



“Wherever I am needed to serve our community, that is where I will be.”

Mellisa Silaga Fairley Fellow 2017

“O Le ala I le pule o le tautua” – The pathway to leadership is through service. The Samoan phrase that Mellisa Silaga has grown up with, has guided her into the community leader she is today. Serving her community, no matter the sacrifice was where her passion took her and opened opportunities to strengthen her abilities and the community around her.

After participating in the Fairley Leadership Program, Mellisa had a greater desire to serve her community. The program identified the inequitable areas in the community and gave her the drive needed to work towards eliminating them.

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With a new gained confidence and vision to build her community Mellisa found many ways to eliminate inequities in the community. By creating the Know Your Roots (KYR) program, Mellisa helps young people of colour reconnect with culture to better help them transition into living in country Victoria as well as a providing a model that bridges the gap between students, families and schools. She is also one of the Co-founders of Point of Difference Studio in Mooroopna, which provides a culturally safe space for community members to find support.

Mellisa continues to facilitate and consult individuals, groups and organisations around cultural intelligence, providing support and advocacy for people of colour and culture in her community. No conversation is too small for her to tackle, proven as Mellisa is part of the Cultural Inclusion Steering Committee (DET) and Cultural Round Table (VMC organised) locally.

“True leadership is about taking on the big uncomfortable challenges like systematic racism and enabling change that has a positive ripple effect that can be felt deep.”

Mellisa’s devotion to removing systematic racism continues to strengthen well past her Fairley days and she continues to fight these challenges in our community to build opportunities for future generations.

“The only way to eliminate such challenges is to speak the truth, by acknowledging and accepting that it exists and work together to eliminate it. The future of the growing generations count on it and the future of our communities especially that of First Nations people depend on this.”