



# Newsletter

March 2007

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc  
GPO Box 1108 Sydney NSW 2001  
Website: [www.nswfarmwriters.org](http://www.nswfarmwriters.org)

## Single desk – which side are you on?



*Pro-single desk: Richard Clark*

AWB's future role in exporting the nation's wheat is a contentious issue following widespread criticism over its 'kickbacks' to Iraq. And critics of the concept of a 'single desk' for export marketing have seized the opportunity to challenge the status quo.

The Farm Writers' luncheon on 30 March will feature both views. Members and guests will hear from grain grower Richard Clark in its favour and from grain trader Peter Howard, who believes it should go.

The presentation will coincide with the deadline for the Federal Government's Wheat Export Marketing Consultative Committee to report to government on its intensive industry consultation to determine Australia's wheat export marketing needs.

Sydney-based Peter Howard, who has been trading and exporting grain for more than 20 years, believes, from his negative experiences with AWB, the wheat market should be deregulated immediately.

Mr Howard, who runs OzEpulse, has submitted his concerns to the Consultative Committee and will share with Farm Writers' members and guests his views about the dysfunction of the existing situation, including corruption within AWB and that support for the single desk comes mostly from agri-politicians.

Key to his argument are the landmark Federal and High Court cases in 2000 that his former company New England Agricultural Traders (NEAT) ran on behalf of 200 durum wheat growers against AWBI for its rejection of an application to export durum wheat.

To present the case for the retention of the single desk, is grain grower Richard Clark who runs an extensive grain operation at Boggabilla, in northern NSW. Mr Clark is Senior Vice President of the NSW Farmers' Association, and has had extensive experience in policy issues in the grains industry over many years, including as a delegate to the Grains Council of Australia, and as a contributor to



*Anti-single desk: Peter Howard*

Grains Research and Development Advisory committees. As a representative of the NSW Farmers' Association, Mr Clark will present the Association's case that the single desk should be retained.

Join Farm Writers' Corporate Members of the Month, **Rimfire Resources** and **Rabobank** for what promises to be an enlightening discussion on the single desk.

☞ **To book your place for the lunch on Friday 30 March go to our website:**  
[www.nswfarmwriters.org/BOOKINGS.htm](http://www.nswfarmwriters.org/BOOKINGS.htm).

**Register early and online for the Friday, 30 March luncheon discussion on the future of the single desk**

**Corporate Members of the Month:** Rimfire Resources and Rabobank

**Venue:** The Menzies Hotel, 14 Carrington Street, Sydney

**When:** **Friday, 30 March 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, 28 March 2007**

online: [www.nswfarmwriters.org](http://www.nswfarmwriters.org), email: [bookings@nswfarmwriters.org](mailto:bookings@nswfarmwriters.org), phone: Lauren Duff (02) 8204 3731

**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 Lauren Duff on (02) 8204 3731.

## Rural Independents challenge National Party

Contributed by Jenny Ward, Department of Primary Industries

THE rise of Independents in rural areas as a result of volatility in country electorates will pressure previously safe National and Labor Party seats at this month's state election.

This was the view of the ABC's election analyst, Antony Green, guest speaker at the February Farm Writers' lunch.

"The National Party is no longer the sole preserve of the rural vote having lost much of its impetus to the Labor and Liberal parties," Mr Green said.

"Plus people no longer see the differences between the National and Liberal parties.

"Rural electorates are also irritated by this Government, which is common when any government has held power for a long period of time."

A virtual walking encyclopaedia on Australian elections, Mr Green has worked on every federal, state and territory election since 1989 and was the first to call the return of the Keating government in the 1993 Federal election.

He drew on a raft of demographic and past election facts to explain how the upcoming NSW election was made for Independents.

Mr Green said the population, economy, infrastructure and politics of rural areas had changed dramatically over the past 50 years and the days when Australia rode on the sheep's back were long gone.

As such voter loyalty to the traditional parties had waned, making way for Independents, who were once popular between the 1950s and 1980s, to re-emerge.

"Agriculture no longer represents the wealth of Australia and as such there isn't the economics to support the National Party throwing its weight around," Mr Green said.

Figures from 1971 to 1996 show that the while the population of rural NSW has grown by only 13 per cent, the North Coast has grown by 110 per cent, the South Coast by 51 per cent and Sydney by 34 per cent.

"There is a feeling that Independents can deliver," Mr Green said.



*ABC election analyst Antony Green.*

"The demographic mix of many regional and rural areas has changed dramatically.

"For instance the North Coast is full of people from Sydney – they would never have voted for the National Party previously - so now they vote for the Independents. "Their vote is up for grabs."

The other dramatic change driven by changed demographics is that in 1910 Labor held 24 seats west of the Blue Mountains – today it only holds two seats.

However Mr Green said people have a romantic vision of what Independents can achieve. "They believe that the Independent can deliver on very basic local issues – those which affect them.

"But while Independents can affect the distribution of funds for education for instance – they can't actually influence the policy which sees those funds distributed."

While not prepared to call this election yet, Mr Green said that issues, no matter how seemingly trivial, could tip the election a week to 10 days out. "A snap bus strike, traffic jam, power failure could be enough to tip voters either way." But he said issues effecting Sydney voters would hardly affect those in the Tweed Valley.

In the meantime, we will have to wait until the polls close on 24 March to find out just what will happen!

*Thanks to corporate members of the month, Australian Wool Innovation and Hassall & Associates.*

## IFAJ trips up for grabs for Farm Writers' members

Farm Writers' is offering financial support for the NSW winner of the Star Prize for agricultural writing and a member to attend the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ) Congress in Japan from 17 to 22 September 2007.

To enter the Star Prize, members of Farm Writers' need to submit their best article on an issue of wide agricultural interest published as editorial material in 2006. The deadline for entries is close of business, 30 March 2007.

Members who don't qualify for the Star Prize (or don't fancy their chances as 'best in state') need to tell Farm Writers' why they should go to the Congress by submitting an expression of interest by close of business, 5 April 2007. The call for expressions of interest is at [www.nswfarmwriters.org/news\\_views/IFAJCongress2007\\_EOI.pdf](http://www.nswfarmwriters.org/news_views/IFAJCongress2007_EOI.pdf) or contact the Secretary for a copy.

Both winners will receive \$2,000 from Farm Writers' to cover congress registration and, depending on the prevailing exchange rate, a small contribution to travel costs. The NSW Star Prize winner receives a certificate and becomes one of four finalists in the national contest to find Australia's entry for the IFAJ Star Prize.

For more information about either contest visit [www.nswfarmwriters.org](http://www.nswfarmwriters.org). Information about the 2007 IFAJ World Congress is at [www.knt.co.jp/ec/2006/ifaj-e/](http://www.knt.co.jp/ec/2006/ifaj-e/).

☞ Do you have a speaker you'd like to hear at a Farm Writers' event – or any other suggestions? Email us at [suggestions@nswfarmwriters.org](mailto:suggestions@nswfarmwriters.org)

### March 2007

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc

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