



Timber Queensland Growth Scholarships

Forestry's Future: Women's Protagonism in leading Sustainable change

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A Timber Queensland Growth Scholarship offers funding to Queensland based forest and timber industry professionals and workers who are in their early or mid career years. Growth Scholarships facilitate access to learning experiences and opportunities that will foster a passion for working in the forest and timber industry and enhance career pathways. This report was completed post learning project activities.

Introduction

In 2023, I was awarded a scholarship to participate in the Yale School of Management's Women's Leadership Program Online, a globally recognised executive education course designed to empower women with advanced leadership skills. Women remain underrepresented in top leadership positions across various sectors, and the forestry industry is no exception. According to a report from the Australian Government, only 18% of employees in the forestry industry are female. This learning project aims to leverage resources from a renowned institution like Yale University to boost confidence in leadership roles, foster a more collaborative environment, and support women in joining and advancing their careers in forestry. The program's curriculum focused on strategic decision-making, negotiation, emotional intelligence, and collaborative leadership—skills critical for navigating complex industry challenges.

Focus of Learning Project

The main goal of my learning project, as mentioned in my scholarship application, was to learn advanced leadership skills to help women in the Forest & Timber Industry. Specifically, I wanted to:

- Create strategies to increase the number of women in leadership roles.
- Improve teamwork to encourage new ideas.
- Use Yale's proven methods to better engage stakeholders and promote sustainability..

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Learnings & Outcomes

The program completely shifted how I think about leadership in ways I didn't expect. For example, I've always seen myself as someone who gets things done quickly, but the Vroom-Yetton decision-making framework showed me a blind spot and how I could fix it by including more people on decision-making or simply using the matrix. One exercise had me map out decisions based on things like the team's expertise, how important their buy-in was, and the long-term impact of acting alone versus working together. It was eye-opening to realise that, in my rush to "get things sorted", I'd sometimes missed opportunities to build trust or tap into the team's knowledge. In an industry like forestry—where safety, land management, and community engagement rely on teamwork—this was a real wake-up call. Now, I catch myself thinking about the matrix before deciding.

The program also made me rethink how I approach professional relationships. After doing a "network profile" assessment, I saw that my network is pretty broad but spread thin—something I'd got to by moving around a lot over the years. At first, I thought this was a weakness, but the program helped me see it as an opportunity. For instance, I recently connected a colleague in Queensland's forestry with a contact in Forestry tech in Brazil. Moments like this showed me that networks aren't just about who you know; they're about bringing people and ideas together to solve real problems. Now, I'm more intentional about sharing challenges openly, knowing someone in my network might have a piece of the puzzle.

What surprised me most, though, was how much the little things shape workplace culture. The idea of "micro-moments"—like how I give feedback after a meeting/project delivery or whether I take the time to ask a crew member how their weekend was—made me realise that leadership isn't just about the big stuff. In forestry, where teams often work in remote, high-pressure environments, a sharp comment during a safety briefing or a rushed email can slowly erode morale. I've started paying more attention to these small interactions. For example, instead of saying, "This harvest plan isn't working," I'll ask, "What's your take on how we can tweak this?" It's a small change, but I've noticed people are more willing to share ideas, often coming up with solutions I wouldn't have thought of on my own.

Conclusion

The scholarship didn't just help me grow personally—it also highlighted how crucial it is to invest in women's leadership to tackle the big challenges our industry faces. Moving forward, I'm keen to keep sharing what I've learned. I've already started by introducing some of the tools from the program to my colleagues. Right now, it's about taking a bit more time to think through decisions and looking for ways to include and share more information with women across the forestry sector.

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