

FOROUGH A SHINING EXAMPLE

Each year, Regional Development Australia (Riverina) assists skilled migrants to relocate to the region.

One such person is Forough Aaollahi, whose passion for agriculture has taken her from a small farming village in Iran to studying her PhD at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga.

In September, Forough was named NSW International Student of the Year for 2018 in the higher education category of the state government's StudyNSW International Student Awards.

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Riverina's CEO and Director of Regional Development Rachel Whiting congratulated Forough on her award.

"Forough is a passionate advocate and leader for international students at the local, state and national level and is tireless in her service to newly arrive immigrants in the local community.

"Outside university, she volunteers with several community organisations, including the St Vincent de Paul Resettlement Program, the Wagga Wagga City Library's Language Café initiative and the Multicultural Council of Wagga Wagga's informal Culture Club meetings.

"It's important that her work as the inaugural Women's Officer for the Council of International Students Australia, the national peak body for international students, and for helping refugees settle into her community in Wagga Wagga be recognised in this way."

Mrs Whiting said that Forough – who is in her final year of studies and is writing a thesis on sheep mineral supplements to improve the reproductive performance of ewes and improve lamb survivability – is a wonderful example of successful migrants who stay long-term in the region.

"Forough has been living and working in Wagga Wagga since July 2015 and holds a subclass 489 visa.

"At RDA Riverina we are huge advocates for increased skilled migration in the Riverina. We have an allocation of 100 places in 2018/19, which are almost filled five months in.

"Our numbers show that the region will need at least 10,000 new skilled workers in the next few years and these skilled positions cannot be filled with further training or internal migration alone, although we are also advocates for these initiatives as well."



Wagga Wagga City Council's Manager, City Strategy, Tristan Kell also congratulated Forough on her achievements and explained that skilled migration is the biggest contributor to population growth in Wagga Wagga.

"Cultural diversity is celebrated here. It has contributed to our region becoming a vibrant, liveable and productive city."

Forough's success story comes amid early reports that a change to migration policy is being discussed that could see states and territories submitting to the federal government their annual requirements for skilled migrants.

"These changes would take into account factors like urban congestion and declining quality of life in city areas," Mrs Whiting said.

"We intend to be an advocate for further skilled migrant places in our region and look forward to a positive outcome for the Riverina from these early discussions."

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MEDIA NOTE: For more information, contact RDA Riverina CEO and Director of Regional Development Rachel Whiting on 0429 444 213.

