

Primary Interest

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



Issue 3, August 2008

Seeking Members' Input

Adapting to climate change, developing business management skills, increased production costs and succession planning was among the concerns expressed by farmers in a recent survey of Bureau members.

The survey, conducted by the Advisory Board of Agriculture (ABA), is part of a follow-up to January's Think Tank.

ABA Chair Mark Dennis said that the survey was important in providing members with a forum to having their thoughts and views on the future of farming heard.

"As we all know farmers and land managers are operating in an increasingly difficult environment as they grapple with the rapid changes in climate and technology," he said.

"As a result it is increasingly imperative that the ABA keeps identifying these issues to build up a picture of farming in the 21st century."

Ensuring sustainability and productivity with climate change was the focus that many farmers wanted to see conducted in agricultural research. The most common concerns were in the area of further information and training, developing business management skills.

The greatest risks to business success were identified as increased production costs (particularly fuel, fertiliser, chemicals and water), along with concerns over the consistency in pricing for agricultural products and

"Day Off, Peter" Returns to Angaston



Angaston's landmark farmer and plough horse statue titled "Day off Peter" has pride of place again in the Memorial Reserve on Murray Street.

The new look for the restored statue was unveiled on 13 May by the Minister for Regional Development, Karlene Maywald, marking the 120th anniversary of the formation of the Angaston Agricultural Bureau, the oldest Bureau branch in Australia.

Christopher Radford, the original sculptor was also on hand to welcome the statue back to Angaston.

More pictures and story on page 3.

the greater terms of trade.

Many respondents also expressed concerns about overall family health due to increased stress and the declining viability of farming.

Mr Dennis said the survey results confirmed not only the issues that emerged at the Think Tank but also through general discussions with farmers and members around the State.

"The survey has essentially confirmed the anecdotal picture that was starting to build up," he said.

To address these concerns the ABA is now looking at establishing an extension project aimed at establishing more on-ground help for farmers and farming groups.

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Sowing the Seeds with Mark Dennis

It is a fact of life that change is the only constant in this day and age. A mantra that is all too true in agriculture.

The question for us as land managers is how to embrace that change and assist us in our enterprises.

One of the best ways to approach this is to redefine our role. Instead of looking at ourselves as "just a farmer" why don't we consider ourselves as land management specialists?

Labelling ourselves in this way should provide us with the confidence to tackle the many and varied facets that the role now brings.

The ABA and the Agricultural Bureau assists with this changing outlook by encouraging the take up of best practice. Reaching and maintaining such standards is always achieved through the exchange of information.

Therefore as we celebrate our 120th anniversary it is timely to remember that the idea behind the establishment of the Bureau network was to provide an information outlet for farmers and to further the development of agriculture in South Australia.

While at first glance 21st century agriculture is a vastly different industry to that practised by the Bureau's founders, information exchange is still an important aspect. As was the case in 1888, this exchange is still best

facilitated through your peers either informally or formally.

The bottom line is that you shouldn't wait to be asked to give help. If you see a neighbour who may be in need of advice and guidance then give it. It is amazing how far the art of gentle persuasion can go in enabling practice change to occur.

Another important aspect in dealing with the constantly changing world of 21st century agriculture is succession planning. Not only is it a vital part of family enterprises but is also a critical element in lifting the profile of

"The bottom line is that you shouldn't wait to be asked to give help."

farming, not to mention keeping people in the regions.

While our children may not be initially interested in working on the farm or consider farming as a career, it is in our interest to remind them that there are other agriculture jobs out there, in areas such as research and marketing. These are all skills that can come in handy for family agribusiness.

It is therefore pleasing to hear about initiatives currently being



developed to provide cross skills training that would be of benefit to both ourselves by and the mining sector. Like many industries, we are struggling with the skills shortage that is sweeping the country and anything that can assist in attracting and maintaining our future talent has to be applauded.

Farming may be a tough business but it is time for us as a collective whole to lift our profile and embrace change. Our greatest challenge may not be dealing with drought and climate change but to ensure that there is a future generation willing to give it a try.

Board Bis

June meeting

The Advisory Board of Agriculture met on 10 and 11 June.

Board members received a presentation from dean Cresswell and Peter Smith from Urrbrae Agricultural High School on agricultural education in South Australia.

Andrew Curtis from the Agra-food Work Force Development also

spoke to the Board on workforce development in the agricultural sector.

Ceris Crosby former FarmBis Networker conducted a demonstration on the use of internet telephone software program Skype.

Service to Primary Production Award

So does your Branch have someone in your community that you would like to recognise?

Each Bureau Branch has the opportunity to nominate a person they believe has provided exceptional service to primary production. The person nominated does not need to be a Bureau member, and it is not restricted to farmers, the only criterion is that they are involved in primary production.

Nominations for this year's awards are now open and close on Friday, 19 September.

Peter Returns Home



Peter hasn't been seen in Angaston for a while....

And he's been sorely missed during that time.

But now Angaston's landmark farmer and plough horse statue titled "Day off Peter" has pride of place again in the Memorial Reserve on Murray Street.

The new look for the restored statue was unveiled in May by former Minister for Regional

Development, Karlene Maywald.

The ceremony celebrated the partnership between the Angaston community, the State Government and the Barossa Council.

The unveiling coincided with the 120th anniversary of the Angaston Agricultural Bureau, the oldest bureau branch in Australia.

The statue pays tribute to the agricultural heritage of the district and is seen potentially by more



Left: Sculptor Christopher Radford unveils the bronze version of his original statue. Top (Left to right): Project Officer Jen Light, The Hon. Karlene Maywald and James Graetz, President of the Angaston Agricultural Bureau inspect the new look Day Off, Peter.

than 200,000 visitors to Angaston and the Barossa region each year.

The State Government contributed \$60,000 from the Rural Town Development Fund. This was matched by funds from a local community fundraising campaign initiated by the Angaston Agricultural Bureau and a \$10,000 commitment from the Barossa Council.

The Secret of Parawa's Success

From the humblest of beginnings in a local woolshed the Parawa Agricultural Bureau is still going strong after more than 50 years.

And the secret to its success – strong links with the local community.

Situated approximately 36 kilometres west of Victor Harbor on the Fleurieu Peninsula, Parawa is predominantly a sheep and cattle producing district.

The branch held its first ever meeting in a local woolshed in 1951 with 26 foundation members. Originally named the Range Road branch, it became Parawa in 1952 and has gone on to achieve great success for the region and its occupants.

Current President Graeme Golding

explained that the branch had a strong tradition of community involvement and collective achievement.

"Having a number of members also sitting on the Parawa Progress Association we have been able to successfully combine our Bureau branch with the Association," he said. "Together we have been able to achieve great outcomes for the community."

Mr Golding said that in order for members to reap the benefits of their involvement in the bureau, the branch aims to provide and develop programs that meet the specific needs of the region.

"Farmers need to be able to

communicate on a personal level, which is why the Ag Bureau is so important as it gives them a vehicle to talk about their experiences and offer advice on issues affecting the industry," he said.

"Even with the development of the internet as an information tool that farmers can access, you still can't put a price on the value of face-to-face communication offered by the Bureau."

Continuing their aims of achieving community outcomes, the Parawa Branch has a number of other programs in the pipeline, including proposals for kangaroo management in the region, as well as water security and glacial sands projects.

Peter Olsen Fellowship Solves Salinity Issues

For Gumeracha horticulturalist Steven Newman overcoming salinity issues on his family's property would not have been able to be achieved as quickly if it wasn't for the Peter Olsen Fellowship.

Winner of last year's Fellowship, Steven, a production manager of his family's business Hills Fresh, used the Fellowship to investigate and implement soil moisture monitoring equipment on their property

"Without the Fellowship, we wouldn't have been able to ascertain what we were doing wrong but also to become more sustainable," he said.

"It has enabled us to see the big picture. We now have a better understanding of what is happening underground, while at the same time being more aware of salinity and water penetration issues.

"We can now irrigate for longer but more efficiently. We can also now see salinity dropping by 10cm after each rainfall event."

Encouraging young farmers to enhance and develop their on-farm skills is the aim of the Agricultural Bureau of South Australia's \$7000 Peter Olsen Fellowship for Young Farmers.

Now in its eighth year, the Fellowship is for young people aged 18 to 35 involved in farming as their principal activity for the past 12 months. It is named in memory of Eyre Peninsula farming identity and Agricultural Bureau member Peter Olsen who along with his wife Wendy, were among eight people killed in the 2000 Whyalla Airlines crash in Spencer Gulf.

Agricultural Bureau State President Mark Dennis said the Peter Olsen Fellowship was an opportunity for the new generation of farmer wanting to



further their skills and knowledge.

"All our applicants have had innovative, positive ideas to improve primary production in this state and have gone on to put their skills to good use," he said.

"The reality in agriculture is that we all need to ensure our enterprises are as sustainable as possible if we are going to cope with the demands of a warming climate. Keeping up with innovation and research will assist us to achieve that aim."

People who are already studying or plan to do so in the future can apply for the fellowship, with the grant to be used for courses, study tours or running special projects.

Past winners have used the funding towards advancing a beekeeping business, upgrading production at a boutique winery, investigating precision agriculture and studying artificial insemination.

At Hills Fresh while the Fellowship has made problem solving much easier, it has also presented the

business with new questions.

"It really has opened up more things for us to investigate," Steven said. "It has probably at the end of the day provided more questions than answers."

In addition to the Agricultural Bureau funding, Primary Industries and Resources South Australia (PIRSA) is also a sponsor of the Fellowship along with continual support from the Eyre Peninsula Bushfire Recovery and Response Team.

Applications for the 2008 Peter Olsen Fellowship close on 19 September with the winner to be announced at the Spirit of Excellence Awards in Agriculture on 14 October. Copies of the guidelines and applications forms are available from the Agriculture Bureau's website www.agbureau.com.au or by phoning 1800 652 258 or 8226 0351.

For further information and assistance, please contact Helen Lamont (PIRSA Rural Solutions) on 0409 885 606.

Top marks for Lois Harris scholarship winner

Top marks and a passion for agriculture have earned Eyre Peninsula's Jessica Crettenden the 2008 Advisory Board of Agriculture's Lois Harris scholarship.

The 18-year-old's tertiary entrance rank of 93.4 won her the \$1000 scholarship, beating other first-year students vying for a position to study Bachelor of Agriculture at the University of Adelaide's Roseworthy Campus.

Jessica accredits her passion for agriculture to growing up on her family's 2300 acre wheat, sheep and grazing business, 4km north of Lock.

"I have always loved working on the farm . . . so I decided to work even harder at school to get the marks to study agriculture at Roseworthy," she said.

A student at Port Lincoln's St Josephs Catholic College, Jessica says after applying for 15 other scholarships, the Lois Harris award was a real surprise.

"It was such a shock when I first heard I won the scholarship," Jessica said.

"I worked hard to get a good TER but I didn't expect to get almost 94, let alone the scholarship."

Jessica says winning the scholarship has really helped to propel her career in agriculture.

"Money aside, the scholarship has helped to put me squarely in the agriculture industry circle," she said.

"It's amazing. . . I have already been approached by agriculture companies wanting me to work for them after I finish my studies.



"It's also definitely given me the motivation to achieve well. To get the best results possible, because I ultimately want to make the most of this opportunity."

Advisory Board of Agriculture Chairman Mark Dennis says the scholarship was named in honour of the late Lois Harris, a representative of the board to reward top students for agriculture studies.

"It was established to encourage senior high school students to study agriculture, and ultimately keep young people in industry," Mr Dennis said.

"The scholarship is a fantastic

starting point for young people to be involved in the industry and inspire them to continue learning."

Having just finished her first semester, Jessica says she's aiming to branch off into animal nutrition in the third year, as this is an area she wants to pursue a career in.

"I also hope to do AgriVenture, an overseas placement program after I finish my studies, which will see me working in the agriculture field for 6-12 months in another country," Jessica said.

"After that I hope to get a job back in Australia. I've been told there are about four jobs going for every graduate, so I hope that's right!"

Reminder on Fuel Tax Credits

With fuel costs continuing to rise it is important to remember that from 1 July many primary producers are now able to claim fuel tax credits for the first time, while many others will be able to claim additional fuel tax credits.

The Tax Office is encouraging

businesses in the agriculture industry to find out if they can save money on their business fuel costs.

In the past, businesses have only been able to claim a fuel tax credit for fuel used in heavy vehicles, such as trucks and specific activities, such as primary production.

Under the expansion, fuel tax credits can be claimed for the majority of fuel used in business. How much a business claims depends on how the fuel is used.

For more information on rates visit www.ato.gov.au/fuelschemes or phone 13 28 66.

Thinker gives growers food for thought

Adelaide Plains and Hills horticulture businesses were encouraged to think more broadly when it comes to supplying consumers with produce, instead of focusing solely on price.

That was the advice from Adelaide's latest Thinker in Residence, Dr Andrew Fearne, a UK leader in value chain management and consumer behaviour.

Speaking in May at a workshop hosted by PIRSA Horticulture, Grow SA and Elders, Dr Fearne spoke to a group of 11 growers, packers and processors on how to get the best results from their value chains.

Dr Fearne emphasised how important it was for growers to access customer and consumer information to help them make the best decisions for their business.

"Value chains need to be coordinated and responsive to the dynamic needs and wants of the final consumer," he said.

"There's no point continuing to offer a product that no one is interested in. That's most probably why they're no longer getting the best price for their produce.

"The growers need to look at the big picture, it's no longer just about growing . . . they need to be aware of the consumer trends to know what's working and what's not."



Dr Andrew Fearne (Thinker in Residence); John Fennell (PIRSA's principal horticulturalist) and Mike Redmond (Virginia Horticulture Centre/ Grow SA CEO).

Chief Executive Officer of the Virginia Horticulture Centre/ Grow SA, Mike Redmond says unfortunately this type of benchmarking information is not always readily available, but that it was important this information gap be addressed.

"I can definitely see scope for Grow SA to provide such information in the future, there is definitely a strong need for it within the industry," he said.

Dr Fearne also praised the SA Grown marketing strategy, saying it was a fantastic example of growers collaborating to offer local products that consumers are proud to purchase.

"I suggest growers collaborate

further though and take the initiative to interact with retailers and other links in their value chain to see how their products are faring with consumers.

"That way they can better align their resources and make investments in their business that they know will pay off."

Dr Fearne said some SA horticulture businesses were already well integrated into supply chains and that it would be useful to prepare case study profiles of these businesses to help others follow suit.

A workshop with Riverland growers will be held on 23 September. Contact PIRSA's Angela Ramsden on 8389 8815.

Minister McEwen Briefed on Members' Concerns.

Farmers concerns on the future of agriculture, in particular climate change and rising production costs were among the topics discussed with the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries at the recent Advisory Board of Agriculture (ABA) meeting.

The forum with Minister McEwen is a follow-up from ABA's Think Tank The Face of Tomorrow's Primary Production in Low Rainfall Regions of South Australia, held in January and recent member survey. Other topics raised during the discussion included research and technology, workforce development and rural extension

services.

ABA Chairman Mark Dennis said the exchange of information to the Minister was an important aspect of the Board's role in not only tracking the concerns and aspirations of the primary industry sector but also ensuring that farmers' voices are heard.

"Given we represent the interests of the whole agricultural spectrum we can often present the big picture view on issues to the Minister in a way that lobby groups cannot," he said.

"The January think tank resulted in the rare opportunity to have farmers and researchers together

in the same room, jointly looking at the future of agriculture. To then have the opportunity to pass on that unique information gathering process on to the Minister is the icing on the cake."

Mr Dennis said that as farmers continue to grapple with the rapid changes in climate and technology, the ABA believes it is imperative that it keeps identifying issues to further build up the picture of farming in the 21st century and to keep the Minister abreast of those issues.

"In this period of uncertainty, it is more important than ever for farmers' voices to be heard."

Branch Briefs

Eastern Eyre Peninsula Region: Bureau members will be present at the Cleve Field Days on 12, 13 and 14 August. Call in and visit the team at the Ag Excellence site.

Buckleboo: Fluid fertiliser use was the topic of the July branch meeting which involved a bus trip to Wirrula to check out the local success stories and issues that have arisen with its utilisation on properties.

Mallala: Representatives from TransportSA attended the July branch meeting to discuss compliance issues. As part of this members brought along farm equipment for discussion and viewing by the officers.

Roberts-Verran: Mulesing strategies have been a hot topic for this branch with members discussing the various options as 2010 approaches.

Branch AGMs: Monarto and Mallala branches will conduct their AGMs in lieu of their August meetings.

Calendar of Events: Reminder to all Branches to please advise Anne Madden or Sam Johnson about forthcoming events so they can be included on the website, in Primary Interest and Board Bis. Let other branches now what you are doing and the issues facing your area.

Weather Watch

Warmer than average season is indicated for Southeastern Australia over the next three months (August to October) in the latest Bureau of Meteorology's Seasonal Climate Outlook.

The Bureau's Outlook for August to October states a moderate to strong shift in the odds towards warmer than normal conditions over most of southeastern Australia. This is due to a continued strong warming trend in the Indian Ocean and a warming trend in the equatorial Pacific.

Averaged over August to October, the chances are mainly between 60 and 75% for above average maximum temperatures in South Australia.

Average seasonal minimum temperatures are also favoured to be warmer with the chances of increased overnight warmth (averaged over the coming three months) greatest in South Australia. The Bureau indicates that most of the state has more than a 75% chance of minimum

temperatures above the median.

The rainfall outlook for southeastern Australia for the coming three months shows generally neutral conditions for much of southeastern Australia with moderate swings in the odds towards below-normal rainfall in an area covering eastern South Australia and far western NSW.

These rainfall odds are also due to the warming trends in the Indian Ocean and the equatorial Pacific.

According to the Bureau, the chances of below average rainfall is between 60 and 70% in eastern South Australia.

exceeding the median rainfall over the August to October period are between 30 and 40% over eastern South Australia. This means the chances of below average rainfall are between 60 and 70% in these areas.

For further information visit www.bom.gov.au

National Agricultural Monitoring System

Primary Producers looking for further information on climatic, production and agronomic information for Australian dryland/broadacre and irrigated agriculture can now access the web-based National Agricultural Monitoring System (NAMS).

NAMS was built to serve a wide range of users, from those involved in drought applications to producers wanting to access agriculturally relevant information. Covering 600 regions throughout Australia the NAMS website can produce maps, graphs and reports to demonstrate the production situation for major agricultural systems, as well as the state of their climatic drivers.

Primary Industries Ministerial Council instigated the development of the NAMS. Representatives from Australian, State and Territory Governments, along with industry and the scientific community worked together to design and develop the NAMS website, and the information contained within it.

Collectively, the information in the NAMS shows conditions for production and prospects for the major agricultural production systems. A variety of national, state and regional reports are also available.

This information can be accessed from the website at www.nams.gov.au.

WAB News



A new branch of Women in Agriculture and Business has been formed in Pinnaroo and will be called Mallee WAB.

A meeting of 18 young rural women elected Liz Moyle as president and Kate Nickolls, secretary and program planning is underway.

The existing Pinnaroo WAB branch with older members meets in the afternoons and feels this does not suit young women in the district, many of whom work off farm. The branch sponsored a recent WAB information meeting to encourage these women to consider forming

a new branch which would meet in the evenings.

The new Mallee WAB branch program is likely to include crop walks, speakers on grain marketing and the sharemarket and visits to local rural enterprises.

Murraylands WAB Regional Councillor, Adair Dunsford said the

formation of another new WAB branch reflected both an upsurge of interest in the organisation and the generational change which is occurring in parts of rural SA.

Other members of the Mallee WAB committee are Tanya Thomas, Rosita Lloyd, Robyn Gum and Sarah Thiel.



New Mallee WAB Branch committee members from left: Tanya Thomas, Kate Nickolls, Rosita Lloyd, Robyn Gum, Liz Moyle and Sarah Thiel

Updates

New Code of Practice for Lamb Finishing Sector

A new Code of Practice for the Intensive Lamb Finishing Sector is currently being developed.

The code is being developed in consultation with producers, industry stakeholders, Sheep Meat Council of Australia (SCA), Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA), and Australian Lamb Finishers (ALF).

The code once finalised will result in a framework of standards and guidelines encompassing industry best practice. All lamb finishing systems will be covered from pasture-based to shedded enterprises and will include environmental,

nutritional, design, management, supply chain and animal welfare guidelines.

A series of workshops on the draft code were conducted in South Australia in July with the second round of consultations scheduled in mid 2009. For more information on the code and to provide feedback visit <http://www.productivenutrition.com.au/COPlambfinishing/>

National Innovation System Report

The report on the National Innovation System is now due to be released in September.

The review was announced by the Federal Government in January this year, recognising the vital role innovation plays in boosting

productivity and international competitiveness.

The Green Paper was originally due to be received in July. The Review Chair sought an extension of time because of the breadth of the task and overwhelming response with submissions.

The Federal Government believes this time extension does not alter the timeframe on the release of an innovation White Paper before the end of the year.

For further information on the review visit <http://www.innovation.gov.au/innovationreview/Pages/home.aspx>

FarmBis celebrates rural trainers

The highly successful FarmBis program came to an end on the 30 June, but not without acknowledging the achievements of its top rural trainers.

Hosted by the ABC Country Hour's Annabelle Homer, the inaugural FarmBis Training Awards celebrated the achievements of rural trainers in helping producers build productive businesses and manage risk.

Laura Fell, FarmBis State Planning Group Chair, said with the FarmBis program coming to an end the night was a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the success of the program and its trainers.

"FarmBis has supported training for primary producers in South Australia since 1998, recording more than

28,000 training occasions, but this wouldn't have been achievable without the dedication of our training providers," Ms Fell said.

"The diversity of training being offered by our award winning trainers, from production and management to specialist training for indigenous groups, women and youth, shows just how proactive our training sector is."

Ms Fell said to assist future training initiatives in the aftermath of FarmBis, a catalogue of management training resources for primary producers and land managers has been developed.

"This catalogue will act as a reference source for training in risk management, and is available on the Primary Industries Skills Council website," Ms

Fell said.

Honourable award winners included:

- Regional Skills Training Pty Ltd (Yorke Peninsula) for outstanding achievement for a registered training organisation.
- Partners in Grain (Yorke Peninsula) for specialist support for rural women.
- Rural Solutions SA – Sustainable Agriculture (Clare) for specialist support for rural women.

A replacement training program for primary producers is yet to be announced by the Commonwealth or State Government.

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 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
- 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. Jump to media and communication and follow the prompt under drought e-news.

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