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# Leadership: it's an action, not a position

By JANE MILBURN

Principles to live and lead ethically

- The golden rule – do unto others as you would have done to you.
- The sunlight test – don't do things you would not want to see on the front page.
- The informed conscience – you need to know what is good/right, and act on it.

ASKING powerful questions, building relationships through conversations, and being conscious of other points of view are three skills that are part of leadership. In reality, leading can be hard; it is an action not a position and is often precipitated by a crisis.

Ahead of our Australian Rural Leadership Program graduation, colleagues on course 16 are working on project presentations and final reports, and reflecting on the key lessons learned in the leadership 'sandpit' we've been in during the past 16 months.

Most recently in Perth during the case study session, we looked at some of the leadership challenges around decisions made to secure a sustainable future for the Western Australian rock lobster industry.

It was clear there were many perspectives on one issue, all sides needed to be considered, and the numbers may always be incomplete, so policy decisions are often made on the best available data at the time.

Importantly though, when you lead with passion, courage and truth, you are less likely to come undone later.

At an earlier ARLP session in Sydney, Dr Simon Longstaff from St James Ethics Centre said the most powerful question in any situation was: what ought one do? To live and lead ethically requires moral courage and a set of principles (see breakout panel).

From the book reading, *Fierce Conversations*, we learned: You must extend to others what you want to receive. It begins with you. Live what you are intent on learning. And the emotional wake is what they remember after you're gone.

Other probing questions from this book are: "How shall I live my life so that it means something more than a brief flash of biological existence soon to disappear forever? What values



Jonas Woolford (SA), Anthony Shelly (Vic), Troy Fischer (SA), Andrew Menschelyi (WA), Farron Fletcher (NSW), Jane Milburn (Qld), Mike Mooney (Vic), Cathie Donohue (Vic) with John Wright (NT) in front.

do I stand for, and are there gaps between these values and how I actually behave?

A value is a tightly held belief (as opposed to a vague notion) upon which a person or organisation acts by choice. What are your values? I now know my values are reflected in my penchant for collecting rocks weathered to the shape of heart stones. I've collected a few on my ARLP travels.

Expanding our world view involved a visit to India, a country with significant bilateral trade potential and a place to foster a culture of gratitude. Here we learned that leadership is about circumstance – cease the moment and it will make you a leader.

Opposition political leader Dr Jayaprakash Narayan, head of the Lok Satta party, explained to us his motivation: What are the important things? What is the best thing to do in your lifetime? If it hurts more to not do it than do it, then you should do it.

As has been the way of ARLP since 1992, we began our journey

in the Kimberley region of Western Australia where we learned about ourselves, our leadership style and our team work.

It was there, at Carlton Gorge, that Australian Rural Leadership Foundation patron Professor Peter Shergold recommended the practice of saying seven thank-yous a day and valuing all that we have. It was there we met indigenous leader and ARLP fellow Rob Watson who works with young people on picture building, to show them how they fit into the future. And it was there we learned that Australia has the oldest living culture in the world and we have not done enough to empower and protect it.

This month we go back to Australia's heartland, Alice Springs, to graduate and join more than 500 ARLF fellows committed to rural Australia through their industry, community, and family leadership.

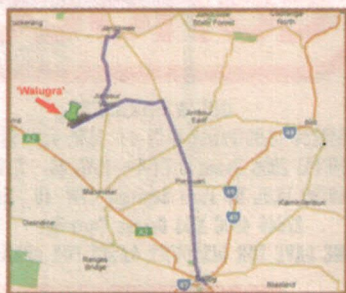
● Rural Press Ltd has sponsored Jane Milburn on ARLP. Jane writes at [www.foodfarmingaustralia.com](http://www.foodfarmingaustralia.com)

## Queensland g Systems

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Dr Lindsay Bell will present the results of the integration of various winter and summer pasture legumes in rotation with grain crops.

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Dr Jeremy Whish will discuss various crop management options with chickpeas including row spacings and the feasibility of shorter varieties for double cropping.

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