



Newsletter

September 2007

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc
GPO Box 1108 Sydney NSW 2001
Website: www.nswfarmwriters.org

It's 2020- How Clever is the Country ?

Anyone with a stake in the future sustainability of rural communities and Australian agribusiness should be part of our September seminar.

In a special panel session, Farm Writers is tackling the question of the skill shortage in rural NSW and across agribusiness.

Farm Writers has assembled a three member panel covering three different perspectives on the skills debate; getting rural school children into vocational education; attracting students to agriculture and natural resource management university undergraduate courses; and keeping skilled people happily employed in agribusiness and in rural towns and cities.

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 will form the expert panel.

The panel will discuss what agribusiness needs to be doing now to reverse the brain drain and create a sustainable pool of skilled labour for 2020 and beyond.

Michael Condon, the presenter of ABC's Country Hour in NSW, will set the scene and lead the discussion as the seminar facilitator. The proceedings will be taped and may be broadcast at a future date.

Jocellin Jansson as the Executive Director of the Country Education Foundation of Australia, is working to assist communities to establish local foundations that help local youth make their post high school education and vocation goals become a reality.

Professor Copeland as Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources at the University of Sydney and as President of the Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture is leading moves to address the declining number of agriculture graduates.

Rebecca Middleton from Rimfire Resources assists clients with HR practices, policies and strategies as well as salary benchmarking and performance review and incentive programs. Rimfire Resources specialises in the human resources needs of agribusiness and rural and regionally based businesses. Rebecca is an expert on how to match the needs of employers with high quality staff to work in agribusiness or rural Australia.



Michael Condon, Presenter of NSW Country Hour and facilitator of the How Clever is the Country panel session.

Don't Forget: AGM commences at 11 am then lunch commencing at 12.30 pm. If you cannot attend the AGM please lodge your proxy with the secretary cray@hassall.com.au

Join our Corporate Members of the Month Agricultural Appointments and Integrated Marketing Communications on Friday, 28 September to be part of this very important debate.

To book your place for lunch on Friday 28 September go to our website: www.nswfarmwriters.org/BOOKINGS.htm

Register early and online for the Friday, 31 August lunch to be part of How Clever is the Country.

Corporate Members of the Month Agricultural Appointments and Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC).

Venue: The Menzies Hotel, 14 Carrington Street, Sydney

When: **Friday, 28 September at 12pm for 12:30pm (AGM Starts at 11 am)**

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

Register: **BEFORE 5:00pm on Wednesday 26th September 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**.

The Great Divide: How To Get Over It

A report from a presentation by Deb Bain, the Australian RIRDC Rural Woman of the Year 2007 at Farm Writers on August 31.

Australian Rural Woman of the Year Deb Bain told the August Farm Writers seminar that with rural Australia now being seen as a source of energy, not just a source of food, the need for city people to understand farmers was greater than ever.

“When we talk about wind, solar or nuclear power, all these facilities will be built in rural Australia,” Ms Bain said.

The diversion of water from traditional rural uses to bolster city water supplies was emerging as a hot issue in Victoria.

Ms Bain said it was more important than ever to get city and country talking again. “We need to reconnect the threads of the fabric that has been torn asunder,” Ms Bain said.

With 25% of Australians having been born overseas, it was very difficult for city people to form relationships with country people. The old links between families living in the city with rural roots were breaking down.

Ms Bain was speaking from her experiences of organizing Farm Day, which in May 2007, brought 200 families from the city and country together for a rich social and educational experience.

Deb’s achievements with Farm Day led to her being named as the 2007 Australian RIRDC Rural Women’s Award Winner.

“We have to demonstrate to urban Australia and to our capital city based Governments that there is more to agriculture than the economics.

“Farming families are part of the social fabric and environmental management capacity of a large part of Australia.

Deb works in partnership with her husband David on their wool growing property in western Victoria, but her passion is for promoting the importance of agriculture to the broader economy and the urban population.

She pioneered the concept of Farm Day, providing the opportunity for a city family to be hosted by a farm family.

Deb believes there is enormous good will among city people towards agriculture. What is needed is programs that allow city people to reconnect with people on the land.

Ms Bain quoted survey data showing that 73% of city people surveyed feel they know very little about agriculture, while 87% still believe that farmers make a valuable contribution to Australia.

Ms Bain is concerned about the way farmers are portrayed in the media.

“We have a choice about how to portray farmers. They can be portrayed as someone who is at the mercy of the elements, or someone who can manage risk,” she said.

Ms Bain also challenged capital city based agribusiness to do a better job in communicating how important they were to the cities where they operate from an employment and wealth generation perspective.

City people are very interested in agriculture and the lives of farmers, but its a lack of access to interact directly with farmers that holds back better relationships across the great divide. Farm Day is one program that is providing the direct access.

Thankyou to August corporate members of the month Grain Growers Association and Cox Inall Communications.



Australian RIRDC Rural Women's Award 2007 Winner-Deborah Bain

Farm Day: Sydney vs Melbourne

When the organisers of Farm Day asked city families how far they were prepared to drive to visit a country family, Melbourne families were happy to drive two to three hours but Sydney families felt one hour was long enough.

Deb Bain is looking for more corporate support for Farm Day 2008. Deb can be contacted via farmday.com.au

Responsible Reporting of Farm Suicide

Jo Piggott, a senior project officer at the Hunter Institute of Mental Health’s Mindframe Media and Mental Health Project, is offering Farm Writers’ media members background briefings on responsible reporting of mental illness and rural suicide.

The Project’s resources provide media professionals with current contacts, research sources, facts and statistics, and suggestions about issues to consider when reporting on mental illness and suicide.

Jo is already working with some of our media members to assist them to sensitively report on these issues. As the drought worsens media organisations may be grappling with how to report on reported increases in suicide incidence or on individual tragedies.

Jo Piggott can be reached on 02 49246787 or joanne.piggott@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au

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