

COMMUNITY BUILDER OF THE WEEK

CELEBRATING THOSE WHO STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY

How many years have you called Alice Springs home?

I first came to Central Australia as a teenager in December 1997 to work out bush in the Watarrka and West Macs regions. It was the first time I'd left my family in Victoria, jumped on a plane, and travelled hours on corrugated desert roads. The adventure of life in the desert and the opportunities in remote Australia had started. I've visited the region over many years and made the return with my late husband Matt in 2008.

What is a moment in your life that profoundly shaped who you are today, and how did it influence the person you've become?

I have three key defining moments that have shaped my life. In December 1997 I arrived at Alice Springs in the height of summer living in a silver bullet under a desert oak tree at Watarrka National Park. The vastness of the desert landscape, the generosity of local people and the resilience and beauty of the desert have shaped who I am today. I loved it and I was hooked! In March 2022 I graduated from Course 27 of the Australian Rural Leadership Program, which has shaped me into who I am today, given me the confidence to lead in complex situations and learn how to connect, mobilise, and draw on the strengths of people around me. We are better when we work together. In January 2023 the sudden and unexpected loss of my late husband Matt was life-changing. I've come to realise there are many gifts of grief, gratitude, generosity and growth. Grief can also provide unexpected clarity about what is important in our lives and the contribution I want to make to my community, region and the NT.

How do you contribute to your community group, activity, or action?

People tell me they see me as a community connector with enduring networks locally, across the NT and nationally. I love nothing more than connecting good people to do good work together to create a brighter future for all. I am a big believer that everyone has something positive to contribute and when the right space is created and people can come together to listen, learn and lead this is where the MAGIC can happen! I've recently set up Territory Connect, a for-purpose community network, working to empower Territorians to realise their leadership potential through intentional action. I enjoy connecting people within my networks so that others can work together on initiatives that make Alice Springs a better place. I am always listening and looking for opportunities to bring courageous community leaders together on purpose, whether it's helping a stranger, rallying the team to bring some extra helpers to support an initiative, or supporting others to step into their leadership journeys so that they can develop and grow their impact in Central Australia. They say "If your dreams don't scare you, they aren't big enough". In 2022, I said aloud and committed to fundraise \$50,000 for a Central Australian leadership scholarship. I am about to embark on the inaugural 100 km Leadership on Larapinta FUNdraising walk with 9 other leaders (4 NT and 5 from interstate). Together we are drawing on our national networks to fundraise \$50,000 to fund a scholarship for a Central Australian leader to participate in the Australian Rural Leadership Program which is facilitated through the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation. Course 32 of ARLP kicks off in June 2025. So far we've received 140+ donations from our generous collective networks across Australia. We welcome any support big or small from local people in our community.

What significance does your community group, activity, or action hold?

The inaugural Leadership on Larapinta FUNdraising walk has become more than a walk to fundraise a \$50,000 scholarship for a Central Australian leader to represent the NT and do the ARLP in 2025. The walk has generated conversations and shared perspectives about local leadership, how we grow our young and future leaders in Central Australia and explore opportunities to invest in local leadership



DONNA DIGBY



development. It has also fostered new networks between leaders from WA, NT, SA and QLD, it is building a community and network of generous people who are contributing to something bigger than themselves by making a donation or promoting the walk. We are also very excited to be connecting with local Aboriginal businesses 100% Finke River Culture and Adventure, Kungkas Can Cook and Angkerle Atwatye (Standley Chasm) as part of the walk. I am so pleased that three other local Central Australians will be lacing up their boots to do this walk on Country: Rayleen Brown, Maxi Fonte and Nicole Walsh.

What motivates you to volunteer?

I love volunteering in Alice Springs and Central Australia because it has given me the chance to meet many different people in our community and visitors to our region who have different perspectives, life experiences and skills. I love the spirit of local people and seeing their generosity and random acts of kindness showcased every day. I also really enjoy being able to give back my time and skills and contribute to local groups and initiatives and Alice Springs because we are a special community.

What achievements are you most proud of?

After losing my late husband Matt Digby unexpectedly, I experienced the true spirit of our community in full force. The strength, care, generosity and love offered by many local people across different parts of our diverse local community was humbling. The considered 'check-ins', and offer of support and kindness were incredible. Local people are the heart of this special place, with our friendships, networks and love for life in the desert shining through.

Nearly 18 months on, this support has enabled me to mobilise and launch the inaugural Leadership on Larapinta Walk. I am thrilled that 9 leaders from Alice Springs, Top End, Kimberley, Clare Valley and Western Queensland have signed up to do the walk. They are paying their way, as well as committing to fundraising \$2,500 each with 100% of funds raised going towards a local leadership scholarship. I am proud to support the work of the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation and acknowledge the generosity of over 140 donors who have so far raised over \$26,000 for this fundraising campaign.

Anything else you would like to say?

If you are keen to give back, why not give a gift so that a Central Australian leader can grow their leadership skills and make a positive difference to our future in Central Australia, please donate to our fundraising campaign!

Check out the rural leaders website and read more about the Larapinta Fundraising Walk. Join in making a difference and donate.



IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO NOMINATE SOMEONE AS THE COMMUNITY BUILDER OF THE WEEK, PLEASE SEND YOUR NOMINATION VIA EMAIL TO: INFO@MASCF.ORG



mparntwe
ALICE SPRINGS
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
creating our future together.

INFO@MASCF.ORG

WWW.MASCF.ORG

EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITY: ENCOURAGE, SUPPORT, AMPLIFY



Help create the community and future we need with your tax-deductible contribution using this QR code.