

Agricultural Bureau
of South Australia Inc.
PATHWAY TO IMPROVEMENT



MEMBERS HANDBOOK ADDRESS LIST CONSTITUTION

April 2003

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Consitution

This Handbook has been prepared to guide and assist members of Agricultural Bureau Branches in conducting their activities. It describes briefly the history and organisation of the Agricultural Bureau, and outlines administration requirements and services offered by the Bureau.

The administration of group meetings should be made easier and less time-consuming if those concerned become familiar with the contents of the Handbook. Current and new office bearers, including committee members, would benefit from being familiar with these notes.

Copies of this handbook are available through Executive Officer, GPO Box 1671, Adelaide SA 5001; phone: 1800 65 2258.

1 ORIGIN

In May 1887 Mr. Albert Molineux suggested the establishment of an Agricultural Bureau in South Australia to assist the education of primary producers and to allow farmers to come together to discuss their farming problems. His concept was for a "farmer's organisation" divorced from all political and concession-seeking activities and that at meetings, farmers should involve themselves only with matters concerning their livelihood and include subjects of interest to younger people and wives.

On 27 February 1888 the Government adopted the suggestion and on 10 April 1888 the inaugural meeting of the Central Agricultural Bureau of South Australia was held.

The Central Agricultural Bureau of South Australia consisted of nine or more members. The function of the Central Bureau was:

- (1) to advise the Minister of Agriculture regarding agricultural matters; and
- (2) to supervise and act as a Board of Control of the Agricultural Bureau of SA.

In June 1902 the Central Bureau was replaced by the Council of Agriculture, and in July 1905, the Council was reconstituted as the Advisory Board of Agriculture.

In 1900 or a little earlier, the Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Census and Statistics took over many of the functions formerly in the hands of the Central Bureau.

The first Congress of the Agricultural Bureau was held in the Concert Hall of the Jubilee Exhibition Buildings, North Terrace, from 4-7 March, 1890. It was attended by representatives of most of the Branches.

The first publication containing official records of the work of the Bureau was published in 1889 and was known as the Journal of the Bureau of Agriculture, which was replaced by The Journal of the Department of Agriculture from 1897 to 1975.

2 ROLE AND STRUCTURE

The Agricultural Bureau is a voluntary organisation of people allied to or interested in agricultural development and education, who meet regularly to exchange ideas, discuss farming practices and keep abreast of the latest developments. The Bureau helps bridge scientists with farmers and helps members to work together to solve problems of management and marketing, as well as individual or group problems. It is non-party political, non-sectarian and non-concession seeking.

The objective of the Bureau is to promote improved economic and practical agriculture to the benefit of the farmer, the community and the State.

2.1 The Advisory Board of Agriculture in South Australia

The Advisory Board of Agriculture (ABA) is the governing body of the Agricultural Bureau.

The Board currently consists of the Chief Executive of Primary Industries & Resources South Australia [PIRSA], the Executive Director of the South Australian Research & Development Institute [SARDI], the Executive Dean, Faculty of Sciences at the University of

Adelaide, and 14 Bureau members nominated by Branches and appointed by the Minister of the day. There is also a representative from tWomen in Agriculture and Business (WAB).

The Board is governed by the Constitution of the Agricultural Bureau of SA Inc.

2.2 Membership of the Bureau

Membership is available to people interested and / or involved in agriculture. There are approximately 3500 members in 120 active Branches throughout South Australia (2003). Members of the Bureau pay a membership fee to cover costs of operating the Bureau, insurance, the Bureau Project Fund and promotion.

Membership of a local Bureau offers:

- interaction with other farmers to discuss and share relevant issues,
- access to latest research and development activity and information,
- direct communication with Government,
- access to the Bureau project fund, and
- opportunities to participate in group [training and other] activities,

Note that being a member has cover for personal and accident insurance while participating in Bureau activities.

2.3 Branches

Branches consist of members of the Bureau. An active Branch area has the:

- ability to attract experts and leaders from elsewhere into your area,
- scope to initiate and conduct trials and demonstration of new technology,
- capacity to develop projects of local and regional relevance,
- ability to apply for funds from the Bureau Project Fund and other industry and government schemes, and
- numbers and credibility to influencing government and industry policy directions.

The insurance policy of the Bureau provides \$10m liability cover for bodily injury for non-members and property damaged in the course of Bureau activities.

Branches can be formed or closed through notification/approval of the ABA, the governing body of the Bureau. The operations of the Branches are governed by the Constitution of the Agricultural Bureau of South Australia Incorporated, but operate more-or-less autonomously through the Branch committee, which is elected annually.

The section in this handbook, "Branch Administration" provides more details regarding suggested workings of Branches and Section 8 provides principles that Branches could adopt, noting that the Constitution actually sets out the legal framework for Branches.

2.4 District Bureau Executive

In some regions, groups of Branches meet to form District Bureau Executives. District committees provide the opportunity for Branches to join with neighbouring Branches to exchange information on programming and resolve common issues and problems. Their aim is to assist individual Branches fulfil members needs through the exchange of ideas.

2.5 Branch activities

The Bureau encourages Branches to have a range of activity types to cater to the different interests of members. In addition to the traditional meeting format, Branches initiate, field days, demonstrations, paddock trials, farm walks as parts of their activities. Successful Branches tend to be those that routinely organise a range of activities and projects.

Note that the Karoonda, KI, YP and Riverland Field Days are all Bureau initiatives.

2.6 District conferences

Conferences may be arranged to provide coverage of subjects that are of interest to the whole district and which are complementary to Branch activities. Conferences are usually hosted on a rotational basis. Refer to the Conference section below.

2.7 Bureau Projects

The Bureau encourages project funded activities for which there are at least three approaches that can be taken to gain financial support.

1. The ABA organises State-wide projects which Branches participate in. Such projects have included Better Soils and Better Breeding. For these projects the Board was successful in applying for funds from the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) for Better Soils, and from the International Wool Secretariat (IWS) for Better Breeding.
2. The ABA manages the Bureau Project Fund to which Branches can apply for funds to carry out small projects. (see appendix 2).
3. Individual Branches or District Bureau Executives can apply for and run their own projects as some branches are running their own Landcare and Envirofund projects.

3 THE FUTURE

The Bureau has a long and distinguished history that has played a vital role in the development of agriculture and rural communities in this state, and has a huge potential to do so in the future.

The face of agriculture and rural communities has and is changing at a very rapid pace, and this has presented many challenges to the effectiveness and strength of the network. The original formality of the structure and format of the Bureau now has less relevance to the majority of the newer generations of rural people, and the challenge for the future is to retain the effective parts of that formality, but to develop approaches that are flexible and responsive to the modern era.

The Bureau structure does provide for flexibility in the structure arrangements and range of activities that can be undertaken. It also allows for members to decide to join with other Branches, to exist as an entity with just a small core of members who can remain as a focus for Bureau communications and initiatives

4 GUIDELINES FOR THE DUTIES OF ABA MEMBERS

The following are a guide as to the expectations of members joining the ABA.

1. **Attend Board meetings.** Follow-up matters which relate to the Branches in your area.
2. **Keep in regular contact with Branches, Branch Secretaries and members** in your district, to find out how Branches are functioning and give advice and guidance on administration and programming. Through personal contact, phone contact, visits to Branch meetings, regularly report your activities to Board meetings.
3. **Assess the Agricultural Bureau Branches in your district:**

Are numbers increasing or decreasing? Is it enterprise orientated? Level of interest in Branch, regional, district activities? How effective is the Branch program? Are members willing to take office? Are members willing to support regional or district activities? What is the local prestige rating of the Branch?
4. **Assess the needs of the Agricultural Bureau and the district as a whole.** Look at Branch admin and the need for conducting administration sessions for office bearers?
 - conduct a specific programs to resolve local problems?
 - trials, projects, demonstrations, field days or special meetings?
5. **Seek advice and assistance in and for the district through** discussion at Board meetings, Executive Officer, local PIRSA staff
6. Offer help to Branch officers and members:
 - advise on administration and programming, promote Branch, regional and district activities, assist with development of schools, demonstrations, field days, advertise Bureau and Board activities at every opportunity.
7. **Attend and participate in Regional meetings.**
8. **Establish/maintain close liaison between PIRSA and Bureau members.**
9. **Report to the Board** on the state of the Bureau and agriculture in your district.
10. **Bring to Board's attention**, matters to be discussed / forwarded to Minister / Dept..
11. **Foster new Branches and promote the Agricultural Bureau** and membership.
12. Board members may be invited to **open conferences** both in and out of their district and may also be asked to **present membership awards** at Branch meetings / Conferences.
13. Other **associated duties** as from time to time may arise:
 - represent Board on committees and conferences,
 - open shows and other functions as a Board member, and
 - act as an information source for local organisations.

5 BRANCH ADMINISTRATION

This is the responsibility of the Branch committee and its executive. The president, secretary, treasurer and committee members have responsibilities to the Branch.

The following is *suggested* for Branches Officers (see Appendix 1):

President and Vice-President

Maximum of two consecutive years. A president and vice-president shall not be eligible for re-election to that same office until the lapse of a further two years.

Secretary

Two-year appointment with a maximum term of four consecutive years and to change on alternate years to that of the president. This ensures that the position of a new secretary will have the support and guidance of an experienced president and vice-versa.

Treasurer

Maximum of four consecutive years.

Auditor

Suggest local bank manager or business person.

Officers of Branches who require assistance should contact their local Board member.

5.1 A Guide for Presidents

The role of the president is to Chair the meetings and activities of the Branch and would be expected to lead the group through its activities. Note that the Constitution states that ***“Each Branch shall hold an annual general meeting during the month of July”***.

Generally the president should:

- facilitate and guide Branch decisions that are the wishes of the majority
- be familiar with the Constitution and rules of the organisation, and
- the general rules of meeting procedures.

5.2 A Guide for Secretaries

The secretary is the executive officer of the Branch and carries out the decisions of the Branch. Regular duties include:

- review membership and attendance records after the AGM in July
- Return the membership roll to the Bureau’s Executive Officer.
- Forward annual activity program to the Bureau’s Executive Officer
- Make applications for membership and service awards.
- Inform Bureau’s Executive Officer of changes to office-bearers after AGM.
- Ensure payment of membership fees to the Bureau Treasurer.
- Deal with Bureau circulars and any other mail.

In addition, Secretaries often:

- arrange guest speakers
- organise activities with the President and Committee
- notify members of Branch activities and meetings,
- prepare correspondence and agendas with the President
- keep accurate minutes
- maintain an accurate attendance roll (as a reference for membership awards)
- liaise with the ABA member.

5.3 Duties of Treasurer

- To receive all monies, issue receipts and bank all money .
- To present a financial statement to each Branch meeting.
- To present accounts to be passed for payment, and move their acceptance.
- The bank account to be in the name of the Branch. Cheques to be signed by two signatories, usually any two of the treasurer, president and secretary.
- To present an audited statement of receipts and payments at each AGM.
- To arrange payment of membership fees to the State Treasurer.

5.4 The Annual General Meeting

The Constitution does state the need for the Branches to conduct an AGM. The following is standard agenda.

1. Opening, welcome and apologies
2. Minutes of previous AGM
3. Annual report - compiled by the president and secretary
4. Treasurer's audited financial statement
5. Election of officers and appointment of honorary auditor
6. Branch annual subscription (inc the membership to be paid to the State Treasurer)
7. Any special business, eg. dates and times of meetings
8. Close

5.5 Branch Programs

Branches are encouraged to be flexible and open to suggestion regarding formats and subject of activities. Branches are certainly also encouraged to adopt an approach based on activity and project focus, as opposed to approaches focussed solely on information exchange. The Bureau is well set up for receiving funding grants to undertake projects of all types, and it is activities that are likely to attract members to join and participate.

An important matter to address is a constant monitoring of how activities are being received by the members. The ABA is keen to support improvements that can be made to Branch programs and to assist in making them interesting and relevant.

5.6 Procedure for opening a Branch

A group that wishes to become a Branch of the Bureau because its activities are consistent with the intent and spirit of the Constitution, can pass a motion at their meeting and make application. It would generally be beneficial to involve a member of the ABA in that process, to ensure clear communication and understanding.

Subsequent communication with the ABA will request the approval of becoming a registered Branch. Upon approval, the Group would be advised and begin to operate as Branch and receive the benefits and services which that provides for. It is normal for the Branch to have a bank account with three signatories and keep its own financial records.

5.7 Procedures for the closure of a Branch

If a Branch contemplates closing or going into recess, then a motion should be passed to that effect and the ABA be advised.

6 GUIDE NOTES FOR MEMBERSHIP AWARDS

The approval of membership awards for meritorious service is governed by the Constitution of the Agricultural Bureau of South Australia (Section 11).

Guidelines for Branch nominations of members

- 1 Details for awards must be on the prescribed form and contain as much detail as possible.
- 2 Years of membership need not be continuous and may involve more than one Branch.
- 3 In addition to years of membership and frequency of membership, the nominee should also have contributed in some ways to the welfare of the Branch, eg. offered his/her property for field days or trials, contributed a paper at a conference or Branch meeting, or held office etc.
- 4 The Branch must forward the nomination to their Advisory Board member on the form.
- 5 The Board may approve a nomination in exceptional circumstances (eg. where no record is available for attendances over some years) provided the Board is satisfied that the Branch has made a reasonable attempt to supply all relevant information.

Presentation of membership awards

Presentation by the Chairman of the ABA or a member of the Advisory Board of Agriculture will be made at district conferences unless otherwise specifically requested by the Branch.

The Advisory Board will, as much as possible, present all membership awards with certificates and / or badges.

7 SUGGESTED BRANCH GUIDELINES

*The following are guidelines **only**. Branches need to make their own rules.*

1 Name

The group shall be known as theBranch of the Agricultural Bureau of SA Inc.

2 Aims and objectives

2.1 To encourage and enable members to collect and discuss information that will help those engaged in primary production or other pursuits connected with the growing of primary products in South Australia.

2.2 To work in close co-operation with Primary Industries and Resources South Australia [PIRSA] which has undertaken to support the Bureau and provide technical assistance calculated to improve agricultural production in South Australia.

2.3 To promote goodwill, friendship and understanding among members.

3 Membership

3.1 A person may become a member of the Bureau if approved by the Branch.

3.2 To maintain membership, a member must regularly attend Branch meetings (a minimum of 3 meetings per year is necessary) unless given leave of absence by the committee. All membership fees due should be paid at the appropriate time, including to the State Treasurer.

3.3 Once in each year the membership roll shall be revised and a copy sent to the Bureau's Executive Officer.

4 Branch management

The affairs of the Branch shall be managed by the Branch committee.

5 Offices

The office bearers of the Branch shall be as follows:

- president
- vice-president
- secretary
- treasurer
- A committee, which shall consist of the president, secretary and 5 members
- An auditor, who may be a member of the Branch for convenience.

The offices of secretary and treasurer may be held by the one person.

6 Terms of office

The offices of president and vice-president should not be held by the same persons for more than two consecutive years. A president and vice-president shall not be eligible for re-election to that same office until the lapse of a further two years.

The offices of secretary and treasurer shall not be held by the same person or persons for more than four consecutive years.

7 Meetings

7.1 The Branch shall hold an annual general meeting during the month of July.

7.2 All members shall be given at least 7 days notice of the AGM and ordinary meetings.

7.3 Ordinary meetings be held monthly (or otherwise recommended by the committee)

8 Special meetings

A special meeting of a Branch may be called at any time by:

- The president
- The committee
- A joint request in writing by at least five financial members of the Branch, clearly setting out the reason for which the meeting is required.

All members shall be given at least seven days' notice of a special general meeting by a circular clearly setting out the purpose of that meeting.

9 By-elections

By-elections to fill a vacancy occurring during the year shall be conducted at either a special general meeting or an ordinary Branch meeting, provided that all members are given at least seven days' notice of such election.

10 Voting

Voting at all elections shall be conducted by a method determined by the Branch.

11 Quorums

A quorum at a committee meeting shall be three if the committee has five or fewer members, or one half of the total if the committee is larger.

A quorum for a Branch meeting shall be one third of the financial members.

12 Sub-committees

Sub-committees may be appointed by the committee or the Branch to undertake any particular Branch activities duly delegated to them. Any such sub-committee may be disbanded by resolution of the Branch at an ordinary meeting or is automatically disbanded when its task is complete.

Finance

13.1 The Branch shall fix such subscriptions for membership as shall be decided from time to time at the annual meeting.

13.2 The Branch shall be wholly responsible for raising the finance necessary for the proper administration and for keeping the financial records.

13.3 Membership fees set by the Advisory Board of Agriculture shall be paid promptly and forwarded to the State Treasurer.

14 Duties

14.1 The president shall take the chair at all meetings of the Branch.

14.2 In the absence of the president, the vice-president shall take the chair.

14.3 In the event of neither the president nor the vice-president being present, the members present at the meeting shall elect a person to chair that meeting.

14.4 The secretary will:

1. Record in a book to be provided:
 - minutes of all meetings of the Branch (including field days, tours, etc.)
 - a full and complete list of the members of the Branch
 - the attendance of members at each meeting.
2. Answer correspondence.
3. Generally transact the secretarial duties of the Branch under the direction of the committee.
4. Assist the president to prepare an annual report of the year's activities of the Branch for presentation to the annual general meeting.

14.5 The treasurer:

1. shall record in a manner approved, the receipt and expenditure of all monies.
2. shall present an audited financial statement at each annual general meeting.

14.6 The committee:

- may, from time to time, frame such by-laws as appear to them necessary for the proper carrying out of any or all of the objectives of the Branch, and all such by-laws, after approval at a general meeting, shall be binding on all members of the Branch.

15 On no account shall any matter or question of religious or party policy nature be discussed by members at a Branch meeting.

8 BUREAU PROJECT FUND

Purpose of Fund

The aim is to encourage, develop and support local Bureau projects that actively pursue the aims and objectives of the Agricultural Bureau. This includes the collection and discussion of information designed to enhance understanding, co-operation and productivity and to improve the skills and quality of life for Bureau members and their agricultural community.

Guidelines

1. The project must have an identified purpose, a practical plan to achieve this purpose and be in response to project should complement rather than duplicate other locally available services.
2. The project should be accessible to all relevant families and individuals living in an area and encourage participation including non-Bureau members.
3. Applicants are encouraged to seek funds in addition to monies sought from the Project Fund. Projects will be rated highly when Ag Bureau funds are utilised as seed funding to attract additional resources or when Ag Bureau funds supplement existing or planned activities.
4. The Bureau must be recognised by funding recipients as a funding contributor.
5. At the end of the project a written assessment including an expenditure statement must be forwarded to the ABA. **To ensure a report is provided, three-quarters of the funding will be provided initially with the remainder being paid after a report has been received.**
6. Bus trips will be assessed on merit. Generally it is expected that those on the bus trip will pay all or most of the costs involved.
7. Preferably, Bureau conferences should be self-funded or sufficient sponsorship should be obtained. If conferences are supported, it has to be agreed to by all Branches in that area.

Priorities for the Allocation of Funds?

1. Each application will be assessed on its individual merit.
2. The intent of the Fund does not include considerations of equity across the Branches or regions, rather it adheres to a principle that rewards initiative and merit. However, the ABA may target priority issues, Branches, regions to encourage the uptake of the Fund
3. Areas of high need, demonstrated by such factors as geographic isolation, low membership.
4. When there is no other source of funding (all avenues tried should be listed in the application).
5. Particular consideration will be given to innovative ideas to cater for Branch or regional needs.
6. There is a limit of \$1,000 available per year, per Branch for projects. Multiple Branches combining on projects could develop larger funding applications projects.
7. Projects that involve more than one branch and increase interaction with relevant organisations will be rated favourably. Applicants are encouraged to outline how project outcomes will be extended beyond those immediately involved.

Applications will be assessed at the ABA meeting following receipt of the application. Application

Forms and other details are available from the Executive Officer.

- Applications will only be considered from Branches that have paid their current membership fees.
- The ABA will determine the merit of each application and administer the Bureau Project Fund.
- Successful applicants are to report to the ABA on the outcomes of their project when completed.

The application form available through the executive officer requires the following information

9 PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE

The Bureau's risk policy grants indemnity to the Board, and all Bureau Branches affiliated with the Board. The main purpose of the policy is to cover any member of the public in respect of any personal bodily injury or any accidental damage to property (due to negligence on the part of the Bureau) resulting from any Bureau activity. The policy also indemnifies any individual person or persons in respect of any claim arising while they are voluntarily engaged in an activity organised for or on behalf of any of the insured.

The insurance includes liability for goods sold.

The limit of liability under the current policy is \$10 million dollars plus legal expenses.

In everything we do, we are duty bound not to cause personal bodily injury to another person or damage to his or her property. If we fail to observe this duty of care we become liable for the consequences of our actions and in the present-day, community claims for third party damages can be very substantial indeed.

The best known area of third party liability insurance concerns the use of motor vehicles, but the same duty of care applies with everything we do either as individuals or as groups of individuals formed into committees, associations, clubs and the like.

This means that the Board and the Bureau Branch can all become liable for damages arising out of an act of carelessness or negligence on the part of someone engaged in their activities and the potential amounts which may be awarded by way of damages are such that insurance from the liability is essential.

The indemnity arranged covers all activities normally undertaken by respective groups but there are certain policy exclusions that should be kept in mind, in particular:

Claims

- In respect of the use of any vehicle in the physical or legal control of any of the insured or in respect of any waterborne craft.
- In respect of bodily injury to or damage to the property of any person in the employ of any of the insureds.
- In respect of damage to property in the physical or legal control of any of the insureds.

The last exclusion is important. It means that if a Bureau is conducting a display on a basis whereby the Bureau assumes physical and legal control of appliances and other exhibits it would have no protection under the policy if the property was lost or damaged. The merchants and agents for the appliances and other items usually retain control and oversee their display areas, whereby their property would not be "in the physical and legal control" of the Bureau, and as such, if it was damaged in circumstances whereby the Bureau became liable, the policy would provide indemnity.

By incorporating the Board and Bureau as the Agricultural Bureau of SA Inc., the Board has ensured greater protection for members and organising committees with respect to third party liability claims. Any claim made will be made against the incorporated body and not against individual members or committees.

Any claims would involve legal proceedings as negligence by the Bureau would have to be proved.