



**AGRICULTURAL
BUREAU**
of South Australia

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

Connecting sustainable communities

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About Us

Helping to bridge the gap between scientists and farmers, the Agricultural Bureau of South Australia (Ag Bureau) encourages excellence in agriculture, business management, and the sustainable management of natural resources.

Representing the interests of South Australian farmers, the Ag Bureau communicates regularly with the government and other agencies on issues that affect the farming community, including research and development, farming practices, and education.

This includes the Department for Environment and Water (DEW), the Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA), Rural Business Support (RBS), the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI), and the University of Adelaide (UoA).

A not-for-profit organisation with more than 1,000 members and 40 branches across the state, the Ag Bureau was established in 1888 and is the only farmer network group of its kind remaining in Australia.

Membership is open to primary producers and those with an interest in South Australia's agricultural industries.

Members are provided with opportunities for professional development, collaboration on common challenges, project funding, application support, knowledge exchange, and crucial local community support.

Young farmers are mentored by experienced Ag Bureau members, and the annual Spirit of Excellence Awards recognise, encourage, and support young farmers and rural youth who are pursuing careers that will sustain rural communities, with prestigious and generous scholarships.

Ag Bureau branches foster the development of vibrant communities and industry networks, and provide resources to branch members, including relevant Codes of Practice, local, state, and federal grants, project funding opportunities, and agricultural-related articles by farmers and industry advocates.

For more information or to locate your nearest branch, visit agbureau.com.au

Governing Body

Comprising representatives from each of the Ag Bureau's regions, the Ag Bureau Board is strengthened by members from government, research bodies, and agricultural education.

Representing the interests of South Australia's farmers to the government, the Board contributes to the extension of emerging agricultural research and development by managing innovative projects.

The Board also manages the annual Spirit of Excellence Awards, which recognises and celebrates the achievements of young people. It provides winners with financial support to pursue a career of excellence in agriculture and helps promote Ag Bureau membership to a young and vibrant audience.

As a governing body, the Board is responsible for:

- Managing and administering finances, insurance, awards, and projects
- Preparing and distributing submissions on industry-relevant issues
- Facilitating the implementation of research, extension, and training programs to enhance agriculture, business, and management
- Promoting the Ag Bureau's aims, objectives, and achievements, and the importance of sustainable resource management to the broader community
- Providing a forward view to industry bodies and government departments on behalf of members.



Mallala Branch



Monarto Branch



Nelshaby Branch



Lone Pine Tanunda Branch



Owen Branch



Point Pass Branch



Mount Barker Branch



Laura Branch



Paskeville Field Days

Chair's Report

I am pleased to present our annual report, summarising the key activities and developments of the Agricultural Bureau of South Australia over the past year. In this report, I will share some reflections on the present and future of the Ag Bureau in South Australia.

A bold initiative aimed at better communication with our members and networks was launched around this time last year, a new Ag Bureau logo, along with an updated website which now has the capability for memberships to be paid online. As with all changes, there have been some implementation issues, but the objective of using technology to interact with our membership remains a key focus.

The Board provides the link between our sponsors, the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) and the Department for Environment and Water (DEW), and the applicants and finalists for the 2023 Rural Youth Bursary and the Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship. Together, we actively encourage participation in the awards.

The annual Spirit of Excellence Awards dinner in 2023 provided an opportunity for a group of young rural people and farmers, to gather and share their achievements of the past and aspirations for the future, alongside past winners, stakeholders, and sponsors. It was a unique learning opportunity, and we thank our award sponsors, PIRSA and DEW, for their continued investment in this event.

One of the many stories shared on the night was from Damian McArdle, the winner of the Peter Olsen Fellowship in 2012, his story about what has happened in his business venture as a result of the award, was inspiring. Small beginnings to a successful outcome.

As a statewide organisation, the objectives remain strong and clear, **connecting sustainable communities**.

Ag Bureau branches, through the volunteer efforts of members, engage with each other and drive farmer-led initiatives to improve outcomes. They learn and share new skills and insights across a wide range of topics, from soils, climate, and local services to health and well-being.



The choice is endless. **Connection at a local level, by local people.**

Sustainability – In the face of so many variables in agriculture and rural areas, as managers of the land, production, and people, navigating a sustainable way forward is a challenge. This year has been no exception. While it is easy to become absorbed in our own business, all aspects of agricultural production are facing adversity: lack of rainfall, inflation driving up input costs, market challenges, disease, and more.

Communities – The word ‘community’ means something different to each of us, but the sense of belonging and being part of something greater than our own backyard is key. It is unique and special, and the sharing and support gained from being part of a group gives strength to us all.

Where does the Ag Bureau fit into this picture? It can and does achieve all its objectives, but to survive into the future, as an organisation at both local and state levels, it will require additional support. This support should be targeted to provide links to opportunities and resources that enable change and learning to be implemented at the local level, by interacting directly with the existing Bureau groups.

That is the challenge for the future. Agricultural production and rural communities are major contributors to the economy of South Australia and as a statewide organisation, our objectives remain strong and clear—connecting sustainable communities.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all our members, sponsors, stakeholders, and networks who have supported the organisation at all levels. They continue to believe in the importance of meeting and connecting at a local level, sharing stories, learning, and thriving in this industry we call farming. Well done to all.


Janette Ridgway
Agricultural Bureau of South Australia, Chair

2023-2024 Region & Branch Round Up



Nelshaby Branch annual Sticky Beak Tour

AUGUST 2023

Parawa Branch welcomed Lynton and Ellen Arney of Inverbrackie Border Leicester Stud for a presentation on modern livestock breeding and production. Topics covered included genetics, breeding values, electronic identification (eID) and associated technology, software, and selecting the right ram or bull for an operation. They focus on performance recording and are an early adopter of new technologies.

Nelshaby Branch's annual Sticky Beak Tour, included viewing several trial sites and hearing from a number of speakers and researchers from Trengrove Consulting, UNFS, Agricultural Consulting & Research, SARDI, Centrestate, Platinum Ag, Davis Grain and Kitto Harvesting.

Mallala Branch held their annual dinner at The Barns, Freeling, which included a tour of the Silo accommodation. The guest speaker for the evening was Ben Davis, Assistant Livestock Manager at Thomas Foods International.

SEPTEMBER 2023

Fleurieu Farming Systems held a Filling Feed Gaps workshop which explored how timing was key and how using feed tests could help improve the quality of fodder. Participants were encouraged to tweak their silage/hay production practices.

Parawa Branch President Sammy McIntyre gave an update on things she learnt while travelling overseas as part of her Nuffield Scholarship. Her presentation, "Same, Same, but Different: Observations & Learnings from Recent Travels," highlighted her experiences in Singapore, India, Qatar, Germany and the USA.

Owen Branch held their Spring Crop Tour & Sponsors Day, which included spray unit comparisons, a tour of the AGT Breeding facility and the Ahrnes manufacturing facility and museum. The day concluded with a tour of the Freeling Barns Silo accommodation and shed display. Andrew Parker was announced as the winner of the Allan Tiller Memorial Wheat Competition for 2022. The "Toyota" award for the most consistent performer was awarded to Brett and Peter Freebairn.

Goode Branch members participated in the annual Goode-Charra Crop Walk/Sticky Beak Day at the Penong NVT trial site. The event was attended by local growers, grain industry representatives, local businesses, grain buyers/marketers who inspected new crop varieties, discussed different farming practices used in the area, and made useful connections.

Nelshaby Branch held their meeting in conjunction with a GRDC Grower Network Forum. Tim Gurney provided an update from T-Ports, followed by the forum.



Owen Branch Spring Crop Tour & Sponsors Day

Point Pass Branch held a Spring Crop Walk, followed by the GRDC Grower Network Forum. Members were excited to hear about some great outcomes and future projects in the area.

Monarto Branch held their annual Crop Walk with the **Milang Branch**. The day featured discussions on various trials in collaboration with GRDC. Members visited local farms to explore new crop varieties, including barley, lentils, peas, and wheat, and also viewed innovative approaches to canola cultivation. The day concluded with a demonstration of drone technology for crop spraying and a visit to inspect grazing canola under irrigation at Langhorne Creek.

OCTOBER 2023

Parawa Branch held their Spring Hay & Pasture Renovation Field Day, which focused on hay crops and renovation paddocks during what proved to be a challenging spring.

Fleurieu Farming Systems held a Producers' Breakfast – Seasonal Conditions and Outlook. Presenters included Darren Ray, Climatologist, Clint Endersby, National Livestock Manager of Prostock, and Chris Scheid, Business Advisor from Moore Australia. The event featured group discussions with questions, strategies, and concerns.

NOVEMBER 2023

Rowland Flat Branch visited A1 Mushrooms at Mallala.

DECEMBER 2023

Parawa Branch, along with the Progress Association and CFS, held a Community Christmas Party at the local Hall.



Laura Branch Stock Feed Run (Picture by Kiara Stacey)

Owen Branch held a Post Harvest Barefoot Bowls Windup at the Owen Bowling Club after an early finish to the season. After a quick round of social bowls, they discussed the season, both good and bad.

Laura and Nelshaby Branches participated in a Stock Feed Run that saw the arrival of 23 trucks loaded with grain, straw, and hay for graziers in Orroroo and nearby areas, after no real winter rain left them short of feed.

JANUARY 2024

Parawa Branch toured Ryan Walker's Wagyu Beef Farm and new facilities, followed by an opportunity to connect with local farmers and the community at the Red Meat Connect BBQ.

Rowland Flat Branch visited Nitschke Dairy to view the milking system and cows, then drove to Barossa Infrastructure Limited (BIL) holding dam and then to Dimchurch Vineyards.



Point Pass Branch Spring Crop Walk

2023-2024 Region & Branch Round Up



Lowbank & Districts Branch awarded the David Roget Award (Picture by Quinton McCallum)

FEBRUARY 2024

Fleurieu Farming Systems and Landscape SA Hills & Fleurieu held two Summer Fodder Crops and Soil Pit Field Days at Waitpinga and Langhorne Creek. Attendees were invited to inspect the growth of the crops, hear from the landholders and S&W Seeds about their experiences with the soil, and listen to Ed Scott during soil pit demonstrations.

Goode Branch attended an eID demonstration hosted by PIRSA at the Ceduna Sports Club.

Monarto Branch took a bus tour to Adelaide and checked out the facilities and products at Sipcam, Incitec Pivot, Koch, and Hardi.

Lowbank and Districts Branch were awarded the Mallee Sustainable Farming (MSF), David Roget Award for Excellence, this is the first time it was awarded to a group, not an individual. The Branch was celebrated for its continued support of agricultural research and enthusiastic collaboration with research scientists. Nearly a dozen Bureau members were on hand to receive the award from MSF's new Managing Director Jenny Garonne and Director Andrew Biele.



Monarto Branch bus tour

MARCH 2024

Fleurieu Ag Fest returned with its second Field Day and Careers Expo, with a number of **Parawa Branch** and **Fleurieu Farming Systems** members involved.

Angaston Branch members again produced an eye-catching display, themed "Always room for neighbours and mates at a garden party," in the Show Hall at the 127th Angaston Show. The aim was to showcase the diversity of agriculture in the region while promoting a seasonally relevant, topical theme and the Ag Bureau.

Bute Branch held a dinner at the RSL clubrooms, where they announced the winners of the 2023 Wheat Competition, Colin Hewett and Nathan Hewett.

Monarto Branch's Hogget Competition was won by multiple past winner Robert Thiele. Judge Luke Schreiber, from Spence Dix & Co, said the uniformity of the pen was what stood out to him.

APRIL 2024

Clint Endersby, National Livestock Manager from Prostock Livestock, presented at **Parawa Branch** on the state of the cattle and sheep market. He provided a summary of the last two years, a snapshot of the current position, and his projection for the next 12 months.

Water was the topic for the **Wolseley Branch** meeting, including underground water, review of the plan, as well as Bordertown and industrial estate water supply. Speakers included Chelsea Burns, Senior Project Officer and Sue Botting, Team Leader Water Policy and Planning, both from Limestone Coast Landscapes Board, as well as Simon Sherriff, Manager Regional Water Security from SA Water.



Milang Branch with their new BBQ trailer (Picture Victor Harbor Times)

Point Pass Branch had a bus trip to a dairy farm to look at alternative production systems and filling feed gaps. They were joined by SA Drought Hub Team Leader Zoe Starkey.

Rowland Flat Branch visited Hanson Sand Quarries and learned about its history, commercial outlook, soil, plant, and animal conservation.

Monarto Branch awarded a Lifetime Service Award to Branch Secretary Judy Paech, who had served as secretary for more than two decades. "She is a tireless worker in our community. She is a salt-of-the-earth person and held in such high regard around here." said Robert Thiele, Branch Treasurer.

Milang Branch welcomed their new BBQ trailer after a \$14,000 donation from Bendigo Bank branch, Fleurieu Community Bank. The BBQ trailer will be used for meetings and events held to attract new members and for social gatherings for the group.

MAY 2024

Parawa Branch visited three members' farms. Steve Rogers demonstrated a vertical tillage machine that broke up thatch and kikuyu. Keith Fryer, an organic



Monarto Branch's Judy Paech awarded her Lifetime Service Award (Picture by Quinton McCallum)

farmer, spoke on his composting programme, and the Swincers demonstrated their solar irrigation system.

Koonunga Branch had Stuart Ratsch from YourTech Services as a guest speaker, showing members the benefits of 3D printing. Stuart also shared his passion for radio-controlled planes.

JUNE 2024

Owen Branch held a Drone Demo & Post Seeding meeting. Adam Bruce from Xtreme Drones, Clare, demonstrated his mapping drone and all the latest in drone tech, and Brayden Harkness spoke about his experience with drone tech and short field inspection to discuss the 'Dids and did nots' post seeding: machines, setup, pre-ems, soil types, and early fertilisation.

Wolseley Branch meeting included guest speakers Jono and Danielle England who spoke about dry seeding and livestock management into a late break season. Members also received a short update on the Wolseley upgrade from Andrew Lehmann from Viterra.

Rowland Flat Branch toured the Pernod Ricard wine canning line with host and guide Damien Moore.

JULY 2024

Parawa Branch held their AGM with a guest speaker talking about solar pumps.

Wolseley Branch held their AGM with guest speaker Theo Schulz, who had moved from South Africa to work with a local SA family. Theo talked about farming and agriculture and shared several eye-opening stories about life in South Africa.

Goode Branch held their annual Hogget Competition and included guest speakers from Elders Rural, Cousins Merino Services, PIRSA, AWI, and MLA.

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 AGT

Contact

Brad Koster, Variety Support Manager SA: 0400 812 475

agtbreeding.com.au

Long Serving Members Awards

August 2023 - August 2024

The Board recognises and congratulates the following long serving members and thanks them for their ongoing contribution to the Ag Bureau of South Australia.



Lone Pine/Tanunda Branch Long Serving Members Awards



Lone Pine/Tanunda
Michael Schubert

Paskeville
Nick Correll
Brad Meier

Rowland Flat
Mark Jenke
David Gogoll



Koonunga
Jamie Nietschke
Keith Hampel
Jonathon Hampel

Lone Pine/Tanunda
Neville Eichler
Philip Neldner

South Kilkerran
Peter Kakoschke



Koonunga
Merv John

Paskeville
Neil Harrop



Lone Pine/Tanunda
Ian Lange
Keith Koch



Lone Pine/Tanunda
Donald Ross
Geoffrey Neldner
Melvyn Sonntag



Koonunga Branch Long Serving Members Awards



2023 Spirit of Excellence Awards

Ag Bureau proudly recognised the outstanding contributions of young leaders in the agricultural sector at the 2023 Spirit of Excellence in Agriculture Awards Dinner. Held on 22nd September at Howard Vineyard, this prestigious event brought together over 110 industry leaders, guests and Ag Bureau branch members for an evening dedicated to celebrating innovation and leadership in agriculture.

Generously supported by DEW, PIRSA, and RBS, the Ag Bureau is committed to promoting excellence in agriculture and encouraging young farmers and rural youth to pursue opportunities for personal and professional development to benefit their local communities.

2023 Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship Winner: Emma Faint

Emma Faint, a fourth-generation farmer from Steelton near Saddleworth, South Australia, was honoured with the 2023 Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship. Sponsored by the DEW, this \$10,000 award acknowledges Emma’s commitment to regenerative agriculture, particularly in the area of soil biology and its application in crop and pasture production.

Although Emma was unable to attend the awards dinner, her achievements were celebrated in her absence. Her dedication to sustainable practices is evident through her involvement in local agricultural groups, research trials, and educational field days. With the scholarship, Emma plans to further her education in soil biology and biological nutrition management, with the intention of applying her new

knowledge through paddock trials on her family farm. She is also committed to sharing her insights with the broader community and promoting sustainable farming practices within her network.

Emma expressed her excitement about the future, stating, “There is a quiet but steady increase in the number of farmers of my generation who are looking for better ways to farm. The more we can work together, the more we can show that there are alternatives to traditional methods, leading to a broader adoption of sustainable practices.”

Janette Ridgway, Chair of the Ag Bureau, praised Emma’s innovative spirit, saying, “Emma embodies the spirit of progress and sustainability that is driving the future of South Australian agriculture. Her energy and curiosity are inspiring, and she is sure to make a significant impact in her community.”



Corbin Schuster, Ag Bureau Board Member for Barossa & Light, announcing the 2023 Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship Winner, Emma Faint.



(L): Dr Hannah Brown, Acting Executive Director SARDI, The Department of Primary Industries & Regions SA, presenting the 2023 Rural Youth Bursary winner to Lourens Coetzee. (R): Tim Herrmann Sustainable Soils, The Department for Environment and Water, presenting the 2023 Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship winner to Emma Faint.

2023 Rural Youth Bursary Winner: Lourens Coetzee

Lourens Coetzee, a vineyard hand at Kaesler Wines in the Barossa Valley, was awarded the 2023 Rural Youth Bursary. Sponsored by PIRSA, this \$5,000 bursary recognises Lourens’ passion for sustainable viticulture and his commitment to advancing his education in this field.

Currently pursuing a Bachelor of Viticulture through Charles Sturt University, Lourens plans to use the bursary to cover his university fees and travel expenses to the CSU Wagga Wagga campus. His future ambitions include visiting Chateau Maris in France, a winery renowned for its sustainable viticulture practices. Upon completing his studies, Lourens aims to return to the Barossa region, where he hopes to influence local wine grape professionals to adopt more sustainable farming practices.

Reflecting on his journey, Lourens said, “Before I started implementing sustainable practices, I didn’t realise the need for change in traditional farming methods. Now, I am committed to becoming an industry leader in sustainable viticulture, demonstrating the importance of preservation and responsible farming.”

Janette Ridgway commended Lourens’ dedication, saying, “Lourens’ journey into viticulture has inspired him to pursue sustainable farming practices. His passion and commitment to learning will undoubtedly leave a lasting impact on the South Australian agricultural industry.”



(L-R): 2023 Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship Finalists, Karl Zerner (Finalist – Angaston), Nicholas Mignanelli (Finalist – Myponga), Mr. Matthew Ward, Director Information and Science, DEW, Troy Julyan (Finalist – Manoora), Corbin Schuster, Ag Bureau Board Member for Barossa & Light.



(L-R): 2023 Rural Youth Bursary finalists and winner. Dr Hannah Brown, Acting Executive Director SARDI, The Department of Primary Industries & Regions SA, Stephanie Lokan (Finalist – Murray Bridge), Nicholas Mignanelli (Finalist – Myponga), Caleb Schaefer (Finalist – Loxton), Lourens Coetzee (Winner – Angaston) and Darren Kennedy Ag Bureau Board Member for Riverland & Murraylands.

Embracing Regenerative Agriculture: Emma's Vision

Emma Faint, a fourth-generation farmer from Steelton, South Australia, exemplifies the forward-thinking approach needed to sustain and enhance the agricultural landscape.

In her winning application for the 2023 Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship, Emma outlined her holistic vision for her family's farm and her commitment to regenerative agriculture and sustainable practices.

Emma's journey into sustainable farming began with a strong connection to the land, fostered during her childhood on the family farm. This passion grew as she pursued formal education in horticulture and later returned to Steelton as part of the family's succession plan.

Emma's experience highlighted the increasing challenges of traditional farming methods, particularly the susceptibility of crops to frost. This led her to explore alternative approaches, focusing on soil health, regenerative practices, and proactive farming systems.

The transition to more sustainable and regenerative agriculture is a process that can take several years, but I am very excited to start that journey and be an example for farmers in the district of what can be achieved.

Emma Faint,
2023 Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship Winner



2023 Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship winner Emma Faint

Emma's approach to farming is rooted in the belief that working with nature is key to long-term success. She has immersed herself in learning opportunities, such as the RCS Farming and Grazing for Profit school and Nicole Masters' soil masterclass.

Emma plans to complete the Certificate in Nutrition Farming course offered by Nutri-Tech Solutions. This course will equip her with the skills to implement nutritional strategies on her farm, focusing on growing nutrient-dense crops and improving soil health.

Emma also intends to visit leading regenerative farms across Australia to gain practical insights that can be applied to her family farm, Rusty Park.

Through her proactive approach and dedication to knowledge sharing, Emma aims to inspire other farmers in her community to explore sustainable practices. She is actively involved in local agricultural groups and frequently engages in discussions about regenerative agriculture with fellow farmers.

Emma's vision is clear, to create a thriving, resilient future for her family's farm and to be a beacon of sustainable farming in her region.

Pioneering Sustainable Viticulture: Lourens' Vision

Lourens Coetzee, a vineyard hand at Kaesler Wines in the Barossa Valley, is a strong advocate for sustainable farming practices in viticulture.

In his winning application for the 2023 Rural Youth Bursary, Lourens shared his journey and commitment to advancing sustainability in the agricultural industry.

Lourens' passion for agriculture was cultivated during his time at Urrbrae Agricultural High School in Adelaide, where he specialised in viticulture and horticulture. After graduating in 2021, he joined Kaesler Wines, where he has embraced sustainable farming practices under the guidance of vineyard General Manager, Nigel van der Zander.

His experience at Kaesler Wines has transformed his understanding of farming and has shown him the critical importance of sustainable practices for both environmental and economic sustainability.

Lourens has been deeply involved in practices that reduce the vineyard's environmental impact. Instead of using chemical sprays, they manage weeds with under-vine mowing and encourage the growth of native grasses, which helps retain soil moisture and supports carbon sequestration. In winter, sheep graze the vineyards, naturally fertilising the soil and reducing the need for tractors, thereby lowering carbon emissions.



2023 Rural Youth Bursary winner Lourens Coetzee

Lourens is also part of the vineyard's organic composting program, which enhances soil health and improves grape quality. The vineyard uses organic fertilisers and pesticides and tailors pruning techniques to optimise fruit quality while minimising disease risk.

Lourens envisions a future where sustainable farming is the norm. He is committed to leading by example, showcasing the benefits of these methods to young farmers. Currently studying a Bachelor of Viticulture at Charles Sturt University, Lourens plans to visit leading sustainable vineyards worldwide to bring back new insights to Kaesler Wines and, one day, apply them to his own vineyard.

I want to become an industry leader by showing the importance and benefits of farming sustainably; preservation is key, I believe.

Lourens Coetzee,
2023 Rural Youth Bursary Winner



Thank You to our Sponsors

Generous sponsorship and support have enabled the Ag Bureau of South Australia to continue delivering valuable educational activities and events to our branches and members throughout the year.

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new sponsor, **Tarcowie Phosphate**, and thank them for their partnership. We are excited to have them join us as a sponsor and look forward to working together to support South Australian agriculture.

We also express our gratitude to **Australian Grain Technologies (AGT)** and **Incitec Pivot Easy Liquids**, for their unwavering commitment to the Ag Bureau.

AGT has been a steadfast supporter for many years, and their ongoing commitment has played a vital role in the success of our organisation.

The generous support from **Incitec Pivot Easy Liquids** is sincerely appreciated particularly Daryl Higginson and his BBQ trailer, which has bought Ag Bureau members together over many a shared meal and drinks.

We are also very thankful to **The Department for Environment and Water (DEW)** for their \$10,000 funding towards the Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship, which continues to support our mission of fostering innovation in agriculture and to **The Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA)** for once again generously funding the Rural Youth Bursary with \$5,000, helping to nurture the next generation of agricultural leaders.

Lastly, we acknowledge the ongoing support from **Rural Business Support (RBS)**, whose assistance during the Spirit of Excellence Awards dinner and provision of administrative support have been invaluable to our organisation.



SA Natural Fertiliser Solutions



Tarcowie Rock Phosphate (TRP) is a family-owned company which was restarted by G.E. Hughes Construction in April 2023. Tarcowie Phosphate is mined and processed right here in South Australia.

Our fertiliser delivers significant beneficial minerals, elements, and trace elements including phosphorus, manganese, silica, calcium, copper, and zinc, and can be delivered to SA, NSW, and Victoria by our G.E. Hughes transport team.

TRP is trialling the spreadable product in several applications, in the field for 2024. Some products have been applied to broadacre areas known to be trace-element deficient. TRP contains many trace elements, particularly manganese and iron, which are currently being monitored for responses, albeit during a tough growing season.

The team has also been assessing several blends. TRP product contains clay that acts as a natural binding agent. So far, blending TRP with chicken manure has been found to be successful in both dust suppression and aiding spreadability.

Further work will be carried out over the coming months to assess blending with organic mulches, composts, as well as gypsum and lime. Blending TRP with products that growers currently use will save time and money in the application process. We believe there are many complementary agronomic benefits when combining these products.

TRP is helping South Australia conserve and sustain the environment by paving the way to a sustainable future, using our natural resources to deliver a product that will benefit both the environment and growers for years to come.

Our strong Tarcowie team consists of an agronomist, a geologist, and a sales team to assist with all your needs.

Please contact Simon from sales to find out more about our natural fertiliser on 0477 966 088 or visit our website at www.tarcowiephosphate.com.au



Supporting Farming Families Through Financial Hardship



Agriculture’s unpredictable nature brings rewards but also significant challenges for farming families. At Rural Business Support (RBS), we understand that financial hardship can hit unexpectedly, whether from market downturns, environmental pressures, or increased costs.

RBS has delivered the Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) across South Australia and the Northern Territory, on behalf of the Australian and State governments since 2006. Our Rural Financial Counsellors (RFC’s) work closely with farmers, offering free, confidential and independent support to help them stabilise their financial situation and build resilience.

Currently, the demand for RFCS is at an all-time high. We’re supporting approximately 400 primary producers, with many clients having reached out within the past year, reflecting the growing pressures on the industry. Livestock market crashes, dry conditions, and soaring input costs have driven producers across various sectors—livestock, mixed farming, cropping, and wine grapes—to seek help.

Our RFC’s work one-on-one with clients to assess their financial health, reviewing income, expenses, debt, and insurance. We guide farmers through

debt management, explore refinancing options, and offer strategies for dealing with current market challenges. For some, the focus is on succession planning, ensuring a smooth transition to the next generation. Others need help connecting with grants, government programs, or navigating the complexities of changes in banking policies.

In recent months, even traditionally resilient sectors like mixed farming and horticulture have faced increased financial strain. Livestock producers are still feeling the effects of last year’s market crash, while crop producers struggle with late seasonal starts due to inconsistent rainfall. In the wine grape industry, lower prices and contract difficulties have compounded financial stress. Across all sectors, rising interest rates, council charges, and input costs are squeezing profitability, while labour shortages further intensify the pressure.

If you’re a primary producer or rural small business owner concerned about your financial future, now is the time to act. Our experienced Financial Counsellors are here to support you explore your options and create a plan to move forward. Early intervention can make a significant difference.

For more information or free, confidential and independent support contact freecall 1800 836 211.



Soil Health, Productivity and Drought Resilience



A new Ag Bureau of SA project is now underway in the Lower North and Yorke Peninsula to improve soil nutrition, increase productivity and profitability, and build drought resilience.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) and South Australian Research and Development (SARDI), in partnership with Peninsula Precision Agriculture (Arthurton) and the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board, is delivering the one-year project, funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund through the South Australian Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub. Participating Ag Bureau branches include Mallala, South Kilkerran, Petersville, and Arthurton.

Andrew Harding, Senior consultant at SARDI, said, "The project is using a zone-based approach to target fertilisers and soil amendments to meet yield potential. In some zones, nutrients and soil amendments may be reduced, while in other areas, nutrients and amendments may need to be increased."

The zones for each of the 13 focus paddocks were created using satellite spatial imagery and Normalised Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) data from August/September, compared over several years, and then aligned with yield maps.

Each paddock has 2 or 3 zones, and each zone has been sampled for a complete soil analysis, including nitrogen and carbon to a depth of 60 cm. Soil sampling has helped identify issues and constraints such as salinity, acidity, alkalinity, boron, and/or shallow soils.



Soil sampling in zones



Veris® soil pH mapping to identify acid zones within paddocks

Where acidic soils have been identified, paddocks have been mapped with the Veris® pH machine. This shows where lime needs to be targeted and applied at a variable rate.

Mr Harding said, "A major issue is the high soil pH on calcareous soils, particularly on the Yorke Peninsula, which locks up phosphorus. Grid mapping has been conducted by Peninsula Precision Agriculture to investigate the variation of Colwell phosphorus, phosphorus buffering index (PBI), and DGT-phosphorus across the paddock."

"From this, phosphorus can then be applied at a variable rate. More phosphorus may be needed in the high PBI areas, and phosphorus may be reduced in the lower PBI areas."

Based on soil test results, fertiliser strips have been applied to determine the most effective and economical rates of fertilisers.

Janette Ridgway, Chair of the Agricultural Bureau of SA, said, "This project will involve field days and case studies and will provide landholders with a better understanding of soil test results, improving their soils knowledge and giving them greater confidence in making fertiliser decisions and managing drought and dry conditions. Information from the project will be available on the Ag Bureau website."

The project continues until December 2024. For more information, contact Andrew Harding, Senior Consultant (Soil and Land Management), on 0417 886 835.

Managing Healthy Soils with DEW



Government of South Australia
Department for Environment
and Water



The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) works to help South Australians conserve, sustain and prosper with our environment. The DEW Soils Team's goals of managing healthy soils for food security, sustaining land for habitat and biodiversity, promoting sustainable agriculture, and preserving the environment for future generations, align closely with those of the Ag Bureau.

As an ex-officio member, DEW values the Ag Bureau as a farmer led organisation that supports farming groups across SA. DEW acknowledges the passion and enormous effort of the managing committee in supporting members, and branches in building strong networks that connect members and facilitate knowledge sharing. The Spirit of Excellence in Agriculture Awards provides opportunities for future generations to develop their ideas and careers, and DEW's sponsorship of the Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship continues.

DEW recognises that we already live in a changed climate, as is evidenced by this season's challenging growing conditions, and the DEW Soils Team continues to provide monthly seasonal condition and erosion risk reports to inform stakeholders. Despite challenges posed by climate and soil constraints, and managing annual seasonal conditions as they evolve, DEW continues to see ongoing innovation and improved management practices that advance productivity and resilience.

The DEW and PIRSA soils teams are working together towards developing a SA Soils Knowledge Network, with funding from the Commonwealth Government's National Soil Action Plan. Led by PIRSA this network will build capacity within the SA soils community and enhance soil extension services across the state, including through the Ag Bureau. We will also enhance DEW's SA Data and Information Bank to provide updated soils information through a modernised soils data system, and improved acidification and lime models.

DEW also uses soil, field observation, production and remote sensing data to support soil and landscape health by informing water use trends, environmental reports, and new soil health scorecards for our agricultural districts. Recently, over 30,000 data sets informed the newly released **Soil Organic Carbon Benchmarks** and **Soil Carbon Factsheets**, providing regionally relevant information to help land holders and advisors understand how their soil resource can be managed to improve soil carbon levels.

More information about DEW's work with soils can be found here: <https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/soil-and-land-management>

Public soils enquiry **E: DEWSoilsInfo@sa.gov.au**

Sustainable Soils Team Leader:
Tim Herrmann

Senior Soils Officers:
Giles Forward, Ruby Hume and Stuart Wright

Ag Bureau Projects 2023-24

Current Projects

Soil Zone Mapping and Variable Rate Application (VRA) for Drought Resilience and Preparedness

- Increase awareness, knowledge, and understanding of soils and soil nutrition for land managers across SA
- Enhance farmers' skills to enable them to suitably sample, analyse, monitor, and interpret soils within zones, improving soil health and building resilience and sustainability in crops and pastures
- Test and adopt technologies (NDVI, pH and EC mapping, grid mapping) to drive innovation, prepare for

drought, and build farm resilience, particularly during dry years

January 2024 to December 2024 - \$23,500

PIRSA and SARDI, in partnership with Peninsula Precision Agriculture (Arthurton) and the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board, is delivering this one-year project. It is funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund through the South Australian Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub. Participating Bureau Groups include Mallala, South Kilkerran, Petersville, and Arthurton.

Completed Projects



Yorke Peninsula & Mid North Soil Acidity Project

- Increasing farmers' knowledge and skills to manage emerging soil acidity to improve soil health, crop, and pasture production.

June 2021 to October 2023 - \$63,175

The Agricultural Bureau contracted Rural Solutions to fulfil the requirements of this funding agreement.

The growth of high-value crops such as lentils and chickpeas is highly sensitive to low pH (acid) soils. Due to acidic soils, these crops are turning yellow, not nodulating well, and dying in patches.

This project collaborated with two Ag Bureau groups to demonstrate innovative technologies, such as the Veris® soil pH mapping machine, to show the spatial variation of soil pH across paddocks.

The soil pH mapping work and decision support tools were used in workshops to increase farmers' awareness, knowledge, understanding, skills, and management practices for treating acid soils.

After the workshops, farmers will have the capacity to make informed decisions that improve soil health, crop production, and profitability.

Meet Our Board Members



Janette Ridgway
Chair

Board Member
for South East

M: 0427 532 338
E: ejr@duneven.com.au

Janette works with her family on their farm, east of Bordertown. The farm is a mixed enterprise of broad acre crops, sheep, and horticulture. A member of the Wolseley branch, Janette has a passion for agriculture, community and family and she brings these skills and understanding to the Board, along with a desire for learning and sharing of information.



Bevan Oster
Vice Chair

Board Member
for Yorke Peninsula

M: 0408 824 790
E: oster5@bigpond.com

Bevan has been part of the Petersville Ag Bureau since 1980. He spent many of his early years shearing in the area and later farming. In 2012 he returned to farm at Dowlingville. He is passionate about the history and future of the Ag Bureau in his region and is confident the Petersville branch has a strong future.



Darren Kennedy
Treasurer

Board Member
for Riverland & Murray

M: 0438 339 837
E: djmakennedy@bigpond.com

Darren is a second-generation farmer in the Glossop region, managing wine grape and dried sultana properties. A member of the Barmera branch, Darren believes the Ag Bureau's history and standing make it the ideal vehicle for sharing information and ideas from legislation to grassroots farmers and back in an informal setting, giving voice to the non-activists within the rural community.



Corbin Schuster

Board Member
for Barossa & Light

M: 0429 939 582
E: corbinschuster@msn.com

Growing up on a diverse farm producing hay (domestic and export), grain, straw and pigs, Corbin is passionate about growing high-quality products and value-adding on farm produce. He has attended Freeling Ag Bureau meetings for over 15 years, and sees Ag Bureau as an important social network for SA farmers.





Jasmin Piggott

Board Member for Eyre Peninsula

M: 0427 527 646
E: jgalerana@hotmail.com

Jasmin and her husband run a mixed farming enterprise including cropping, sheep and cattle. A member of the Franklin Harbour branch, Jasmin won the 2021 Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship after starting a native flower farm on their property to use land less suited to cropping and provide another form of income during dry times.



Richard Williams

Board Member for Hills, Fleurieu & KI

M: 0418 845 073
E: rmwilliamsagb@gmail.com

Richard and his wife farm a smallholding in the Adelaide Hills near Echunga. He has a very successful business background in marketing, sales and management from his career in real estate and has been actively involved as a member and office bearer of the Mount Barker Branch for 13 years.



Ex Officios

Department for Environment and Water (DEW)

Tim Herrmann

Conservation and Land Management
Sustainable Soils

E: tim.herrmann@sa.gov.au

Rural Business Support (RBS)

Brett Smith

Chief Executive Officer

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Department of Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA)

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