



Newsletter

October 2008

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc
GPO Box 1108 Sydney NSW 2001
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Austar's vision for rural communications

John Porter has a direct line of communication 24/7 into the homes of 700,000 regional and rural households. He runs a subscription TV, internet and mobile telephone business behind one of regional Australia's best known brands. And he is delivering the 2008 Farm Writers annual media executive address on Friday October 31.

John Porter is the Chief Executive Officer of Austar, regional Australia's leading subscription television provider and emerging player in internet and telephony. John played an integral role in the development of Australia's subscription television industry in 1995, and in 2005 received an award for Most Outstanding Contribution to the industry.

Prior to joining Austar, John spent 10 years in various senior management capacities for Time Warner Cable, a subsidiary of Time Warner, Inc. He is a director on the boards of Austar and the Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association.

In his address, John will discuss the state of the media and telecommunications sectors in Australia, with a particular focus on regional Australia.

As one of the only ASX companies dedicated specifically to regional parts of the country, John will share his insights on broadband and broadcasting issues that are on the national agenda such as the National Broadband Network, the switch from analogue to digital, content reviews and more.

Austar has been one of the innovators in Australian media; taking a big punt in the mid-1990s to roll out wireless and satellite pay TV capacity in the bush.

Austar, through the Weather Channel, pioneered the introduction of interactive TV and behind the scenes has been pushing for a slice of Government investment into better broadband services for the bush.

Mr Porter was a key driver behind the establishment of The Weather Channel. Austar holds 50% of the production company XYZ Networks that now operates The Weather Channel along with delivering The LifeStyle Channel, LifeStyle FOOD, Channel [V], [V]2, Max, Country Music Channel Discovery Channel, Nickelodeon and Nick Jr.

Mr Porter follows in the illustrious footsteps of our 2007 media executive speaker David Kirk, CEO of Fairfax Limited.



*John Porter,
Austar CEO*

October seminar

The Menzies Hotel
14 Carrington St
Friday 31st October 12pm

\$60 per head or voucher for members.
\$70 per head for all non-members

BEFORE 5:00pm
Monday 27th October 2008
online: www.nswfarmwriters.org

Please note, if bookings are not cancelled by the deadline, the person making the booking will be invoiced.

AWI election in full swing

A resolute Australian Wool Innovation Chairman Brian Van Rooyen told the Farm Writers seminar on September 26 that AWI is now a global business that needs professional directors to run the company.

Responding to concerns about perceived Board in-fighting Mr Van Rooyen said the Board was unanimous on 95% of matters, however mulesing was a contentious issue due to conflicts of interest among directors.

“Our shareholders have told us they are tired of the in-fighting and this is contributing to their sense of disengagement,” Mr Van Rooyen said.

“We are hoping for at least a 50 per cent vote at our AGM – more than double what it has been in the past – shareholders need to get involved.”

Mr Van Rooyen said the AWI Board took a step in direction of professionalism and a global focus earlier this year with the appointment of three new Directors.

These directors, Dr John Keniry, Ken Boundy and Robyn Clubb, face levy payers in Board elections in November.

Mr Van Rooyen talked about AWI's three year strategic plan which contains three specific targets geared to providing tangible returns for levy payers. He committed to creating an additional 20 million kilograms per year of demand for Australian merino wool. This would be achieved primarily by working business-to-business with the top 200 international retail and brand partners.

AWI is aiming to reduce wool's cost of production by 40 cents a kilogram clean over the three year period.

He was firm in his belief that AWI will provide woolgrowers with alternatives to mulesing in support of the industry's commitment to phase out the practice by the end of 2010.

“On the mulesing front, we are seeing the momentum gaining pace week by week. We have been able to release only limited details of two injectables code-named FSP-1 and FSP-2. I am confident that they and other alternatives will be available in time for the deadline.

“Large trials of these technologies start within a couple of weeks at SARDI in South Australia. We are committed to enhancing our governance and professionalism. We need to provide independent and professional expertise to guide what is now a global business. Our international business partners want to work with a Board and management that is totally professional and stable.

“We are committed to bringing a united approach to the future of our industry for the benefit of our growers,” Mr Van Rooyen said.

Mr Van Rooyen engaged with some show and tell with Farm Writers, handing around various innovative wool garments, including the Shower Suit, launched with Japanese retailer Konaka.

As Mr Van Rooyen put it, a suit that you can wash in the shower, and have dry, wrinkle free and ready to wear, four hours later, is very popular with the Tokyo salary-man who needs to knock back a few pots of sake on the way home from work every night.

Agribuzz

Your Thursday night network

The NSW Farm Writers' Association's first professional networking event was held on the 18th of September; and from the attendance and feedback the event was a great success.

Over 60 Farm Writers' members, friends and colleagues attended, and were treated to a presentation from Ben Fargher, Chief Executive of the National Farmers Federation. The future of Australian agriculture, personal experience in agribusiness and advice on how to succeed in the industry; were all covered by one of the sharpest young minds in agribusiness.

The Farm Writers' Committee would like to thank everyone who supported Agribuzz, particularly Agribusiness Appointments for sponsoring the event. Farm Writers' aims to hold regular Agribuzz events with guest speakers on a range of topics, to establish professional mentoring and networking opportunities. The next Agribuzz is scheduled for February 2009, so keep an eye out for the reminders in the New Year!

See the pictures from Agribuzz on the next page of the newsletter.

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Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc

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Website sponsored by Telstra Country Wide



Tim Vidler, Agricultural Appointments and Adam Kay, Cotton Australia; enjoying the Agribuzz



Fiona Devar and Kaaren Latham, Cox Inall Communications; and Phillipa Lampe, RAS



Agribuzz guest speaker Ben Fargher, CEO National Farmers Federation and Tim Powell, President Farm Writers'