



2007 RIRDC Rural Women's Award

The 2007 RIRDC Rural Women's Award has again been successful in recognising two of our State's most dedicated rural women. Eleanor Cook from Coolah (Winner) and Fiona Kliendeinst (Runner-up) from Uralla were presented with their awards, by the NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Ian Macdonald MLC, at a special Gala Dinner in Sydney in February.

Rural Women interested in applying for the 2008 Award can go to: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn to download the selection criteria and find out more information. Applications for the 2008 Award will open on 1 August and close on 15 October 2007.

Eleanor Cook, Coolah

2007 RIRDC NSW Rural Women's Award Winner

Eleanor has a strong commitment to the sustainability of rural communities and to creating a strong base to help support the economy of small country towns.

Originally from Sydney, Eleanor's rural life began when she met her husband Phillip and moved to a farm near Coolah in the State's north-west. She has applied her marketing background locally by becoming involved in a range of local fundraising committees, helping to establish the Community District Development Group, which has attracted \$1.5 million in funding for local community projects over recent years. Eleanor is also the editor of the local newspaper, and is involved in a range of tourism and promotional activities that focus on raising the profile of Coolah and district.

Eleanor's project aims to reduce fund-raising pressures on rural communities, particularly rural women, by establishing a community-managed trust fund. This would enable bequeathed funds to be invested and the profits used to support a wide scope of work across social, economic and environmental projects. While Eleanor's aim initially is to establish the fund locally, she hopes to develop a simple model that could be used by other communities.

Eleanor's project and its emphasis on community sustainability is particularly relevant as much of rural NSW struggles to cope with the drought. Eleanor hopes that the community trust fund would attract complementary support from individuals, the private sector and Government.

Eleanor's vision is summed up by her personal motto: 'Work smarter, not harder: it's as simple as ABC.'

Fiona Kliendeinst, Uralla

2007 RIRDC NSW Rural Women's Award Runner-up

Fiona Kliendeinst's passion for the wool industry extends back to her childhood growing up on a merino sheep farm at Emmaville near Glen Innes. After studying agricultural economics at Armidale, Fiona spent a number of years working in Agricultural Marketing in Sydney promoting Bioclip.

After deciding the city life was not for her, Fiona moved to Armidale. There she met her husband Paul, eventually joining him on his family's superfine wool property at Uralla. In addition to working full-time on the farm, and raising their three children, Fiona has become a key player in the superfine production industry, and their flock's wool quality has attracted national recognition.

Fiona's latest focus has been the development of a woollen clothing fashion line, 'Luv2wearwool'. Fiona's interest in developing a clothing line grew from the realisation that it was difficult to buy woollen clothing, and she was determined to address the gap by starting her own range. Local women from wool-growing properties pool their sewing and designing talents to produce a combination of high fashion and practical woollen clothing.

Fiona's project focuses on expanding the Luv2wearwool production base at Uralla to include a full-time studio employing local women in all aspects of woollen garment production, including the processing component. She believes this will play a vital role in showcasing the qualities of NSW's fine wool to the rest of Australia and the international fashion scene.

She also wants to better promote the use of Australian wool for both high fashion and everyday clothing ranges.



Drought Donations Register

With most of NSW currently affected by drought there has been increased interest from groups and individuals wanting to donate money, goods or other types of assistance to farming families and communities in need.

NSW DPI has set up a Drought Donations register to link groups wanting to donate money and goods to welfare organisations that may be able to assist in the delivery and distribution of these donations to individuals and communities.

NSW DPI has a Drought Hotline on 1800 814 647 which can be contacted by groups and individuals who want to donate money or goods. The Hotline is available from 8.30 am to 4.30 pm on weekdays and from 7 pm to 9 pm, seven days a week.

Guidelines for donations

You are encouraged to donate money rather than goods, as the money can then be spent locally in the drought-affected communities. This supports local businesses that are also affected by drought. Donations of money to charitable organisations are generally tax-deductible.

If you wish to donate food products please ensure that

the food is non-perishable and well within the 'use by' date. If you are donating personal care products (e.g. soaps, shampoo, cosmetics) please ensure that any packaging, wrapping or product-protection measures are intact and that products are well within their 'use by' date. If you wish to donate toys or games, these should be new, not second-hand.

You can donate in two ways:

1. Large donations: If you are an individual or a group (e.g. Rotary, Lions, VIEW, Quota or other community group) and you wish to donate money, goods or services, you should contact the NSW DPI Drought Hotline so your donation can be included on the Register.

You will need to provide contact details and a description of the donation. The details you provide will be recorded on a spreadsheet that will be made available to participating welfare organisations through a password-protected site on the NSW DPI website. The welfare organisations may (or may not) contact you to arrange the pick-up and delivery of the donation.

2. Small donations: If you wish to donate single or smaller amounts of money or goods, you should contact a local welfare agency in your area. If you are unsure about which welfare agencies are available in your area, contact the Drought Hotline.

VIEWPOINT: LOSING PERSPECTIVE ON DROUGHT CHARITY

Rural people suffering from the ongoing challenge of drought are very grateful for the generosity of others. The food hampers, pamper packs and 'gifts' of moral support are well received. However, it should be noted that some areas have gone into drought ahead of others and these areas continue to attract the majority of media attention, leaving other areas often feeling left out and forgotten by benefactors.

We all know that virtually every political group has been on a drought tour of Bourke and Brewarrina, but the small pockets of ongoing drought areas of the likes of Tomingley and Upper Hunter, Parkes, Crookwell and many others are less often mentioned and have not necessarily been the target of food parcels or aid. The little parcels of goods or food represent a community of concern and it is the sentiment and thought which is important, not the utility of the gift. The 'new' areas of drought are just as needy as those well documented and recognised areas and in targeting gifts we must be cognisant of this.

At times of extreme stress it is easy to lose perspective and to become self-absorbed. This has already been documented by groups such as Beyond Blue and rural mental health workers. This self-absorption can manifest in insidious ways, such as expecting the generosity of others as a right.

Last year I was the recipient of a colourful necklace from a thoughtful woman friend who was suffering from the drought herself but wished to cheer me up. This same generosity

encouraged a community effort from our drought-stricken area to piece together Christmas parcels for another area of need. In making these small gestures we were able to lift ourselves away from our personal situation and gain perspective. The children who took part also felt gratified by the letters of thanks and were able to think beyond their immediate plight. In a similar way we receive a sense of gratification in giving to disasters offshore, but in our own environment it is often harder to establish perspective.

The millions of dollars which have filtered through aid networks such as the Country Women's Association, Anglicare, the Salvation Army and many other groups and individuals, does not cover the 'real' cost of drought and it is important that drought-affected individuals and benefactors keep this in perspective. No one area should have a call upon these parcels more than another. The distribution to all 'new' drought areas has a profound effect on the morale in these communities and we look to the broader networks of the Red Cross and CWA to effect this.

Giving to others can provide therapeutic relief and lift a person from the path to self-absorption. The gift can be one of helping a neighbour, pooling resources or just being a friend. It does not have to be monetary or material. All gifts are received with thanks and gratitude.

Susan Ainge McLeish & Denise Turnbull
Rural Women's Network State Advisory Committee

parenting ■ helping teenagers celebrate safely

Going out and partying is a normal part of growing up, but there are some risks involved. You can help your teenager manage these risks through discussion and planning. Whether your teenager is hosting a party at home or just 'going out' with friends, this fact sheet contains some important discussion points and planning tips to help keep them safe.

Hosting a party? Plan together!

Planning beforehand ensures a safer night for everyone.

Police

Contact your local Police licensing officer to discuss laws related to alcohol and young people. Register your party with the Police: this doesn't mean they will come into the house to check on the party, but it will help them respond quickly if you do need their help.

Entertainment

Entertainment such as dancing, a theme or a 'chill out' or quiet area will take the emphasis away from drinking.

Supervision

Adult supervision at youth celebrations reduces the risk of injury or harm. Parents don't have to be 'hovering' over guests; but don't restrict yourself to certain rooms.

Alcohol

By law in NSW alcohol cannot be served to minors (under the age of 18) without their parents' consent – even in your home. So provide plenty of appealing no-alcohol drinks and party food. For parties where alcohol is available, serve small amounts, set limits, have low-alcohol options with one responsible, sober adult serving.

Gatecrashers

Gatecrashers can be discouraged by handing out invitations, including an RSVP. Have one entry and exit point with a reliable person at the door to check all invitations – no invite, no entry. Don't allow guests to come in and out of the party.

Transport

Help your guests get home safely:

- book a taxi
- check bus/train timetables
- provide or organise a lift with a responsible adult
- allow them to stay overnight.

Source: Youthsafe Parent Fact Sheet: Helping Teenagers Celebrate Safely. For more information about youth injury prevention call Youthsafe on 02 9809 4615 or go to: www.youthsafe.org

Going out? Discuss together!

Parents often worry about major celebrations like Schoolies or formals. However, research shows that young people are most at risk when they are just 'going out' with friends, as these occasions are often poorly planned and unsupervised. Discuss the following points with your teenager before they go out and consider setting some boundaries around transport and alcohol use.

Check where your teenager is going and talk to them about ways to manage possible risks in that setting.

Transport to an event is often planned, but getting home is sometimes forgotten. Think about and discuss: transport options; only travelling with a sober and responsible driver; having enough money to get home; or staying overnight.

Going out, friends are safer arriving and leaving together – they can help each other if something goes wrong. Have contact numbers for your teenager's friends (and their parents) as a back up.

If their plans fall through, or if they are feeling unsafe wherever they are, let your teenager know it's OK to contact you for help.

When young people are partying there may be alcohol or other drugs around, and it's often a new experience for them. Young people generally have little understanding of the effects of these substances and how to apply limits, so it's important for you and your teenager to discuss this as well as:

- the health and injury risks involved in drug and alcohol consumption
- an agreed limit on alcoholic drinks, if alcohol is permitted
- zero alcohol limit for 'L' and 'P' platers

Consider confirming the decisions you have made together with a written agreement. Your teenager can sign this to show they trust you and promise to go to you for help. For tips on developing agreements (including a sample agreement) and discussing these issues with your teenager go to: www.youthsafe.org



MY OLD DAD & THE WEATHER

'40°', the old fella said,
'Me chooks have stopped laying
and me dahlias are dead.'

It was so bloody hot
When we woke up this
morning,
Mum broke into a sweat,
Purely from yawnin.

Talk to him in winter
And you're bound to hear
'What temperature you got
there?
Oh, its *much* colder here!'

It was so cold last night,
It froze up me dog,
Had to bring her inside,
She was as stiff as a log.

I had bowls on Tuesday,
I got ready to go,
But when I looked out the
winda',
There was three feet of snow!

I phoned him last week
When the weather was breezy,
He answered the phone,
Sounding quite wheezy,

'I've just been outside,
To tie down the car,
She's shifted a bit
But can't blow too far.'

Now I love me old Dad
So I forgive him his fibbing,
I just play along,
while he gives me a ribbing.

'It was *how* hot?', I say,
Feigning surprise,
Knowing full well,
He's telling me lies.

'It was 40°', the old fella said,
and me chooks have stopped
laying and me dahlias are *dead!*

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Caring for country families

By Sr Enid Doherty, Coordinator, Country Care Link

It all began in 1991 with a desire to discover a way of breaking down some of the barriers that were seen to exist between people living and working in the city and those living and working far outback in rural NSW. City life we felt was seen as fast, racy, filled with opportunities not available to those living in the bush. Yet the rural life offered a different and appealing way of life so often seen as the true Australian way.

So, how could the communities share their way of life in such a way that each would benefit from the sharing? A breakthrough came in 1992 when the Sisters of Charity Outreach Centre, based within St Vincent's Clinic at Darlinghurst, was offered a freecall 1800 phone line as a means of communicating. With this came the added bonus of the support offered by the Rural Women's Network and the expertise available within that group. The chosen name for this organisation was Country Care Link (CCL) with each word occupying an important part of the title.

A tour of rural NSW by Sr St Jude Doyle and Pauline Noyes from Outreach and Carolyn Lyons from Gulargambone was organised as a way of meeting rural people and discovering just how CCL could meet some of the needs that had surfaced as a result of the drought of 1992. These many meetings determined the services which are still in place.

At one of these meetings a mother of young children, living on a very isolated property, expressed a wish that her children would be given the opportunity to connect with other children who were receiving their education at a 'normal' school. Telepal was introduced and children from city schools began telephoning their Telepal friends in a rural school on a regular basis during school time. This took some organisation and resulted not only in phone contacts but also in visits between the schools and a great camaraderie between the Outreach Centre at Darlinghurst and the city and country schools. Because of the many other curricula activities within schools and the introduction of new ways of communicating, the Program was under review in 2006 with the hope of being reintroduced in its new form in 2007.

When transport was suggested as a service, we had no idea that this would escalate in the way it has. We see this service as a wonderful community builder. The sharing that happens between out clients and our drivers is enriching to both parties and the connections with friends and families that are found are quite extraordinary. Our volunteer drivers feel privileged to help in this way and are always moved by the stories of rural people and in admiration of their courage. The transport of children and their parents is dear to the hearts of all drivers



and after 14 years in operation we have seen many children benefit from our service and move from needing a fixed car seat to even occupying the front seat of the car.

There are many stories and I have been privileged to be part of a great number of them. I was reminded of this at Mass this morning when I listened to the Gospel Reading with Jesus saying to St Peter, '*Reach out into the deep and you will catch people*'. I have always thought this a strange saying but this morning I saw it as a real model for CCL where we do indeed reach out far into the deep of rural NSW making rural communities part of our lives. Many of our volunteers have now been present at the Women's Gatherings and Isolated Children & Parents Association meetings and were also part of the Women on Wheels tours. These meetings, as well as other tours, have enabled us to be better known and also put a face to the voice on the end of the 1800 line when one of our eight volunteer workers says – '*This is Country Care Link. How can I help you?*' ■

Country Care Link operates Monday to Friday from 9 am to 4.30 pm. Call 1800 806 160

Women in action

By Tammy Ingold, NSW Fire Brigades



Jennifer Cameron is a busy woman. She is a wife, a mother of one, part-owner of a sign writing business, a training correctional officer and runs a small pistachio nut farm. At the age of 34, Jennifer decided to become a firefighter with the NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB).

So, why would such a busy woman decide to take on such a huge responsibility?

‘I have lived in Cootamundra all my life and know most people in the community. Over the years, these people have helped me in many ways, and I wanted to give something back to them. I also wanted to do something different and exciting. Becoming a firefighter seemed like a good challenge.’

Two years on, Jennifer believes that the role has completely changed her life. She is now a fully qualified rescue operator and has responded to a range of incidents in and around Cootamundra.

‘I’ve had some scary experiences like experiencing a back draft at a house fire. I also attended the Victorian

bushfires where we operated under very intense conditions, car accidents and a recent Cootamundra silo fire.

‘I have seen some terrible things but I think that we, as both firefighters and women, can do so much to comfort and help someone in their darkest moments.’

Jennifer is one of 176 women who have joined the NSWFB as a retained firefighter. Retained firefighters are part-time firefighters which means that they are ‘on call’ from home or work rather than on duty at a station. Like Jennifer, many retained firefighters have full-time or part-time jobs, but must be able to respond to an emergency when the call comes in.

The job of a firefighter is a challenging and physically

demanding one that does require a certain level of fitness and health. But Jennifer said that women should not be deterred by this.

‘Being a firefighter is more than just spraying water onto a fire. It comes with huge responsibility, but we are fully trained and capable of saving lives and property.

‘And while we will never be as strong physically as men, I believe that women are just as capable and have many skills and talents to bring to the job, especially if you are prepared to work hard and get involved. I do all the same jobs as the male firefighters and my Captain has no hesitation in giving me these roles as he knows I will always give 100 per cent.’

‘I think an important skill that women can bring to the role is compassion. I have found that women and children in particular respond well to the presence of a female at the scene of an incident.’

According to Jennifer, the key to becoming a good firefighter is teamwork.

‘You need to be able to relate to the people in your

team on a highly intense level. I know that any member of my team would run into a burning building with me because they know that I would be able to get them to safety in a crisis.’

The NSWFB Commissioner, Greg Mullins, said that retained firefighters form the core of the NSWFB’s service to communities in regional NSW.

‘Retained firefighters are vitally important to our operations in rural and regional NSW. Their dedication and support is crucial to ensuring the safety of these communities.

‘I believe that women have a lot to contribute to the NSWFB, and would encourage anyone who is interested in finding out more about becoming a retained firefighter to contact the NSWFB,’ Commissioner Mullins said.

Jennifer would like to see more women become firefighters.

‘When I joined the NSWFB I did expect to see more women than I have. I would encourage more women to join because I believe that most women would find the job to be well within their capabilities.

‘I think that being a firefighter is the best job I’ve ever had. I’m proud of my achievements and I’m grateful of the skills this job has taught me. It’s certainly given me a deeper respect for life.’ ■

For more information on becoming a retained firefighter, contact Wayne Challinor, Human Resources Manager, NSWFB on Mobile: 0419 433 490 or Email: wayne.challinor@fire.nsw.gov.au

Your life will be no better than the plans you make, and the action you take. You are the architect and builder of your own life, fortune, and destiny.
ALFRED MONTAPERT