



Newsletter

October 2004

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

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

Newsletter: Alan Dick (citynews.theland@ruralpress.com) and

Andy Royal (andy@ajroyal.com.au)

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

Internet: www.nswfarmwriters.org

GGA set for a shake up under Hards

Our guest speaker for our October 29 luncheon meeting, Ron Hards, was appointed only in August as the chairman of the Grain Growers Association, and he'll have some fairly hot news.

The GGA is holding an extraordinary general meeting on October 27 to discuss some controversial constitutional changes and he'll be talking to us about the result.

As outlined on the GGA web site, the EGM will consider a package of reforms to create a more modern and effective Association responsive to members' needs.

"We are currently operating under a constitution that dates back to our origins in 1958. It has served Grain Growers well but now is the time to reinvigorate our organisation," Mr Hards said in the web site announcement.

"The grains industry has been through incredible change, especially in recent years. New challenges confront the next generation of grain growers and we need to ensure our Association is ready to meet them," he said.

According to the GGA web site, there are four key elements to the proposed reform package:

- Reforming the membership criteria to ensure future members are active grain growers.
- Enshrining the role of regional committees in the Association's constitution.
- Establishing a process for reviewing zone boundaries to keep the number of members in each zone similar.
- Modernising language and removing irrelevant sections of the constitution.

A memorandum explaining the proposed reforms was

mailed to growers on 1 October and a series of member forums are being held across Victoria, NSW and Queensland during October to assist members to understand the reform proposal.

Mr Hards will also discuss the GGA's position in relation to the growers' report on the 2004 Wheat Marketing Review.

Mr Hards was appointed GGA chair after previous chairman, Ron Greentree, stood down mainly because of a perceived conflict of interest in his chairing both GGA and GrainCorp Ltd, in which GGA has a controlling interest.

Mr Hards has been a grain farmer in Victoria's Mallee region for the past 30 years and runs South Devon cattle and a small White Suffolk sheep stud.

He has had a strong involvement in the Victorian Farmers Federation since 1970 and in the 1980s gained a position on the VFF Grains Council. This led to positions on the ABB and AWB restructure committees.

From 1998 to 2003, he was president of the VFF Grains Group which meant he had to balance political lobbying with running a broadacre grain property.

During that time he fought, ultimately unsuccessfully, to retain the single desk for barley in Victoria and now works to ensure growers have the opportunities and skills to flourish in a deregulated market.

He joined GGA in 2000 following the merger of the Prime Wheat Association with Victorian Grower Services, and was elected to the board of GGA in February this year.

Don't forget that our own ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING takes place at 11:00am the same day at the same venue, the Menzies Hotel, 14 Carrington Street.

Register early and on-line for Friday 29 October's AGM and luncheon seminar with the GGA's Ron Hards

Corporate 'Members of the Month': Cox Inall Communications and NSW Farmers' Association.

Venue: The **ALL SEASONS PREMIER MENZIES HOTEL** 14 Carrington Street, Sydney.

When: AGM: 11:00am - 12:00noon. Luncheon seminar: 12:00 noon for 12:30pm: Friday, 29 October

Cost: \$55 per head, or voucher for members. **\$65 per head for ALL non members.**

Register: On-line **BEFORE** 5:00pm, **TUESDAY 26 OCTOBER** 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 Fiona Dewar (phone: 02 8204 3856) or Jamie Graham (0418 479 434)

Farmer bodies tackle the unusual to remain relevant

It's a sign of the changing role of farm organisations that one state body's services for its members dips into the area of "lonely hearts": a dating service for its remote, young farmers.

That was one more unusual examples our September guest speaker, Wendy Craik, gave of the challenges facing farmer organisations in an era when the importance of agriculture in the economy is declining and people in rural areas suffer a socio-economic disadvantage compared to urban people.

Wendy, whose many achievements include a spell as chief executive of the National Farmers Federation, said one of the big changes in recent years for farmer organisations had been the reliance on research based rather than emotional arguments in lobbying governments.

This had contributed to a range of unlikely alliances the NFF had formed that had contributed to its success in matters of trade liberalisation, industrial relations and tax reform.

The NFF had both lead and reflected debate on issues such as telecommunications, rural health, education and water.

Farm bodies had to compete for attention in lobbying among a large range of associations and corporate interests, she said.

She suggested, however, they needed to recognise the opportunities within the challenge, such as the increased urban "willingness to pay" recently illustrated in the compensation to fisheries in the Great Barrier Reef Park.

One of the perennial challenges was maintaining membership base and persuading "free riders" to come



Wendy Craik: farm bodies need to recognise the opportunities within the challenge

to the party.

She was less upbeat about the success of farm organisations in involving the 175,000 women who identified themselves as involved in agriculture.

They were widely recognised as the backbone of the industry yet only one woman had been elected to a senior position in the NFF in 25 years, and women were starting to form their own organisations.

She acknowledged that changing culture was difficult for organisations but said three organisational reviews in her time with the NFF had resulted in no change.

"Change won't occur until the pain of no change exceeds the pain of change," she said.

Wendy's talk was thought provoking we hope to have her back again in several months after she has settled in to her new role as head of the Murray Darling Basin Commission.

