

# Primary Interest

The Newsletter of the  
**ADVISORY BOARD OF AGRICULTURE**  
Governing Body of the Agricultural Bureau



Issue 2, March 2008

## Planning for the Future

Four priority areas have been identified - research and technology; education and training; extension and business risk management – as matters for further consideration and development following the Advisory Board of Agriculture's (ABA) think tank on sustainable farming in low rainfall regions.

Guided by the topic, *The Face of Tomorrow's Primary Production in Low Rainfall Regions of South Australia*, scientists, Agricultural Bureau members, Natural Resources Management Boards, Government agency staff and academics combined together at the Plant Research Centre at Waite to discuss new enterprise mixes and options on how the lower rainfall areas of the State can be farmed into the future.

The idea of the day came out of the Board's decision to further investigate sustainable farming in low rainfall areas and felt getting experts and farmers from such agricultural regions together would be useful.

ABA Chair Mark Dennis said it was important for the Board to network with other people and groups involved in the Agricultural industry.

"I think it has become increasingly important that all of us in the industry can see that we are all thinking together in the right direction," he said.

"It is not often that you can get a group that includes both farmers and researchers together in the same room, jointly looking at the future of



Among those at the low rainfall farming think tank were (from left): Charlton Jeisman, Liz Connell, Rob Lewis, Shirley Pledge, Peter Rose, Sam Trengrove and David Davenport.

agriculture."

The aim of the day-long forum was to identify ideas to assist farmers to survive, be profitable, and sustain the environment landscape in low rainfall areas. Aspirations included:

- Stronger, vibrant communities
- Industry confidence
- Valuing diversity
- Making farming "easier"
- Innovation leading to best practice
- High infrastructure standards.

The day included presentations by Belinda Barr, Sam Doudle, Rob Lewis, Peter Butler and Mike Bennell interspersed with panel discussions and group sessions.

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## Sowing the Seeds with Mark Dennis

As farmers, we know there is no such thing as a "risk-free" year, but the promise that a good opening rain brings can sometimes be too hard to resist.

The excellent opening rains most regions of the State received for the 2006 and 2007 seasons prompted many farmers to take the punt and invest heavily in their cropping programs. The higher than normal grain prices mid-season also led many to forward contract some crops to ensure top returns come harvest.

Seemingly sensible decisions in the business of farming, but in two extraordinary years of devastating drought, they left many financially exposed.

The last two years have sapped just about everyone's confidence, and made a huge impact financially. The decisions that historically we made almost instantaneously are now proving very hard to make.

When it rains we tend to think all our Christmases have come at once, but it's always worthwhile to check the long-range weather forecasts before committing to an ambitious cropping program.

Again, hindsight is a wonderful thing, but there were some warning signs in the forecasts that the season break last year might not have been a sign of things to come.

For those who intend to go another round with the weather in 2008, it's worth taking a good look at your farming practices and see what you can change to manage your risks better. This might be choosing not to sow a crop on your lowest yielding

paddocks or seeking professional advice before working out your fertiliser and chemical programs.

It's important not to make these decisions in isolation. Your fellow Ag Bureau members are a great sounding board for trying to get the mix right on your farm. But also seek out advice and information from the various business people who play an integral role in the success (or otherwise) of your farm. For instance, now is the time to talk to your bank manager, your stock agent or your grain trader so you can get as clear a picture as possible of how things will be for the coming year.

### "The issue of risk extends across the entire agricultural supply chain."

While making informed agronomic decisions about what to produce, when to sow and what inputs to apply are essential to any viable farming enterprise, the issue of risk extends across the entire agricultural supply chain and it is important to have a good understanding of how to assess those risks and effectively manage them.

With that in mind, the Primary Industries Skills Council and Transport Distribution Training SA have



produced an excellent free resource which outlines the areas of risk encompassing exports, food safety, quarantine, skills and training, the environment and compliance. Dealing with Risk: Identifying and Managing Risks along Primary Industry Supply Chains is written in plain English and outlines 29 different areas of risk with suggestions on how to reduce or eliminate them. The manual can be downloaded at <http://www.pisc.org.au/training-resources/dealing-with-risk.html>

By conducting our risk management methodically and carefully we can make the decisions with confidence to help us weather the difficult times ahead.

## Board Bis

### January meeting

The Advisory Board of Agriculture met on 29 and 30 January.

Board members heard a presentation from Professor Anthony Cheshire on Carbon Credits and the opportunities for agriculture and agribusiness following Australia's recent ratification of the Kyoto Treaty.

Glen Gale, Principal Technical

Advisor NRM from DWLBC and David Davenport, Land Management Consultant at Rural Solutions provided an update on the Sandy Soils project, due to finish at the end of June.

### ABA membership

The 2007-2008 ABA membership has been appointed by the Minister for Agriculture Food and Fisheries. The only change to the Board was in the Murraylands region with Peter Rose from Karoonda replacing Andrew

Hansen of Coomandook.

### Communications

Fontella Koleff joined PIRSA's Communications and Marketing unit in February and will be assisting the ABA/Ag Bureau with communications and media support. Fontella is keen to hear from Board and Bureau members so she can publicise stories from around the regions. Fontella can be contacted on (08) 8226 0596, 0434 660 987 (mobile) or via email at [koleff.fontella@saugov.sa.gov.au](mailto:koleff.fontella@saugov.sa.gov.au)

## The Tale of Mundoo Island

Fourth generation farmers Colin and Sally Grundy are all too aware of the plight of the Lower Lakes.

The family farm approximately 4,000 hectares, on Mundoo and the surrounding islands between Lake Alexandrina and the Murray mouth since the pre-barrage era.

While Angus beef cattle is the main business interest, the family also receive supplementary income from cattle station tours. They also crop approximately 400 hectares annually, providing them with their required hay, seed and feed-off crops.

Always on the lookout for improved farming practices, they have recently trialled areas of dryland lucerne with mixed results and a range of biological farming methods.

"The past two years have been very difficult due to the drought which have not provided us with ideal conditions," Sally said.

March 2007 was the start to the unimaginable position that they now find ourselves in currently. Millions of litres of salt water leaked back through the barrages from the salt water of the Coorong to the fresh water of the lower lakes of the River Murray. Their stock and domestic water supply reached incredibly high salinity levels rendering it useless for both purposes.

"We have carted well over 1 million litres of water for our stock and have recently installed a pipeline on Hindmarsh Island to service our

property there.

"At present we are searching for pockets of fresh groundwater on Mundoo and other islands with varied success," Sally said. "It has become evident that we will have to extend the new pipeline across Holmes Creek to Mundoo Island for reticulation around our paddocks."

**'We have never witnessed such a moonscape in this area before.'**

The Grundys have prematurely sold many head of cattle to reduce their numbers and believe more will have to go as the conditions worsen.

The river bed is a sand blow for up to five kilometres from the Ewe Island Barrage back towards Lake Alexandrina.

"We have never witnessed such a moonscape in this area before," Sally said.

"It is a very tough time for us and many other property owners and communities at the end of the River Murray. We only hope that common sense will prevail to provide us with assistance to survive and that very strict guidelines are set down for the recovery of the River Murray"

As a business the Grundys fall out of all EC funding. To date the salt water incursion has cost them \$250,000 with a further \$50,000

about to be spent to pipe water to Mundoo Island for the winter.

While they are still viable they are concerned over the mounting debt that is accumulating.

"We, and many others in the local communities, feel let down, undervalued and forgotten by all levels of government," Sally said.

They believe the only way to restore the River Murray to its former glory is by a massive reduction in water being drawn from the system and an environmental flow allocation to ensure the river flows to the sea.

"The River Murray itself has to become THE priority," Sally said.



MOONSCAPE: Testing a stock water soak in the dry Boundary Creek.

## Milang Bureau visits Mundoo Island

Mundoo Island was the focus of this year's Milang Agricultural Bureau Family Day.

The day featured a tour of the island's landscape led by Colin Grundy, including viewing the Murray mouth side of the Island to experience the distance the mouth had moved through the sand dunes.

Colin also described to the 34 members and their families present

the difficulties his family now faced in supplying fresh water to their beef cattle operation.

Branch Secretary Grant Blackwell said the result of the lack of fresh water and the contamination of the lake by sea water from leaking barrages was eye opening.

"When we reached Tauwitcherie Barrage and looked across towards Pelican point we were were amazed

that there was two and a half metres of sea water one side and sand as far as we could see on the other side where there should have been fresh lake water," he said. "While we were there Colin showed us soaks made in rocky spots in the dry lake bed to find and supply some water for his cattle.

"It just brought home to all of us just how bad things are."

## Day-Off Peter Project Receives Funding Boost

Angaston Bureau's project to re-bronze the "Day off, Peter" statue has received a boost thanks to the State Government.

The statue was one of two projects to be featured in the latest round of the Rural Town development Fund.

The Minister for Regional Development, Kaylene Maywald said the Government will contribute \$60,000 to the project.

"The Government's contribution will be matched from the local community," she said.

"The project was supported because of the statue's iconic status for Angaston and the Barossa region, which attracts more than 200,000 visitors each year.

"Projects are assessed on their cultural and economic value and take into account community support and involvement in the planning of the project."

Commissioned by the Angaston Agricultural Bureau in 1988 to mark its 100th anniversary, the statue commemorates the achievement of the Bureau movement in rural SA and the contribution made by the working horse to Australia's development.

Initially a fibreglass statue which has had pride of place in the Angaston Memorial Reserve for the

past 19 years, a series of vandalism attacks left the farmer badly damaged. The Barossa Council was forced to remove the whole statue in order to protect it.

Since mid-last year the Angaston Bureau has led a community fundraising campaign to meet the \$120,000 cost of having the statue re-bronzed so that it can be returned to public display.

The campaign raised \$109,000 from local businesses, service clubs and individuals with the Barossa Council also contributing \$10,000 towards the project.

Bureau Project Officer Jennifer Light said the unveiling of the new-look statue is due to occur in May. It is hoped that the original sculptor Chris Radford from Freeling will also be in attendance.

"Everyone loves Peter," she said. "You often see children sitting on his back, having their photos taken.

"The whole aim of the project was to ensure that he was back where he belonged in time for our 120th anniversary."

Jennifer said the community has responded brilliantly to the fundraising campaign.

"It is a massive achievement by the community given that we are in a difficult drought period," she said.



"Not only has there been support from the local community but we would also like to thank the other branches for their donations."

With the countdown to the unveiling getting closer Jennifer is confident that the remaining funds will be raised.

During April a scrap metal collection will be conducted by the Angaston Agricultural Bureau along with a red gum woodchop on April 12.

"We are still on the trail to complete our fundraising," she said.

For further information on the Day-Off Peter project, contact Jennifer on 8565 3390. Donations can be sent to the Angaston Agricultural Bureau Day Off, Peter Fund, PO Box 44, Angaston, SA 5353.

## Planning for the Future (Continued from page 1)...

With the ideas and concepts now identified, Mr Dennis said the ABA was now looking at developing a 12 month action plan.

This included identifying groups and individuals that the Board will need to work to achieve their objectives.

"This is a lot more work that needs to occur," he said. "We have really only just begun."

"Out of the day we have documented ideas for low cost, short term options

along with longer term directions and options. So it is now a case for the Board of prioritising what can be done quickly to assist sustainability against the important strategic items that require more discussion and planning to ensure their success."

### Future forums

Following the success of the think tank Mr Dennis said the ABA was considering conducting future

forums.

"One of the main messages we have received from the feedback on the day was to do something like this more often," he said.

"Certainly the Board will be looking at running such events on a regular, probably annual, basis. Already I think there is scope for education, an issue identified at this brain storm, to be a future topic for further discussion."

## Carbon Trading - Opportunities for Agribusiness

By preparing for the Australian National Emissions Trading Scheme, due to come into effect in 2010, agribusiness will gain bottom and top line advantages.

Opportunities that carbon trading will provide following Australia's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, was the theme of a presentation by Professor Anthony Cheshire to the Advisory Board of Agriculture in January.

A marine ecology and environmental scientist, Professor Cheshire, is the Executive Director of Balance Carbon Pty. Ltd. He is also Affiliate Professor with the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Adelaide and Adjunct Professor with the School of Biological Sciences at Flinders University.

With agriculture one of the largest emitters of methane and nitrous oxide, a contributor to carbon dioxide emissions and one of the industries to be most effected by global warming through loss of productive land, reduced productivity of crops and grazing lands as a result of lower rainfall and increasingly frequent and more

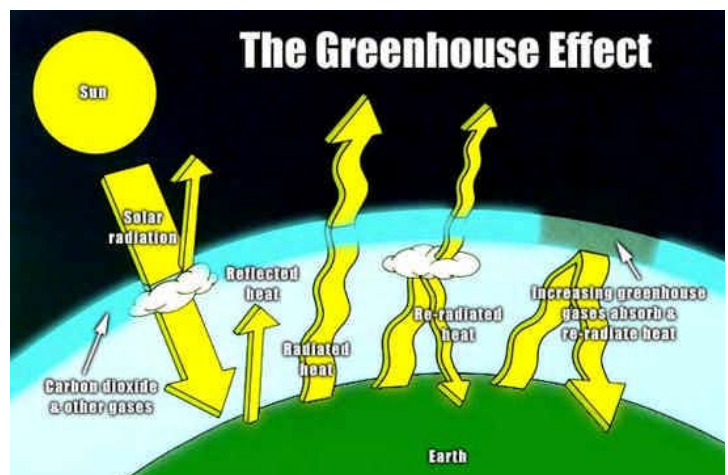
extreme water shortages; Professor Cheshire said it was important that agribusiness considered measures to reduce and/or avoid emissions, which in turn enables the establishment of carbon

credits for trading. This can be achieved by such methods as:

- Using renewable power generation - biofuels, solar, wind and geothermal energy not nuclear
- Revegetation or avoided deforestation.

Professor Cheshire also explained other methods of developing carbon credits for trading, such as Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and Joint Implementation (JI) projects.

With Australia now a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol it is now eligible to enter global carbon markets,



thereby increasing opportunities for agribusiness to trade and offset their carbon production. In 2007 worldwide carbon trading reached a total value of \$59.2 million with value of the trade expected to rise to \$92 billion in 2008. Professor Cheshire said while the Australian National Emissions Trading is yet to be defined it was expected to be a cap and trade system.

A powerpoint of Professor Cheshire's presentation to the Board can be found on the ABA's website at: [www.agbureau.com.au/general\\_information/carbon\\_trading\\_and\\_the\\_agribusiness\\_sector](http://www.agbureau.com.au/general_information/carbon_trading_and_the_agribusiness_sector)

## Getting By: Farmers Facing Climate Variation

The experiences of farmers and their families living and working in an environment that is heavily influenced by climatic variations is the subject of a new two-year Flinders University project.

Over the next two months the research team will travel around the State speaking to farmers about what they have been doing to 'get by' during critical times, particularly in terms of their work and health.

Of particular interest are broadacre and dairy farmers who own and operate their farms as well as their partners or spouses. All participants should be aged over 18 and located in either Central Eyre Peninsula, Mid North, River Murray and Lower Lakes Corridor and the upper South East.

The project is funded by the Department of Health (SA), and

has representatives from PIRSA, SAFF and Country Health SA on the management group. The information collected will be used to:

- To develop strategies to assist other farmers face the difficulties associated with climate variation
- To inform policies in the areas of primary industry and health
- To write reports and other publications, including media articles, to keep other sectors of the community informed about the topics raised by farmers in the interviews They are interested in talking to broadacre or dairy farmers who own and operate their farms, as well as their partners or spouses.

All participants should be aged over 18 and be farming in one of the following areas: Central Eyre

Peninsula; Mid North; River Murray and Lower Lakes Corridor; and the Upper South East.

The research team includes Debra King, Colin MacDougall, Jennene Greenhill and Anna Lane. All are from various disciplines and departments within the University and have either grown up on farms, worked on farms or have family members on farms. As a result they have a special interest in determining what is happening in country SA, particularly at this period of time when drought is affecting so many.

If you are interested in talking to these researchers or finding out more about their project, please contact Dr Debra King, [deb.king@flinders.edu.au](mailto:deb.king@flinders.edu.au) or phone 08 8201 3164.

## To P or not to P - Assessing the 'P' in Your Soil

Understanding phosphorous levels in soils has now become easier for growers due to an initiative by the Bureau.

As a result, growers can now purchase Soil Phosphorous Testing kits at a special price with the information provided by the kits enabling them to more accurately calculate fertiliser inputs.

Senior Consultant at Rural Solutions, David Davenport said with the costs of many phosphorous (P) based fertilisers reaching an all time high, efficient applications were essential to manage operation costs without restricting yield potential.

"Knowing and understanding soil phosphorous levels are essential to managing soil and nutrient quality in an efficient manner," he said.

The kits include four sample bags allowing growers to analyse soil samples from specific parts of their property. Samples can then be lodged at Bureau collection points or Rural Solutions SA offices, which are sent to ACML/SASPAS laboratory in Loxton for analysis.

Samples are then tested for "Colwell P" and the Phosphorous Buffering Index (PBI). Colwell P is a measure that has been widely used in South Australia and elsewhere and provides an indication of the amount of P available to the plant (adequate levels are generally between 20-30mg/kg of available soil Phosphorous depending on soil type and crop grown).

Mr Davenport said PBI provides an indication of the potential for phosphorous to be tied up in the soil (reducing plant availability) or for phosphorous to be leached through the soil. "Essentially this index enhances Colwell P data and assists in making decisions on how much and what type of fertiliser to apply," he said.

Chairman of the Advisory Board of Agriculture, Mark Dennis said the Board was excited about taking part in the initiative to provide the kits at a discounted price.

"We always encourage solutions that will help growers to become more efficient and cost effective," he said.

## Rural Chemicals Program

Agricultural and veterinary chemicals are important tools in primary production systems. When used correctly, they play a valuable role in maximising the quality and yield of primary produce. However, product integrity, the environment and human health can be put at risk when they are not used correctly.

The Rural Chemicals Program of PIRSA promotes the safe and responsible use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals. It is responsible for developing policies and projects that identify and manage risks to trade, food safety, environmental protection and community health arising from the use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals.

Some functions of Rural Chemicals Program are to:

- Assist the review and maintenance of relevant legislation
- Advise the Minister on policy issues and general matters related to rural chemicals
- Develop and administer compliance systems related to use of rural chemicals
- Disseminate regulatory and technical information on rural chemicals
- Contribute to national rural chemical policy issues that affect SA.

For further information on rural chemicals, the program has a section on the PIRSA website which contains information such as various fact sheets about such chemical-related issues as:

- Federal and State legislation controlling the use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals in Australia
- Responsible use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals - how to manage chemical trespass and the regulatory role that PIRSA Rural Chemicals Program has regarding chemical trespass
- Agricultural and veterinary chemical residues in produce, and food safety issues
- Education and community awareness programs regarding chemical use.

Visit [www.pir.sa.gov.au/ruralchem](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/ruralchem)

## Revamp of ServiceSA Drought Information

The Service SA website has recently been revamped. The update includes an improvement to the layout of information so it is now in a similar structure to the South Australia's Guide to Drought Assistance Measures Brochure. The website will continue to be improved in the coming months to increase the information available on the drought programs and will include an improved frequently asked questions section to help answer your questions.

The improvements have also included the development of an online enquiry system. This system will enable individuals to submit a drought related question through the website directly to the Government. We will endeavour to respond to your enquiry within 10 working days.

To access the enquiry point and submit a question go to:

[www.service.sa.gov.au/drought.asp](http://www.service.sa.gov.au/drought.asp)

## Branch Briefs

**Murraylands Region:** Bureau members will be present at the Karoonda Farm Fair on 4 and 5 April at the Karoonda Sports Complex. Call in and visit the team at the PIRSA site.

**Lower North Region:** A series of Bureau harvest report meetings were conducted at Mallala, Snowtown, Owen and Stockport in February. Other recent events include a seed dressing and new chemical "Boxer Gold" information night organised by Freeling Branch March 4 and a Precision Agriculture meeting at Mallala with Sam Trengove on March 18

**Parawa:** Water allocation was the hot topic at the branch's February meeting with Marion Santich, Senior Policy Officer, Adelaide & Mt Lofty Ranges NRM Board on hand to discuss the proposed Water Allocation Plan for the Western Mt Lofty Ranges. With non-members also present there were so many questions from the floor that Marion abandoned her power point presentation.

**Saddleworth and Waterloo:** Former Bureau member, Murray l'Anson was named Clare and Gilbert Valley Council's Citizen of the Year. Murray is known for his many commitments to the community and of course the Bureau.

**Wirrega Lowan Vale:** Together with the MacKillop Farm Management Group, a very successful demonstration day was held on 14 February with the Spayder machine at Roger Grocock's farm. Members are now awaiting with interest to see the use of the machine on the local duplex soils and what can be achieved in production outcomes.

## Weather Watch

South Australia is expected to face warmer temperatures and a 50:50 chance of above average rainfall during the forthcoming June quarter, according to the Bureau of Meteorology.

In its seasonal temperature and seasonal rainfall outlook released last week, indicators suggest that the chances of above average normal maximum temperatures in the southern areas of the State is between 60 and 70%, with chances of exceeding the three-month media rainfall between 45 and 60%.

The minimum temperature outlook for the quarter indicate cooler nights.

The exceptional and prolonged heat wave experienced throughout the State in March was the result of a persistent high-pressure system in the southern Tasman sea.

The "blocking high in the Tasman Sea directed north to north-easterly winds through much of the southern part of the continent. While "blocking highs" are not unusual, the persistence of this system over more than two weeks is according to the Bureau, very rare in Summer and Autumn.

Many centres in the State set records for the most consecutive days with high temperatures.

Adelaide had 15 consecutive days above 35C and 13 consecutive days above 37.8C (100F), breaking the previous records of eight and seven days respectively and a new record for any Australia capital city. Also break consecutive days records were Ceduna with 12 days over 35C, Mildura with 14 days over 35C and Kyancutta with 13 days over 40C.

For further information visit [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au)

## Lochaber Farewells Father and Son

Father and son members Phil and Craig Biggins were recently farewelled from the Lochaber Agricultural Bureau with a BBQ following their move to Naracoorte.

Phil initially joined the Browns Well Branch in 1959 before joining the Lochaber Branch where he went on to hold the positions of Secretary, Vice President and President. He was also a recipient of a 20 Year Service award from the Branch.

Craig also initially was a member of the Brown Well Branch, joining in 1982 before moving to the Lochaber Branch. During his five years as a committee member he also served terms as President and Vice President. Craig joined Browns Well Bureau in 1982 aged 18 years then transferred to Lochaber Bureau serving 5 years as a Committee Member including Vice President and President.

Both Phil and Craig believe they have gained greatly from their membership of both Agricultural Bureau branches. Not only socially but also in expanding their agricultural knowledge - in particular localised knowledge.



Farewelling Lochaber (from left to right): Phil Biggins, Tony Legoe (Lochaber President) and Craig Biggins

## WAB News



A new email branch of Women in Agriculture and Business of SA called WAB On Line launched in March last year now boasts 21 members.

The move was prompted by the need for busy rural women, unable to attend meetings because of time limitations or isolation, to have membership of a rural women's organisation.

WAB On Line members live as far apart as Beachport in the South East to the Gawler Ranges and all places in between.

Members receive all WAB news and

information by email, are invited to Regional and State Conferences and other WAB events around the State.

Regional Councillor, Adair Dunsford said On Line members have already represented WAB at an Obesity Conference and a recent Building Community Resilience seminar. The first annual dinner was held in

November when members met WAB State Councillors over a meal in Adelaide. A monthly email 'meeting' day is planned so members can communicate directly with each other.

Membership of WAB On Line is \$20 annually and anyone interested should contact Meg Partridge by email - [pirsa.wab@saugov.sa.gov.au](mailto:pirsa.wab@saugov.sa.gov.au) or telephone 8226 0250



Attending WAB's On Line Branch first annual dinner were from left: Mary Wilkinson (Macclesfield), Gay Glynn (Parrakie), Jane Smith (Yeelana), Bonnie Pfeiffer (Parrakie), Sharon Honner (Ardrossan), Adair Dunsford (Regional Councillor) and Jenny Hocking (Athelstone)

## Updates

### Closing Dates for Interest Rates Subsidies Reminder

Farm businesses and farm dependent small businesses considering applying for interest rate subsidies in the River Murray Corridor and Fleurieu Peninsula Exceptional Circumstances (EC) region are reminded that the closing date for Year One applications is 17 April.

For further information on the subsidy and other drought packages visit [www.pir.sa.gov.au/pirsa/drought](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/pirsa/drought). For application support contact Rural Financial Counselling Service SA on 1800 836 211.

### Need Help Making Crucial Business Decisions?

Rural Solutions SA will be holding a decisions point workshop from 9.30 am to 3.30 on 8-9 April at the Riverland Loxton Research Centre, Bookpurnong

Rd to assist farming families secure their business future.

Information on succession planning, business structure, tax minimisation, superannuation, updating your will and retirement will be available to help those considering leaving their farm to the next generation or exiting the business.

The session is open to all. Costs include \$95 per person for farmers inclusive of a FarmBis subsidy or \$440 per person for non-farmers.

To register contact Anita Baltutis or John Noonan on 8291 2800.

### Seeking Young Farmers for Leadership Development

Two programs to provide leadership development amongst people aged 18-35 involved in primary production in South Australia will be offered in 2008.

The aim of the programs is to provide young primary producers with a range of leadership development

opportunities and experiences to address succession issues in their businesses as well as organizations within their community and industry sector.

The program will be held as a four day residential workshop with a further two day residential follow up session. Both sessions are held in Adelaide.

There is no cost to participate. Accommodation costs are included and participants will be reimbursed for travel costs to and from the program. Applications are now open.

Program One: 28 April to 1 May with a follow up session on 3 and 4 June.

Program Two: 26 to 29 August with a follow up session on 9 and 10 October.

For more information visit the PIRSA website [www.pir.sa.gov.au/pirsa/drought](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/pirsa/drought) and click the link on the right hand side of the page or contact Lib Hylton Keele, PIRSA on 8226 0245.

## Farmers Can Compete In Attracting Labour

Farmers can step up the challenge against attracting and retaining staff by becoming 'employers of first choice' and offering greater staff incentives.

FarmBis State Planning Group Chair, Laura Fell says the rural skills shortage is being challenged by farmers willing to create a more 'attractive' workplace for their employees.

"Farmers just like any other business managers have the responsibility to create an innovative and attractive workplace for employees to keep them from leaving the business and industry," Ms Fell said.

"While we can't overlook the pressures that drought and apparently the lucrative mining industry are having

on staff attraction and retention, there are many ways producers can value-add to their career packages in the farming industry.

"Many of the younger generation have left the family farm to find work elsewhere because of the perceived lack of opportunities. However, while drought is affecting some areas – others are prospering and require skilled labour."

Ms Fell says attracting and keeping skilled people is more than paying good wages, it's about providing a good working environment.

"Farmers need to find the right 'carrots' for their staff and their business, such as providing performance based

rewards, flexible working conditions and providing free or subsidised accommodation," she said.

Ms Fell suggests the best way for farmers to improve is to up-skill in all areas of human resource management to maximise employment outcomes within their regions.

For more information visit [www.farmbis.sa.gov.au](http://www.farmbis.sa.gov.au) or freecall 1800 182 235.



## Drought Information

Drought Assistance eligibility guidelines are available from: PIRSA Prudential and Rural Financial Management, on 1800 182 235 (freecall)

Further information is available from:

- PIRSA website drought page [www.pir.sa.gov.au/drought](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/drought) or the Drought Hotline: 180 2020 (freecall)
- SA Government Drought Response <http://www.sa.gov.au/drought>
- Rural Financial Counselling Service SA <http://www.rfcssa.org.au/>
- Centrelink Drought Assistance [http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/drought\\_assist.htm](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/drought_assist.htm)
- Australian Government Drought Assistance <http://www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/drought>
- beyondblue <http://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

For the latest news and tips on the drought and government programs subscribe to the free weekly drought e-news. Log onto [www.sa.gov.au/drought](http://www.sa.gov.au/drought). Jump to media and communication and follow the prompt under drought e-news.

## Your ABA regional representatives

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8527 2077  
0417 830 406

Philip Wheaton (Far West Coast/  
Central EP)  
8626 1301  
0428 261 301

Heather Baldock (Eastern Eyre  
Peninsula)  
8627 4056  
0428 101 416

Peter Rose (Murraylands)  
8578 9049

Trevor Wilksch (Barossa Valley)  
8524 5344  
0417 391 124

Vic Walter (Fleurieu / Murray Plains)  
8598 5335  
0438 011 200

Lyn Teakle (Women in Ag &  
Business rep)  
8737 2669  
0427 372 669

Allen Meissner (Adelaide Hills)  
8388 3378

Tony Loffler (Riverland)  
8584 9083

Richard Murdoch (Yorke Peninsula /  
Hummocks)  
8854 5115  
0419 842 419

Janette Ridgway (Upper South  
East)  
8753 2338  
0427 532 338

Yvonne Correll (Mid and Lower  
South East)  
8765 8065  
0438 273 264