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The Buzz

AWiA's quarterly newsletter

Spring Edition



The Buzz | President's Report

Spring has well and truly sprung. On the farm here in the WA Wheatbelt we have switched from picking the last of our late season oranges to harvesting cereal grains, patiently working around the seemingly erratic Mother Nature!

The AWiA Board has also switched tack after the phenomenal 2015 Conference in Alice Springs to focus on a number of strategic projects, continuing to ensure that women influence the agricultural agenda.

Not wanting to lose the momentum created at the Conference, Past President Elaine Paton AO and I started calling MPs before we had even left Alice Springs in preparation for our Canberra delegation the following month. You can read more on page 6 and 16 but suffice to say it was hugely successful and the AWiA Members that joined us gained a great insight into the inner workings of Parliament and have benefitted immensely from the direct connections made with Federal politicians and key decision makers.

Every quarter I connect with women from across the globe via webinar as part of the World Farmers' Organisation Women's Committee. www.wfo-oma.com At our last meeting we discussed how to recognise and celebrate the UN International Day of Rural Women (IDRW) on 15th October. We were asked to contribute to the international F@rmltter publication, which was also themed around food security. See page 11 for an excerpt. This article is also featured in the current edition of GoFarmer magazine.

AWiA also engaged with AgChatOz to co-host an International Day of Rural Women themed online discussion. AgChatOz is an interactive discussion on Twitter featuring a different theme or hot topic every Tuesday at 5:00pm AEDT. www.twitter.com/AgChatOz AWiA and AgChatOz called for questions in the week leading up to the online event on 13th October (the Tuesday before IDRW) and we had many AWiA Members and Board join us for a robust discussion about issues affecting agricultural women in Australia.

Social media continues to be a valuable way for us to engage with our Members, industry, partners and broader network. Aside from the record post we shared earlier in November (see page 11) we will also be coordinating a global conversation about climate change in the lead up to and during the upcoming 21st UN Conference on Climate Change in Paris. AWiA will be in Paris during the COP21 Climate Talks and will be attending various events including the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN International) and Women Leading Solutions on the Frontlines of Climate Change .

Thank you to our Sponsors of
2015 Conference



Even if you're miles away from Paris, you can contribute and participate in the discussions virtually by joining us online. We will be tweeting from the @AustWomenInAg Twitter account using the #AWiA2Paris hashtag as well as providing daily blog entries which we will also share links to on our Facebook Page.

And finally, some rather exciting news! AWiA has been successful in our application to the Merlyn Myer fund! The guiding principles behind the Merlyn Myer Fund grants are "the experience, well-being, and concerns of Australian women – those endeavours which enable the intelligences, sensibilities and attributes of women". This funding will enable us to facilitate series of programs including teleconferences, professional development opportunities for Members and support of the Invisible Farmer Project that was presented at our Conference in Alice Springs. We have been awarded \$33,000 over a 12-month timeframe, commencing in January. If you are interested in participating or contributing to any of these programs, please get in touch.

Until next time, stay safe and cherish this festive seasons with loved ones. The AWiA Board will be taking a well-deserved break in January and be back on board and ready to spring into action in February. Festive felicitations to you all.

Elizabeth Brennan

AWiA 2016 Conference

Date: 9th, 10th & 11th September, 2016

Venue: University House, ANU, Canberra



Book the date! More information in Summer Buzz Edition

2015/2106 Board Directors

ELIZABETH BRENNAN—PRESIDENT AND BOARD DIRECTOR REPRESENTING WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Elizabeth has facilitated a number of community and agricultural development programs in her home WA Wheatbelt region, across Australia and abroad as an AusAID volunteer in Papua New Guinea. Elizabeth is a Graduate of the Australian Rural Leadership Program and was awarded the Women in Australian Agribusiness 100 (WiAA 100) Outstanding Emerging Leader award.



DONNA DIGBY—VICE PRESIDENT AND BOARD DIRECTOR REPRESENTING THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Donna has been living and working in rural and regional communities in Victoria and in the Northern Territory for the past twelve years, where her work has focused on working with land managers to deliver sustainable land management programs. She currently lives in Alice Springs, NT with her husband Matt.



VAL LANG AM—SECRETARY AND BOARD DIRECTOR REPRESENTING VICTORIA

Val is part of a farming family producing fine wool and cereal, legume and oilseed crops near Lismore in western Victoria. Val has tertiary training in agriculture. She is a graduate of the Australian Rural Leadership Program and has been honoured with an Australia Day Award, AM, for services to rural women.



MAUREEN HOLLAND—TREASURER AND BOARD DIRECTOR REPRESENTING TASMANIA

Maureen is the Tasmanian representative for AWiA. As a past President of Tasmanian Women in Ag, she joined AWiA in 2012 after presenting a Breast Cancer Awareness session at the 2012 Conference in St George, Qld., becoming the Tasmanian Rep in 2013.

Currently the Treasurer for AWiA, she also runs a property with her husband Bruce farming beef cattle and sheep. Maureen has 2 children and 5 grandchildren.





NERIDA CULLEN—BOARD DIRECTOR REPRESENTING NEW SOUTH WALES/ACT AND NATIONAL RURAL LAW AND JUSTICE ALLIANCE (NRLJA) REPRESENTATIVE

Nerida is an active participant in rural and city endeavours, in leadership roles and as a team member to improve social, economic and environmental outcomes for her community and especially for rural women. She has wide and recognised experience in education. She lives on the outskirts of Goulburn with her husband Ron. They grow lavender and agist cattle, and are establishing an extensive parkland setting for future generations to enjoy.



ANNELEISE DOLPHIN—BOARD DIRECTOR REPRESENTING SOUTH AUSTRALIA

AWiA is a dynamic organisation that creates connections for Australian women in agriculture. I have learnt immensely during my short term about networking and enabling AWiA members to keep connected and learning in many areas. I highly recommend all women in South Australia to consider being involved in this wonderful board.



DOMENICA JENSEN—BOARD DIRECTOR REPRESENTING QUEENSLAND

Domenica Jensen (MBus; FAICD) with husband Craig owns a grain farming and contract harvesting enterprise in central Queensland. She also works on the development and delivery of regional and national programs that build individual and community capacity to help minimise access, equity, and socio economic barriers.



SARAH PARKER—GENERAL BOARD DIRECTOR, LOCATED IN VICTORIA AND NATIONAL RURAL WOMEN'S COALITION (NRWC) REPRESENTATIVE

Sarah relocated from Brisbane to the Goulburn Valley 10 years ago to commence dairy farming with her husband Raymond. Within 2 years, they purchased an irrigated dairy farm "Glenclyffe", where they run a stud registered Illawarra and Holstein herd supplying milk to a boutique Italian Cheese Company.

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AILEEN O'SULLIVAN—GENERAL BOARD DIRECTOR, LOCATED IN VICTORIA

Aileen lives and works on a farm in rural Victoria. She is married to Greg. Together with two of their five adult sons, they operate a Primary Production and Hay contracting business. Her role is supporting the administration and production of cereal crops, hay, lucerne, prime lambs and wool at their properties in Victoria and New South Wales.



CHARLOTTE AVES—GENERAL BOARD DIRECTOR

Charlie is based in North East Victoria. Passionate about agriculture and supporting women and youth within the industry she is currently a PhD candidate investigating herbicide resistance in the grains industry. Originally from England, she has worked in broadacre research in the UK and New Zealand before settling in Australia.



RACHEL CARSON—GENERAL BOARD DIRECTOR

Originally from rural Ontario Canada, Rachel Carson, has over 16 years working in agriculture with a background in Agronomy. Her career in agriculture has enabled her to have experience in North America and Central America. Since moving to Australia in 2013 with her family, Rachel has been working for SYNGENTA in marketing as a portfolio manager.



SUSAN GLEESON—GENERAL BOARD DIRECTOR

Susan lives in Camden, near Sydney. Working with women through her training business, Farm Gate Training and Consulting P/L, and hearing their situations and needs has prompted her to assist in a more official capacity. Attending the Global Women's Summit internationally for the last two years has also sparked her interest in global women's issues.



National Rural Women's Coalition



"What Do Rural Women Want" Survey? The "What Do Rural Women Want" survey will offer RRR women from throughout Australia the opportunity to have their say in what is impacting them. This online survey being run by the National Rural Women's Coalition (NRWC) asks a number of questions on a range of topics, which include: - Demographic information - Diversity information - Health and well being - Financial security and employment - Environment and sustainability - Family and relationships - Education, training and telecommunications - Communicating with political leaders and decision makers. This survey is being conducted in the lead up to the next Federal Election and the NRWC is keen to canvass the issues which are impacting on rural, remote and regional women. This survey will give women throughout Australia a chance to have their say on issues that matter most to them. The National Rural Women's Coalition will then undertake an informed advocacy campaign (face to face, digital and traditional media) in the lead up to the 2016 election campaign using this information. Findings from the survey will be published on the NRWC website in early 2016. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NRWCSurvey>

Report of AWiA Canberra visit September 2015



A contingent of AWiA members formally visited Parliament House Canberra on 10th September.

AWiA has a tradition of visiting Parliament House to inform parliamentarians and advisers of the work of AWiA, to introduce AWiA members to the workings of The House and to present issues papers prepared by individual Members on issues which are pertinent to them.



This year's visit was led by AWiA President Elizabeth Brennan, supported by AWiA Members Elaine Paton AO, Aileen O'Sullivan, Val Lang AM, Alana Johnson, Ann Jarvis, Carolyn Hill, Traci Wilson-Brown and Hannah Southcott. Hannah, with permission, filmed parts of the Parliament House visit and has offered to make a short film for AWiA to use to inform future AWiA visits to The House.



Six issues papers were prepared: 1. Changes to Holiday visas which affect WWOOFA (Carolyn Hill and Traci Wilson-Brown); 2. The Inland Rail (Cath Marriott senior); 3. Native Food Sovereignty (Marianne Stewart); 4. What do Women in Agriculture Want (Val Lang); 5. Women in Agriculture: Opportunities to Influence the Agricultural Agenda (Elaine Paton); & 6. Regional Telecommunications Strategy (Marianne St Clair and Claire O'Brien) with supporting case studies by Elizabeth Brennan and Ann Jarvis. These papers were reviewed and where appropriate re-formatted by Dr Rowan O'Hagan. Parliamentarians and advisers visited were given prior notice of topics to be raised and a hard copy of all papers.

A briefing was held before the visit to review meeting protocols and how AWiA could best present itself. Elaine Paton and Elizabeth Brennan organised appointments with fifteen MPs and/or their advisers. The AWiA members worked in groups of three or four, supported by MP Cathy McGowan's Office with meeting space and escorts and also escorted by Vivian Thomson. Cathy and Vivian are both past presidents of AWiA.



A debriefing session gave recommendations to inform the next visit. The group acknowledged the enormous contribution made by Elaine Paton, and appreciated everyone's willingness to work as a team. It was considered a valuable exercise for AWiA, and to inform MPs of issues raised by individual AWiA members.

AWiA and women leaders in agriculture in Papua New Guinea

AWiA, along with Papua New Guinea Women in Agriculture Development Foundation (PNG WiADF) has been an industry partner for the **Leadership, Communication and Decision Making for Women in the Agricultural Sector Project** supported by DFAT Australia and Charles Darwin University.

This project has been running for three years and has seen AwiA members travel to PNG to participate in workshops in Lae, Morobe Province (2013) and Keravat, East New Britain (2014). PNG women have travelled to Australia to participate in AwiA conferences in Albany WA (2013) and Melbourne VIC (2014). AwiA members Val Lang and Joy Deguara joined 67 other participants in the project's concluding workshop this year, the **Women's Leadership Training** workshop 21-22 October, also in Lae (2015).

The majority of participants were PNG women active in the agricultural or related sectors with a small number of participants from elsewhere in the Pacific.

Many greetings were sent back to the AwiA members from PNG women whom they had previously met. Women who sent greetings included: Maria Linibi, (the President of PNGWiADF), Norah Omot (who AwiA first met when she was studying for her PhD in Australia and is now the director of the Enabling Environment Program at the PNG National Agricultural Research Institute), Betty Tiko (who will be starting her PhD in Australia early next year), Rufina Peters (working in Rural Service Delivery and Local Governance), and also others.

We will remember well: Kiteni Kurika, Lanieth Aua, Elizabeth Ling, Kwadile Tuam, Kwina Ambang, Gorothy Dipsen and Annastasia Kawi. Amongst the new friends we found in PNG was Doreen Tunama who follows AwiA on Facebook.

A number of PNG WiADF women have expressed an interest in attending the 2016 AwiA Conference in Canberra. AwiA values its strong relationship with PNGWiADF and PNG WIADF and is an associate member of AwiA.



Congratulations to AwiA Member Karen O'Keefe

Karen has been awarded the Dr Sidney Plowman Traveland Study Award by Victorian Landcare. Karen's aim is to bring horse property management and expertise into Landcare's activities. Karen will travel to the US to learn from highly regarded horse property management educators and best practice demonstration farms. The information and skills gained from the study tour will directly influence on-ground natural resource management programs in her Corangamite region and beyond. Karen was a presenter at the AwiA 2015 Conference in Alice Springs.

RIRDC Rural Women's Award -

A celebration of Australia's Rural Women

Australian Women in Agriculture representatives; Elizabeth Brennan, Val Lang, Elaine Paton and Aileen O'Sullivan attended the Award Dinner at Parliament House Canberra. "For more than 20 years, the RIRDC Rural Women's Award has celebrated the important contribution women make as leaders in Australia's agricultural industries and our rural communities." From a message from the Hon Barnaby Joyce M.P. Minister for Agriculture in the event program.

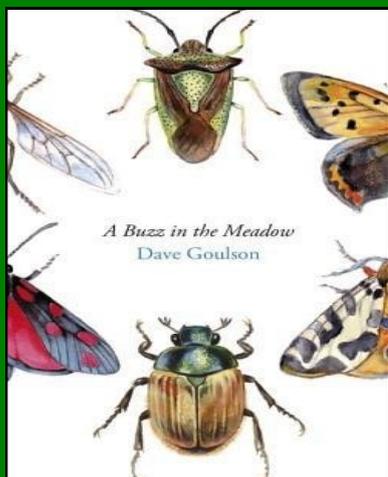
All State Finalists are to be congratulated on their achievements. They are Cindy Cassidy NSW, Sally Isberg NT, Sherrill Stivano QLD, Sarah Powell SA, Carol Bracken TAS, Katie Finlay VIC, Tress Walmsley WA. Award recipients receive financial and professional support to help bring their Award vision to reality.

The winner for 2015 is Sarah Powell. Sarah's bursary will go towards establishing leadership skill within her community. She aims to develop a "Champions Academy" pilot program which will foster personal development through sport and mentoring. The grant will also be used to develop a community leadership plan to continue to build strength and resilience. Sarah hopes this project will become a model that can be replicated around Australia, ultimately delivering resilient agricultural regions and empowering small communities to "have a go".

The evening coincided with AWiA's visit to Parliament House and attendees were fortunate to be able to network with others involved in the Agricultural Industry and many AWiA members at the awards dinner.

A Book Review by Val Lang

'A Buzz in the Meadow' is written by Dave Goulson: naturalist and professional bee observer. It was recommended to me by AWiA Member Cath Marriott. It was a delight to read, but as you would expect it has a sting in the tail. Dave Goulson writes of the meadows in rural France and particularly of the insect life and the insects' relationships to the countryside. After reading this book I started to look more closely at the insects around me and started to see the blue bees, large and solitary and with blue stripes. They are in the garden and in the paddocks, and now I have started to meet other people who watch them as well – quite amazing.



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But back to the book! Dave Goulson is also a scientist and describes his and others' research into bees, particularly into the effects of neonicotinoids, the insecticides which are damaging bee populations and so damaging agriculture. He shows how important it is to ask the right questions and, I think, to read any book that Cath Marriot recommends to you.

If anyone would like to contribute a Book Review to the Buzz please email Aileen— E: aileen@osfarms.com

Tasmanian News

Tasmanian farmers are facing crop losses due to lack of rainfall for the season. Paddocks that have been saved for hay are having to be used to keep stock growing. Irrigation is being used much earlier this year, thus water shortages will occur at the other end of the season.

Tasmania normally produces between 80,000-100,000 tonnes of cereals and oil seed crops a year. This season the volume could fall to between 25,000-30,000 tonnes according to reports in local agriculture newspaper "Tasmanian Country".

Berry fruits are doing well in the warmer drier weather, so as one part of the agriculture system fails another gains. We are indeed in the lap of the "weather god".

Tasmanian firefighters are forecasting a long fire season with unprecedented total fire bans already declared this Spring, and are urging everybody to have a bush-fire plan developed.

Tasmanian Women in Agriculture encourage all rural women to consider attending the :

Tasmanian Rural Womens' Gathering "Embracing Change", at St Helens, on the sunny East Coast of Tasmania, being held on 27th, 28th & 29th May 2016. Includes makers & growers market, farm tours- choice of 3, Gala Dinner with Guest Speaker, Patrice Newell, model, farmer, author and journalist. Patrice and partner, broadcaster Phillip Adams, purchased Elmswood Farm in 1986 in the Upper Hunter Valley region. Today they manages 10,000 acres at Gundy producing biodynamic beef, garlic, olive oil, honey & soap. Her books include: The Olive Grove, The River & Ten Thousand Acres.

For more information: Co-ordinator Mhara Tucker at mhari@antuangus.com.au or AWIA Tasmanian rep Maureen Holland Ph 0409 020 417.



AWiA International Reference Group

AWiA is establishing an International Reference group as a service to members with an interest in policies, discussions, contacts and activities relevant to Australian Women in Agriculture.

If you wish to contribute to the development and/or operation of this group please contact:

AWiA President

Elizabeth Brennan

president@awia.com.au

and/or

Secretary Val Lang

vlang@anson.com.au

before the

20th December 2015

NSW RWN Gathering Glenn Innes October 2015

Over 300 women and some husbands wended their way in beautiful weather to the glories of Glenn Innes and its region for the annual NSW Rural Women's Gathering to listen to inspiring speakers and engage in a variety of activities. They also participated in a workshop to tackle the challenges of living in rural NSW. This was the first time such a workshop had been held to identify rural issues and concerns and to suggest solutions to address them.

Mary Hollingworth, the Gathering chair, said that the Gathering gave Glenn Innes the chance to showcase the community spirit of her town. She said the town's spirit was exemplified in the commitment and enthusiasm of the volunteers and sponsors who ensured the success of the weekend.

Speakers who entertained and inspired the Gathering were drawn from a range of backgrounds. Local speakers included Gail and Roger Fletcher who have worked together to make Fletcher International Exports the largest sheep processor in Australia, and Dr Donna Quinn who as a Doctor returned to her home town. Other speakers included Mary 'Effie' Costas of media and comedy fame, and Michael Crossland who has achieved a successful professional and sporting career despite suffering from cancer for much of his life.

Workshops and activities provided the opportunity for the Glenn to highlight its creativity, its business nous and its gardens.

The Gathering provided NSW rural women with an opportunity to voice their issues and explore ideas to address these through a special session facilitated by DPI's Rural Women's Network, the outcomes of which are to be presented to key government decision makers to build knowledge to improve programs and policies that affect rural, regional and remote women.

The top five challenges identified by the workshop groups were

- Lack of telecommunication access, mainly the internet and reliable mobile phone services
- Gender equality in agriculture
- A lack of access to health services
- The distance rural communities can be from social events and other people and activities
- Support for families and men through tough times, such as the drought.

Possible solutions to these challenges were suggested and will form the basis for the document to be sent to the government from the Gather in the Glenn.

The 2016 Gathering will be held in Broken Hill and it is planned that there will be further exploration of issues affecting the sustainability of rural communities to add to the richness of the discussions in Glenn Innes for submission to government and its policy making. The voice of the rural woman deserves to be heard.

Invitation to AWiA teleconference seminars: New Ways of Seeing Old Things

AWiA and Facilitator Rhiân Williams is hosting a free teleconference-seminar series which will explore how to communicate more effectively about the things that matter. The first seminar is open to all who have completed a previous workshop with Rhian and is an opportunity to re-visit and add to previous training and to reconnect with fellow participants from communities as diverse as Barcaldine, Darwin, Hobart, Coonawarra, Margaret River, Gunnedah, Shepparton, and many places in between.

This first hour-long seminar will be held on 25th February 2016, with registrations and input into particular areas you would like discussed, accepted until 20 February.

The following four seminars will be then be at three-weekly intervals and are open to all AWiA Members, they are: (i) *From Blame to Understanding – uncovering the dynamics people, situations and systems bring to a conflict*, (ii) *Negotiating with Emotional and Cultural Intelligence*, (iii) *Dealing with People You Can't Stand* and (iv) *The Business Case for Happiness*.

For further information or to register for a seminar contact AWiA Secretary Val Lang
vlang@anson.com.au Tel 03 55962014

This is the link to register for the first of our 2016 teleconference with Rhian
<http://awia-teleconf-rhian1.eventbrite.com.au>

Australian Women in Agriculture
 Published by Elizabeth Brennan [?] · 3 November at 13:21 · 🌐

History in the making.
 First woman jockey to win the Melbourne Cup.
 Source: Michelle Payne.

"I just want to say to everyone else that they can get stuffed cos' they think women aren't strong enough but we just beat the world."
 - Michelle Payne, 2015 Melbourne Cup winner.

73,861 people reached Boost Post

Like Comment Share

Melissa Barnett, Margs Andrae, Jordy Waters and 1,034 others like this. Top Comments -

WFO Newsletter

AWiA President, Elizabeth Brennan, was invited to write an article for the World Farmers' Organisation October edition of the newsletter themed around food security. World Food Day occurs the day after International Day of Rural Women annually, highlighting the integral connection between the two events. Below is an excerpt of the article with a link to the newsletter and full article.

Every year on 15th October we reflect upon and celebrate the UN International Day of Rural Women. Empowering and activating women in rural communities is critical in achieving global food security, and indeed, here in Australia too.

Rural Australia faces some significant challenges with drought, diminishing rural communities, waning service provision, lack of regional infrastructure, sub-standard telecommunications, high rates of mental health illnesses, climate change and much more. By including everyone, men and women, we can each bring our wealth of skills, experiences and expertise to collectively create targeted solutions to address rural challenges and create a food secure country and world.

http://www.wfo-oma.com/media/k2/attachments/2015-10_WFO_Farmletter_ENG.pdf

SPRING INTO ACTION

inform | influence | innovate | invest | include

Member Profile—Maria Brown-Shepherd

You may have met Maria Brown-Shepherd at the 2015 AWiA Conference in Alice Springs, or the 2014 AWiA Conference in Melbourne where she had a stall. You may even have been lucky enough to taste her quince paste, served with cheese at the Conference’s opening function.

Maria produces a sophisticated range of jams, jellies and preserves, all made from produce from her extensive orchard and garden. As you can imagine, a lot of fruit is ready to preserve in Autumn.

Maria was brought up in rural Victoria by parents who arrived as displaced persons from the Ukraine. She married an orchardist who operated with his family on an irrigated property just north of Shepparton. Here she learned a lot about growing, picking and packing fruit.

Maria’s mother’s skills and love of traditional and festive cooking, of being self-sufficient, and of using the produce from her father’s vegetable garden, have influenced her. Like her mother she is an enthusiastic and skilled handler of food with a focus on what can be produced locally. From her parents she also has a strong appreciation of the challenges and opportunities for immigrants arriving to rural Australia.

Maria is President of the Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District. Shepparton has a large immigrant community, with people from places such as India, Albania, Afghanistan, Iraq, Greece, Italy, Sudan and Macedonia as well as many other places. The Ethnic Council is a peak body which promotes and represents the social, cultural and economic well-being of ethnic communities in the area and provides support for established and newly arrived immigrants, including refugees.

Maria has continued to develop her ‘Longhaven’ product range, recently adding ‘bombonieres’ for wedding groups. She has continued to learn and to keep up with food handling requirements and new marketing options. She recently completed the Australian Institute Of Company Directors course to support her work with the Ethnic Council.

Maria also has a generosity which is often found in AWiA members. She prepared and donated produce packs which AWiA presented to the visiting PNG women at the 2014 Conference. And long after nearly everyone else had left, Maria was still showing the PNG women around Melbourne: they reported that Maria had shown them how to use a tram and to find The Victoria Market.

I think Maria has ‘bloomed where she was planted’ and we have all benefited.



2015 Conference Sponsors



Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership Program

Lauren Petersen was sponsored by AWiA and Marcus Oldham College to attend the 2015 Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership Program (MORLP). This national professional development program focuses on leadership, communication and planning skills. It was held over five days and attended by members of rural business, industry and community sectors. Congratulations to Lauren for her scholarship. The Next MORLP will be held in June 2016. Visit www.marcusoldham.vic.edu.au for information as it becomes available.

"If it's meant to be, it is up to me" – William H. Johnsen

There are many theories and courses dedicated to Leadership, however the theme of the Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership Program of "navigating change" could not be more relevant for me both personally and professionally.

In the last 18 months I have become a mother and moved to a rural town to become involved in the Agriculture sector for the first time. Both concepts were very foreign to me, and have been challenging in a number of ways. Growing up in Melbourne and with no prior Agricultural experience, leasing a dairy farm almost overnight whilst working off farm to pay for this opportunity was not on my previous "to-do" list. However, my partner's dream has become our dream and twelve months ago we did just that.

Our vision has been met with a lot of resistance and negativity towards our plans, however the positive support we have received from some has been priceless. How have we made it through the first twelve months? Why have we not thrown it in at each large hurdle (and there have been a few)? Attitude. Like in Agriculture, particular leadership skills can be taught. However effective leaders possess attitudes and attributes that set them apart. Commitment to the vision, resilience, good sense of self, and determination. These are just a few of those characteristics and attitudes that have enabled us to survive and lead, which I was reminded of during my week at Marcus Oldham.

This is true for women too. Whilst living and working in Rural Australia and in the Agriculture sector can be a rewarding experience for women, there are still a number of inequalities and challenges faced by women everyday. This is something that I have been thinking about a lot, and was fitting that I was able to go to this course thanks to the sponsorship of both Marcus Oldham College and the Australian Women in Agriculture travel scholarship.

With a background in welfare work and a passion for women's issues, I have been wondering what I can do in my community to address these issues. Being new in both the community and the Agriculture sector, it can be hard to find your voice.

However not only was the 2015 MORLP class made up of a majority of women, but we had the opportunity to meet inspiring women such as 2015 Merial Howard W Yelland Award winner and Agriculture advocate Lynne Strong and the amazing Dr Dawn Casey. Thanks to the course, I now feel I have the confidence and motivation to empower other women and make a difference.

I went into the course aiming to gain confidence and clarity on what my current goals and leadership opportunities were. I was hoping to utilise the new skills and knowledge learnt and the networks I made on the course to improve our business.



**Ms Lauren Peterson with
Dr Dawn Casey**

Thanks to a last minute opportunity from AWiA to attend the Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership Program, what I actually gained from this course was so much more. I am excited for the journey that lies ahead, and I look forward to sharing it with the many other amazing Australian women in Agriculture.

Hopetoun Women on Farms Gathering 2016 — Cr Helen Ballentine

Hopetoun is a town in Yarriambiack Shire, Northwest Victoria, with a population of around 550 people. It has beautiful Lake Lascelles which is nicely aligned on the edge of town within walking distance to shops. Hopetoun itself has a village atmosphere, possibly because it was originally built as Corrong Station, and many of the Managers' homes of pastoral days and English influence still exist. Hopetoun has advocated and contributed in many ways over the years to the improvement in agricultural livelihoods. Both men and women have made significant impacts in supporting the Industry, with many stories to tell. Primarily it is a grain and pulse farming region, with some export hay and fat lamb production.

Cr Helen Ballentine of the Hopetoun Ward, Yarriambiack Shire Council and the Committee of the Hopetoun Women on Farms Gathering 2016 extend an invitation to all readers to the 27th Victorian Women on Farms Gathering. Save the dates of 18-20 March, 2016 and contact can be made on hwof2016@gmail.com or 0429006016. Further to this there is a great website www.hopetounwofg2016.com.au and Facebook HopetounWOFG2016 to gather more information. Online registrations open on 11th January, 2016. For those who need a hard copy of information, please let us know, our Treasurer will also assist in any way if you prefer to send cheques or pay by phone. The event will be opened by a highly esteemed person (awaiting protocol procedures) and a BBQ followed by storytelling which will make a very welcoming first evening for those who have travelled across the state or interstate. Our MCs are a husband and wife team with a great story to tell to open up proceedings.

Saturday morning will offer an early start for those wanting exercise with Tai Chi by the Lake, with workshops (mostly presentations) commencing at 9am. Tours will also be on offer Saturday, and leaving at various times. Traditional lunch bags will be provided, however some tours provide lunch, and for those not partaking in tours there will be more workshops on offer, hairdressing, free health assessments all weekend, displays and town tours including Corrong Homestead built in 1846. Our dinner on Saturday night will commence around 6.30pm, with special guests Deputy Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Councillor Susan Riley and Senator Bridget McKenzie, with one other surprise guest and some great music from Leo Tellefson & Sandra Loats. Our local church group will provide catering.

Sunday morning has a choice of meetings for Australian Women in Agriculture members, the Heritage Collection meeting, a Ecumenical church service or a lazy breakfast by the Lake that will run till 10.30am. Three key speakers will be available so participants can sit around and listen or wander the township checking on displays they may have missed Saturday. 11am is definitely a highlight with the cooking demo from Pulse Ambassador Chef, Simon Bryant, where we will learn more about the nutrient value for healthy eating and health in general, and as we know most rural people are hearty meat eaters, we will be suggesting ways to combine lentils or chickpeas in regular meals.

Our closure will occur around 1.30pm and hopefully we will have a Minister of our Victorian Government to thank everyone on our behalf and we will conduct the handover to the next shire for the 2017 event Remember, 18-20 March, 2016. Bring a tent, caravan or stay in a neighbouring town and help us support our farming families. The season 2015 has been a drought, and a lift in morale and a confidence boost to continue into the 2016 season and try again is greatly needed. Any visit, any time, supports our groups, and our shops to stay viable.



Recognising and responding to stress in challenging times

Living in rural Australia can be very rewarding. However, farming in particular can be a stressful occupation. Keeping yourself in a fit state to enjoy the good times is important. Keeping yourself in a fit state to weather the difficult times is even more important. After all, the most important asset on any farm are the people.

Frequently named stressors in farming environments include extreme climatic events, unpredictable markets, social and geographic isolation, reducing services, family illness and long working hours. Many people deal with stress by focusing or working hard on the problem and putting everything else aside, and, this generally works in the short-term. While a small amount of stress is normal and usually motivating, persistent elevated stress can be very debilitating, affecting our bodily functions, mental alertness, decision-making ability and energy levels. It is also a factor in farming accidents.

When faced with ongoing stress, we tend to neglect the very things that would help us get through it, such as our relationships, quality sleep, recreational activities and our health. Neglecting these important facets of life can lead to poor business decisions. Research involving over 2000 Australian farmers found that over 90% of them agreed that improving their health helped them to make better business decisions.

We know that people in the farming community are renowned for their willingness to help others—it's what keeps small communities alive. Unfortunately, farmers are often not so good at asking for help themselves. Overcoming this barrier should be seen as a positive business decision. Talking through issues with family, peers or professionals—who are able to use their experiences and skills—can help lead to new insights and new strategies to deal with challenging circumstances. You may find that you are also able to help someone else by speaking openly. Seeking help and staying on track with your physical and mental health is vital. Don't become discouraged if your first efforts at seeking help are unsuccessful. There is no 'one size fits all' solution and you may have to make an ongoing effort to find support that suits your needs.

Key tips for tough times

Some tips for helping to get through difficult times:

- Eat healthy, nutritious food, (avoid sugary, high salt and fatty foods)
- Get adequate sleep (7- 8 hours per night)
- Keep physically active
- Make time to get off the farm (even for a couple of days)
- Find things to laugh about
- Allow yourself time to do something you enjoy. A short walk, sitting with a cup of tea, a hit of golf, or some deep breaths—these can change the path of the day.

Remember your best farm asset is you.

Act smart, act early and recognise when stress is doing you harm.

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Follow up on Canberra visit with AWiA—Carolyn Hill

As a direct result of meeting Green Senator Janet Rice in Canberra with the AWiA delegation, she visited to discuss and see first hand the Farm Forestry that I have established on my place Yangeba. Janet, her Events Secretary Felicity Marlowe, Photographer Penny and Plantations Researcher Anica all came to visit from Melbourne. John Coyne from the Farm Forestry North East Co-operative (FFORNE) was also there - of which I am also a member. We covered the realities and work involved in managing a private plantation for wood production including the crucial role WWOOFERS play in WHS and assisting with the plantation work, the future of which is looking uncertain for myself and many others as a result of the Government's decision to withdraw the 2nd Holiday Working Visa for WWOOFERS.

We also visited one of Australia's largest revegetation projects in the Delatite Arm Reserve which is close by to look at revegetation of Pine Plantations. Senator Rice's interests in Plantations and Native Forest Silviculture is long standing, so this was an opportunity to learn the realities of working a hardwood plantation as a private grower/farmer.

Traci Wilson-Brown and the WWOOF office have been constantly working on follow up with MPs, WWOOF hosts, the media and WWOOFERS since the opportunities opened out as a result of the AWiA to Canberra.

A Senate Forum in Melbourne on Temporary Working Visas last Friday, 20 November, in Melbourne saw Traci invited to speak on behalf of WWOOF Hosts and WWOOFERS on the impacts of the withdrawal of the 2nd HWVisa issue.

This opportunity also came through meeting Senator Rice in Canberra with AWiA. I have yet to hear how it went, but I heard it is unusual to have a member of the public present at one of these meetings, so I am hopeful.



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Save the date!



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WA RRR Women's Network 20th Anniversary two day event to coincide with International Day of Rural Women on Saturday, 15th - Sunday, 16th October 2016

VICTORIA

The 2016 Women on Farms Gathering will be held in Hopetoun Victoria on 18-20 March. It will showcase the district and include workshops, tours, displays and story time.

www.hopetounwofg2016.com.au

Telephone/Text: 0429 006 016

An informal AWiA meeting will be held during the WOFG, in a local cafe at 7.30am Sunday morning, you can bring or buy breakfast there.

Keeping Connected

Don't forget you can keep connected with all the news from our AWiA members, our organisation and Directors through our:

- Website www.awia.org.au
- Quarterly newsletter *The Buzz*
- Regular Member's Update
- Follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/AustWomeninAg and Twitter [@AustWomeninAg](https://twitter.com/AustWomeninAg) and get involved in online discussions [#AustWomeninAg](https://twitter.com/AustWomeninAg)
- Organise a get together in your State / Territory
- See you in Canberra for our 2016 Conference!