



Newsletter

October 2007

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc
GPO Box 1108 Sydney NSW 2001
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Hear Labor's Vision for Australian Agriculture

Senator Kerry O'Brien, Labor's Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Forestry, will be the guest speaker at the next Farm Writers' Association function to be held on Friday 26 October 2007. According to a recent Rural Press farmer-only poll, farmers believe Kevin Rudd will be the next Prime Minister of Australia, even though most said they will vote for the Coalition.

If respondents to the poll have got it right, Senator O'Brien will be the next Minister for the Primary Industries portfolio.

Senator O'Brien has been hitting the headlines in the rural media this month with the release of Labor's wheat policy.

Under Labor's plan there will be a 'single desk' with multiple accredited exporters. The single desk will be managed by a new export regulator Wheat Exports Australia, replacing the Export Wheat Commission and providing it with additional powers to govern accredited exporters of Australian wheat.

Previous Labor Primary Industries Ministers have often been seen as vigorous reformers. Guests at our October 26 seminar will have the opportunity to hear Senator O'Brien's reform agenda.

Senator O'Brien was appointed to the Senate in 1996 and returned at the 1998 and 2004 Federal Elections.

He was first elected to Shadow Cabinet in November 2001 and has served as Shadow Minister for Primary Industries and Resources, Shadow Minister for Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs, Shadow Minister for Tourism, Shadow Minister for Regional Services, Local Government and Territories and Shadow Minister for Transport.

In December 2006 he was appointed as Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Forestry.

Senator O'Brien has been an active member of the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee and the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade and was a member of the Senate Select Committee on the US Free Trade Agreement.

Prior to entering parliament Senator O'Brien was Secretary of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (Tasmanian Branch) and a member of the union's National Executive. He lives on a small property in northern Tasmania.



Senator Kerry O'Brien

Please join our corporate members of the month NAB Agribusiness and the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, University of Sydney to hear Senator O'Brien's vision for Australian Agriculture.

To book your place for lunch on Friday 26 October, go to our website:
www.nswfarmwriters.org/BOOKINGS.htm

Register early and online for the Friday, 26 October lunch to hear Labor's Vision for Australian Agriculture
Corporate Members of the Month NAB Agribusiness and the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, University of Sydney

Venue: The Menzies Hotel, 14 Carrington Street, Sydney

When: Friday, 26 October 2007 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 24th October 2007**
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 **Bev Jordan 0408 699656**.

It's 2020- How Clever is the Country ?

A report from a panel debate involving Jocellin Jansson from the Country Education Foundation of Australia; Professor Les Copeland, Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources at the University of Sydney; and HR strategist Rebecca Middleton from Rimfire Resources at Farm Writers on September 28.

With ABARE listing a typical mixed wheat sheep property as having an asset value of \$3 million, a \$600,000 turnover and generating \$80,000 in on-farm income, Professor Les Copeland reckons there is a strong case for tertiary education for farm managers.

The Panel discussion, moderated by Michael Condon, the presenter of ABC's Country Hour in NSW, ranged over a number of topics, covering farm succession planning, attracting and keeping talent in agribusiness, and giving young people with no direct links to agriculture a career start.

There were many views about what attracted and repelled young people from a career in farming and agribusiness. Rebecca Middleton said young people were motivated by the culture of the workplace and wanting a sense of achievement. She said agribusiness was a career choice that could deliver a sense of achievement every day.

While the panellists, and the audience, agreed agriculture was driven by technology, and the level of technical sophistication was no less than in many other sectors of the economy, it was difficult to sell that message to prospective employees.

Discussion swung to the impact of drought and climate change on the perception of agriculture as a career. Professor Copeland's view was that urban Australia would become more aware of the importance of agriculture as food prices inevitably increased.

The panellists believed that while the mining industry was out competing agriculture for labour on some fronts, there was more to employee loyalty than the pay packet. Rebecca Middleton said lifestyle and opportunity had a lot to do with employee loyalty and agribusiness presented a more appealing lifestyle to some than a mining workplace. A number of panellists said starting salaries for agribusiness professionals were comparable with other industries and prospects for career advancement were strong. However,

mining did have a salary advantage in the job market.

Jocellin Jansson had an optimistic view about the future. Jocellin, Executive Director of the Country Education Foundation, "helps country kids fulfil their post high school study and vocation dreams". Jocellin says that national data shows that close to 70% of people who have left rural communities to pursue their career and study choices have returned by age 38 (to rural or regional centres). They are an important life blood for the future as they move back, bringing their partners with them and often bringing new skills and ideas into rural communities.

Professor Copeland said 60% of the students who studied agriculture and natural resource sciences at the University of Sydney were from metropolitan areas. "The single biggest factor (in influencing choice) is parents and the conversation around the dinner table. We need to be promoting a positive view of agriculture and get beyond the image of farmers just being there for the handouts," he said. The panellists agreed that high school students needed to be exposed to the benefits of a career in agriculture before they reached year 10. "56% of students have already decided what they want to do by the time they reach Year 10," Rebecca Middleton said.

Rebecca Middleton saw strong demand for graduates with environmental science backgrounds as environmental management in agriculture became even more critical

Michael Condon put an edited version of the Panel debate to air on ABC NSW Country Hour on October 1. Reference: abc.net.au.



Rimfire Resource's Rebecca Middleton

Farm Writers News

Our Man Returns from Japan -Rural Press writer Matthew Cawood, recently returned from Japan after attending the 51st International Federation of Agricultural Journalists Congress (his prize for winning the Farm Writers' Star Prize for Rural Writing in NSW in 2007). Matthew says he's already working on getting to the 2008 IFAJ congress in Austria, "even if I have to swim". To read more about Matthew's experiences in Japan and his perspective on Japanese agriculture, go to www.nswfarmwriters.org.au

New ACAJ Website - Rural communication has a new national focal point with the launch of a website by the Australian Council of Agricultural Journalists (ACAJ). The new site address is www.acaj.org.au

Report of the Month

A report released this month by Greenpeace 'Paths to a Low-Carbon Future' proposes that beef consumption be reduced by 20%. The report argues this could be achieved by shifting to kangaroo meat and/or lower-meat diets. Reference: www.greenpeace.com.au

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