

Newsletter

March 2005

President: Stuart Hutton (shutton@mcnp.com.au)

Secretary: Susan Madden (smadden@hassall.com.au)

Newsletter: Lucy Skuthorp (lucy.skuthorp@ruralpress.com)

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc. GPO Box 1108 Sydney NSW 2001

Internet: www.nswfarmwriters.org



Trade, train and tourism tango

THE 'boy from Boree Creek' - former Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the national party, Tim Fischer - will be the guest speaker at this month's Farm Writers' Association lunch on March 18.

Mr Fischer's address is themed "trade, agriculture, train and tourism tango", and as Chair of the Crawford Fund, he will also address the Farm Writers lunch on issues such as regional security and agricultural research, and the value of Australia's foreign aid to Australian agriculture.

In this year's Australia day honours, Mr Fischer was made a companion in the general division of the order of Australia (AC).

The honour recognises Mr Fischer's services to the NSW and Australian parliaments, advancing the national interest through trade liberalisation and rail transport development, supporting humanitarian aid in developing countries and for fostering acceptance of cultural diversity in the community.

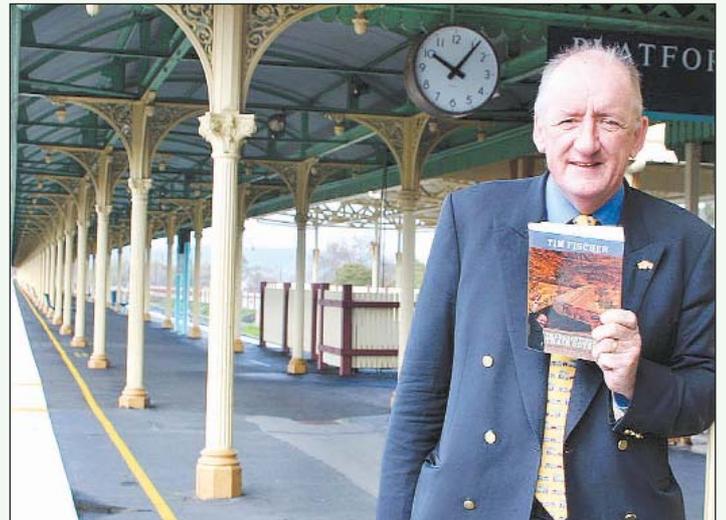
Mr Fischer's political career spanned 30 years, commencing in 1971 when he was elected State Member for Sturt before moving into Federal politics in 1984, when he was elected the Member for Farrer.

He was leader of the National Party for almost 10 years between 1990 and 1999.

When the Howard Government was first elected to power in 1996, Mr Fischer became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, which were positions he held until 1999.

While retiring from politics in 2001, he says trade, transport and tourism were still passions of his and he enjoys helping out where he could to continue the growth of those areas.

In July last year he was appointed chairman of Tourism Australia, and is also an ambassador for the Adelaide to Darwin rail link and the Australian Made campaign.



Former Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer, will be our guest speaker in March.

Since 1999 he has been chairman of the Crawford Fund, which is a support organisation for national agricultural research and after retiring from politics he became a director on the board of pastoral giant, Australian Agricultural Company.

Mr Fischer also holds a number of humanitarian and cultural positions, such as Australian patron for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, co-chairman for the Bhutan Friendship Association and patron of rural health and aged care provider, Frontier Services.

He said these days, when he can, he enjoys spending life on his farm, "Peppers" at Boree Creek, as well as at his wife Judy's cattle property, "Grossotto", between Beechworth and Bright in north east Victoria, and is trying to set aside some time for writing more books, adding to the three he has published since 2000.

■ To book your place for the March seminar go to our website: www.nswfarmwriters.org/BOOKINGS.htm.

Register early and on-line for our Friday, March 18, for the luncheon with former Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer.

Corporate 'Members of the Month': Hassall and Associates

Venue: THE MENZIES HOTEL, 14 CARRINGTON STREET, SYDNEY.

When: 12 noon for 12.30pm, Friday, March 18.

Cost: \$55 a head, or voucher for members. **\$65 a head for all non-members.**

Register: On-line **BEFORE** 5pm, **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16**, at www.nswfarmwriters.org or through *Australian Honey Bee Industry Council's* Laurel Pickering, ahbic@honeybee.org.au, phone (02) 9221 0911 or fax (02) 9221 0922.

Late cancellations: Phone Suzie Ward, (02) 9223 9944 / 0425 327 577, or Jamie Graham, 0418 479 434.

Fletcher means business

IT was vintage Roger Fletcher as he called for the abolition of State Governments, the full sale of Telstra, a super highway west across the Blue Mountains from Sydney, the abolition of payroll tax for bush employers and a new deal for Australia's under-privileged.

Mr Fletcher launched a volley of verbal shots at some of the problems he and his supporters have identified as the major causes of the economic and social decay across much of rural and regional Australia during a speech to a NSW Farm Writers Association lunch in Sydney during February.

The core of the problem, as Mr Fletcher sees it, are the politicians and bureaucrats who continually use short-term fixes and Band-aids to treat the symptoms of a much bigger underlying disease sapping the life out of much of the bush.

But their blinkered attitude won't change until they are shown long-term strategies to cure the bush's major ills, Mr Fletcher said.

He and his team of supporters (formed late last year) are now fine-tuning some big-ticket reforms in key areas such as health, education and rural infrastructure as the start of their campaign to force politicians and governments to take a much longer-term view of the policies and planning needed for a sustained recovery across inland Australia.

Dubbo-based Mr Fletcher, who operates Australia's largest sheepmeat processing and export business and employs about 700 people, started publicly agitating early last November for a blueprint for development and reform in what he sees as the largely forgotten and ignored people and industries west of the Blue Mountains.

He supports the full sale of Telstra providing all the

proceeds (probably in excess of \$30 billion) are used for building new major infrastructure in the bush notably roads, starting with a super highway from Sydney west across the Great Divide.

Mr Fletcher said the pot of gold from selling Telstra should be doubled through borrowings to provide a \$60 billion fund to build the essential new infrastructure identified by a proper long-term planning process.

He said much of Australia's expensive law and order and health problems could be traced to the bottom 20 per cent of Australian society who were being badly failed by the education, health, welfare and political systems.

He said the education and social welfare systems

weren't properly tackling the job of encouraging and nurturing the children of this under-privileged class, the consequences of which were costing the rest of society billions of dollars a year.

There were more than 100 organisations in Dubbo alone with their fingers in the social welfare pie and all trying to get money.

Mr Fletcher said State Governments should be axed to end the costly blurring of funding and management responsibilities across a wide range of areas including health, roads and education.

Local councils would need to be enlarged and more people elected to them "who knew what they were doing" if the States were abolished.

- Vernon Graham

■ **Thank you to our corporate sponsors for February, Landmark, an AWB Company, and Meat & Livestock Australia**



Farm Writers' seminars: claim the date

GET out your diaries and "claim the date" for guest speakers coming up at Farm Writers Association seminars for 2005.

■ April 29: Ian McIvor, Chairman of the Livestock Exporters Council

Corporate member of the month: Schute Bell Badgery Lumby.

■ May 11: Budget Breakfast with Federal Minister for Agriculture, Warren Truss.

Corporate member of the month: Pulse Australia.

Got a speaker in mind for a future seminar? Email the Farm Writers' committee president, Stuart Hutton, with your suggestions: shutton@mcnp.com.au

■ **Thank you to our corporate sponsors for February, Landmark, an AWB Company, and Meat & Livestock Australia**