



# Newsletter

April 2004

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## 'Super Minister' promotes a new way with water

**T**he controversial decision to give NSW irrigators perpetual water licences will be part of the territory our guest speaker for the Friday April 30 luncheon meeting, NSW Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, Craig Knowles, will cover.

Environmental organisations have accused the government through that decision of unconditionally handing a \$6.8 billion asset over to irrigators and at the expense of the environment.

Mr Knowles is expected to put the decision in the broader context of the limitations imposed on water use by the water sharing plans that cover all the major river valleys.

He is also likely to explain the government's preference for a Torrens title type system to deliver water licences in perpetuity.

We can also look forward to an update on progress towards implementing the government's reforms in natural resource management.

Since taking over the new 'super' portfolio at the NSW State election about a year ago, Mr Knowles has wrought dramatic changes to natural resource management and achieved the difficult feat of getting both farmer organisations and environmental groups to sign off on a new natural resource management structure.

It has involved the creation of 13 catchment management authorities to replace the ill-coordinated tangle of 72 river management, native vegetation, catchment management and other committees.



**Hear NSW Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, Craig Knowles on Friday 30 April**

The aim is to give each CMA its own budget to allow them to pay farmers for environmentally friendly activities on their properties, and move away from centralised bureaucratic control over land clearing and other sensitive issues.

The new structures and systems are yet to be tested and whether the reality matches the rhetoric remains to be seen, but Mr Knowles will give his view on how he expects it all to pan out.

The whole thing includes a new approach to native vegetation management which has been a source of conflict and frustration to farmers over the years.

If it all comes off we could at least see less of the mutual sniping between farmers and "green" organisations that has characterised the debate and more co-operation.

**Register early and on-line for Friday 30 April's luncheon seminar with Craig Knowles**

**Corporate 'Members of the Month': TBA**

**Venue:** The **ALL SEASONS PREMIER MENZIES HOTEL** 14 Carrington Street, Sydney.

**When:** 12:00 noon for 12:30pm: Friday, 30 April

**Cost:** \$55 per head, or voucher

**Register:** On-line before 5:00pm, Tuesday 27 April at [www.nswfarmwriters.org](http://www.nswfarmwriters.org). Or through **Australian Honey Bee Industry Council's** Laurel Pickering: [ahbic@honeybee.org.au](mailto:ahbic@honeybee.org.au) Phone: 02 9221 0911 or Fax: 02 9221 0922

**Late cancellations:** Phone Amy Lawrence (02 8204 3857) or Jamie Graham (0418 479 434)

# Trevor Flugge: agriculture starting to look up again in rural Iraq

**G**uest speaker for our March luncheon meeting, Trevor Flugge, offered some fascinating and disturbing insights into Iraq in the wake of the US invasion that toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein.

The former chairman of the Australian Wheat Board chairman was nominated by the Australian government to lead a project to help rebuild Iraq's agriculture,

He and his team arrived in the middle of the night on a military jet in unsecured Baghdad to find virtually all government infrastructure had been destroyed.



*Trevor Flugge and colleague on the job outside the Iraq Ministry of Agriculture. The chauffeur driven limo against which they are leaning, came with the job.*

"Buildings had been looted and destroyed and there was no place to begin a government again," he said.

Helped by slides with pictures of post-war Iraq, Mr Flugge gave a graphic description of the task they faced.

Over eight months he and aid workers from Australia and the United States helped re-organise the shattered agriculture department so it could resume research and development policies which had been neglected for more than 20 years.

He said that by October last year the rebuilding program



*Last month's guest speaker and Iraq survivor, Trevor Flugge*

had encouraged most department people to return to work and an interim agricultural minister had been appointed.

Mr Flugge said Iraq now had a fully functioning agricultural ministry, with good communication network in place.

He said also interest by Australian companies in re-training people in agriculture was growing, and AusAid hoped to bring some Iraqis to Australia for training and education over the next few months.

Fortunately there was still some decent infrastructure left in the grains and horticulture industries and with a few incentives Iraq's wheat production could move from the current 1.5 million tonnes to 2.5 million tonnes.

However, Australia would still continue to sell substantial tonnes of wheat to Iraq though competition to the area would be fierce.

While he believed once the country achieved some stability and production of oil started to rise again Iraq would be back as a strong military power.

"Agriculture though is not efficient or anywhere near its potential and a lot of that won't happen overnight but we are confident Iraq is going to be OK now," he said.

## Post-Budget Breakfast with Warren Truss ... we trust!

Although still to be finally confirmed, we are quietly confident we'll have the Federal Minister for Agriculture and Forestry, Warren Truss, to analyse the impact of the government's pre-election budget on rural and regional Australia. Will he bring home the bacon (to go with our eggs, OJ and croissants) or will we see a roll out of porcine casks? Find out over breakfast: 7:00am for 7:30am on Wednesday, 12 May.