018) before her current role as Interim Executive Dean for the Faculty of Science.

#### Emma Rossi - BA, MMgt

Media & strategic communications executive Emma spent nearly two decades reporting for news and current affairs on national television. Growing up on her family farm in the Pilliga Scrub is where she learnt to ride, muster and preg-test a cow. Emma has been an Australia Day Ambassador for the NSW Premier and Cabinet since 2014, and was instrumental in the establishment of Mary's House, a refuge in Sydney's lower north shore for women and children fleeing domestic violence.

Lyn Angel

### **Active Farmers Staff**



### Marliese Heffernan

### Active Farmers Personal Trainer & Acting CEO

Marliese joined the Active Farmers network as a trainer at Eurongilly and Illabo in 2018. With a defree in Social Science, Marliese has worked in the Human Services/Welfare field for the past 15 years, concluding in mid-2019. Marliese lives on her husband's family property just outside Junee and has 3 boys. She is looking forward to the year ahead as Acting CEO.





### **Alison Skinner**

### Active Farmers Event Manager

Alison grew up on her family farm at Leeton, moved to Griffith and worked as an electrician for 12 years, before marrying a farmer and moving to Wagga to settle on their own cattle farm at Big Springs. Alison became an Active Farmers trainer in 2018 at Book Book and Ladysmith, as she has always enjoyed sport and group fitness, and because of the camaraderie and friendships developed. She recently commenced doing parttime event management for Active Farmers.

### Jess Stevenson

#### **Executive Assistant & Events Co-ordinator**

Jess provides part-time remote support (from Tasmania) to the Active Farmers team, She has lived and worked on farms in Victoria and Tasmania, as well as worked in a variety of rural industry roles, including most recently as a real estate Business Manager. Jess completed her Diploma of Property Services (Agency Management) in 2018, and holds her CASA approved Remotely Piloted Aircraft licence (she is a drone pilot in her spare time).

### How you can help >

In addition to support from dozens of volunteers we rely heavily on fundraising and donations from the community to help equip, staff, sustain and build our group fitness programmes in small farming communities.

### To make a donation:

 Send a cheque (made payable to Active Farmers) to; Active Farmers
PO Box 5361
SOUTH WAGGA WAGGA NSW 2652

- Visit activefarmers.com.au to make an online donation
- Visit our GoFundraise page to make an online donation

### **Contact details**

Marliese Heffernan (Acting CEO) M 0414 398 568 E marliese@activefarmers.com.au W activefarmers.com.au

Corporate Information Active Farmers Ltd ABN 81 623 351 888

#### **Charity Status**

Registered with the Australian Charities and Non-for-profits Commission Endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible



activefarmers

