

Baptism of learning in wilderness

By JANE MILBURN

EVERY person accepted into the Australian Rural Leadership Program has already done a fair bit of living, learning and leading, as that is part of the selection criteria.

But the recent Kimberley trip was the ultimate leveller at the beginning of the 15-month experiential learning journey for the 34 rural leaders involved in Course 16 of ARLP.

There is a cone of silence over details, but the Kimberley opening gambit is designed to take a bunch of capable and competent individuals out of their comfort zone by challenging them in the name of learning.

That sense of the unknown is preserved to heighten personal learning opportunities and build teams where there is a high level of trust.

Under the direction of training and development group AusWorks, participants undertake a physical, intellectual, cultural and spiritual journey with their allocated team.

Team 4 consisted of Queenslanders Jane Milburn, Keelen Mailman and Dallas King, Victorians Mike Mooney and Anthony Shelly, and West Australian Andrew Mencshelyi, and went by the name Spiritual Travellers.

The teams are tasked with various problem-solving activities that are designed to increase self-awareness, develop teamwork and leadership skills, as well as providing a range of other leadership lessons.

Dallas King, sponsored by Auscott/Cotton Research and Development Corporation, said: "It is

an honour to be selected by your industry and be given the opportunity to be in that part of the world with no distractions and just focusing on yourself and your learning outcomes.

"I gained a greater understanding of my abilities and grew in confidence to be an active participant in making change within the team and in my community. It taught me to be more objective with people."

Other Queenslanders in the program are Geoff Cornford from Bowenville, Alex Kutt from Townsville, Georgie Somerset from Kingaroy and Scott Gorrige from Lockrose.

Of the Kimberley experience, Georgie Somerset, sponsored by Meat and Livestock Australia, said: "It was a privilege to have the

opportunity to step out for a couple of weeks and find out more about myself.

"It was a unique opportunity to learn more about how I operate as a leader within a group and how I can become more effective in my business, my community, my industry and across regional Australia.

"The Kimberley for me was about refining personal effectiveness."

The ARLP aims to produce a network of informed, capable and ethical leaders who are able to work collaboratively to advance the interests of their industries, their communities and rural



The Spiritual Travellers team: Anthony Shelly, Mike Mooney, Keelen Mailman, Dallas King, Jane Milburn and Andrew Mencshelyi above Lake Argyle in the Kimberley.

Australia in general.

The 60-day program is part-time and conducted in six sessions in various locations throughout Australia and overseas, funded by sponsors of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation.

A broad range of commercial, philanthropic and government organisations provide scholarships which enable the foundation to implement its personal and professional development agenda.

Rural Press Ltd, publisher of *Queensland Country Life*, is among those businesses supporting ARLP Course 16, as are Woolworths, Elders, Telstra Countrywide, Cooperative Bulk Handling, Santos, Australian Lot Feeders Association, the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation, the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation, and various research bodies and government departments.

About 450 participants have graduated from the program since it

began in 1992 and are now part of the network of fellows working in all parts of Australia.

The ARLP curriculum is designed to expose developing leaders to learning opportunities in three key areas: personal effectiveness; ethics, values, social responsibility and an appreciation of diversity; and thinking, conceptual and analytical skills.

It selects and invests in people who want to help shape the future of remote, rural and regional Australia, and who have the capacity, prospects and commitment to lead at regional, State or national levels.

The foundation's educational approach is designed to provide opportunities and learning experiences within environments that are most likely to assist participants to make shifts in their thinking and approach to leadership.

Sessions are experiential, provide challenge and focus on real-world subject matter.

Applications for places in Course 17 of ARLP are open until July 31, with more information available at www.rural-leaders.com.au



Jane Milburn and Georgie Somerset on the ARLP Kimberley trip.



Dallas King.

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