



## **Media information 22 May 2017**

### **Agri women win national governance award**

Work by a charitable trust to develop the governance, leadership and business skills of women in primary industries has been recognised with a national award.

The Agri-Women's Development Trust (AWDT) won the Outstanding Pathway to Governance Leadership category at the 2017 Women in Governance Awards held in Auckland last Thursday.

An initiative of Women on Boards NZ, a business unit of Governance New Zealand, the awards recognise and celebrate innovation, excellence, creativity and commitment to diversity by organisations and individuals.

The award received by AWDT recognised the organisation that has provided a pathway that aids progression of women to governance leadership roles.

The judges' comments described the trust as "strongly aligning its focus on leadership and governance with key programme offerings at many levels. It has positively benefitted New Zealand in their sector by developing the skills and confidence of 1,800 women who are now making an impact at all levels - from grass roots to the boardroom.

"This award is an acknowledgement not only of the trust but of the women who have completed our programmes, stepped up and are showing the leadership needed to transform primary industries," said AWDT chair Charmaine O'Shea.

"AWDT is changing how women view their contributions and how the sector views their potential. It has also changed women's aspirations for themselves and their farming businesses, communities and industries.

"When women gain the right skills, support and confidence and discover where they can add value, they find purpose and meaning and contribute more strongly.

AWDT graduates are contributing across multiple spheres including industry organisations, farming businesses, Māori agribusiness, environmental and community.

About half of the 84 alumni of AWDT's 10-month governance and leadership programme, Escalator, have now progressed to governance roles that they did not have before, including many as chair.

They include three of Māori corporation Paraninihi ki Waitotara's seven elected directors and three Environment Canterbury's ten Zone Committee chairs, as well as a fourth Zone Committee member.

The two elected women board members of New Zealand's two largest meat companies are Escalator Alumni. Three of the Dairy Women's Network's eight board members are AWDT Alumni. Eight Escalator Alumni were elected to nine local body governance roles in 2016.

Since it was established in 2010, AWDT has provided eight different programmes across primary industries with participants coming from arable, dairy, deer, goats, honey, horticulture, and sheep and beef.

Ms O'Shea said the support provided by industry organisations for the trust's work has enabled an inclusive approach to women's development, making programmes available to women at highly-subsidised or no cost. They included ANZ, Agmardt, Beef + Lamb New Zealand, Dairy NZ, FMG, the Red Meat Profit Partnership and Cashmanager RURAL.

Women on Boards Chief Executive, Linda Noble, said the increase in the number of entries received on last year's awards confirmed that many organisations and individuals in New Zealand are consciously working hard to ensure that the issue of gender diversity is addressed.

"The 2017 Women in Governance Awards provided the perfect opportunity to acknowledge those organisations and to celebrate our women gender diversity champions."

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## **Background**

The Agri-Women's Development Trust (AWDT) is a charitable trust that is growing and strengthening primary industries by enabling women to know their purpose and realise their potential.

Working in partnership with industry, it provides a trusted and enabling environment for all women in primary industries to grow their skills and confidence in order to create positive change.

Since it was founded in 2010 by Lindy Nelson with the help of Patron, Mavis Mullins, AWDT has delivered leadership, governance and business training and support to more than 1,900 people throughout New Zealand, in partnership with industry.

Women on Boards New Zealand was established to promote and advocate for greater gender diversity at the executive and board level in the belief that the boards of companies across all sectors benefit from the diversity that a gender-balanced board brings.

Governance New Zealand is New Zealand's leading independent professional body with a sole focus on the practice of governance and is dedicated to providing leadership in the areas of governance, compliance and risk management.

Governance New Zealand wholeheartedly supports Women on Board's vision of growing the presence of women on the boards of New Zealand, and to bring through the next generation of board-ready women by providing tools and empowerment through education and support.