Celebrating

20 Years Of

SOUTH AUSTRALIA
YOUNG RURAL
AMBASSADOR
AWARD

SA COUNTRY SHOWS

THE YOUNG RURAL AMBASSADOR AWARD

PETER ANGUS

SA YOUNG RURAL AMBASSADOR AWARD COORDINATOR - 2026

2006 TO 2022

This year marks the milestone of the 20th winner of the Young Rural Ambassador Award, an award for youth that I envisaged would strengthen pathways, engagement and opportunities for 16–19 year-olds who had an interest in, and passion, for country shows and rural communities.

During my time as state and national Rural Ambassador winner in the early 2000's, I observed the age group with a potential to have more meaningful involvement with the show movement, were senior secondary students and those in their formative years in trades and tertiary education.

After some discussion and debate, in 2006 the first state final was held for the Young Rural Ambassador Youth Award to highlight the importance of youth in rural South Australia, particularly within the agricultural show movement and identify enthusiastic, skilful and industrious young people involved in their local community.

The goal was to create an award to compliment the existing Rural Ambassador Award for 20–30 year-olds, to enable the next generation to increase their participation at country shows and the Royal Adelaide Show, and develop as leaders and active volunteers in their chosen careers and communities. Early engagement was crucial for future succession planning and creating networking and learning experiences for youth.

Over the last 20 years there have been 161 Young Rural Ambassador Award state finalists, and 19 of these have gone on to compete as Rural Ambassador Award state finalists.

Enjoy reading the reflections of the past 19 state winners, and we acknowledge the support of sponsors and organisers, and the involvement of all participants in the program from across local show, association and state levels, and trust the award has helped shape their personal experiences and life journeys.

JOHN NICHOLAS

2006 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Orroroo Show

Northern Show Societies Association

Since being named the inaugural Young Rural Ambassador in 2006, I have completed a Bachelor of Agriculture and a Graduate Diploma in Education at the University of Adelaide, which enabled me to pursue a career as a senior Agriculture and Science teacher.
After teaching for three years, I returned to the family farm to help grow the business.

With a young family and a desire to expand our farming operation, we purchased a property in western New South Wales. Today, my family and I manage this property alongside my parents, continuing to build and strengthen our family farming enterprise.
Winning the inaugural Young Rural Ambassador Award was a tremendous honour and a defining moment in my personal and professional development. The experience strengthened my leadership, communication, and confidence, equipping me with skills that have benefited me throughout my career and enabled me to make a meaningful contribution to my community.

EMILY LOCKE (COOTE)

2007 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Kingston Show

South East of SA and Border Show Societies Association

Since winning the Young Rural Ambassador Award, life has taken me on an incredible journey, but alas away from SA. I moved interstate to pursue psychology, completing my Masters of Educational and Developmental Psychology in Brisbane and although I always intended to return home to South Australia, I fell in love with a proud Queenslander!

After many adventures and COVID changing our plans, Queensland became my second home, though my heart will always be firmly South Australian and feel blessed that we are able to visit my beloved Kingston SE often. Throughout my career I've been fortunate to work across rural and urban communities, particularly alongside First Nations communities and schools, with experience spanning tertiary mental health, education and private practice.

I'm now a proud mum to two young boys and work in a psychology practice, where a significant part of my role involves consulting with psychologists across Australia on a wide range of wellbeing topics. No matter where life has taken me, my passion has remained the same: promoting mental health and wellbeing and helping strengthen communities across Australia, while never losing my love for the state where it all began.

CRYSTAL JAMES (RUDIGER)

2008 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Tanunda Show

Central Show Societies Association

I now live in the beautiful coastal town of Tumby Bay on the Eyre Peninsula with my husband and our three children. I own an event hire business and recently celebrated the milestone of 10 years of self-employment. My husband also runs his own building business, so between our two businesses and raising three children, life is certainly busy!
Tumby Bay is a wonderful, close-knit community, and we love being actively involved in our local sporting clubs, school, and volunteer groups. Community has always been an important part of my life.

Being involved in the Young Rural Ambassador Award at such an impressionable age gave me confidence, developed my public speaking skills, and helped shape the person I am today. I look back on the experience with such fond memories and am incredibly grateful for the opportunities it gave me.
Growing up, I watched my grandma dedicate countless hours to volunteering and supporting just about every community group imaginable. She was a huge inspiration to me and was the one who encouraged me to enter the Young Rural Ambassador Award.

To be honest, every stage I progressed through came as a surprise. I still remember competing against a student from my school who was older than me and had achieved a TER score of 99. I saw him there and thought, “There’s no way I’m going to beat him.” So when they called out my name, I was absolutely stunned, I almost fell over!
That moment taught me a valuable lesson: life is about so much more than perfect grades or academic results. Attitude, determination, kindness, and a willingness to put yourself out there matter just as much.
My advice is to embrace every opportunity, approach each challenge with determination, kindness, and a smile, and you might be surprised by just how far you can go.

JEREMY SCHUTZ

2009 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Pinnaroo Show

Murray Lands Show Societies Association

Since winning the Young Rural Ambassador Award in 2009, I have completed my trade as a fitter turner and boiler maker and continued working on the family farm, where we run Merino ewes and breed first cross Border Leicester lambs. In my community I am involved in the Pinnaroo CFS and the Pinnaroo show.

In 2015 I won the state Rural Ambassador Award and I got involved in the SA Next Generation Group. After winning the award I then went onto win the National Rural Ambassador Award in 2016, becoming one of only two people to have won all three levels of the awards.
In my personal life I have married my wife Elise, and welcomed three children into our family. Professionally, I have progressed into a management role and now oversee a 12,000-acre cropping program for a potato farming operation in Pinnaroo.

My participation in the awards has given me the opportunity to travel the state and interstate shows, where I have meet so many like-minded people and have learnt so much about country/ royal shows and agriculture. The award has given me the confidence that I needed to step up and take on roles that I may not have before. If I could give one piece of advice to someone that was thinking about entering the award is that you have to take it with both hands and run with it. It is a great opportunity to meet new people and network with likeminded people.

WILLIAM DENHOLM

2010 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner
Kapunda Show
Northern Show Societies Association

I had no idea what could come from the Young Rural Ambassador Award when I entered back in 2010. After many years of involvement with the Kapunda Show, I was nominated by the committee to represent Kapunda at the Northern Finals and then the State Competition. Competing in the award was my first glimpse into the broader show movement, which later led to me becoming a founding member of the SA Next Generation Group.

Through the award, I have met some lifelong friends – and even my wife! I have always said that through my involvement in the show movement, I knew someone in nearly every town in South Australia. The award initially allowed me to see behind the scenes at the Royal Adelaide Show and, later, many other shows across South Australia. From this, I, along with other award winners and participants from Kapunda, was able to bring many new ideas, including new sections and entertainment, back to the Kapunda Show, which has experienced the direct benefits of the award.

When I participated in 2010, I was at university studying a Bachelor of Agriculture. The skills I developed and the networks I built have allowed me to have a successful career in agribusiness. My role as an Agribusiness Manager with ANZ has taken my family and I to Townsville in North Queensland. We now enjoy attending shows throughout the North Queensland region, as well as in South Australia whenever we travel back to visit our families.
Sorry we are unable to join in the 20-year celebrations this evening, and we hope you all have a great night.

AARON BAIN

2011 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Gawler Show

Northern Show Societies Association

Winning the SA Young Rural Ambassador Award in 2011 was a defining moment in my career and reinforced my passion for regional Australia, agriculture and the importance of building strong businesses and communities.

Over the following 14 years with Ahrens, I was fortunate to progress through a range of leadership roles, ultimately serving as Group General Manager - Rural, leading a national business delivering grain storage and infrastructure solutions to the Australian agricultural sector. The experience provided invaluable lessons in leadership, strategy and business growth.

In 2021, Amy, my partner and I, were proud to bring our son into the world, Alby James Bain, now 5 and hopefully a future SA Young Rural Ambassador Award winner. In 2022, I made the decision to pursue a lifelong passion and go full-time in my own business of, Aaron Bain Racing, combining my interests in horse racing, bloodstock and business. Since then, Aaron Bain Racing has grown into one of South Australia's leading thoroughbred training and bloodstock operations, with a strong focus on performance, owner experience and long-term sustainability.

Today, we are proud to call the historic Angaston Park home - the birthplace of the legendary Lindsay Park racing operation. It is a privilege to continue the legacy of such an iconic property while creating our own chapter, investing in world-class facilities, exceptional people and the future of the South Australian racing industry.

Looking back, the Young Rural Ambassador Award played an important role in shaping my journey, and I remain incredibly grateful for the opportunities, relationships and experiences that have followed since receiving the honour in 2011.

MCKEELY DENHOLM (MANEY)

2012 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Mundulla Show

South East of SA and Border Show Societies Association

Becoming the 2012 Young Rural Ambassador was life changing for me. I was in my first year of university at the time and feeling quite homesick and lost. The award reminded me of what I valued and what was important to me - community. I threw myself into every opportunity that agricultural shows had to offer; travelling the state to visit shows, chaperoning the Rural Ambassador Award and volunteering in various cookery sections over the years.

I grew so much as a person, developing life skills and becoming more confident - preparing me perfectly for full time work.

It's no secret that I also met my husband, William Denholm, through the award. We met at a show, got together at a show, engaged at a show and had our wedding reception at the Adelaide Showgrounds. We now live in Townsville, Queensland with our two beautiful daughters who keep us busy and when I'm not with them, I'm working at the library to help others connect with the community here.

We feel blessed to be a part of the "Show Family" - all the friendships we've made along the way - and we always feel like being at the Adelaide Show is like coming home for Christmas.

I'm so grateful for this award, the impact it's had on my life and all the people I've met along the way. Who knew helping with the cookery section on a Saturday morning at the Mundulla Show could lead to this?

CARLY GOGEL

2013 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Keith & Tintinara Show

South East of SA and

Border Show Societies Association

Winning the South Australian Young Rural Ambassador State Final in 2013 at just 16 years of age was the beginning of an incredible journey. Since then, I completed Year 12 at Keith Area School before heading to northern South Australia, where I worked as a governess on two sheep and cattle stations.

I later relocated to Alice Springs to begin my career in agribusiness with Elders, before returning to South Australia in 2020. Shortly after relocating, my life took an unexpected turn when I was diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma. Following months of chemotherapy and radiation treatment, I am incredibly grateful to celebrate five years in remission this year—a milestone that reminds me never to take opportunities or good health for granted.

Back home, I rediscovered my passion for country shows and, inspired by the personal growth and opportunities the Young Rural Ambassador Program had given me, I entered the Rural Ambassador competition at the Naracoorte Show in 2022. I was fortunate to progress through the association and state finals, ultimately being named the South Australian Runner-up Rural Ambassador in 2023. That experience led to the opportunity of a lifetime—a study tour to Canada in 2025.

Throughout my journey, I have learnt to grab every opportunity that comes my way because you never know where it might lead. Age, gender or your background should never define what you are capable of achieving—they should never stop you from putting your hand up and having a go. Not every opportunity will result in success, but every setback or knock-back has made me more resilient, more determined and ultimately stronger.

Country shows have always been a huge part of my family's life and mine, from showing sheep and baking cakes to entering craft competitions and volunteering. They have shaped the person I am today and continue to fuel my passion for supporting rural communities.

I now live in Naracoorte, where I work as the State Livestock Sales Support Officer for Elders South Australia and proudly serve as President of the Lucindale Netball Club. The Young Rural and Rural Ambassador programs have taught me that great leaders lead by example, communicate effectively, listen with intent, and never stop learning. They have opened doors to incredible networking opportunities and lifelong friendships across Australia and around the world.

As the saying goes, "Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they simply have the heart." I am incredibly grateful for the experiences these programs have given me and look forward to continuing to give back to the agricultural show movement that has given me so much.

ALISTAIR KELLER

2014 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner
Melrose Show
Northern Show Societies Association

Since winning the young rural ambassador in 2014 I have built my career around the livestock industry, beginning with shearing around Australia and working on livestock properties across New South Wales, where I developed a strong foundation in animal husbandry and property management.

Since 2016, I have worked as a livestock agent, building trusted relationships with producers and gaining extensive experience in livestock marketing and sales.

For the past five years, I have worked with Elders in Stud Stock for South Australia, specialising in the stud livestock sector.

Alongside my professional career, I also own and operate my own property. I am passionate about supporting producers, advancing the livestock industries' genetics and continuing to grow both professionally and personally.

KAHLIA JENKE

2015 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Eudunda Show

Northern Show Societies Association

After winning the State YRA final in 2015, I made it my personal goal to attend as many shows as possible. Within those 12 months, I was fortunate enough to visit around 14 of the 45 shows in SA and have continued to visit many more since. Along the way, I have met people from all walks of life who are passionate about their shows and local communities —an experience I truly cherish.

Through the YRA program, I met lots of people from across SA and valued the many different opportunities and experiences it provided. It was through these connections that I left my farmhand role in the Mid North to take up a Livestock Administration position in the South East, before returning to the Mid North and joining Elders, where I have worked for almost 8 years now.

I have proudly grown my involvement in the Eudunda Show across various roles, including being a convenor, steward, on the exec and now the current Vice President. Our little town of Eudunda has nurtured many successful YRAs and RAs and we are proud of our strong and growing show community. Many of our members have participated in either the YRA or RA program and value the skills, confidence, connections and passion these programs have brought to both our members and our show.

The YRA and RA awards are an experience that I would highly recommend to anyone to give it a go. They have taught me so much and provided opportunities to build valuable connections and form lifelong friendships that would not have been possible otherwise. Celebrating 20 years of the YRA award is a true testament to the dedication of the team behind the scenes who have nurtured and promoted the RA & YRA awards over the years, so thank you to all who have made and continue to make this possible.

Through the YRA program I was encouraged to be involved with the SA Next Generation group and was able to help with the running of the state Young Farmers Competitions at the Royal. Then in 2024, I was fortunate enough to participate with our team from Eudunda in the state final, taking home the win to then come back in 2025 to compete in the national final and take home the crown. It felt like a full circle moment, a privilege to be a part of and seeing how the competition had changed and improved over time.

CAITLIN MARSHALL

2016 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Coonalpyn Show

Southern Show Societies Association

Since 2016, I have completed my Certificate III in Aged Care, graduated from high school, and left my hometown of Coonalpyn (although I still return every year for the show!). I moved to Mount Barker to study a Bachelor of Speech Pathology at Flinders University.
While living in Mount Barker, I began volunteering with the Mount Barker Show and somehow found myself convening the Jams and Preserves section. In the process, I also discovered a new hobby—making jams and preserves!
I joined the SA Next Generation Group in 2016 and have held a variety of committee roles, including Treasurer, Secretary and now President. In 2023, I had the honour of chairing the second ASA National Conference in Adelaide, which gave me the opportunity to see agricultural shows from a national perspective. I am currently a member of the Emerging Leaders Working Group, which brings together young leaders from across Australia to share ideas and develop new ways to engage young people in agriculture and our show communities.

After completing my degree in 2019, I was able to pursue my passion for providing healthcare to regional and remote South Australia. I moved to Port Pirie, where I delivered much-needed speech pathology services across a large region, from Whyalla to Peterborough, Clare to Kadina, and everywhere in between. Today, I am a Senior Speech Pathologist specialising in swallowing disorders, adult speech and language impairments, and voice disorders. I have the privilege of working with people across the entire lifespan from all walks of life.
If my face looks familiar, it might be because I returned and competed in the Rural Ambassador Program last year, where I was honoured to be named First Runner-Up.

Since then, I have moved to Port Broughton with my fiancé, Mat. We became engaged in December 2025 and are currently planning our wedding for May next year.
The Young Rural Ambassador Program gave me the confidence and drive to pursue the goals that mattered most to me. It empowered me to make a positive impact for young people within our show and agricultural communities while also making a meaningful contribution to healthcare in regional South Australia. I hope to inspire others to step outside their comfort zone, embrace new opportunities, and discover where the program can take them.

LACHLAN JOHNSON

2017 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Mundulla Show

South East of SA and Border Show Societies Association

Since being named Young Rural Ambassador in 2017, I have completed my trade as a diesel mechanic before establishing my own mechanical and fabrication business, Johnson Built Bordertown, which proudly services the local agricultural and rural industries.

In 2019, I achieved another personal milestone by purchasing a small farm just outside of Bordertown where I have now set up my workshop and farm toy museum with thousands of model tractors and farm machinery. Alongside my business and farming commitments, I have remained actively involved with the Mundulla Show Committee, serving in a variety of committee roles over the years and I am currently holding the position of President.

My passion for country shows and regional communities has continued through the Rural Ambassador Program, where I was honoured to be named State Rural Ambassador in 2023 before going on to win the National Rural Ambassador title at the Melbourne Royal in 2024.

These experiences have provided incredible opportunities to represent and promote rural Australia while continuing to grow my business, contribute to my local community, and support the future of agriculture, country shows and communities.

CAITLIN FLANAGAN (HEPPNER)

2018 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Mount Pleasant Show

Central Show Societies Association

Since 2018, I have moved from the Barossa Valley to Bordertown in the South East to follow my career alongside my husband, Luke, who I married in 2022. We bought a small property in 2020, where we are now an established working Kelpie stud. I have remained involved in country shows throughout the South East of SA and Western VIC by fleece judging and over-judging in Young Judges' competitions.

Being involved in the Young Rural Ambassador Award and winning the state title was a huge honour and one of the most valuable and exciting times in my life. I gained so much from participating in the award program. From country show level, to association and state level competitions, I was given so many opportunities to develop myself both personally and professionally.

The award structure teaches us many skills that we can utilise later in life like how to navigate interviews and submit stellar resumes, through to key communication skills, self-confidence, public speaking and the list goes on.

I look back on my time involved with the YRA Award and I see all the incredible networking opportunities and the friends I have made for life. There is so much support, friendliness, encouragement and empowerment that comes with participating in the Young Rural Ambassador Award. Being a part of the YRA award program has made me who I am today.

GARRY SCHUTZ

2019 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Eudunda Show

Northern Show Societies Association

G’day, a bit of water under the bridge since 2019 when I was a shearer and farmer. I am still shearing, although not as much as back then, as the farm has grown and work load there has increased. But I am still loving working alongside my brothers on a daily basis. I’m happily married to my wife Chloe and we welcomed our fist son Otto into the world just about 12 months ago and I couldn’t be prouder.
The ambassador journey for me was after a couple of pretty tough average years on the land for our area. It wasn’t named a drought but a blind man could’ve known it was.

Getting to know other young likeminded people was probably the key thing that sticks with me, it didn’t matter if they were from a town from the bottom of the EP, a cattle farmer from the South East, sheep farmer from the North East, a mechanic from the Adelaide Plains or a fruit picker from the Riverland, we all shared a passion for agriculture and more importantly agricultural shows. No matter what kind of average or abundant season country people are having, we all still manage to do the extra mile when it comes to the country show scene.

There was no greater example of this than our Eudunda Show in 2024. Chatting with an older fella while setting up for the show that year who certainly has seen his share of drought, his words stuck with me.
“2024 has been the worst year on the land I can remember, if this one doesn’t break ya nothing will”, and he was right it was a monster of a season. Although it started alright, the rain packed its bags and left us high and dry. Three days later after our show he was smiling ear to ear like there had just been 3 inches of rain. But there certainly wasn’t, but this time his words were “This is the best country show I have ever been to”.
As president of the Eudunda show at the time I was very proud of what we had achieved as a committee and the same bloke said the 2025 show was better again.

It’s very promising to see most of the ambassadors that have been a part of our show over the years, are still very involved and playing roles forming our show committee. I’d like take this chance to thank everybody who has contributed in any way big or small to the Young Rural Ambassador program as it’s the seed stock to the life blood of future country shows. It was a privilege to be South Australia’s Young Rural Ambassador in 2019 and I’m proof you can just be an ordinary Joe to fit in anywhere and you don’t need to be all that flashy to get places in life.
Here’s to a run of good seasons ahead both on the land and in the show scene.
Good chatting and see ya around.

JACQUI PALK

2021 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Mount Pleasant Show

Central Show Societies Association

Winning the Young Rural Ambassador Award five years ago marked the beginning of an incredible journey of personal and professional growth. Since then, I have embraced every opportunity to develop as a leader, advocate for agriculture, and contribute to the agricultural show movement.

I have served as a Rural Ambassador State Finalist, taken on the role of Secretary for the South Australian Next Generation Group, and represented South Australia at the Royal Melbourne Show, Royal Canberra Show, Sydney Royal Easter Show Exchange Program, and the Royal Adelaide Show. Throughout this time, I have also experienced significant growth within the show cattle industry. What began as a passion for exhibiting cattle has developed into a deeper understanding of breeding, genetics, preparation, animal welfare, and presenting livestock to the highest standard.

The friendships, mentorships, and experiences gained through showing cattle have strengthened my confidence, leadership, and commitment to the beef industry. Along the way, I have had the privilege of meeting influential leaders, including Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC and South Australia's Minister for Primary Industries, Clare Scriven. Looking back, winning the Young Rural Ambassador Award was not the finish line—it’s the foundation for the opportunities, friendships, leadership, and experiences that continue to shape my journey today.

CODY JONES

2022 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Clare Show

Northern Show Societies Association

Cody (B, 2nd from the Right), With The Clair Show Comittee

Participating in and winning the 2022 Young Rural Ambassador award was one of the most grounding and personally building experiences I have had to date. The growth as a person you get out of participating in competitions like this is truly something different. Not to mention the life-long friendships you make and connections you build through the ambassador program.
Post winning the award I had ambitions to increase involvement within my local show. Upon this I took on convening the wool section at the Clare Agricultural and Horticultural Show up until this year when work and other commitments had to take place. I have also become involved in helping steward for one of, if not the largest, sheep judging classes in the world, the School Merino Wether Competition held at the Royal Adelaide Show annually where they consistently have excess of 200 plus wethers in one line up.

Whilst my involvement in the show may have eased off lately, I have tried to look elsewhere in the community to become involved. This includes the uptake of roles within the local Burra Booborowie Hallet (BBH) Football and Netball club, judging at local shows and events around the district and still looking to be involved in community events where I can.

My biggest take away from participating in this award has been my growth in public speaking and gaining the confidence to approach and talk to people. Unbeknown to me, this would become an integral part of my everyday life, being one of the main requirements for my work as a wool broker for Quality Wool. All in all, it's an award that I have been privileged to experienced firsthand and seen in others as well that can help shape futures and for that I can't recommend it highly enough for anyone interested in participating. It simply shows how important community involvement is, and how far it can get you across several different industries through avenues like this. Thank you once again to the Clare Show Society for encouraging me from the start to have a crack and congratulations to all past and future winners of this award.

MACKENZIE WILSON

2023 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Gawler Show

Northern Show Societies Association

Winning the Young Rural Ambassador Award opened doors I never imagined possible. More than anything, it taught me the value of leadership, community connection, and the lifelong relationships that exist within Australia's agricultural show movement. Following the award, I spent over 18 months travelling across Australia solely through opportunities and friendships created by the show community; from the Sydney Royal Easter Show to Beef Australia in Rockhampton, Bendigo Sheep Show to the Royal Adelaide Show, and Broken Hill Mundi Mundi Bashes to the Big Western Rock Lobster. Those experiences showed me what a true "show family" is and instilled in me a passion for giving back to regional communities.That journey inspired me to pursue a Bachelor of Business; Tourism and Event Management, which has led to management roles within state and national organisations, coordinating major festivals and events, and working across Australia's hospitality and tourism industries.

As I prepare to begin the next chapter of my career with postgraduate studies in Economics in London, I continue to draw on the values and experiences the Young Rural Ambassador program gave me. Wherever I am in the world, I proudly share the impact Australia's country shows have had on my life. Whether volunteering as a coordinator, Young Rural Ambassador, steward, committee member, or simply attempting a Young Farmer Challenge, I remain passionate about supporting the communities that have shaped me. Giving back to the show movement has not only allowed me to contribute to something bigger than myself, but has also provided the foundation for my personal and professional growth.

ELSIE JOHNSON

2024 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Murray Bridge Show

Southern Show Societies Association

In the short time since winning the award in 2024, I have had some enriching opportunities, many of which would not have been possible without the skills or networks gained from my time as an ambassador. At the end of 2024 I graduated high school and started my smooth transition into life at university, to which I am now in my second year studying a Bachelor of Business Majoring in Marketing. In addition to this, I have completed my Certificate 4 in Dance Teaching and Management and I am now teaching at studios in Murray Bridge and Adelaide, allowing me to embrace my passion for bringing dance to regional areas while building connections within my local community.

Despite now being based in Adelaide for study, I feel more connected to my local community and show communities more than ever. Within the Murray Bridge show I have stepped into the role of Young Farmer Challenge and Ambassador quest convenor and continue to provide support around show day in a variety of ways. I still support many of the Southern and Central association shows, stewarding many of the cookery sections and embracing opportunities to steward or even judge some sheep sections. Closer to home, around our family farm, I have embraced supporting community organisations by becoming a CFS member. It is rewarding to still actively be involved with my family's sheep studs and, in the future, I look forward to applying my marketing skills.

My involvement with SA Next Gen is continuing as an executive member and I enjoy every opportunity to engage and support youth to become involved in county shows. The ambassador program has provided me with the confidence and networks to explore how I can implement my passion for marketing and content creation in the agricultural industry, alongside country shows. I can now travel anywhere in SA and catch up with someone I know through the Ambassador program, and I am excited to see where my involvement takes me in the future, especially as I complete my degree. It is always rewarding to see new people become involved, sharing their personal passions and talents to ensure the future of regional country shows.

SHAYLA LEPSE

2025 Young Rural Ambassador Award State Winner

Naracoorte Show

South East of SA and Border Show Societies Association

Since winning the 2025 Young Rural Ambassador Award, life had been jam-packed full of amazing experiences and people. This award has taken me all over SA and given me the opportunity to network with some amazing people as well as take me out of my comfort zone. Since achieving this major goal in my young life, it has set me up with the confidence to work on my next life goal so I have transitioned into a new job with beef cattle in order to gain more knowledge about the Australian agricultural industry.

The YRA award has taught me so much about myself and this amazing part of the world we live in. I am forever thankful to be a part of such an inclusive community with my fellow past ambassador winners. This past year has taught me to really take in and appreciate the small moments and the people with in them. Whether it be traveling 8 hours from home to judge cattle at Crystal Brook show or help set up for my local show, I know that wherever I go, there are people who are just as passionate about our way of life and that is an amazing feeling.