



Newsletter

February 2007

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc
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The rise of rural Independents in NSW

WITH the state election only weeks away, the guest speaker for the first Farm Writers' lunch in 2007, on 23 February, is well positioned to offer some insights.

Well known ABC election analyst Antony Green, who has made an art form out of calling Australian elections for two decades, will speak about 'The Rise of Rural Independents in NSW'.

According to Antony, the fate of rural NSW could well be determined by the success of a raft of Independents standing for election in what used to be safe National Party and Labor seats.

Of the seven sitting Independents four are in the former rural National Party seats of Dubbo, Tamworth, Northern Tablelands and Port Macquarie.

Challenges are being mounted against the National Party in Coffs Harbour, Bega, Myall Lakes, Barwon and Orange.

A few Independents are also starting to pop-up and challenge Labor in the Hunter.

Success for the Independents could result in them becoming a larger force in the NSW Parliament than the National Party and one that the party that wins Government will have to

negotiate with over the next four years.

Antony, 47, has worked on almost 40 ABC election coverages over the past two decades. He has covered every federal, state and territory election since his first election with the ABC in Queensland in 1989, and has been part of the ABC's on-air election panel since 1993.

With a Bachelor of Science in mathematics and computing, and a Bachelor of Economics with Honours in politics, before joining the ABC Antony worked as a data analyst in the computing industry and for a polling company. He designed the ABC's current election night computer system, which has set new benchmarks in the speed and accuracy of calling elections.

Join Farm Writers' Corporate Members of the Month Hassall & Associates and Australian Wool Innovation Ltd to hear Antony Green's election predictions.

☞ **To book your place for the 23 February lunch go to our website: www.nswfarmwriters.org/BOOKINGSGS.htm. To get your book of 6 (\$360) or 12 (\$720) vouchers, contact Richard.Hincks@rabobank.com.**



ABC election analyst Antony Green.

Mark your diaries - 30 March luncheon - single desk focus

With the future of the wheat single desk hanging in the balance, Farm Writers' members and guests are encouraged to attend the 30 March luncheon to hear from grain trader Peter Howard who believes it should be abolished.

Mr Howard will speak about his experiences dealing with AWB, which include landmark Federal and High Court cases in 2000 against AWBI for rejecting an application to export durum wheat.

Visit www.nswfarmwriters.org to book your seat.

Register early and online for the luncheon on Friday, 23 February with Antony Green, ABC election analyst

Corporate Members of the Month: Hassall & Associates and Australian Wool Innovation Ltd

Venue: The Menzies Hotel, 14 Carrington Street, Sydney

When: Friday, 23 February at 12pm for 12:30pm

Cost: \$60 per head, or voucher, for members. \$70 per head for all non-members

Register: BEFORE 5:00pm on Wednesday, 21 February

online: www.nswfarmwriters.org, email: bookings@nswfarmwriters.org, phone: Sarah Robson (02) 8204 3730

Reminder: If bookings are not cancelled by the deadline, the person making the booking will be invoiced. We will do our best to accommodate late bookings and cancellations – please phone Sarah Robson on (02) 8204 3730.

IFAJ congress a 'must' for rural journalists

A first-hand account by Neil Lyon, journalist with the *The Land* and 2006 NSW and Australian IFAJ Star Prize winner

NEARLY 200 farm writers from around the world converged on Norway in August to share experiences and learn more about Norwegian farming at the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ) 50th anniversary congress.

I had the opportunity to attend the conference as this year's Star Prize winner sponsored by the Farm Writers' Association of NSW and John Deere.

It was a fantastic experience that provided a chance to meet with fellow "practitioners" and to see first-hand a country whose quaint, small-acreage and highly subsidised agriculture is so different to the Australian way of farming.

It was eye-opening to be in a country where agriculture is limited by very different climatic and topographical constraints to Australia.

For an Australian saddened by the decline of our rural areas and a widening of the city/country divide, it was enlightening to learn that the vast majority of Norwegians are in favour of the extensive subsidy support program that sustains their farming sector.

There is widespread public recognition of the role Norwegian agriculture plays in preserving the rural landscape, defining the national heritage and underpinning the tourism industry.

The opportunity for me to mix with a diversity of journalists from around the world was a highlight of the five-day conference experience.



Neil Lyon interviewing Ronnaug Bjorlykke on a traditional mountain farm near Alesund, Norway, as part of his IFAJ trip that was part-sponsored by NSW Farm Writers'.

We all compared notes and I'm pleased to say the couple of copies of *The Land* I took with me generated many favourable comments about its size, variety of sections, depth of content and quality of layout – a pleasing peer review.

The five-day congress program featured a formal presentation session at the Scandic Hotel in Hamar and a series of farm visits, interspersed with Norwegian cultural experiences from arts and heritage to folklore and food – and far too much pickled fish.

Highlights of the conference sessions included an opportunity to interview Norwegian Minister for Agriculture, Terje Riis-Johansen, and hear from farmer group leaders and government authorities associated with Norwegian agriculture.

While my focus was on farm-based

stories, the conference presentations added depth and understanding to these stories. I was particularly interested in the dairy industry visits which featured housed herds and high-tech milking and feeding systems. The fruit growing visit was also eye opening, particularly considering the extreme northerly latitude that the fruit is produced in.

I commend a visit to the IFAJ Congress to every agricultural journalist. It is an experience that instantly broadens your horizons, helps you put Australian agriculture into perspective and makes you realise that, while the differences are many, the underlying principles and challenges of agriculture and agricultural reporting are similar throughout the world.

I very much appreciated how fortunate I was to have had the opportunity to attend the congress and would like to thank the Farm Writers' Association of NSW and John Deere for sponsoring my trip to Norway.



Traditional Norwegian farm house with sod roof.

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Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc

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