



Newsletter

November 2003

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Crikey, Folks! It's Christmas!

Christmas time is here, by golly. 'Tis the season to be jolly. Deck the halls with boughs of holly. Fill the cup, and don't say when!

So sang satirical songster and song writer, Tom Lehrer back in the 50s.

But he is right. It is that time of year again ... the run up to Christmas.

Of course, for FarmWriters', this means it's time for our traditional 'end of year' celebratory lunch in the Strangers' Dining Room in Parliament House, hosted by our patron, NSW's Minister for Agriculture, the The Hon. Ian Macdonald MLC.

The luncheon will be held on **Thursday, 11 December** and numbers are limited to 100 ... so, it's first in, best dressed, as they say.



Come along and meet him in person: our Patron and end-of-year luncheon host, NSW's Minister for Agriculture, the The Hon. Ian Macdonald MLC

Also, in the spirit of Christmas, it is not too late for member companies and organisations to be part of the traditional 'gift giveaway'.

If you have suitable items which can be handed out to members and guests as 'gifts' on the day, please contact Noreen Coulton (Ph: 9953 4494. Email: ncoulton@telpacific.com.au).

Register early and on-line for the end-of-year luncheon on Thursday 11 December.

Venue: **PARLIAMENT HOUSE - STRANGER'S DINING ROOM** Macquarie Street, Sydney.

When: 12:00 noon for 12:30pm: Thursday, 11 December, 2003

Cost: \$50 per head, or voucher

Register: On-line before 5:00pm, Monday 8 December 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 Amy Lawrence (02 8204 3857) or Jamie Graham (0418 479 434)

If you missed September's meeting ...

Ian Sinclair: looking ahead

The speaker at our October lunch meeting, former Deputy Prime Minister and National Party leader, Ian Sinclair, covered a lot of territory in his presentation.

Trade, the sorry state of NSW rail branch lines, drought and agricultural sustainability all figured.

Mr Sinclair, who recently visited China, noted the astonishing fact that China's GDP is growing at an annual rate equal to Australia's total GDP.

That provided great opportunities for Australian exporters, but he warned we should not focus on China at the expense of more long standing markets such as the Middle East, Europe and the Pacific.

On the rail lines, Mr Sinclair said the system in NSW seemed to be breaking down, with the "fix when fail" approach to branch lines itself a failure.

He said the proposed reallocation to existing rail infrastructure of \$60 million from the planned grain consolidation facilities would be a start toward improving the "horrendous" state of NSW branch lines.

The drought and the drop in grain production had taken some of the urgency from the problem this year.

But had NSW been facing a grain crop this year of the same huge proportions of that in Western Australia, the system would have absolutely no chance of coping.

He suggested development of a 10 to 20 year plan detailing the upgrading of the lines, while acknowledging farmers and other stakeholders should accept that not

all lines could stay open.

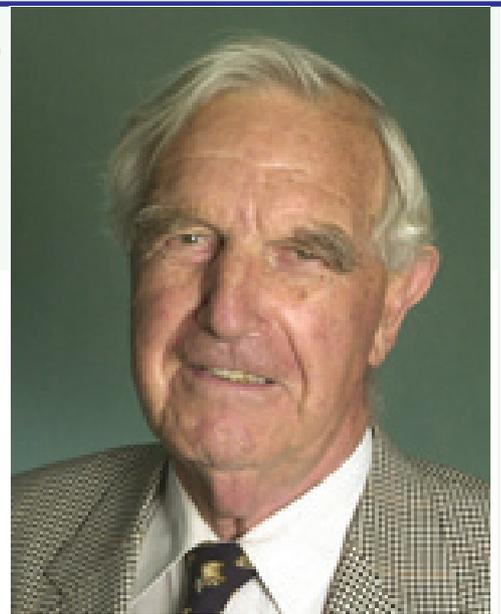
There was a need for a rail conference, where all players — growers, the government, grain marketers and handlers, and grain users — should sit down at the one table.

Mr Sinclair also had a few words about the wave of new "lifestyle farmers" and the related breaking up of some big properties.

These newcomers often wanted to use their land more intensively and this could create some enormous problems in environmental sustainability.

Mr Sinclair, who chaired the road-rail task force of the NSW Farmers Association which completed its work 12 months ago and who just completed a stint as chairman of the native vegetation reform implementation group, has been handed another task by the NSW Government.

He is to head up an inquiry designed to break the deadlock between community groups and environmentalists over the future of the Brigalow south bioregion, which embraces areas such as the Pilliga scrub.



Annual General Meeting

The annual general meeting of The Farm Writers Association of NSW Inc on October 31 saw one new committee member appointed and a few serious on-going issues raised.

Ron Aggs of NSW Agriculture decided not to nominate for another year because of time constraints and Brendan Fox of Agrimedia joined the committee.

President, Stuart Hutton, who retained that role for 2003-04, said one of the highlights of recent times had been the revamping of our website, and announced the new look site was now open.

Treasurer, David Stoate, reported an operating profit of \$1906 for 2002-03, about \$900 down on the previous year.

But he warned although the association was in a relatively strong financial position, income from membership subscriptions had dropped by more than \$2000 in 2002-03, which continues a falling trend of the past few years.

At a subsequent committee meeting, Mr Stoate provided a preliminary projection showing a likely small loss in 2003-04, and the committee plans to look at ways of turning this trend around.

Members are asked to contribute suggestions as to who they would like as guest speakers at our luncheon meetings in 2004.

No more meetings until February 2004

As per normal, the end-of-year function at Parliament House will be the last Farm Writers' meeting until February 2004.

We will keep you all informed about what is planned for next year in January.