



Newsletter

July 2008

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc
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AWB's Transformation: The Inside Story

Gordon Davis took the hot seat at AWB Limited in September 2006 in the wake of the "oil-for-food kickbacks" scandal.

He embarked on a major business transformation to repair the company's battered reputation and to prepare for life without a single desk.

Now the single desk is history, Gordon and his Board are trying again to unshackle AWB from the dual class share structure that was put in place to give wheat growers the dominant voice in the company.

The Board argues abolishing the dual class share structure will put AWB Limited on equal footing with other listed companies, lower capital funding costs and allow the company to pursue growth opportunities.

Despite the oil-for-food scandal, AWB Limited remains one of Australia's most important agribusinesses with revenues close to \$5 billion per annum.

The Landmark businesses are becoming increasingly important to the company's profitability and almost 40% of the group's earnings are now from off-shore activities.

Farm Writers welcomes you to a breakfast seminar on Monday July 28 to hear Gordon Davis speak about AWB Limited's transformation and the Board's campaign to dissolve the dual share structure.

Mr Davis is driving transformational change across the Landmark Rural Services and Landmark Financial Services businesses, and aiming to make the best use of AWB's 60 years experience in accumulating and exporting wheat to carve out a new position in a competitive export market.

Before joining AWB, Mr Davis was General Manager Australia and Asia for Orica Mining Services.

Before joining Orica, Mr Davis worked for three years as a Policy Advisor to the Federal Leader of the Opposition, specialising in the areas of environment, science, and resources. His initial career was in forestry, practicing as a field and research forester for 10 years in Tasmania.

Mr Davis is an active member of the Business Council of Australia, and a past Vice President of the International Fertiliser Institute.



AWB's Gordon Davis

Please join our corporate members of the month Rural Press Limited to hear Gordon Davis at our Monday July 28 breakfast

Thank you to members who have paid memberships

Membership subscriptions for the new financial year are due by 31st July.

Please note in your diary the Farm Writers AGM will be held prior to our August 29 seminar at 11 am.

Register early and online for the Monday, July 28 breakfast.

Please note our venue and day has changed for this month. We are at the Grace Hotel on a Monday for breakfast

Venue: Grace Hotel, 77 York St, Sydney

When: Monday, July 28 2008 at 7 am for a 7.30 am sharp start

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

Register: BEFORE 5:00pm Wednesday 23rd July

online: www.nswfarmwriters.org, **email:** bookings@nswfarmwriters.org

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 Nicole Tyzack on 0400 800 704

Climate change to hit harder and faster

The following is an edited version of an article written by Matthew Cawood for FarmOnline following the June Farm Writers seminar.

Climate change is occurring faster than forecast, and will hit Australian agriculture harder than expected.

That's the sobering news delivered by CSIRO at a special forum in Sydney, when it outlined its latest research on the risks that climate change poses to agriculture, and potential adaptation strategies, at a special forum hosted by the Australian Council of Agricultural Journalists and NSW Farm Writers.

Dr Mark Howden, whose research has focused on climate change adaptation, said carbon dioxide emissions, global temperature rises and sea level rises are meeting - or exceeding - the worst-case scenarios plotted by the Intergovernment Panel on Climate Change in the 1990s.

While it remains an open question as to whether the climatic changes being experienced in Australia—such as the declining rainfall across the continent's lower half—can be attributed to global warming, Dr Howden said the fact remains that many of the changes being recorded around the globe are consistent with the modelling of the potential effects of global warming.

In its latest research, CSIRO decided to move away from largely meaningless forecasts of temperature rises, and look at the risks to various forms of agriculture in different climatic regions.

"Agricultural industries that depend on irrigation water but which produce a relatively low-value product, like rice and dairy, are pretty vulnerable," Dr Howden said.

"There's also a fair degree of vulnerability for cereal cropping in marginal areas—that's only going to get more marginal."

Across the southern regions, Dr Howden forecast the possibility that less reliable rainfall would see more emphasis on livestock production, with cropping seen more as an opportunity enterprise rather than an annual certainty.

Coastal horticultural crops in the north, and sugar, are likely to be exposed to a greater risk of damage from storms, cyclones and even sea level rise.

The good news, Dr Howden said, is that Australian agriculture is already used to coping with adversity and climate risk; and that the nation has a strong underlying research base.

The bad news is that Australia has been politically slow to accept the threat of climate change, "putting us a decade behind where we could be".

Star Prize for Rural Writing Presentation



Matthew Cawood (centre), who writes for the Rural Press group of publications, was presented with his NSW Star Prize winner's certificate at Farm Writers in June. Congratulating Matthew is Mark Druery, NSW Territory Manager, John Deere and Farm Writers President, Bev Jordan (right). Matthew's article was entered as the NSW finalist in the national competition to find Australia's representative in the international Star Prize award. Matthew's entry came third. John Deere sponsors the national competition.

The 2008 Star Prize will be presented at the IFAJ World Congress to be held in Austria and Slovenia during September.

Media release award closes July 31

A final reminder that the NSW Farm Writers **Media Release Excellence Award** closes on July 31.

The award carries a \$500 winner-takes-all cash prize and is open to individual or corporate members.

Farm Writers president Bev Jordan said the intention was to recognise and encourage excellence in crafting messages about significant agricultural or rural issues.

"The media release may have been aimed at raising awareness about an issue with urban audiences, or communicating information about science, a product or a service to rural audiences," Bev said.

Details of the award are posted on the Farm Writers website.

June 2008

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