

# INDUSTRY NETWORKS A KEY FOR HORIZON SCHOLARS

Whether he's consulting, farming or both, Paul Sanderson is confident the networks gained from his Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) Horizon Scholarship will benefit him for years to come.

Studying agricultural science at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga, Paul plans on eventually returning to the family cropping and Merino sheep property near St Arnaud in Victoria.

"The farm is currently run by my older brother but we've got plans in place for me to come home and for us to work together.

There may also be some opportunities to use my degree in some outside consultancy work down the track, but at the moment it's about coming home to the farm.

*“It really is the all-round package for young people wanting to get into agriculture*

The industry networks I've gained through Horizon will definitely help somewhere along the line - whether I do extra off-farm work or not, those contacts will help me through my career no matter what pathway I take," Paul says.

The Horizon Scholarship program supports undergraduates studying agriculture at university with a \$5,000 annual bursary, professional development workshops and mentoring, industry work placements and networking opportunities.

It was such a comprehensive offering that Paul didn't apply for any other scholarships heading into his first year of university.

"I really wanted to have a good go at Horizon, because it just really gave the complete package - there are a lot of other scholarships out there that are just financial, but the opportunities that Horizon creates are a lot more valuable than the money itself.

With industry placements and of course the financial payments providing support through university, it's a fantastic all-round program," Paul says.

One of the most valuable aspects for Paul has been the industry placements, with his first experience in January 2014 taking him to a cotton farm in southern Queensland.

"Being sponsored by the Cotton Research Development Corporation, I felt it was the best opportunity for myself not having any background in cotton to get up there and learn about the industry.



Paul Sanderson

Horizon put me on to a fantastic farmer and I went up there and spent some time with him, and he also gave me opportunity to work with agronomists and other industry people while I was there," he says.

The experience in cotton reinforces the fact that scholars often do their industry placements in both locations and industries they're not familiar with.

"RIRDC Horizon Scholarship National Manager Margo Andrae thought I was really strong in the sheep and cropping areas due to my farming background, so thought it would be healthy for me to get out and learn something different and new, which was good because there is always knowledge overlap across industries you can learn about.

For example the cotton industry is a really well organised industry and really leading the game in Australian agriculture I believe, so there are things I can take out of that and talk to people in our industry at home about," Paul explains.

With plenty of links to industry for future job opportunities in hand, Paul is more convinced than ever that Horizon was the right scholarship to apply for.

"It really is the all-round package for young people wanting to get into agriculture - it's a great program because agriculture really needs a lot more people getting on-board," he concludes.

Undergraduates entering their first year of an agriculture-related degree at university are eligible to apply for a scholarship, which will provide:

- A bursary of \$5,000 per year for the duration of their degree
- Opportunities to network and gain knowledge at a range of industry events
- Annual industry work placements giving first-hand exposure to modern agricultural practices
- Professional development workshops

For details on how to apply for a Horizon Scholarship, please visit [www.rirdc.gov.au/horizon](http://www.rirdc.gov.au/horizon), find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter @HorizonScholar.

