

Fostering further education in Western NSW

By Dee Wilkes-Bowes, Yass

Rangelands Australia (RA) is an Australia-wide initiative, committed to building the capacity for a strong future for rangeland areas. It works in partnership with people in the rangelands to provide high quality and practical learning opportunities. This is most relevant for the people who will be using and managing rangelands, and those who will be supporting them such as advisors, facilitators and consultants.

The programs offered by Rangelands are quite unique in that they have been designed specifically to suit people living and working in grazing industries beyond the farming and cropping country. They recognise existing skills and knowledge so, despite offering post graduate qualifications, do not necessarily need applicants to have completed tertiary education.

Rangelands Australia has also created a number of Rangeland Champion positions to support people who are studying remotely, particularly those people studying Rangeland programs. The support from Champions is a significant boost to the type of support usually offered to distance students and is designed to help people stay the distance, especially early on in their studies. It is innovative and can be especially helpful to those students who may not have studied for some time or not done tertiary study before.

An underlying philosophy of Rangelands Australia is that people undertaking further education will benefit not only themselves and their businesses but also the communities in which they live. Another key role of the Champions is therefore to remind people in the community of the benefits of further education, and demonstrate that there is support for those wanting to take up the challenge.

Champions in NSW are Rachael Williams, who is based on a property at Balranald, Chrissy Brown, on a station near Broken Hill and Dee Wilkes-Bowes, based on a farm near Yass. We can give moral support, provide a sounding board or a source of reference or even provide advice about studying. So if you are thinking about further education in the rangelands, give us a call.

Rangelands Australia is supported by industries and communities in Australia's rangelands and is based at the University of Queensland's Gatton Campus in the School of Natural and Rural Systems Management. The University of Queensland and Meat and Livestock Australia are the founding partners of the Rangelands Australia venture.

For more information contact:
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Dee Wilkes-Bowes on 02 02 6227 4181
or Rachael Williams on 03 5020 1653 or
go to: www.rangelands-australia.com.au ■

A LESSON FROM GEESE

Have you ever wondered why migrating geese fly in a 'V' formation? As with most animal behaviour, God had a good reason for including that in their instincts.

As each bird flaps its wings, it creates uplift for the bird following. In a V formation, the whole flock adds at least 71 per cent more flying range than if each bird flew alone. Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone and quickly gets back into formation.

Like geese, people who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier than those who try to go it alone.

When a goose gets tired it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies at the point position. If people had as much sense as geese, they would realise that ultimately their success depends on working as a team, taking turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership.

Geese in the rear of the formation honk to encourage those up front to up their speed. It is important that our 'honking from behind' be encouraging, otherwise it's just – well – honking.

When a goose gets sick or wounded, two other geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and provide protection. They stay with the unhealthy member of the flock until it is either able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out again with another passing flock or try to catch up with their own.

May we be so sacrificial, that we may be worthy of such friends in our time of need.

You don't have to be a scientist. To learn from God's marvelous creation, you only need to stop long enough to observe and let God reveal His wonders to you.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

HAVE A YARN

Young rural Australians now have an improved 'meeting place' following the revamp of the Young Australian Rural Network (YARN) website.

Designed for and run by young people in rural industries, YARN provides a place where you can interact and share information with others.

YARN has a number of interactive features including a discussion forum, events calendar and a listing of opportunities for young people in rural industries. It also has a site builder function, allowing you to create a website for your rural non-government organisation without needing to know anything about designing webpages. The template-based tool allows you to create a professional looking site in minutes: you will even get your own website address that you can place on stationery and publications.

Go to www.yarn.gov.au or for more information on how you can use YARN to help promote your events or organisation email: yarn@daff.gov.au

Young Farmers Program

The Lachlan Catchment Management Authority (LCMA) Young Farmers Program (YFP) is a new initiative aimed at building capacity in young farmers and strengthening their ability to manage natural resources sustainably.

It recognises that farmers in their thirties are responsible for a lot of innovation and new thinking and it will provide a range of opportunities including networking, scholarships, seminars and leadership and development opportunities.

■ NETWORKING

The YFP will provide a network for young people so they can keep in touch, share ideas and learn about opportunities through email, newsletters, websites, chat forums, fax streams and regular face-to-face meetings.

■ SCHOLARSHIPS

As part of the program the YFP will provide intensive training in Natural Resource Management, agricultural business development and leadership to a select number of participants. There will be three levels of training available.

1. Personal Development and Leadership Training – designed for men and women who will lead rural and regional Australia into the future. The course will involve a considerable time commitment. Young people interested in participating will need to apply through a formal selection process.

2. Business Skill Development – an intensive workshop aimed at developing business skills. Confidentially benchmarking farming enterprises and businesses, this workshop will involve an application and selection process and require a commitment of two years.

3. Conference Scholarships – YFP will offer a number of conference scholarships including some international scholarships. The conferences will focus on themes relevant to the LCMA management targets and programs. A detailed proposal from applicants will be required.

■ SEMINAR SERIES

Seminars are being developed based on participants' interests and feedback and will cover areas such as: conservation farming, financial management, succession planning, alternative agriculture, value adding/marketing, carbon sequestration, managing for climate and climate change, innovation and diversification and natural sequence farming.

■ LEARNING DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A range of other activities will be offered through the YFP such as:

Bus trips – using the ideas gained from our preliminary BBQ meetings held in November and December last year we are proposing to run two trips outside the Catchment and three trips within the Catchment. The schedule of trips is being developed and will be available soon. Each of the trips will be to see farmers and innovators.

Field days – again using the ideas gained from our preliminary BBQ meetings held in November and December last year, we are proposing to hold field days on various farmers' properties and other places of interest. These days are being put together and a schedule of events will be available soon.

Forums – we would like to run one or two forums during the year based on a topic that people are interested in, for example, a forum on ag. policy or research, which will be interactive so everyone can put their point of view forward and then discuss/debate their opinions.

For more information about the YFP, contact Mike Chambers, Lachlan Catchment Management Authority on Ph: 02 6341 9306, Fax: 02 6342 2565, or Email: mike.chambers@cma.nsw.gov.au

LONE SCOUTS

Travelling, making new friends and developing survival and leadership skills are some of the opportunities that come along when you become a Scout.

Scouting is for everyone, anywhere. Lone Scouts is a special correspondence program that allows young people in isolated, remote, or rural communities to become Scouts. Participating through the use of radio, telephone or computer, each Lone Scout is paired with an experienced Leader, who becomes their mentor and friend.

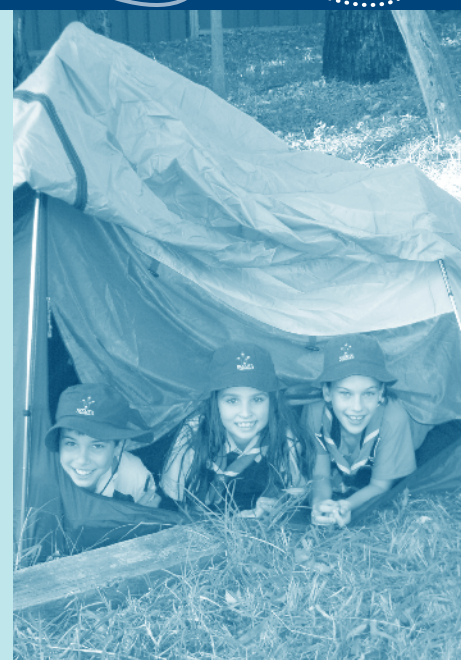
Through being a Lone Scout or joining a scout group, your child could gain an opportunity to participate in national events,

such as the Jamboree, a 12-day campout with 11,000 other Scouts. Your child could experience sailing, caving, flying or whitewater rafting on weekends with new Scouting friends.

Scouting as a worldwide movement turns 100 years old on 1 August 2007. With over 16,000 Members across the state, Scouts Australia NSW is the largest youth organisation offering your child unique opportunities for fun and adventure.

Your child will be able to try Scouts for three weeks with no obligation to join. Use this period to work out the best arrangement for you.

*To find out more about Lone Scouts,
Ph: 18000 SCOUT (18000 72688) or
Email: info@nsw.scouts.com.au*



health ■ prostate cancer a major threat to men

In 2004, my whole life turned upside down when, despite feeling well and having no symptoms, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. In my case it was the results of the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test that raised the alarm. The news absolutely shattered me, with its impact all the more traumatic as tests and procedures involved in the investigations dragged on for several weeks. It was the uncertainty and not knowing the outcome that made it so very stressful for me. The tests confirmed that the cancer was in its early stages but very aggressive (a score of seven out of 10 on the Gleason grading system).

Following the diagnosis I had to decide which form of treatment I would have, the main ones being external radiation – pin-pointed radiation done by the insertion of radioactive pellets directly into the prostate (known as brachytherapy) – or surgical removal of the gland – radical prostatectomy. There were pros and cons with each option, the surgery being the most traumatic on the body.

In the end I opted for the surgery and so began a long period of convalescence.

Prostate cancer is now the second most common form of cancer occurring in males (after skin cancer). Prostate cancer is commonly slow-growing and often men don't know they have it, as they experience no symptoms. Fast-growing, aggressive cancers loom as a major threat and, for these, early detection is imperative.

Being diagnosed with cancer changed my life forever. I no longer take anything for granted, but neither should anyone else! Having a positive outlook on life has meant that I appreciate everything more now.

My message is clear. It is vital that all men over 50 speak to their doctors about regular checks (remember, I had no symptoms). With cancer especially, the survival rate is significantly bolstered if it has not spread beyond the prostate gland.

It is in your own, as well as your family's, interests to know everything about your health.

That not only means speaking to your doctor about regular checks, but also being fully informed. The Internet is a wealth of useful information. Use it! Ignoring your health issues is not the way to deal with them! A diagnosis of prostate cancer is not a death sentence but a 'don't want to know about it' approach does no one any good; in fact, it could have serious ramifications.

Article by John Smarsz. Re-printed courtesy of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Men's Health Peer Education (MHPE) program.

Note: John Smarsz has recently retired after working in the Department of Veterans' Affairs for 37 years. Following on from John's early diagnosis, he has recovered from his prostate cancer surgery and continues to have regular checks. He is feeling well and makes the most of each day.

Men over the age of 45 who have a family history of prostate cancer or are experiencing any problems with urine flow should speak with their GP.

For more information about the MHPE program or electronic copies of the MHPE quarterly magazine go to: www.dva.gov.au/health/menshealth/newsletter.htm

CAN-SURVIVE

It's all about living

Can-Survive provides unique practical and emotional support and survival skills to relieve the distress and suffering of patients and their families around Australia facing and living with cancer or any other life-threatening illness. Specific programs include telephone counselling and weekend retreats and workshops which provide participants with practical skills and ideas to better cope with their illness.

For more information go to: www.can-survive.org or call HOPELINE® 24 hour support on 1300 364 673 for the cost of a local call.

Early detection of disease may prevent more serious problems from arising. If you have a family history of illness or do not see a GP on a regular basis then it is recommended that you have regular health check ups.

Talk to your GP to find out what's needed to maintain your health. Don't wait until symptoms are present – practise preventative health.

The Men's Health Unit has a Men's Health Checklist which lists some of the issues men need to look out for and some examples of what your health check might include. The list is divided into four specific age groups.

For your free copy, Ph: 02 9976 9761.

Find out what's going on under your bonnet



ROYAL FAR WEST CHILDREN'S HEALTH SCHEME

The Royal Far West Children's Health Scheme is a non-government organisation that facilitates access to health services for children from country NSW. Each year, approximately 3500 children access our services because they are unable to access them in the areas where they live.

A range of specialist health services are available at the Manly facility including paediatric medical, child and adolescent mental health, ophthalmology, allied health and orthodontics. Allied health services include Clinical Psychology, Dietetics, Occupational Therapy, Orthoptics, Physiotherapy, Social Work and Speech Pathology.

Other services provided by the Children's Health Scheme include a respite program for children from country NSW with special needs and their families which enables them to have a supported 'holiday by the sea'.

For more information about The Royal Far West Children's Health Scheme, or to obtain a registration package, call 1800 500 061, Email: admin@royalfarwest.org.au or go to: www.royalfarwest.org.au

More families to benefit from Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme

The Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme is an Australian Government programme that provides financial assistance to eligible families whose children are unable to attend an appropriate state school on a daily basis. It is targeted at families living in geographically isolated areas across Australia with primary and secondary school age children. Some tertiary students are also eligible for assistance under the scheme.

To be eligible, tertiary students need to be either under the minimum age for education or training in their state or territory or under 16 years of age – whichever is the greater. They must also be:

- boarding away from home;
- living in a second home set up by the family so that they can attend school; or
- enrolled with an approved distance education institution.

Currently, the scheme provides a Basic Boarding Allowance of \$6150 per year, a Distance Education Allowance of \$3075 per year and a Second Home Allowance of \$179 per fortnight for each student – up to a maximum of three. These payments are not subject to income and assets tests and they are not taxed. Depending on parental income and boarding costs, an Additional Boarding Allowance of \$1096



per year may also be paid.

You could be doing your family out of significant benefits if you are self-assessing your children's eligibility.

For more information call Centrelink on Ph: 13 2318 or go to: www.centrelink.gov.au

Information from Rural News, Spring 2006. Rural News is published three times a year and provides up-to-date information about programs, payments and services available to rural and regional Australians. To subscribe, fax your details to 02 6284 6397 or email: rural.news@centrelink.gov.au

Tackling tough times through drought and beyond

The Drought Mental Health Assistance Package, announced by the NSW Premier last October, is funded by NSW Health. It provides support for drought-affected communities and aims to help reduce the stigma around mental health, promote mental health and ensure that everyone knows how to get help for themselves or others if needed.

As part of the project:

- Six new drought mental health liaison workers will provide outreach across rural areas and link mental health with front-line agencies to improve access to services;
- Fifty Mental Health First Aid Workshops will be held for farmers, rural service providers and community members to

improve understanding of common mental health problems and increase confidence in recognising and responding to mental health issues;

- Seventeen Farmers Mental Health Gatherings will be held to provide information about mental health and services available;
- Fifteen Service Network Meetings will bring together mental health service providers with others in the agricultural and agri-business sectors to improve the delivery of services in rural communities; and
- A resource package will be developed providing information about common mental health issues and key services/agencies.

To date, over 30 Mental Health First Aid Workshops have been run or are planned, and the last 20 are in the pipeline. A Farmers Mental Health Gathering was held at Corowa and the next 16 will roll out over the next few months. In most places, Service Network Meetings will be held in the town prior to the Mental Health Gathering to allow for local input into the planning.

A resource pack is currently being developed that will be used at all the functions. The pack will have information for adults and children and will cover a range of topic in various formats such as CDs, information sheets etc.

For a full list of activities go to: www.crrmh.com.au

*Julie Greig, Coordinator, Drought Mental Health Assistance Package.
Ph: 02 6360 7823 or Email: julie.greig@gwahs.health.nsw.gov.au*



Telework – distance no barrier

By: Paula Heelan, Director, Foundation for Australian Agricultural Women. Published in Queensland Country Life 29 May 2006

While Chris Capel lives on her family-owned cattle and sheep station, 90 kilometres north-west of Longreach, her location has no bearing on the work she is able to do from her home, Evesham. As a teleworker (someone who works outside the central office using telecommunications), she is part of a group of people working together...apart.

With an open mind and the persistence needed to make things happen, Chris is a driving force behind a recent research project with the potential to change the future of work for women in rural and remote areas.

Since gaining her first teleworking position with a State government department in 1997, and in recognising the benefits, Chris has been determined to make teleworking opportunities readily available to rural Australia. With years of experience on voluntary boards at both state and national level, an Australian Rural Leadership Program graduate and an ABC Rural Woman of the Year regional winner, she has been advocating teleworking for more than a decade.

As a board director and past president of the Foundation for Australian Agricultural Women (FAAW), and ardent about anything to do with empowering rural women, Chris

established a subcommittee within FAAW to investigate the opportunities to increase the uptake of teleworking.

‘The project came about because a lack of hard data on teleworking in Australia, particularly in rural areas, was identified by the Australian Government’s inquiry into teleworking last year. When a funding source became available, we pounced on the opportunity to do the research with the focus on rural women.’

FAAW, an independent, non-profit organisation, became actively involved in the teleworking inquiry and, when the government hosted a round table at Longreach, FAAW put forward one of the 34 submissions. An Australian Government Office for Women grant followed and FAAW appointed research consultant Jane Dowling (who teleworks from her Ulladulla home office) to identify telework opportunities and barriers. As part of the project FAAW have also built a database of women interested in or already teleworking to promote the research to key businesses and other interested parties.

‘Employment opportunities are not easy to come by in rural Australia and yet there are skill shortages,’ Jane says. ‘Combine this with the wealth

of skilled and educated women in rural and remote areas and you have a win—win situation. Through promoting teleworking opportunities to key employers we hope to raise awareness of the potential contribution from rural and remote women. While teleworking breaks rank with the traditional way of working from a central office, there are significant benefits to be gained by employers tapping into the large numbers of skilled women living in rural, regional and remote areas.’

With first-hand experience, Chris knows that both the social and financial benefits of working from home are immense, particularly for geographically isolated women.

‘When I was offered my first job in 1997, I was so excited, it was like winning lotto. Nothing like that had ever happened out here or anywhere else in Australia that I had heard of.’

When she began teleworking, the youngest of her three children was under two – which led to the creation of another job. ‘When I first started, my view was that I needed to work as though I was in George Street, Brisbane – where the rest of my department was. I couldn’t be running off to attend children. We advertised for a station hand and wife team, so I could employ someone to do my child minding. This made our station hand position a lot more attractive, as we were able to offer paid work for both. And for me, it was a supreme childcare arrangement. Whenever I went out for lunch or coffee, there he was, happily being minded.’

Today Chris and her husband David’s youngest child, Miles, nine, attends the Evesham State School, a one teacher school on their property. Their eldest, Jessica, 21, is studying

BUILDING CAPACITY, SUSTAINING COMMUNITIES AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL WOMEN

A national research project conducted in 2006, which surveyed over 130 women and employers, has found that increasing opportunities for teleworking for women in rural and remote areas will significantly benefit employers, government, women, families and rural communities.

For the full report go to: www.faaw.org.au or contact FAAW President, Margaret Alston on Ph: 02 6933 2783 or Chris Capel on Ph: 07 4658 9184.