



**Media Release**

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## **Rural women ready to shine after graduating from leadership course**

Sixty-five women from rural New South Wales say they're ready to make a difference in their communities after graduating from a new leadership and professional development course for the cotton and grains industries.

The Generating Regionally Outstanding Women (GROW) course is a professional development and leadership program for regional women. It works to boost the participants' leadership, management, communication, and networking skills, as well as provide tools to improve Work Health and Safety and staff management in their businesses.

The course is provided by Tocal College and funded through the AgSkilled program, a training initiative of the New South Wales Government, led by industry partners the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) and Cotton Australia.

A total of 104 participants completed the GROW program this year, and 65 of those women attended a graduation ceremony in Sydney today to celebrate their achievements.

"This course is all about empowering regional women to use their leadership skills to generate positive change in their businesses and communities," GROW program manager Rebecca Fing says.

"By focusing on building leadership and business skills in this program, we're fostering a belief that meaningful change is possible and that our regional businesses and communities can flourish when women stand up and let their skills shine."

"While many regional communities don't have the breadth of resources metropolitan communities do, we believe having strong rural businesses can have a huge impact in building resilience and strength in our towns. That's why workplace health and safety and human resource management is the other key focus of this program – strong businesses build strong communities."

Beth Shakeshaft participated in the GROW program at Parkes and says it was a valuable experience.

"This was honestly the best training course I have ever done," Ms Shakeshaft says.

"All the information and activities were very relevant and gave me a wonderful insight into my clients' and friends' farms and businesses."

"I feel like a more valuable person because of this course."

AgSkilled project officer Claudia Vicary says GROW is an important program for agriculture in NSW.

“The cotton and grains industries are committed to building diverse skillsets, strong businesses and healthy communities; through AgSkilled, that goal is being realised,” Ms Vicary says.

“The GROW program has been a huge success this year, and by having an army of positive, empowered and passionate rural women ready to use their skills and lead from the front, our regional communities and farm businesses will continue to go from strength to strength.”

“The women that participated all have fascinating stories and outlooks on how we can build a stronger regional Australia, and I’m excited to see where these women end up. Likewise, I can’t wait to meet another group of passionate women when the GROW program runs again next year.”

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