



Website: www.agbureau.com.au

BOARD BIS – March 2007

NEWS FROM THE BOARD:

Advisory Board of Agriculture meeting: Next Executive / Board and working group meetings to be held on Tuesday 11th and Wednesday 12th April. Michael Noble, winner of this year's Lois Harris Scholarship will be presented with the first instalment of his bursary

Annual Report 2005 – 2006: In tabling the Board's annual report to Parliament, Minister McEwen placed on the table his "thanks to Michael Richards and his team for the leadership they have shown".

ABA membership 2007 / 2008: The terms of eight Board members expire at the end of August 2007. Letters / nomination forms have been sent to Branches in these regions seeking nominations (be it for the sitting or a new representative) for the ABA for the next two year period.

Ag Excellence Forum: Successful again this year. Dinner with former St. Kilda coach Stan Alves held on the evening of 26th March and full day forum on 27th March. Both functions were held at the West Adelaide Footballers Club with around 60 attending each and feedback from each event has been very positive.

Regional Executive visit: ABA Chairman, Mark Dennis and Executive Officer, James McDonald travelled to the Lower North and met with local ABA representative, Richard Konzag and several branch reps, with fruitful discussions followed by a dinner. A visit to the Riverland is planned for 1st May.

Former ABA Executive Officer moves to SAFF: Deane Crabb, Executive Officer for 13 years, has been on the sick list, shortly after moving to SAFF as Policy Manager. He took ill and after three days in hospital, has recovered well at home and hoping to be back at work very soon. The farewell function, planned for 20th March will be re-scheduled.

RIRDC Rural Woman of the Year: This function was held on 13th March. Abi Spehr from Millicent was the winner, Natasha Mooney from Williamstown was the runner-up, and Simone Burton from Millicent won the PIRSA Incentive Award.

BUREAU ACTIVITIES:

Bangham / Western Flat: At last meeting ABA activities and how they may assist their farming businesses discussed. Branch has its own annual reporting process by asking various members to research a specific industry and then present a short summary to the meeting. Impressive that each member had taken time to research the regional and national trends and promote a general discussion about the topic

Barossa Valley: All Branches have been busy with meetings. Topics and activities have ranged from a Sticky Beak Day, several have visited the Greenock Whet Store Brewery, a display at the Angaston Show and a talk on Communications / Technology.

Buckleboo Farm Improvement Group and Franklin Harbour: Eastern EP representative, Heather Baldock attended both AGM's. They both outlined their farming systems projects with the Minnipa Research Centre staff and identified priorities for this season's projects. Also happening with several other Eastern EP branches.

Butler: Is busy planning its Centenary celebrations in August.

Coomandook: A Precision Ag. project and GRDC update review was held in late February, and in March held a workshop on "Feeding sheep and cattle in dry times" with Brian

ABA funded by the



Ashton (PIRSA Livestock Consultant and Tara Crommelin (Animal Health Officer at Keith).

Karoonda: Farm Fair to be held on 30th and 31st March with ABA / Bureau representation.

Koonunga: WAB representative on the ABA, Lyn Teakle, has been invited to speak at the Branch social night in July with a requested topic of WAB Theme "90 – Building a Stronger Membership". She feels it is important both groups work together and more women become involved in both organizations

Lochaber: Members could attend the Community Gathering at Kybybolite Sports Complex on 1st March. Over 60 people heard key speaker Pita Alexander, a specialised farm accountant from Christchurch, NZ. Issues he spoke about included 'cash is critical', 'profit is a decision', but families come first. Ken Solly spoke on strategies to assist you, your family and the community in trying times. Bernard Seal from Elders Rural Bank also spoke on surviving tough times and gave some interesting statistics from ABARE. Lyn Teakle, WAB State President and Yvonne Correll spoke on WAB, Ag. Bureau and the ABA. March Meeting included a talk on Men's Health by local Naracoorte GP.

Mallala: Hosted a community get together. Guest speakers included a Rural Financial Counsellor, Simon Gierke (PIRSA), and Josh Hollit (Rural Directions) speaking on chicken litter as a fertiliser

Meadows: No April meeting due to Easter Fair – it's a good money raiser for the Branch.

Milang: Held a well attended Beef Field Day visiting local producers with speakers on nutrition and marketing, on 21st March, utilising the drought get together at Brian Lansdeer's shearing shed. Next meeting planned is to visit the Bio Dynamic Dairy at Paris Creek on 18th April.

Millicent: February meeting was a Sunday afternoon Field Trip at Canunda visiting the wind farm with the giant power generating windmills followed by a cattle feedlot for waygu cattle then onto a 50 stand rotary dairy with an auto calf feeder. March Meeting: Saxon Ellis, weed and pest control officer, spoke on the control of weeds, foxes etc.

Monarto, Frayville and Mobilong: Met on 19th March with the topic "Bio Fuels". The 16th April meeting is at Murray Bridge on GPS Guidance at 7.30 pm.

Nelshaby: Held an all day agronomy forum with Mick Faulkner. Very enlightening for all those who attended

Parawa: Held an NRM Field Day visiting properties throughout Parawa and Willow Creek to inspect grant monies work for fencing off creeks, swamps and native vegetation. Next meeting was to be a Succession Planning Workshop but has been cancelled due to lack of numbers. Instead the controversial climate change movie "An Inconvenient Truth" will be shown on 2nd April at 8 pm at the Parawa Hall.

Tatiara Groups: Annual Harvest Report meeting held at Mundulla in February. In conjunction with the MacKillop Farm Management Group, a workshop presentation was held to involve more than the trial results with numerous contributors. A good time to reflect on the past and gather information to move forward to 2007

Wattle Range: Very successful "Water" meeting in February, with Tony Beck of Mingbool and SAFF. A successful March meeting was held on 26th with the topic of "Pastures".

.SEASONAL CONDITIONS:

Drought: Guidelines are available from:

- PIRSA Prudential and Rural Financial Management, toll free on 1800 182235
- Service SA Drought Link website www.service.sa.gov.au/drought

Further information is available from:

- PIRSA website drought page www.pir.sa.gov.au/drought

- Drought Hotline: 180 2020 (freecall)
- *Five New SA 'EC' Applications*
 On 26 February 2007 State Cabinet gave the go ahead to forward five new applications for 'Exceptional Circumstances' drought relief from SA regional communities to the federal government for urgent consideration.
 The new applications were from the Mid North, Yorke Peninsula, the Fleurieu Peninsula, the River Murray Corridor and the Clare, Light and Barossa region. About 2100 farm and small businesses in those areas could be eligible for EC support in those areas.
 The National Rural Advisory Council (responsible for assessing each region's Exceptional Circumstances application) toured two of the regions last week - the River Murray Corridor and Fleurieu Peninsula – as part of the assessment process, and prima facie was declared for both areas on 27 March (see article below). Applications for the other three regions are currently under consideration.
 The five new applications are additional to the eight regions in SA that are currently EC declared: the Central North East, Central North, Upper North, Far North, Murray Mallee, Upper South East, Central and Western Eyre Peninsula; as well as the current prima facie declaration in place for Lower Eyre Peninsula, while the federal government considers a full declaration for this region.
 Prima facie 'EC' drought support declared for River Murray Corridor and Fleurieu Peninsula
 As of Wednesday 27 March, prima facie cases have been declared for the River Murray Corridor-Lower Lakes and Fleurieu Peninsula regions, meaning an additional 3500 farmers in those areas of South Australia can now apply for up to six months Exceptional Circumstances (EC) income support. The two regions include the areas of: Fleurieu Peninsula and Murray River and Lower Lakes Corridor.
 Eligible farmers in both areas can now apply to Centrelink for six months EC income support. Small business operators with up to 100 employees and who derive at least 70 per cent of their income directly from agriculture are also eligible to apply for the assistance.
 Farmers and small business operators are urged not to self-assess, but to contact the drought assistance hotline **132316** to check their eligibility for assistance as soon as possible. Further information is available from the department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's website at www.daff.gov.au/droughtassist
 The EC applications have now been referred to the National Rural Advisory Council (NRAC) for a comprehensive assessment. NRAC, which started its assessment with a tour of the regions last week, will recommend to the Australian Government whether or not the criteria for full EC are met.
- *Managing the Pressures of Farming*
 A new support resource for rural communities was launched in early March to help people manage the pressures of farming. The resource, produced with the help of farmers, is available in a printed booklet, in an interactive CD ROM, and in the form of an interactive website.
 To use the resource online log onto: www.aghealth.org.au/pressures and click on the SA version.
 For further information about the Managing the Pressures of Farming resource, or to obtain your free copy of the booklet and CD ROM please contact Geoff Cook on 8412 6339 or geoff.cook@health.sa.gov.au
- *Community Support Grants*
 Another 17 community events have secured Community Support grants through the State Government's drought response, bringing the total approved to 30 since December 2006. The State Government has made available \$500,000 for community projects, which help finance events contributing to community spirit in rural regions affected by drought. Grants of up to \$5000 are available, and community groups are

encouraged to apply for funds to help with an event that will help bring people together in their region.

For information about the Community Support Grants call 1800 182 235 or visit the PIRSA web site www.pir.sa.gov.au/grants

- *EC Information Session:* Board rep, Heather Baldock reports that session held in Kimba was well attended, with one targeting businesses, coming up soon. This assistance is valuable but again raises the question of eligibility.

Eastern Eyre Peninsula: The rain has been wonderful for pastoralists in the northern areas of the district. Totals have been patchy in Eastern Eyre with some picking up a couple of inches and others much lighter

Lower Eyre Peninsula: Rain over the last week. Some germination starting with everyone hoping it carries on to the break of the season

Upper North: Some interest in feed supplies for stock with increase in hay sales and prices. Some sales of feed grain have been held on-farm

Lower North: The rain continues to offer some early hope of a return to more normal conditions with 35 mm falling at Mallala so far in March

Barossa Valley: Vintage almost finished with many having their worst crop in 15 years or more. Quality is mixed with the best from higher crop levels, having not as much moisture stress. Pressure on growers and most have had to accept very poor prices, considering the grape shortage.

Weather kind to grape growers with only small delays. Two rain days amounted to only 10 to 15 mm, and the forecast of rain caused more concern than the actual rain

Adelaide Hills: Useful showers for pasture germination. 12 mm last week. Very busy spreading lime and chicken manure and seeding pastures soon.

Fleurieu / Murray Plains: Rain ranged from four to 16 mm. Perennial grasses freshened up and seeding of short term rye grasses has started in earnest. Stock feeding still in full swing and water supply is still critical on many farms. Pastures have had a real hammering over the drought and many farmers are sowing short term rye grasses to get quick growing feed instead of re-sowing permanent pastures. Stock is in reasonably good condition but lambing percentages could be affected by drought conditions. Autumn calving well on the way.

Milang had five mm: just enough to settle the dust. Lambing to begin for many in mid-April. Some have split lambings in April and October. Waiting for a good rain.

Monarto, Frayville and Mobilong: Seven mm of rain at Frayville. Stock in good condition. Paddocks not grazed

Murraylands: Northern areas received very useful rains, combined with good summer weed control should give those areas excellent subsoil moisture going into seeding. Some on to their second round of spraying and some started sowing sheep feed. Rainfalls have been a lot less to nearly zero to the south western areas

Mid and Lower South East: Exceptionally dry until 5 mm on 16th March. Hay is disappearing very quickly and the air is just full of fine black dust. Calving is well underway with numerous sets of twins reported.

Due to continuing dry conditions since January rain with only seven mm recorded last week, supplementary feeding is still happening regularly with pastures almost non-existent. Everyone now looking skyward for an opening rain.

The **next issue** for 2007 will be produced on **Monday 30th April**. **Any comments or questions**, please contact Executive Support team on 1800 652 258 / 8226 0351