



**Media information, 29 November 2018**

## **100<sup>th</sup> graduate from primary sector leadership programme**

Leadership and governance development of women involved in the primary sector was celebrated last week as the Agri-Women's Development Trust (AWDT) marked the 100<sup>th</sup> graduate from its Escalator programme.

The milestone was reached as graduates of the eighth annual programme gathered in Wellington last week with primary industry leaders and more than 30 members of the Escalator Alumni.

AWDT founder Lindy Nelson said New Zealand's primary sector were embracing and using this new talent as the programme's graduates now led at all levels of the primary sector, from the farm to the boardrooms of some of the largest companies.

"We have seen significant change in the sector through our graduates' involvement in leadership. In part, this comes from these women deeply knowing their purpose, understanding their motivation for involvement, and tying that to the betterment of their communities and the sector.

"Over the past eight years, about half of the Escalator Alumni have served in governance roles that they did not have before.

"Others are heading up environmental and community projects, rural health and wellbeing initiatives, local government, Māori agribusinesses and commercial ventures producing high-value primary products," Lindy Nelson said.

At the event last week, Labour List MP and Primary Sector Select Committee member Kiritapu Allan thanked the graduates for being leaders in their communities.

"What you are doing on this programme is clearly pretty special. Our regions are the backbone of our economy and country and agribusiness has sustained our industries for generations."

Addressing the graduates, Escalator Alumni and 2018 Dairy Woman of the Year, Loshni Manikam, encouraged them to accept opportunities and trust the expectations of others.

"Being anchored by a purpose that is bigger than you and that serves others, will help you overcome any self-doubt," Loshni Manikam said.

The 10-month Escalator programme provides leadership and governance development to 14 women each year. It takes a wide approach to development, providing women with skills and support, and addresses the real barriers women can face when engaging in decision-making.

Participants have come from across the primary industries including dairy, meat, horticulture, arable, wool, wine and honey.

Escalator is supported by Agmardt, ANZ, Beef + Lamb New Zealand, DairyNZ, FMG, Ravensdown, Red Meat Profit Partnership and CRS Software.

ends