

conservation group to see what vegetation is drought-resistant and/or native to the area. In Canberra, a very successful Garden Regeneration scheme was set up by volunteers and in the two-year period after the fires they helped many people re-landscape their gardens. To see green, to see new growth, when we returned to our rebuilt home, was not only beautiful but gave us hope that we too could recover.

Kids

My children were young at the time of the fires, so I remember how grateful I was when we received toys, colouring books, pencils and textas, craft items, DVDs, books and pushbikes.

Friends and acquaintances

If you personally know someone who was affected, every little gesture of help and support helps. Bake some biscuits or a meal and drop it around to them, offer to put their washing on the line, do the grocery shopping or mind the kids. I remember feeling so overwhelmed and so busy answering phone calls and organising basic survival items that I didn't have the time or energy to cook, wash, clean and do all the other things that keep a family going — and this went on for months.

Buddy system

Our children's school instituted a 'buddy system' for families from school that lost their homes that could be adapted for use in any disaster. Hundreds of people were phoning, dropping into our temporary accommodation and offering help, but it was so overwhelming. People kept asking 'What do you need?' and it was very hard to say 'everything'. Our buddy removed this stress so that when people asked 'what

do you need?' or 'What can I do?', we referred them to our buddy. She had a huge list and would determine what we needed and people could then choose what they wanted to donate or buy. When we returned to Canberra after the fires, we returned to a fully set-up house complete with beds, lounges, toys, bed linen, towels — to the level of detail of waste paper baskets, scissors in the drawers and pot plants. I find it hard to express our gratitude for this amazing assistance.

Women's networks

As well as dealing with trauma, pain and grief, women have to look after their families' needs, often putting their own needs last. My greatest sources of support and friendship was a small group of women bound by the fact that our children all attended the same school and we all lost our homes. We started meeting for coffee a few weeks after the fires and, six years on, we still meet regularly for lunch. We call ourselves The Singed (as in 'slightly burnt') Sisterhood. I don't know how I would have gotten through the last six years without these wonderful women.

In the months to come, as victims spread across the State, they will need avenues where they can come together and discuss what they, and their families, are going through.

Survivors

Consider the survivors who did not lose their homes and have to return to a devastated community. Please don't say to them, 'At least you didn't lose your house'. They are going through such mixed emotions after losing friends and neighbours that they may have mixed emotions about being 'spared'. They have to return to

the devastated landscape and try and rebuild their lives. Their children will play in ash and dirt, the amount of dust and debris flying through the air is unbelievable. They will spend the next year or so cleaning constantly and yet everything will still remain covered in a layer of fine ash and dust. They won't be able to hang clothes on the line because they come in dirtier than when they went out.

These seem like insignificant things, but when these things happen after a tragedy such as this, when you've lost friends and neighbours, and your support networks have gone, they make a very traumatic situation even more stressful.

Note to the victims

Learn to receive. Most of us are great at giving help, but many people find it difficult to accept help. Take the help when it's offered and don't be afraid to ask for what you need. While at the moment you have no choice but to accept help, it may be hard to keep accepting help months and years down the track. But you need to allow family, friends, and the wider community to give. It will make you stronger and, years from now, will be an incredible insight into what others need in times of trauma — because you've been there and you understand. The only way you can truly learn to help others is by accepting help yourself when you need it.

Community

When a disaster strikes, we are reminded of the amazing generosity, kindness and compassion of others. Humans have an incredible capacity to help others in times of need. I am forever grateful to the friends, relatives, work colleagues,

acquaintances and strangers who did what they could to help us in the weeks, months and years after the fires.

No matter how small the gesture, it was appreciated. One friend gave me her copy of a cookbook she knew I used all the time and I bless her every time I open it. A woman who worked with my husband knew that he had bought me some pearl earrings as a present before the fires, so she gave me her favourite pearl earrings as a gift, and I bless her every time I wear them. Another friend's son gave my son his cricket bat and ball, and I bless him every time I see the boys playing outside. A friend and former work colleague of my husband's donated furniture, a TV and cooking utensils, and I bless her every day.

At times, despite everything, I felt buoyed by the support of all these people, by knowing they cared. And now, six years on, I still feel an enormous faith in the human spirit, our ability to survive, and the compassion and generosity we can offer each other. ■

We were unable to re-print Liz's full article due to space, however you can read the full article (published 11 February 2009) on The Canberra Times website at: www.canberratimes.com.au or go to: <http://tinyurl.com/dyjr8b> The image on the facing page was provided by the Victorian Government.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- *Coping with a major personal crisis & After the emergency: A book to help kids cope. See page 35 for more information.*
- Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction & Recovery Authority website: www.wewillrebuild.vic.gov.au

Annual farmer awards help create awareness of where our food comes from

Trudy Glasgow, NSW Department of Primary Industries



2008 Young Farmer of the Year award winner, Tally Matthews, believes it's important that consumers are encouraged to learn more about where their food comes from, and the efforts behind NSW's quality food produce.

Tally, who is a vegetable and turf producer based in the Windsor region on Sydney's outskirts, says it's particularly important for Sydney-based families to be more aware about agriculture and the part it plays in everyday life.

'We have some of the best food producers in the country living in NSW, and it's their efforts that get us our clean, green food produce reputation,' he said.

'Unfortunately, there's not always a lot of awareness about where food comes from, so initiatives like the Farmer awards or even the Royal Easter Show are a great way to generate positive stories about our food industries.

'Apart from myself and this year's Farmer of the Year winner, Nigel Kerin, who produces sheep and grain products, most past winners and finalists in the awards have been focused on livestock, dairy,

horticulture and grain production – and these all form the basis for our everyday foods.'

Applications are now open for the 2009 NSW Farmer of the Year and Young Farmer of the Year Awards, and all farmers from across the State are encouraged to apply.

The Awards acknowledge excellence in agriculture through new and innovative management approaches, with a particular focus on farm profitability and environmental sustainability.

The Awards are an initiative of NSW Department of Primary Industries and the NSW Farmers' Association, with support from *The Land* and the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW.

The Young Farmer of the Year Award is open to farmers aged 16-35 years, while the Farmer of the Year Award is open to all farmers aged over 35 years.

The Young Farmer receives \$5000 and the Farmer of the Year wins \$10 000. Application forms are available on the DPI and NSW Farmers' Association websites, and entries close 12 June. For more information contact Trudy Glasgow on 0427 217 354.

Food trends 2009

Excerpts from an article by Daniel Palmer, 2 January 2009
Source: www.ausfoodnews.com.au/2009/01/02/food-trends-2009-comfort-food-to-be-prominent.html

Spotting trends in food is essential to understanding what food consumers are doing now and more importantly may be doing in the future.

'thefoodpeople', a British-based food consultancy, split their food trend predictions into *mega trends* — which are already apparent within the market — and *emerging trends* that are just starting to take hold.

'The big trends for 2009 include comfort food, nostalgia, scratch cooking and home baking as consumers want to save money as well as feel good about themselves and the food they consume just as Mum or Grandma did.

'Also big in 2009 will be head to tail eating where more people will be eating those forgotten cuts of meat in a bid to make food go further.

'Despite the credit crunch we expect to see sustainability remain high on the agenda whilst some of the nice to haves such as organic drop back.

'We expect domestic cuisines to be big, with people cooking and dining on food that is traditional and indigenous to their country of residence.

'In addition, we also expect to see shifts in drinking habits with more in home drinking as well as a rise in the popularity of beer, cider and cocktails.

'As consumers get used to using the internet more for food purchases we anticipate more business and food brands miniaturising and customising their food products to the specific needs of their consumers.

'Last but not least, we expect to see health in food trends such as natural health choices, ultra low calorie, anti foods, more detox diets and tailored health food choices to be big in 2009.

And it's not just the mega trends that are of interest; the emerging trends are just as exciting and often more inspirational for those looking to use food trends as a basis for innovation,' thefoodpeople noted.

'We expect beauty foods to emerge in 2009, foods that enhance your inner and outer beauty. We also expect to see more *free* food such as people foraging or growing their own, as well as community food projects and initiatives.'

According to AgriFood Skills Australia CEO, Arthur Blewitt, the agrifood industry is in 'better shape' than other industries in facing up to the effects of the global economic crisis.

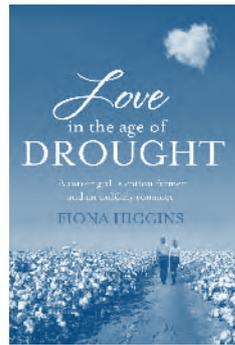
He said it is a good time for people looking for a change of lifestyle to seriously consider getting work in the agrifood industry as there is a shortfall of people in areas of agriculture and food production and opportunities are there for people who may be displaced from other industries by the downturn.

University of Sydney data shows a shortfall of 96 000 people over the next six years in agriculture's top seven occupations: livestock farmers (will need another 34 000), farm hands (21 000), crop farmers (18 000), mixed crop/livestock farmers (14 000), general mobile plant operators (4000), bookkeepers (3000) and shearers (2000).

Australia's agrifood industry produces food for 60 million people and occupies two-thirds of the land mass. AgriFood enterprises employ up to 900 000 people.

For more information, go to the AgriFood Skills Australia website at: www.agrifoodskills.net.au

book reviews



Love in the age of Drought

By Fiona Higgins

Fiona was a single woman living in Sydney when she attended a leadership conference on ethics. At the conference she meets Stuart Higgins, a cotton-farmer from South-East Queensland, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Fiona's memoir charts their love affair throughout the strain of Stuart's cotton farm entering its fourth year of drought, and her issues with commitment. She eventually gives up her city lifestyle and moves to Stuart's farm where the nearest township is Jandowae (population 700). Despite the culture shock, Fiona falls madly in love with rural life.

Fiona also puts a city gal's eye to country living and she raises some pretty topical questions about ethical farming in an age where balancing environmental concerns with commercial realities is really hard.

Published by Macmillan Australia
ISBN 978-1-4050-3909-3
www.loveintheageofdrought.com
RRP \$34.99



When Nuns wore Soldier's Trousers

By Pat Studdy-Clift

This is a 'big' little true story about five European nuns during the Second World War. After spending almost 20 years on a mission station in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, they found themselves in great peril and in direct line with the Japanese invasion. With the help of local people, an expatriate and numerous 'miracles', they were able to escape capture. Their journey through harrowing jungle forests while weaving Japanese spotter planes shows the powerful will to survive.

Sister Vinciana kept a diary (in German) about their adventure which has now been translated by Pat Studdy-Clift — a Lismore author. This small book is simply written and provides an interesting account of a unique time in history.

Reviewed by Veronica Pansaru, Kingscliff

Published by Hesperian Press
ISBN 978-0-85905-469-0
To order, contact Pat Studdy-Clift on Ph: 02 6624 4657
Cost \$12.22 + p&p



Little Wins for Working Women

By Jen Dalitz

Ever felt like you're juggling so many things you can't possibly be doing a good job of any of them? It's an everyday experience for working women who trade off their most precious commodity, time, between friendships and family, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, community responsibilities, personal interests and the challenge and fulfilment of a rewarding career.

Little Wins for Working Women is a treasure chest of advice, insights and practical strategies to ensure every day of your life is filled with success. When things don't go to plan, when you're feeling frustrated or inadequate, or you're finding it hard to push on, this book encourages you to celebrate all the little wins that contribute to a seriously successful life.

Published by Dalitz & Assoc. Pty Ltd
ISBN 978-0-9804141-1-0 (hbk.)
www.jendalitz.com
RRP \$19.95

The Country Web has received free copies of *Love in the Age of Drought* and *Little Wins for Working Women* to give away.

To be in the running, write to us and tell us in 25 words or less which book you'd like and why?

Entries must be received by 23 June 2009.

Send your entry to: The Country Web, Locked Bag 21, Orange NSW 2800. See page 2 for Terms and Conditions.

Is your school asthma friendly?

By Julie-Ann Garvie, Asthma Friendly Schools

Do you know a school-aged child with asthma? When they are away from home do the people who care for them understand their triggers and know how to help them when they get sick?

The Asthma Friendly Schools program is a free government initiative available to every primary school and high school in NSW facilitated by Asthma Foundation NSW a dedicated team of staff to assist schools with their needs on an individual basis.

When a school registers in the Asthma Friendly Schools program they become part of a program that assists them in creating an environment that is safe, supportive and understanding of students and staff members with asthma. The school is given a comprehensive one-hour asthma emergency training session for all staff members, asthma first aid posters and free teaching resources to assist school staff in fostering understanding and asthma awareness in students.

The Asthma Friendly Schools program staff work closely with each school, ensuring that there are ample Asthma Emergency Kits for excursions and camps and they also assist with guidance regarding the administration procedures, ensuring that the school's policy has considered the needs and safety of students with asthma.

Asthma Friendly Schools report that their staff have much greater confidence in managing an asthma emergency, their students have fewer days off due to asthma and they are more likely to take part in sporting activities.

Check if your school is asthma friendly by clicking on the search link at: www.asthmafriendlyschools.org.au

If your school is not asthma friendly call the Asthma Friendly Schools team on 1800 645 130 and they will guide you on how to support your local school and principal in completing the Asthma Friendly process. You can also check out the website for more information about the program.

One in nine Australian kids has asthma, so chances are you know one of them. Shouldn't every school be asthma friendly?

Is there an ideal weight we should all try to achieve? The answer is NO! There's no ideal weight that suits everybody. Each person is different and their healthy weight will be determined by different factors. For healthy eating tips and information on physical activity and nutrition, go to: www.healthyactive.gov.au



UNDERSTANDING COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES IN CANCER CARE CONTINUES TO GROW

Support News, November 2008

Interest in complementary therapies in cancer care continues to grow, according to recent Australian research that shows that 65 per cent of people with cancer are using some form of non-mainstream therapy.

Because of this unprecedented interest, Cancer Council NSW has published a new book, *Understanding Complementary Therapies*, which provides a basic introduction to the topic for people with cancer, their families and friends.

The book encourages people to make informed choices and to discuss their use of complementary therapies with their health care providers, such as General Practitioners, dietitians and nurses.

The book is also a useful resource for health professionals, particularly those who are not familiar with different complementary therapies but who often encounter patients seeking advice about them.

Over 30 different therapies are discussed, including mind-body techniques such as meditation, body-based practices such as massage and reflexology, and biological therapies such as herbal medicine.

Practical information about safety issues, choosing a therapist and a therapy, and talking with mainstream health professionals is included, along with a comprehensive question checklist and glossary to assist people in their discussions.

For a free copy, call the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20 or download the booklet at: www.cancerCouncil.com.au



THE BUTTERFLY FOUNDATION SUPPORTING AUSTRALIANS WITH EATING DISORDERS

The Butterfly Foundation provides support for Australians who suffer from eating disorders and negative body image issues and their carers through: 'direct relief' for treatment and support to sufferers of eating disorders; prevention programs in schools and the community; enhancing and developing effective treatment options; advocacy and awareness; supporting rural and regional eating disorder networks; and day programs for young people with eating disorders.

The Foundation offers phone and email counselling, together with support groups. For more information, Ph: 02 9412 4499 or email: support@thebutterflyfoundation.org.au

RASF FOUNDATION GRANTS

The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW Foundation provides a range of education grants and scholarships, as well as awards to assist young people to build strong local communities.

Ph: 02 9704 1234, Email: foundation@rasf.org.au or go to: www.rasf.org.au

**FARM READY REIMBURSEMENT GRANT**

Provides grants up to \$1500 for individual primary producers and Indigenous land managers to attend approved climate change training activities to learn about adaptive practices, understand innovative technologies, and share ideas and information with other primary producers.

Call 1800 087 670, or go to: www.farmready.gov.au

**MERCY FOUNDATION SMALL GRANTS**

Provides up to \$5000 per organisation for social justice and community initiatives that focus on addressing disadvantage, especially in relation to women and children. Grants are ongoing and should be submitted using the grant application form.

Ph: 02 9699 8726, Email: office@mercyfoundation.com.au or go to: www.mercyfoundation.com.au

Feed your mind at the 2009 Women's Gathering



The historic town of Junee will host the 17th annual rural Women's Gathering this coming September and the Committee is hoping you will be making tracks to participate in this dynamic, fun-filled weekend of events.

Women involved in this year's Gathering are working busily to ensure preparations are well in place by 18–20 September when women from across the state are expected to converge on Junee for creativity and connection, fun and friends, laughter and learning.

The caterers have now been booked and the food and wine taste-tested!

Workshops are being explored, with a range of options from arts and craft, educational and agricultural-based workshops for you to choose from.

Keynote speakers are being finalised with Ella James and Petrea King already confirmed.



Ella James has notched up over 20 years in the Australian media, in radio,

television and magazines as well as playing the supporting role in a Tropfest finalist film and performing stand-up comedy at the Basement for the International Comedy Festival. Ella is the ultimate performer, having done stand up comedy and being one of Australia's top voice-over artists. She combines this well with her extensive journalism background, to give

her a unique ability to think on her feet and hold an audience's attention.



Since 1984 **Petrea King's** presentations, writings and residential

programs have inspired and encouraged people facing life's greatest challenges to make meaning of their circumstances and establish peace of mind. Her work with doctors, nurses, psychologists and allied health professionals has enabled them to re-establish a deep commitment to their personal and professional development. Petrea's innovative approaches have proved helpful to thousands of people and she is nationally recognised as a leader in the field of health and well-being.

So do you need any more enticing to come to Junee this September?

Junee is tucked into the western folds of the South West Slopes of NSW, just 60 km west of Gundagai, and less than half an hour north of Wagga Wagga. The building of the Great Southern Rail line in 1878 marks Junee's emergence as an important and busy town, reflected in the grand buildings of the era, beautifully preserved and housing many Junee businesses. Junee's streetscape is still dominated by its stately railway station, the majestic Loftus Hotel, and the curving spine of the tracks themselves.

For the visitor, Junee steps out of the country town mould and provides a unique experience, courtesy of its legacy as a busy rail and transport junction and its location in the rich farmlands of the eastern Riverina. From the violins in the roundhouse, to the red dust of the paceway, events range from the quirky to the dramatic but always entertaining. And the Women's Gathering will not disappoint. Plus, no visit would be complete without a ghost, lavender or chocolate tour, or a visit to a real life Thomas the Tank Engine Roundhouse.

MEN'S PROGRAM

Let your husbands know that the Junee's Men's Shed is busy working on a fun weekend for the men who won't miss this chance to visit Junee, a real blokes' playground. From railway to museum, golf or the Men's Shed itself, there will be something to keep all your hubbies happy, so bring them along. Mark your calendar today.

Look out for the next edition of *The Country Web* which will feature a 4-page pull-out section and include the official program, workshops selections, details of the men's program, tent city and travel information along with Gathering and tent city registration details.

You can also pre-register online at: www.junee.nsw.gov.au Simply follow the links to the Women's Gathering page.

The 100 Mile Diet



By Cynthia Jarratt, Orange

When I announced to my husband Paul that as part of the Orange F.O.O.D Week festivities we would be taking on the committee's challenge of following the 100 Mile Diet, the idea was met with somewhat subdued enthusiasm. But, to our surprise, finding enough local ingredients in the Central West to survive on has been easier than first thought.

The 100 Mile Diet is not your typical 'lose weight diet'. It's a concept that began with a Canadian family who tried a one-year experiment to eat only food that was grown and produced within 100 miles of their home. The concept gained worldwide recognition and has been coined 'the new organic' — offering foods that are not just better tasting and better for local economies but better for your health and the environment. Their 100 Mile Diet inspired thousands of individuals, and even whole communities, to change the way they eat.

The area within 100 miles (or 160 kms as it is here in Australia) of Orange has a lot to offer; fruit, vegetables, meat, fish and bread to name a few. So, armed with a typical weekly shopping list for fruit and vegetables, I went to Totally Local, a food shop in

Orange that specialises in, you guessed it, all things local.

I was amazed. I got everything on my list and a few extra treats and I came out paying nearly exactly the same as I would have if I'd gone to one of the major food outlets. I parked outside the front of the shop, didn't have to wait in a queue to be served and, after talking to the shop owner, found out exactly where the products had come from.

I even had berrnaise sauce on my shopping list, knowing full well it would be difficult to get but a local chef explained that with a few home grown herbs, some local verjuice, olive oil and eggs I could easily make my own.

Most of the foods I source from farmers' markets or the producers themselves are grown locally and those that aren't are Australian-grown products which have been value-added such as chocolate covered local hazelnuts.

It feels great to support local farming families and share in their passion of producing and eating quality food that's in season and fresh. And judging by our first weeks of eating locally I suspect this diet will definitely have us putting weight on, but it will all be worth it if it means we can live sustainably and look after the planet.

It has given my husband and me much food for thought and hopefully you can do some research in your own area and see what you come up with. The further west you travel, of course, you may need to stretch that 100 mile limit... but even if you only buy 50 per cent of your food regionally I reckon you'll still be making a difference! ■

For more information on The 100 Mile Diet to go:
<http://100milediet.org>.

Braidwood Organic Growers Society

By Pamela Wright, Reidsdale

An old city friend rang the other day to see how our farm was faring in the extreme heat with little or no rain at all.

'Are you still going to your mud club?' she asked.

'MUD? If only! We haven't seen mud for years,' I laughed, 'but I think you're really talking about BOGS — a rather water-free bog. You see... BOGS is really the Braidwood Organic Growers' Society.'

We are a group of mainly retired people who are passionate about growing organic fruit and vegetables and raising healthy livestock for our own and others consumption. Coming from all walks of life, most of us have opted for a tree-change and set up our small rural enterprises. Definitely not dabblers but serious doers.

Our members' interests cover bee-keeping, fruit and vegetable and garlic growing, sheep, goat, alpaca and cattle raising, egg production, and viticulture, all under the organic, sustainable umbrella.

We gather together six times a year for field days, rotating around members' properties where there is a great opportunity to exchange information and participate in enlightening walkabouts. With the fondness of our members for fine food and the fruit of the vine, these gatherings have developed into what one member calls the Braidwood Orgasmic Gourmet Society! With no prior planning, the members' contributions towards the meals result in what appears to be a well-coordinated menu.

It's great to taste each others produce and sample new and old varieties. We keep a seed bank and have a table for excess produce to share. There are no membership fees but at each meeting we hold a raffle and as everyone brings a prize, all go home satisfied!

The drought apart, Braidwood's climate is something of a Gordian knot. Late frosts and early ones, take January for example, present challenges. Our members come up with amazing solutions — like building a hot-house on an island in a dam, so that temperatures are more evenly sustained. Our meetings, whether we have a guest speaker on a special topic or perhaps a game of horticultural trivia, are generally satisfying amid great bonhomie!



GET CREATIVE: Soft avocados become guacamole, while old fruit becomes jam, juice or smoothies. For some great recipe ideas, go to: www.lovefoodhatewaste.com You'll also find some great ideas for re-using leftovers!

Art to Brungle

By Kathryn Powderly, Wagga Wagga



Some of the participants in the Art to You workshop held at the Brungle Aboriginal Community Centre.

It's 5.30 am and my blue Subaru station wagon is loaded to the upper window frames with clay, tools, books, boards, buckets, aprons, slippers and glazes. I hope I have distributed the weight evenly between the front and rear wheels so my headlights don't shine up into the tree tops again. I leave the flat land of Wagga Wagga behind me and head for the rounded hills of Gundagai, allowing two hours for the trip to Brungle — just in case I get lost (it's been known to happen on past trips as I daydream my way along country roads).

Today I have an *Art to You** Workshop booked at the Brungle Aboriginal Community Centre with a group of adults and children who are coming along to try their hands at clay.

I arrive in Gundagai with time to spare and take a quick trip up to the scenic lookout for the 360 degree views of the Gundagai Valley. The Murrumbidgee River coils its way across the floodplain and I am reminded of a terrible

flood in the 1800s when the whole town went underwater. People were trapped on their rooftops, water continuing to rise, with no emergency services to rescue them. One heroic Aboriginal man took his canoe out and single-handedly rescued family after family of white settlers, taking them to the safety of higher ground. And he did this all at night!

I contemplate the enormity of this as I drive into the beautiful Brungle Valley, contrasting remarkably with the stark brownness of the Riverina Plains.

Three generations of the Brungle Koori community came along to work with clay — with our youngest artist only two-and-a-half and the eldest in her 70s.

Rolling long coils of clay for coiled pots reminded people of snakes and so began the first of many stories. One mother told us how when she was first married and was living in the house down the road she put her baby girl into her cot with a bottle of milk. She looked in

a little while later to check on her and was horrified to see a black snake curled up drinking the milk from the baby's bottle. The mother stood transfixed, not moving a muscle, barely able to breathe, not wanting to disturb the snake for fear it would bite her little girl. Finally, after what seemed like hours, the snake slid off the pillow and across the floor. The mother grabbed the baby from the cot and fled back to her mum's house and did not return for months.

I love the conversations we have over clay. During the two-days we covered family and local history, land regeneration, repatriation of Aboriginal remains from museums to home land cemeteries, geology and where clay comes from, science, the chemical changes of clay during firing, and the variety of clays available for use by artists.

Our youngest artist, at two-and-a-half, was completely absorbed for the whole day working with clay. Whoever said pre-school children have a short attention span had never seen this little gem at work. She painted clay, made animal models, cut out shapes and arranged them into sculptures, she made coiled pots, and her work was just exquisite. No stopping there; when she had finished she helped everyone else!

Meanwhile, one of the elders, 70 years old, focused on her tile with total concentration, firstly making a maquette of her tile before completing a story, in symbolic form, of our art workshop weekend. We were all represented on the tile; I felt greatly honoured to be included for the first time in an Aboriginal artwork. It was truly a special weekend on many levels! ■

**Art to You is a program run from the Best Street Studios in Wagga Wagga, which brings art workshops to communities in rural and remote regions of NSW and Northern Victoria. Kathryn Powderly, Director of Best Street Studios, takes her art materials and expertise on the road to share with groups of adults and children across regional and remote areas, travelling as far afield as Hay to Tumbarumba and the Riverina Valley to West Wyalong, Cootamundra and Young. Wherever ten people can come together in a group Kathryn will bring her workshops to share the interests and skills of both adults and children.*

BEST STREET STUDIOS ART WORKSHOPS & COURSES

The Murrumbidgee School of Creative Arts (MSCA) is a creative art event that draws together artists and tutors from across Australia and beyond! Held in beautiful Wagga Wagga, the MSCA offers a variety of professionally tutored creative art workshops, suitable for the beginner right through to the experienced participant. Whether your fascination is for fine arts, textiles, sculpture, millinery or calligraphy there is something to tempt everyone.

Winter School: July 18–21
Spring School: October 15–18

For more information go to:
www.mscawagga.com or
www.beststreetstudios.com.au
or Ph: 02 6921 2977

ADVERTISEMENT

Women in Decision Making



An interview with Jann Gardner, Maitland, Partner Sparke Helmore Law Firm

WHAT BOARDS/COMMITTEES ARE YOU CURRENTLY ON?

I am a former Board Member of Sparke Helmore Lawyers and current Board Member of the Hunter Water Corporation, Vice President of the Women's Network (Hunter NSW), and member of the Newcastle City Council Coastal Advisory Committee.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO BECOME INVOLVED?

I obtained an MBA in the mid 1990s and had not used it a lot in my day-to-day role. I had achieved a number of my aims in my career and was looking for interesting roles where I could use the skills and knowledge I had gained while studying for the MBA. The Board positions fulfilled this.

I became involved in the Women's Network as I was keen to support women to obtain decision-making positions, where they could make a difference in their community or the organisation in which they were involved.

WHAT DO YOU GET OUT OF BEING IN THIS ROLE?

The Board positions allow me to have an overview of the respective organisations and to plan the strategic direction they

will take. A long-term perspective and visionary thinking are required in these roles and I enjoy the contrast with my day-to-day operational role.

In relation to the Women's Network, I enjoy supporting women, becoming involved in my local community and contributing to the shape it will take.

HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY OBSTACLES?

The Hunter Water Corporation operates on an entirely different business model from a law firm and getting abreast of the whole organisation and the manner

in which it operates has been a challenge.

WHAT IS ONE OBSTACLE YOU HAVE OVERCOME?

There are few women in paid Board positions in the Hunter region and obtaining the position on Hunter Water Corporation's Board was a major achievement for me.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR SUPPORT?

My husband is my greatest support. He keeps the household running while I work long hours. He is also a great sounding board for me to test my ideas and to clarify my thoughts.

I also rely on advice from my first boss, who continues to provide me with honest feedback and challenges me to see issues from another perspective.

WHAT IS YOUR FINAL MESSAGE TO OTHER WOMEN WANTING TO BE MORE INVOLVED IN DECISION-MAKING?

Have a clear idea of what you want to achieve and prepare a detailed plan to help you get there. Find a mentor and a network of supporters who can keep you positively focussed. Most importantly, support other women who want to become involved in decision making. ■

Are you interested in conservation and caring for the environment? Join up to have your say in national parks management.

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is calling for people passionate about visiting national parks and conservation to nominate for local advisory committees across the state.

The recruitment drive for members for the 19 advisory committees is part of an ongoing process to tap into community knowledge and expertise to guide the future of national parks.

These committees have formed a crucial part of NPWS decision-making processes for many years. They help NPWS to ensure an ongoing community and neighbour

involvement in the operations and play an important role as a point of contact for the broader community to communicate ideas and issues relating to conservation. Advisory committee members also help NPWS to understand community needs which guide the provision of appropriate services and community facilities.

Advisory committee members are appointed by the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment and they make a real difference over four years. The current committees' term is due to finish in December 2009. New committees will need to be recruited for the following four years.

Members of these new committees will be recruited from a variety of backgrounds and interests. They may be drawn from local councils, university students studying environmental

subjects, the rural community, recreational user groups, conservation groups, bush fire brigades, the education, scientific and tourism fields, and the Aboriginal community.

New appointments are for four years from 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2013. Successful applicants would be expected to attend approximately four meetings a year plus field inspections to parks and reserves. This is a voluntary position. Sitting fees are not paid, but travel expenses are reimbursed.

Interested people can apply online at: www.environment.nsw.gov.au/npws or email: rac@environment.nsw.gov.au or call the Stakeholder Liaison Officer on Ph: 02 9585 6117 for an application form and information kit.

Applications close 30 June 2009.

Powerful incentives to consider solar energy

By Mark Filmer & Kevin Parton,
Charles Sturt University, Orange

There's perhaps never been a more opportune time for householders to choose 'carbon-free' solar power to supply their electricity, with the Federal Government currently offering subsidies to householders who install rooftop solar power generators.

But the way these subsidies operate will change from 1 July.

The government wants one-fifth of Australia's electricity to come from renewable energy sources by 2020. This 'Renewable Energy Target' aims to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and combat global warming.

With the move toward a low-pollution economy, the government is offering rebates for the installation of small-scale renewable energy systems through its Solar Homes & Communities Plan (SHCP). This plan provides for rebates of up to \$8000 for households purchasing solar power systems. Currently, rebates are only available to households with an annual income of less than \$100 000, and for installations at a primary place of residence.

Solar electricity systems also create credits known as Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs). The number of certificates created reflects the amount of renewable energy the power

system will generate. This depends on the system's size and location. (Each certificate represents the equivalent of one megawatt hour of electricity generation from a renewable source.) Households installing solar electricity systems can sell their RECs to power companies to further offset the cost of their power system.

The SHCP effectively enables a large proportion of Australians to install a one kilowatt solar power system connected to the grid for a net outlay of no more than \$4000. (A one kilowatt system is the most popular domestic system. It produces about four kilowatt hours of electricity a day, depending on several factors including location. This is about one-quarter of the average Australian household's electricity consumption.)

From July 1, the Federal Government's Solar Credits scheme will replace the SHCP. The new scheme will scrap the household means test and expand eligibility for rebates to businesses, developers, schools and community groups, as well as non-primary places of residence, such as holiday homes.

Another significant change is that purchasers of small-scale renewable energy systems will receive five times the number of RECs for the first 1.5 kilowatts of system capacity they generate than they would under the current system. (This multiplier will be in place until June 2012, after which it will decrease by one each financial year until the end of June 2016.)

Under the new system, RECs will act as an up-front capital cost subsidy worth up to \$7500 for the purchase of photo-voltaic energy systems. The actual value of the RECs will vary slightly

with location — four zones have been established based on how much renewable energy can be generated by a solar panel within each zone. (Certificates for systems installed in northern Australia will be worth slightly more than for equivalent systems installed in southern Australia.)

Although substantially more purchasers of solar power systems will be eligible for rebates and more RECs under the new scheme, Australian families with a household income of less than \$100 000 will receive substantially less in rebates than under the current system. Estimates suggest a shortfall of up to \$2500 on a 1.5 kilowatt system and \$4000 on a one kilowatt system compared with the current rebate. Installing a system before 30 June is financially more attractive for these households. Table 1 (below) shows the current and future situations.

A decision by the State Government will also have a significant impact on the 'attractiveness' of the Federal Government's Solar Credits scheme to NSW residents. The State Government decision, which is imminent, relates to what sort of 'feed-in' tariff system it will adopt. Feed-in tariffs are effectively financial incentives to invest in solar power systems.

The choice is between a gross feed-in tariff and net feed-in tariff. With a gross feed-in tariff, solar power system owners feed all the electricity they generate into the grid and are paid for this gross amount. Under a net feed-in system, owners are only paid for electricity surplus to their

needs that is fed into the grid. Why does this make a significant difference? The answer is that with a gross feed-in tariff the amount of revenue to be generated for the householder for many years ahead is clearly defined, and householders can borrow to finance the investment in the solar panels. The net feed-in tariff does not have this guarantee, so you would expect far less finance to be available and far fewer solar panels to be purchased under a net feed-in tariff system.

Adopting a gross feed-in system, as has been introduced in the ACT, will provide much greater financial incentives for families to invest in solar power systems and reduce the carbon footprint of their households. It will also encourage investment in larger systems which, when combined with the provision for businesses, developers, schools and community groups to be included in the federal scheme from 1 July, suggests there could be considerable expansion of solar power generation under a gross feed-in tariff arrangement. ■

For more information go to the Federal Department of Environment, Water, Heritage & the Arts website at: www.environment.gov.au/settlements/renewable/pv/index.html

The Choice Magazine website also has some good (independent) information at: www.choice.com.au/viewArticleAsOnePage.aspx?id=106422

Table 1: Approx. net cost of 1kW system (having unsubsidised cost of \$13 000)

	Current	After 30 June 09
Income less than \$100 000	\$4000	\$8000
Income more than \$100 000	\$12 000	\$8000



The Rural Women's Network (RWN) State Advisory Committee (SAC) is made up of women from key networks. It provides advice and strategic direction to the RWN by promoting and evaluating its initiatives, exchanging information and progressing issues relevant to rural, regional and remote NSW communities.

The SAC is currently co-chaired by

- Richard Sheldrake
NSW DPI Director-General; and
- Nerida Cullen
Livestock Health & Pest Authorities

The SAC invites your views, ideas and questions.

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rwn sac update

Finishing my term as the representative member on the Rural Women's Network (RWN) State Advisory Committee (SAC) gives me 'food for thought'. Three years as a Member, and two years as Co-Chair, representing the Country Women's Association (CWA) of NSW, has given me the opportunity to work closely with some of the most energetic, committed and community-conscious women that I have ever met. I commend NSW DPI for their support of this Committee which brings together women from throughout the state to discuss the issues and concerns of their communities and constituents.

'Hot & Emerging Issues' have been at the forefront of our meeting agendas. Topics have been as varied as women's health and wellbeing, access to appropriate and accessible transport and high fuel costs, the city/country divide, farm safety, domestic violence, and bilingual difficulties for women workers, to name just a few.

RIRDC RURAL WOMEN'S AWARD (RWA)

The Gala Dinner for the presentation of the 2009 Award winner was a marvellous success this year and we were thrilled to have the Premier with us for most of the evening, along with several Ministers. Kim Currie from Orange won this year's Award with Gillian Hogendyk from Warren the runner-up. [You can read more about Kim and Gillian and their Award projects on pages 6 & 7].

The RWA recognises and encourages the vital contribution women make to rural Australia, and supports women with strong leadership skills, a positive vision for the future of primary industries, and their potential to make a difference. There were double the nominees this year, which is indicative of the number of women we have working for the advancement of our rural communities.

Nominations for the 2010 Award open in August. Please think about encouraging someone you know. Details can be found on the RWN website: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn

THE COUNTRY WEB

The free *Country Web* newsletter is a great way to disseminate information to women

and their families. Our reader coverage is over 12 000. To receive a copy, fill in the mailing address form on the back cover of the newsletter or contact RWN. You can also download the newsletter from the RWN website.

DARING TO DREAM

The *Daring to Dream* book features inspiring stories from women who have dared to dream and then seen their dreams come to fruition. Their stories will encourage you in your own individual pursuits. You can buy a copy from the RWN for \$11 incl. GST plus p&p.

2009 JUNEЕ WOMEN'S GATHERING

Planning is well underway for the Junee Women's Gathering, with Chair and Secretary of the Junee Committee presenting their progress report at our recent meeting. Plan to 'Make Tracks' to this event from 18 to 20 September, for a weekend of creativity and connection, fun and friends, laughter and learning. Junee is reasonably central to most of the southern region, so perhaps a day trip by bus could be planned? [More on the Gathering program is included on page 25].

CHALLENGING TIMES

We are all feeling the stress of the current economic climate, especially in rural and remote areas, where costs are forever rising. Women in these areas are under enormous pressures both on the farm front and in their communities. Many wear several hats, with the hat of wife and mother being the priority. RWN recognises this and hopes that by providing opportunities to meet, network and re-energise, women will be better able to work both on-farm or off-farm to support their families and communities.

NEW RWN SAC CO-CHAIR

Congratulations to Nerida Cullen (Livestock Health & Pest Authorities representative) on her recent election as the new Co-Chair. Nerida will bring her own special expertise and knowledge to this important Committee.



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