

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

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# MISSION AND VISION

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CHRRUP is committed to cultivating resilient, prosperous and connected rural communities by empowering primary producers, agribusinesses and regional stakeholders to adapt, innovate and thrive in changing conditions.

We work to build practical capability in AgTech and modern production systems, enabling grain growers, cotton producers, horticulturalists and graziers to respond confidently to evolving market, technological and regulatory environments. We champion responsible land and water stewardship to ensure the long-term health and productivity of our landscapes, recognising that environmental resilience underpins economic resilience.

Central to our work is advancing regional futures and economic integration by shaping the pipeline of strategic initiatives that will influence community wellbeing, business diversification and regional opportunity over the next decade. As a community, profit for purpose organisation, every outcome we generate is reinvested back into our region, strengthening local enterprise, supporting collaboration across sectors and ensuring shared benefit for the communities we proudly serve.











# REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

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I present this report with mixed feelings (including pride and sadness) as it will be my seventh and final report. I have been elected until 2026 but I feel now is an optimal time to hand over the Chair role.

There is a risk of overuse of the word resilient when discussing CHRRUP. However, there are few other words that capture the continuing magic of its reputation. The changes during the past seven years have included a complete change of staff, a complete change to the type of entity (from Co-op to Company Limited by Guarantee), a complete change of Board membership, two changes of address, and a change of focus from government funding to creating its own revenue. Yet, it is still well-known and highly respected for Advancing Rural Communities in the Central Highlands and Western Regions of Queensland. CHRRUP is still similarly perceived by its many stakeholders across a sizeable component of regional Queensland. I consider that resilience and magic are the most appropriate descriptions.

When I first joined CHRRUP, it was recovering from the sudden termination of its major funding source. There was clearly a strong and well-connected community involvement but the structure was not ideal from an operational aspect. In hindsight, it is now clear that the rapid changes to gain operational efficiency (through moving from The Co-op, "CENTRAL HIGHLANDS REGIONAL RESOURCES USE PLANNING CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED" to a company Limited by Guarantee called "CHRRUP Limited") contributed to a decline in the community connection. The Forum was intended to serve this purpose but after the initial success leading to LEADAg, the Forum has struggled. Challenging financial circumstances required sustainability and prevented aggressive expansion. While the structural shifts and prudent management required to transition from Co-op to Company Limited by Guarantee necessarily demanded focus, these actions ensured the entity's survival. The rigorous focus on stabilising our finances, led by Noella Powell and her team, provided the solid base that now allows Justine McLeod, our new CEO, to progress an achievable positive impact community-wide. The new structure and operation will enable us to confidently rebuild our deep connections.



# REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

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There is no doubt that the year has been challenging. Several months of challenging financial sustainability indicators prevented aggressive expansion plans. However, the grit, determination and dedication of Noella Powell and her team saw us achieve a solid base by the end of June. This will now allow Justine to progress an achievable positive impact community-wide. The frameworks and resources are being reinforced and the outcomes will become increasingly apparent through the coming year.

The year, defined by necessary structural transformation and a focus on financial sustainability, brought about natural personnel evolution. However, we are immensely proud that the underlying strength and dedication of the core team maintained continuity and ensured all products and services were adequately supported, setting the stage for the new talent now joining CHRRUP.

LEADAg (in its various forms) is iconic. The concept grew from the Forum and from an initial trial to the current multi-format product range. The reputation is the envy of similar projects across Queensland.

Safe Station has continued to contribute to one of the most important services in the agricultural sector – the safety of the workforce. Safe Station continues to be enhanced and developed to ensure the service is ongoing and expanding.

Smart Station is a key umbrella programme dedicated to building regional capability and community capacity. It provides specialised services and tools, including initiatives such as Xero training in Longreach, Low Stress Speaking, and the Emerald Careers Day. All are designed to enhance the skills and resilience of our regional workforce.

Greener Pastures is the umbrella program for specific projects established in accordance with grants. These projects deliver specific targeted outcomes as another component of advancing rural communities. Currently, the key project is Rural Enabler.

The hosting of the Agricultural Workforce Officer (AWO) for the Queensland Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has continued to be a core role within CHRRUP. It is very useful to a wide range of agricultural businesses. The Queensland Government's ongoing commitment to this service is vital in many regional areas.

# REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

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CHRRUP is deeply indebted to, and shows great appreciation to, its major supporters. These include the Queensland Department of Primary Industries. The AWO hosting is just one of the several areas of cooperation. The Federal Department of Agriculture has provided some opportunities in the past, and we look forward to further collaboration there in the future. Our 'expansion' into surrounding areas has been assisted by working with NQ Dry Tropics, Desert Channels Queensland, and Fitzroy Basin Association. There are many local supporters with which collaboration is so important. These include the Central Highlands Regional Council, the Central Highlands Development Corporation, and the Emerald Campus of Central Queensland University.

The key to CHRRUP is, of course, the amazing and dedicated staff. Noella Powell handled an extremely challenging period in CHRRUP's history with extraordinary dedication. Her leadership skills and extensive knowledge maintained CHRRUP and her fellow employees. Meg Bassingthwaite provided exemplary leadership with LEADAg and her AWO role has been crucial for CHRRUP. Evangeline Fysh is performing very well in taking on Meg's former role. Sarah Chicalas has found a niche in merging administration, finance and social media and is doing a great job in the business support role. Our inspirational new CEO, Justine McLeod, has already brought significant major motivation and change to her role which is complex and challenging. Her extensive corporate and social background is being well utilised.

# REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

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I would like to acknowledge all members of CHRRUP Limited and especially the contribution of the CHRRUP Forum and the Working Groups.

I especially acknowledge the professionalism and dedication of the Board Members of CHRRUP Limited. I thank Samantha Cobb, Kerry Piggott, and Christine Rolfe and I wish them well in what I hope will be ongoing roles. My thanks also to Dr Jane Oorschot and to Cherie Holland for their contributions prior to their recent retirements from the Board.

I am confident that I leave CHRRUP Limited in the hands of a dedicated Board, Staff and Membership that will see sustainable growth and a major contribution to Advancing Rural Communities.

**IAN DANIELS**

INDEPENDANT CHAIR





# REPORT FROM THE CEO

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"Our success is built on a deep foundation: the collective will, the sheer energy, and the enduring legacy of every partner, landholder, and dedicated professional determined to make Central Queensland's future as prosperous as it can be."

It is a privilege to share CHRRUP's reflections on the 2024–25 financial year and to celebrate the achievements of a team and network deeply committed to supporting Central and Western Queensland's agricultural communities. Since stepping into the role of CEO on 1 July 2025, I have been continually inspired by the people who make CHRRUP what it is. I am particularly inspired by the pervasive motivation across our communities to understand and realise our region's greatest potential. This drive to identify opportunities and the nimbleness to bring the right people together to effect positive change, growth, and future prosperity is truly remarkable. The sheer number of different individuals willing to donate their time, energy, and effort, building on the impressive legacy of those who have shaped our agenda, is what makes our work possible. Dedicated professionals, collaborative partners, and engaged landholders work together to strengthen the region's future.

The past year has been one of momentum and growth. Considerable time and effort have been invested in grant applications, as is the nature of profit-for-purpose organisations, and we look forward to seeing the results of this investment in 2025–26. These projects will enable CHRRUP to deliver new initiatives that build capability, enhance sustainability, and provide tangible benefits to landholders and communities across our region.

I would particularly like to acknowledge Noella Powell, our previous General Manager, for her outstanding leadership and dedication to delivering projects that met our objectives and provided real value to landholders. Noella's contribution has left an enduring legacy of integrity and practical outcomes.

My thanks also go to Lisa Ferguson, who has played a key role as Business Development Lead, driving collaboration and growth through innovative partnerships and opportunities. Lisa's ability to connect CHRRUP's purpose with community needs has been instrumental in shaping our success.

# REPORT FROM THE CEO

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I would like to offer specific acknowledgement for the instrumental work that has defined our approach to workforce development this year. This includes the ongoing provision of support to our producers through our established programmes like Smart Station and Safe Station, which ensure producers have continued access to vital resources and assistance.

Meg Bassingthwaighe, in her role as the Agricultural Workforce Officer for Central Highlands and Central West Queensland, has continued to deliver excellent results through programmes such as LEADAg and LEADAg Plus. I want to specifically acknowledge Meg's critical work in setting the scene for this role, effectively redefining how we connect across the region. Her foundational efforts were key to developing opportunities for people seeking work and were defining in encouraging workforce retention within the local agricultural sector. Furthermore, her work was instrumental in building pathways to bring new people to the region, including those with no prior agricultural experience.

In recent months, we have welcomed Evangeline Fysh to the role. Evangeline has already made an outstanding contribution in maximising our impact and further innovating how we deliver this vital programme. LEADAg is a shining example of CHRRUP's capacity to address workforce challenges by providing new entrants with authentic, hands-on experience and meaningful mentorship. My sincere thanks to the many mentors, host businesses, and contributors across the region who make this programme both impactful and inspiring.

Another highlight of the year has been the launch of the Rural Enabler Programme, an ambitious, three-year initiative designed to bridge the gap between technology providers and producers in Central and Western Queensland. We are proud to be matching and refining AgTech solutions to the specific needs of our region's graziers and farmers.

Through extensive consultation, we know that much of the AgTech available on the market is not optimised for Central and Western Queensland's conditions. The Rural Enabler Programme seeks to change that. By working alongside local producers and suitable AgTech providers, we are helping refine and adapt technologies so they truly fit the needs, challenges, and opportunities of our region. This programme reflects CHRRUP's broader commitment to innovation that is practical, accessible, and community-driven.

# REPORT FROM THE CEO

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We were proud to represent CHRRUP at a range of community and industry events, including the Emerald Careers Day, Xero Training in Longreach, the Central Queensland AgTech Showcase Tour, and the Low Stress Speaking Pilot Launch. Each of these activities reflects our ongoing commitment to collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and innovation in the agricultural sector.

As we look ahead, the future of CHRRUP is exceptionally promising. The past year has been one of dedicated reflection and planning, planting the seeds that will chart a course forward and position CHRRUP to thrive for years to come. We are now clearer than ever on our three core pillars and how our focus contributes to building regional prosperity. Our work extends beyond agriculture, land, and water to significantly strengthen the economic and social resilience of Central and Western Queensland.

This journey would not be possible without the hard work, resilience, and commitment of our key partners and members. They have been instrumental in achieving our goals thus far and in creating the vital platform that allows us to lead on. We recognise and acknowledge that without this foundation, what we are doing today, and what our future holds, would not be possible.

To those who have moved on, I wish you all the very best in your future endeavours and know that their legacy will continue to create growth and prosperity for the region. To the current team, I am incredibly excited and honoured to continue this journey with you.



# REPORT FROM THE CEO

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In closing, I must express my deepest gratitude to all who have supported our mission this year. I would like to specifically acknowledge the pivotal role of our Board of Directors, whose unwavering support and guidance has been instrumental.

Our success is built on the collaboration and support of key partners, including landholders like Alexandria Doyle, Emerald Downs and Georgia and Toby Whip, Leander, Longreach. Community Organisations such as Desert Uplands Committee, GroWQ, CHDC and CHRC, Central Queensland University, and Funders such as the Primary Industries (DPI), Department of Environment and Science (DESI), Queensland Government and our partners in the mining sector. Their support is the bedrock of our success and enables us to continue to contribute to our region in such a meaningful way.

The future of our organisation is bright. I am so energised by the possibilities that lie ahead and excited about what we can accomplish together.

**JUSTINE MCLEOD**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



# OUR WORK

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Drought Resilient Soils and Landscapes Grant Program  
Funded by the Future Drought Fund (May 2022 – September 2024)

Despite challenges such as material shortages, weather disruptions, and the sale of one property, all project objectives were achieved through flexible delivery and adaptive management.

## Building Knowledge and Capacity

Throughout the project, CHRRUP delivered multiple opportunities for producers to access leading technical knowledge and peer learning. Seven field days were held across the region with expert presenters including Ross Newman, Darryl Hill, Glen Landsberg, the Mulloon Institute, and Dr Sharon Brown. Topics covered pasture improvement, erosion management, regenerative rangelands, landscape hydration, and drone use in property monitoring. Eight one-on-one advisory sessions provided tailored guidance on erosion control, forage budgeting, and hydration design. Five major outreach events—including Westech, the World Science Festival, Beef Week, AgGrow, and La Trobe Station—extended the project's reach across industry and community stakeholders. Two peer meetings at Barcaldine and Adelong further promoted knowledge exchange and regional collaboration.

## Outcomes and Impact

The project exceeded expectations and produced several additional benefits:

- Landholders more than doubled their financial and in-kind contributions, investing over \$516,000 to expand project activities.
- A strong collaborative network of producers, researchers, and partners emerged to continue this work.
- Rapid recovery of scalded land post-rehydration demonstrated the effectiveness of the interventions.
- Public engagement was strong, with project videos and updates reaching more than 24,000 viewers.
- Restoration revealed areas of Indigenous heritage, highlighting the cultural and environmental value of landscape repair.

# OUR WORK

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## Challenges and Lessons Learned

While outcomes were excellent, material shortages, weather, and property sales affected timelines. These were managed through flexible planning, milestone-based funding, and regular communication. Key lessons included the value of co-designing with producers, maintaining flexibility, and ensuring consistent engagement through site visits and open communication.

Monitoring programs established baselines for soil health, biodiversity, and ground cover, though the project's short duration limited long-term analysis. Continued monitoring will be vital to assess lasting impacts and support data-driven drought resilience planning.

## Looking Ahead

CHRRUP and participating landholders are committed to expanding this work through new funding opportunities. Plans are underway to participate in the Future Drought Fund's Long-Term Trials of Drought Resilient Farming Practices (Round 2) and the Resilient Landscapes Program (FO2024-2932).

The next phase will extend trials from the Lake Eyre Basin into the Murray-Darling catchment, supported by a consortium including Southern Queensland Landscapes, the University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, and The Superpower Institute. This partnership will focus on long-term monitoring, advanced data collection, and continued knowledge-sharing to build the resilience of Queensland's grazing landscapes.





# OUR WORK



Safe Station continues to be one of CHRRUP's cornerstone initiatives, providing agricultural businesses with a fully individualised safety management system that makes meeting workplace health and safety obligations straightforward and practical.

In 2024–25, Safe Station has continued to grow, with more producers engaging in review sessions designed to refresh and strengthen their existing safety systems. Led by facilitators Lisa and Bron, these sessions offer a valuable opportunity to update documentation, refine procedures, and reinforce a culture of care across rural enterprises.

As part of CHRRUP's ongoing commitment to improving services for our members, we are now focused on upgrading the Safe Station app and digital platform. We are actively applying for grant funding and exploring innovative solutions to give the system a modern, user-friendly facelift.

Thank you for being part of the Safe Station community. Because of your ongoing support, CHRRUP is investing in the next chapter of Safe Station, a smarter, more accessible app designed to keep your business safe, compliant, and future-ready.

Here's a glimpse of what's to come:

- Accessible on all smartphones
- Simple voice-to-text setup for policies and procedures
- Photo and video uploads for risk management and reporting
- Automated reminders for reviews and certifications
- Easy support ticketing and appointment booking

We'll continue to share updates as development progresses and look forward to delivering a safer, more connected experience for all Safe Station users.



# LEADAG



## BACKGROUND

LEADAg (Leading, Educating and Developing the next generation of the agricultural workforce) is a key CHRRUP initiative that provides introductory agricultural skilling and exposure in regional Queensland.

Originating in 2021, LEADAg is modelled on the highly successful Hay Inc. program in New South Wales and has been precisely tailored to address the workforce issues identified by industry in regional Queensland. The program directly meets the demand for opportunities for young people to understand agricultural pathways, gain skills and enter the workforce, significantly supporting the region's ability to attract and retain young people.

In July 2021 a dedicated working group was formed with members from industry, education, employment and community to progress this specific agricultural training initiative, ensuring the involvement of industry mentors. The working group remains instrumental in providing an industry perspective on required training and skills. Their ongoing responsibilities include informing the program and training outcomes, undertaking student selection and identifying or volunteering as industry mentors.



## 2025 LEADAG PROGRAMS

Building on this foundational structure, the program successfully delivered the intensive LEADAg Youth Emerald Week in September. This dedicated one-week program was conducted entirely within the Central Highlands area, attracting eight participants from across Queensland spanning from Stanthorpe to Sarina.

The Emerald week was structured to provide broad exposure and tangible skills. The intensive curriculum focused on critical areas, including practical livestock management skills, training participants in how to appropriately and effectively handle livestock, understanding the integral role and joys of working dogs. Participants also received essential training in rural first aid and CPR, while gaining a deeper understanding of the livestock production chain and exploring the newest evolutions in Ag Tech.

The mentors involved included local agribusiness and property owners, managers and employees, played a focal role in the success of the program. By sharing their time, expertise and knowledge. The mentors provided participants with invaluable, hands-on learning experiences and crucial opportunities to begin building professional networks within the agricultural sector.

### TOPICS COVERED INCLUDED:

- Rural and Remote First Aid and CPR
- Biosecurity
- Cotton and chickpea supply chain process
- Cropping production and basic management
- Pasture management
- Livestock management
- Livestock supply chain
- Livestock nutrition
- Bovine Reproduction technologies
- Working dogs for livestock handling
- Precision agricultural
- AgTech innovation
- Workplace personality and mental health management
- Career pathway conversations





The program was generously supported by key partners and sponsors, including the Cotton Growers and Irrigators Association, the Department of Primary Industries and the Tropical North Queensland Drought Hub. Their financial and in-kind support was crucial in delivering this high-quality, impactful program.

The planned expansion of the LEADAg Plus, had to be postponed. This program, specifically designed for the over-18 demographic and due to be held in the Tambo region in July, was temporarily halted due to a lack of securing the necessary funding. CHRRUP remains fully committed to supporting this community and the need for workforce skilling in the area and will look to secure the required funding to offer this valuable program to the tambo region next year.



# REGIONAL ENABLER



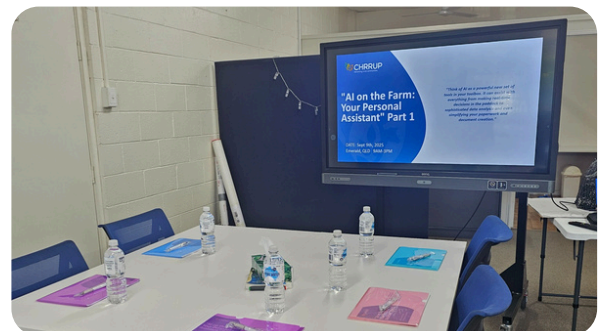
Proudly supported by the Queensland Government.

CHRRUP was selected as one of Queensland's Regional Enablers under the Advance Queensland Regional Enabler Program to strengthen innovation and AgTech adoption across Central and Western Queensland.

During 2024–25, CHRRUP established the program's foundations, developing a regional engagement strategy, monitoring and evaluation framework, and the first comprehensive ecosystem map of service providers, producers and innovation partners across the region. These tools are now informing coordinated delivery and stronger collaboration between government, industry and producers.

Pilot AgTech training modules were designed and tested with local service providers and producers, providing practical insight into regional capability needs. The concept and structure for a place-based AgTech Accelerator were also finalised, paving the way for implementation and recruitment in 2025–26.

This work has positioned CHRRUP as a key connector in the regional innovation ecosystem, ensuring that the technologies shaping the future of agriculture are informed by, and built for, Queensland's producers.





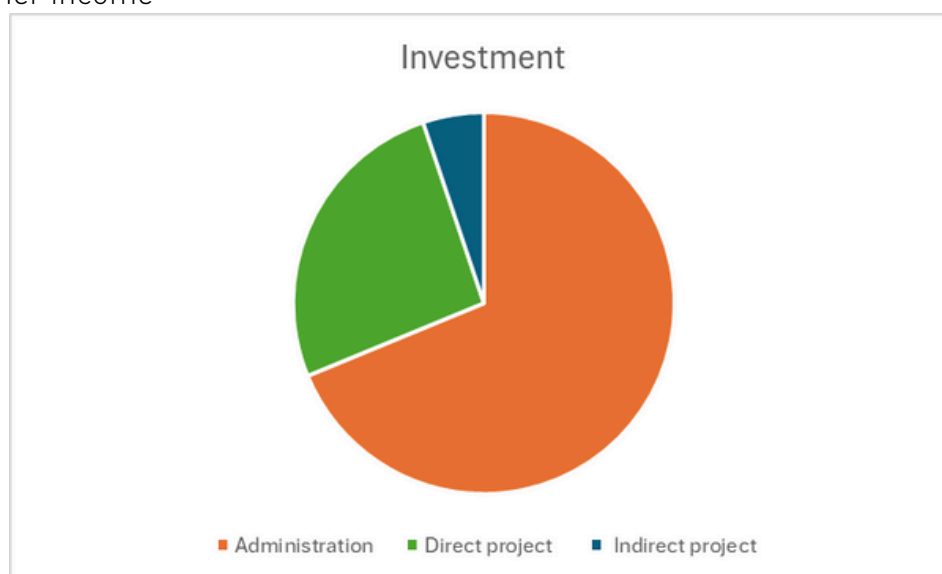
# FINANCIALS

In 2024/25 our income was \$824,935\*

\$268,419 Grant income from project partners

\$554,300 Provision of products and services

\$2,216 Other income

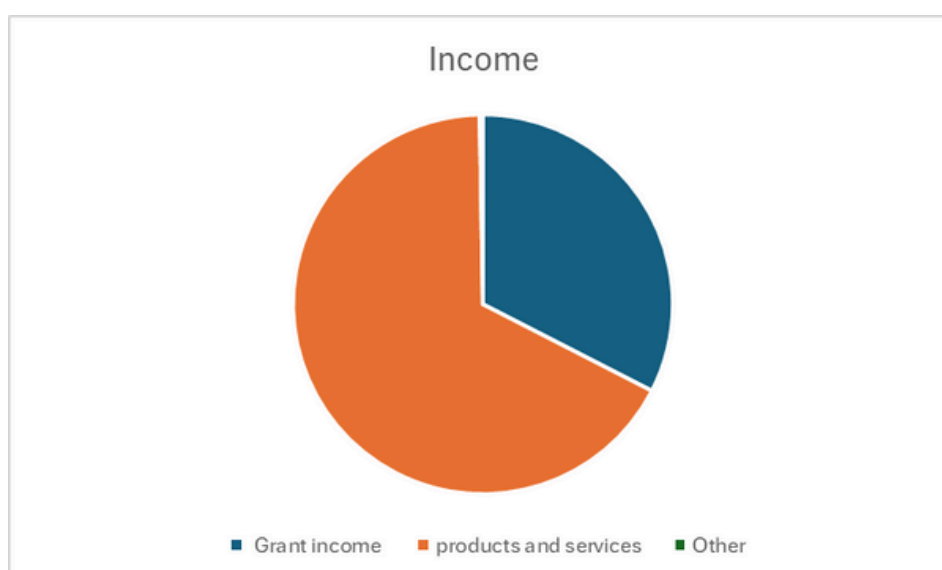


In 2024/25 we invested \$675,513\*

\$464,568 Administration

\$176,005 Direct project delivery

\$34,940 Indirect project delivery



\*2024/25 CHRRUP Audited Financial Statement

# OUR BOARD & TEAM

## OUR BOARD



**CHRISTINE ROLFE**  
DIRECTOR



**IAN DANIELS**  
CHAIRMAN



**SAMANTHA COBB**  
DIRECTOR



**KERRY PIGGOTT**  
DIRECTOR



**JANE OORSCHOT**  
DIRECTOR  
RESIGNED  
AUGUST 2025



**CHERIE HOLLAND**  
DIRECTOR  
RESIGNED SEPTEMBER  
2025

## OUR TEAM



**EVANGELINE FYSH**  
AGRICULTURE WORKFORCE  
OFFICER



**JUSTINE MCLEOD**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
OFFICER



**BRONWYN ROBERTS**  
PROJECT  
OFFICER



**SARAH CHICALAS**  
BUSINESS SUPPORT  
OFFICER



**NOELLA POWELL**  
GENERAL MANAGER  
RESIGNED MAY 2025



**MEG  
BASSINGTHWAIGHTE**  
AGRICULTURE  
WORKFORCE OFFICER  
RESIGNED AUGUST 2025



**LISA FERGUSON**  
BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT LEAD  
RESIGNED MAY 2025

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHRRUP Limited would like to acknowledge our program partners in 2024-25. Without their support we would not be able to have as significant an impact on achieving our vision of thriving, connected rural communities.



**Queensland  
Government**



**Department of Primary Industries**

# THANK YOU & CONTACT DETAILS

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Thank you for your interest in, and support of CHRRUP in 2024/2025. To stay up to date with the latest developments at CHRRUP, follow us on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and subscribe to our monthly newsletter via our website.

## CONTACT US



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# CHRRUP

Advancing rural communities