

More information is available at: www.immi.gov.au/skilled/business/business-development-sponsorship.htm

EMPLOYERS BEWARE

Since August 2007, it has been an offence to knowingly or recklessly employ illegal workers.

Illegal workers are people who are not Australian permanent residents or citizens and who do not have visas. This includes people who have

visas but do not have work entitlements.

Individuals who are convicted of employing illegal workers may be fined up to \$13 200 and two years imprisonment while companies face fines of up to \$66 000 per illegal worker.

The offences also apply to businesses that operate informal labour referral services such as backpacker hostels that organise harvest work for backpackers.

CHECKING WORK ENTITLEMENTS

The safest, easiest and quickest way to avoid penalties is for farmers to check the work entitlements of all workers before employing them.

There are three ways to check:

- Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO): www.immi.gov.au/evo
- Fax: 1800 505 550
- Phone: 1800 040 070

Farmers have 48 hours from the time employees start work to check their entitlements. If you check within this time and you do not know they are illegal, you will not face fines or prosecution.

For more information on skilled migration, please contact Fiona Clarke. Phone: 0401 713 536 Email: fiona.clarke@immi.gov.au Regional Outreach Officers can be contacted on 13 1881. ■

2008 International Women's Day

International Women's Day (IWD) was celebrated around the world in a series of events held around 8 March. The Rural Women's Network (RWN) was pleased to be involved in a number of these celebrations.

The theme of this year's IWD was '100 years of active women in paid and unpaid work'.

This theme recognises the significant contribution that women have made towards improving workplaces and working conditions, as well as their volunteering work which has sustained and grown our communities.

NSW DPI hosted a Women's Lunch at the Dubbo Beef Spectacular on 6 March. The eighty places filled quickly, well in advance of the event. Lucinda Corrigan, Director of Rennyale Pastoral Company, was the guest speaker and shared her story, what motivates her and the challenges she sees facing the beef industry in the future.

On 7 March, Danielle Goolagong represented the RWN at the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) International Women's Day breakfast in Sydney. Guest speakers included Ms Romy Shapira from Israel and Ms Wafa Abel from

Palestine. Both of these prominent women are members of the International Women's Commission, which strives to achieve a meaningful peace between the two nations.

RWN was also involved in organising a women's lunch in Orange on 7 March that was attended by one hundred women. The guest speakers were Pam Boney (local Murrauari woman and NSW Woman of the Year finalist), Elizabeth Makonnen Desta (supporter of the 'Mums for Mums' project in Ethiopia) and Jan Stevenson (local Magistrate) who spoke of women's issues at individual, community and international levels. ■



Lucinda Corrigan, Ian and Jennifer Bjorkften and Lorraine Sinnamon at the Dubbo Beef Spectacular

DROUGHT ASSISTANCE FOR SMALL BUSINESS

■ The NSW Rural Assistance Authority offers financial assistance for drought affected small businesses. Assistance includes interest rate subsidies and income support payments. The eligibility criteria for assistance has changed.

More information

Toll free: 1800 678 593

Phone: 02 6391 3000

Email: rural.assist@raa.nsw.gov.au

■ The NSW Department of State and Regional Development offers Business Drought Assistance Programs which aim to help established regional non-farm businesses to survive the drought.

Programs include: payroll relief, mini diagnostic and financial position assessments and business improvement and recovery strategies.

More information

Phone: 02 9338 6713

Email: droughtassist@business.nsw.gov.au

Website: www.business.nsw.gov.au/region/drought

NSW DPI climate change update

By Gary Allan, Climate Risk Management Project Leader, NSW Department of Primary Industries

There is now increased certainty that global warming, or climate change, is occurring. This is supported by the already substantial and growing body of scientific evidence, which has been the subject of rigorous review and validation. This process is most notably led by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and involves thousands of contributing scientists around the world from many relevant disciplines.

In November 2007, the last of four reports which together comprise the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) was released, summarising the findings of global research into climate change undertaken since the Third Assessment Report was released in 2001. Among many conclusions reached in this report, the AR4 concluded that:

'Most of the observed increase in globally averaged temperatures since the mid-20th century is very likely* due to the observed increase in the anthropogenic greenhouse gases concentrations.'

* 'Very likely' in this context means >90% certainty.

In other words, changes in the earth's climate have been clearly detected, and these changes have been attributed to human activity which has resulted in the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere rising significantly.

The response to this situation revolves around three key areas:

- Assessment of the (known and potential) impacts of climate change, which are many and varied
- Development of a range of adaptation strategies to offset, cope with or limit these impacts
- Limiting these impacts (mitigation) by directly addressing the causes of climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Agricultural production, natural resources, terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems will all be affected by the impacts of climate change in a variety of ways.

As part of the general response to climate change by Australian governments (particularly in the last 10 years), NSW DPI has been increasingly concerned with addressing climate change in these three key areas. Here is a brief summary of what has already been done, and what will be done in future.

NSW GREENHOUSE PLAN

The NSW Government released the NSW Greenhouse Plan in November 2005. In this plan there are three defined areas of action:

1. Awareness raising
2. Adaptation to climate change impacts
3. Mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions

Within each area, a range of specific actions were described, and responsibility for delivering these actions was identified such as NSW agencies, local government etc.

Under the Adaptation section of the plan, NSW DPI was identified as the agency responsible for delivering Action 2.4, the objective being to:

'Strengthen the *Climatology in Agriculture* program, and develop tools and guidelines for farmers and Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs)'

In July 2006, NSW DPI launched its Climate Risk Management project to deliver the outcomes identified under Action 2.4 of the plan, and a number of other key actions. The main activities undertaken to achieve this include:

- Staging a series of 15 regional climate change forums in partnership with NSW CMAs, at numerous regional centres including Muswellbrook, Narrabri, Tamworth, Buronga, Dubbo, Bega, Nowra, Goulburn, Broken Hill, Cowra, Deniliquin, Albury, Hillston, Griffith and Bourke.
- Delivering a one day, fully accredited PROfarm training workshop, *The farmer's guide to managing climate risk*, to groups of farmers, industry professionals and interested participants from the broader regional community.
- Working collaboratively with NSW DPI staff and CMAs to develop a better understanding of climate change impacts on agriculture (and the broader environment) at the regional to local level.
- Developing more effective collaboration and exchange of information and relevant experience with other

agencies, researchers, industry representatives and other stakeholders (e.g. local government).

- Contributing to the broader initiatives to address climate change at the state and national levels.

More recently, NSW DPI has been developing a comprehensive Climate Change Action Plan across all divisions, to enable a consistent and coordinated response to what is clearly recognised as a major challenge to every area of NSW DPI business. The NSW DPI Board of Management is currently considering the extensive details of this plan, which includes recommended actions in the following areas:

- Impact Assessment
- Mitigation
- Bioenergy
- Emissions Trading
- Clean Coal
- Adaptation and Transition

Adoption and implementation of the plan is anticipated in 2008, but will ultimately depend upon a number of other related federal and state government initiatives, such as the Garnaut Review commissioned by the Federal Government, and a review of the NSW Greenhouse Plan by the NSW Government. Notwithstanding any uncertainties, NSW DPI is getting on with the job of working with primary producers to prepare them for the challenges of climate change now and into the future. ■

What can I do about Global Warming?

TOP 10 ACTIONS I CAN TAKE NOW

1. Switch off lights, appliances and equipment when they're not needed.
2. Install energy – efficient compact fluorescent lamps.
3. Divert garden and food wastes from landfill to composting (either at home or through a Council scheme).
4. Make your home more comfortable by insulating, draught-sealing and shading windows in summer.
5. Manage home heating and cooling by setting thermostats appropriately – a couple of degrees up in summer and a couple of degrees down in winter.
6. Cut out hot water usage by installing a water-efficient showerhead, taking shorter showers and using cold water clothes washing.
7. Switch off your second fridge except when it's really needed.
8. Switch to low greenhouse impact transport options like bicycle or public transport – or use phone and email more.

9. Minimise waste of packaging and materials – refuse, reduce, re-use, recycle.
10. Use solar power – dry clothes on the clothesline outside, not in a dryer.

GOOD DECISIONS I CAN MAKE IN THE FUTURE

1. When buying a car, buy a fuel-efficient one. Alternatively, consider buying a transport pass or bicycle.
2. When building, renovating, renting or buying a home, aim for high energy-efficiency and install energy-efficient appliances and lighting.
3. When replacing an electric hot water service install a high efficiency gas or solar unit.
4. Buy energy-efficient appliances with low standby power usage.
5. When choosing a home location, consider the time and cost of travel from there to work, school, shops and leisure activities.

From: Global Warming – Cool it! A home guide to reducing energy costs and greenhouse gases (2007) Dept. of the Environment and Water Resources

Managing risk in a changing climate

By Michael Cashen, Climate Risk Management Project Officer, NSW Department of Primary Industries

Incorporate weather and climate information into your decision making

With the release of the Fourth Assessment report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2007 and the recent drought still fresh in the minds of many farmers in south eastern Australia, it is not surprising to find interest in climate information at an all time high.

Australian agriculture has, over the past 200 years, evolved under great year to year climate variability. It now faces a new challenge with known historical patterns changing due to human induced global warming.

NSW DPI has developed a one day course to help better inform land managers

and their advisors about the weather, climate variability and of course climate change. The workshop titled *The farmer's guide to managing climate risk* is run under the NSW DPI PROfarm banner and is offered on demand across the state.

The course is delivered in a five part workshop format and is tailored to the locality and production orientation of the group, with topics including:

- Understanding the climatic history of the area.
- Understanding the weather of the area, such as sources and triggers for moisture, where winds come from and other related phenomena
- Understanding seasonal patterns and drivers of variability such as El Niño Southern Oscillation Index, Indian Ocean Dipole and Southern Annular Mode

■ Understanding climate change science and the 2007 IPCC Global forecasts, 2007 CSIRO/BoM forecasts for Australia and what these mean for agriculture

■ Applying risk management principles to climate risk in your business

As with all NSW DPI Profarm courses, participants are surveyed on completion of the workshop to evaluate whether the course met their expectations, whether the instruction was of high standard and was delivered at a level that could be understood, whether the topics were useful and the material was clear and helpful. For the 16 climate workshops (237 participants) delivered across the state between October 2006 and May 2007 the feedback has been very positive.

This workshop is invaluable for managers of agricultural businesses and rural land, or anyone seeking to understand weather and climate risk management.

For more information and to secure a place in a workshop, contact:

Michael Cashen
Phone: 02 4939 8953
Email:
michael.cashen@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Doug Richard
Phone: 02 6741 8331
Email:
doug.richard@dpi.nsw.gov.au ■



Understanding Food Miles:

The long journey of our well-travelled food

By the Sydney Fair Food Alliance and Food Fairness Illawarra

The 'FOOD MILE' is a measure of the distance food travels from where it is grown or raised to where it is purchased by the consumer.

Increasingly in Australia, supermarket shelves are stocked with imported food and food products that have been hauled thousands of kilometres: kiwifruit from Italy, oranges from Brazil. In the last four years Australia has had a 26 per cent increase in imports of fresh produce. Imports now total \$300 million per year. Swedish systems ecologist Folke Gunther goes even further, suggesting that we need to be concerned about all the 'miles' travelled in production as well as distribution – the distance travelled by fertilisers, herbicides, pesticides, fodder, veterinary supplies, containers, farm machinery etc – in which case we need to take into account the entire industrial agriculture system, not simply the distribution of food products.

HIGH COSTS, HIDDEN COSTS

The food purchased in this globalised system is not 'cheap' – there are high costs for farmers, for our environment and for our health. In general, the greater the distance food has travelled from paddock to plate, the greater the transport pollution and the greater the impact on the health of people, the land and the global climate.

The impacts of long distance food may include:

■ **Environmental** – freight, especially by air and road, consumes large quantities of fuel and energy and releases greenhouse gases which contribute to global climate change. Add to this the environmental impacts of packaging and processing and the real costs of the weekly shopping

basket can be much greater than people think.

■ **Health** – long distance transport increases the time from farm to fork and can reduce nutritional value as the food contains fewer of the vitamins and minerals that our bodies need for good health. Buying local food ensures fresher, more nutritious food, often picked closer to ripening time, and usually with fewer pesticides applied.

■ **Social** – Australians have little say in the farming practices of other countries – the levels of pesticide used and the wages and conditions of workers. Imported food can come from countries with inadequate environment and health standards and few regulations to protect workers from contamination.

How to reduce your Food Miles

How, in practice, do we support, purchase, and eat local food?

- Read the labels and ask questions. Buy the vegetables and fruit that thrive in your own region.
- Find local greengrocers, butchers, delicatessens and fish shops – these are likely to be locally owned businesses selling products produced within the region. Again – read the labels or ask where produce has come from.
- Avoid air freight, especially. Tell your shopkeepers and the government that you want food with 'country of origin' clearly identified on the label.
- Eat whatever is in season – that is when it is at its freshest and tastiest – and also at the best price. Seasonal food guide pamphlets are available from some fruit markets or www.sydneymarkets.com.au
- Source your food from community food options such as local farmers' markets, community gardens and food co-operatives.
- Grow some of your own food. Most people can get access to a 1 m x 3 m sunny, raised bed in which you can deposit compost and intensively grow a surprising amount of supplementary fruit and vegetables. Even on a balcony, tomatoes and herbs do well. Growing fruit and vegetables teaches children – and their parents and teachers – attitudes of care and respect that are needed to sustain life.
- Look at what you can do to support local food in your personal and professional life:
 - Does your council/workplace/school support urban agriculture?
 - Does your council/workplace/school purchase regional produce?
 - Celebrate the produce of your region by hosting a local food dinner party.

AGRIBUSINESS, TRADE AGREEMENTS, GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES

The current system of production and distribution in the industrial agriculture of globalised food puts small farmers all over the world in competition with each other.

This has depressed the farmer's share of the food dollar with the profit being taken by transport, marketing and processing by global corporations.

Trade liberalisation is forcing small farmers off the land as they attempt to compete with subsidised food imports and big corporations in the farming sector.

In Australia between 1986 and 1996, the number of farms fell by 20% – almost all of them less than 500ha in size.

GLOBE-TROTTING FOOD

To date, little research has been done on the food miles associated with products on sale in Australia. Measuring the full impacts of food can be a complex task, however the Australian Conservation Foundation lists the following figures from overseas studies that reveal the true costs of the practice of globe-trotting food (www.acfonline.org.au):

- In the USA, food for a typical meal has travelled nearly 2100 km but the figure is much greater if the meal contains off season fruits or vegetables.

- The energy consumed in food freight often outweighs the nutritional energy in the food itself. It takes around 1000 kJ of energy to ship 170 kJ worth of strawberries from Chile to the USA.

- Processed or multiple-ingredient food products may accumulate more food miles. A recent German study found that a 240 ml cup of yoghurt on a supermarket shelf in Berlin has covered over 9000 km in transport.

Even imported organic food can have a tremendous impact. A single Briton's shopping basket of 26 imported organic products could have travelled 241 000 km and released as much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as an average four bedroom household does through cooking meals for eight months.

Many consumers don't want local growers and industries undermined by cheaper imported produce. In New Zealand, the importation of Chinese garlic has decimated the local industry. For every one kilogram of garlic imported from China there is an additional 5500 kJ of energy from fossil fuels consumed (www.greens.nz/food-revolution).

LOCALLY PRODUCED IS THE BEST

So, do you want food that has not travelled far from farm to shop, contributes less to global warming and supports local growers, processors and retailers as well as local economies? Go local.

Locally grown and raised has made a shorter journey to market and abattoir. According to a 2005 British study, if all food was consumed within 20 km of where it was produced, costs associated with congestion and transport would be cut by 9% (www.acfonline.org.au). ■

This item was excerpted from a Sydney Food Fairness Alliance (www.sydneyfoodfairness.org.au) discussion sheet.

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COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

Every year in Australia many community groups organise their records, photographs and other material into an archive.

The National Archives of Australia has produced a book called *Keep It for the Future!* that will help aspiring archivists.

The book explains basic archival principles and terms in plain English.

Practical advice is provided on deciding which records to keep, and organising, storing and preserving them. Access and promotion of archives are also covered.

The book costs \$4.95 and can be ordered at: shop.naa.gov.au under 'Books'.

Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

Harold R. McAlindon

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Reduce global warming through your diet:

- Buy locally grown food to reduce the CO₂ produced transporting food

- Don't waste food. It is estimated that a quarter of all the food sold in Australia is thrown away.

Cook only what you need and eat your leftovers or turn them into another meal.

Planet Ark



2008 RIRDC NSW Rural Women's Award

Tracey Knowland was announced as the winner of the 2008 Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) NSW Rural Women's Award by The Hon. Ian Macdonald MLC at a Gala Dinner in February at Parliament House, Sydney. Louisa Kiely from Goolma is the runner up.

Tracey, along with her husband Stuart, owns and operates Bangalow Wholesale Nursery at Brooklet in the Byron Bay hinterland. Tracey's business specialises in trialling and developing superior selections of small to medium Australian temperate/subtropical rainforest trees and coastal tolerant trees. Her target markets include the landscape and development industry.

As the state winner, Tracey will receive a bursary of \$10000 to undertake her project. She also has the opportunity to be selected from the other state and territory winners as the national winner of the 2008 RIRDC Rural Women's Award which is announced in May.

Tracey will use the bursary to fund her participation in the 2008 National Nursery & Garden Industry Association National Conference in Adelaide in March, followed by a study tour of Victoria's largest wholesale production nurseries to look



2008 winner Tracey Knowland

Winning the bursary will enable me to embark on a learning and networking experience and take advantage of opportunities I could only have dreamed about.

Tracey Knowland



2008 Runner up Louisa Kiely

at sustainable growing methods. Tracey also hopes to build on a water recycling project as part of their nursery business, and share her experiences with other women in rural and urban-based businesses.

Runner up Louisa Kiely owns and operates a superfine wool enterprise at Goolma in central western NSW with her husband Michael. Her focus for the past two years has been on climate change and sustainable farming. She has coordinated a number of workshops and summits, bringing together scientists and farmers to share information about carbon farming.

Both Tracey and Louisa will attend the prestigious Australian Institute of Company Directors' course with other state and territory winners and finalists. ■

Award Presentation Gala Dinner

The Gala Dinner at Parliament House was attended by over one hundred guests. The dinner began with a Welcome to Country by Patricia Bates-Canty, a Barkindji woman from Bourke and a member of the Rural Women's Network State Advisory Committee.

The Hon. Verity Firth MP delivered the opening address acknowledging the important work and significant achievements of rural women in NSW.

Eleanor Cook, winner of the 2007 Award, spoke of her experience during the past year and the opportunities that arose for her as a result of receiving the Award.

Following a video that showed the finalists on their properties discussing their projects, the winner and runner up were announced and plaques were presented by The Hon. Ian Macdonald MLC and Richard Sheldrake, Director-General of NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI).

Mary Boydell, Chair of the RIRDC, delivered the closing address of what was an inspiring evening.



2008 RIRDC NSW Rural Women's Award runner up Louisa Kiely and The Hon. Verity Firth MP.



(L-R) The Hon. Ian Macdonald MLC, 2008 RIRDC NSW Rural Women's Award winner Tracey Knowland and husband Stuart, NSW DPI Director-General Richard Sheldrake and RIRDC Chair Mary Boydell.

Do you have a great idea?

The RIRDC Rural Women's Award provides women with an opportunity to undertake a project that will be of benefit to agriculture and natural resource management and to rural Australia. Applicants submit details of the project they wish to undertake and the winner is selected on the merit of their project, the benefits their work will bring to the industry and rural communities, as well as their leadership potential.

The Award is open to all women involved in agriculture, including fisheries and forestry, natural resource management and related service industries.

The Award was instigated in 2000 with the objective of increasing women's capacity to contribute to agriculture and rural Australia. There is

an award for each state and territory. The winners then have the opportunity to be selected as the national winner of the RIRDC Rural Women's Award.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Nominations open annually on 1 August for a period of eleven weeks and close on 15 October.

In each state and territory, applicants are short-listed and interviewed. Two finalists are then selected from the interviews.

Winners are announced at formal presentation events within their state or territory. State and territory winners are subsequently interviewed by a judging panel comprising of executives with relevant industry experience, past recipients and sponsors to select the national winner.

The Rural Women's Award is an opportunity to be seized with both hands!

Tracey Knowland

State and territory winners and runners up also have the opportunity to participate in the Australian Institute of Company Directors' Course, which coincides with the National Award Dinner held in Canberra.

More information about the Award is available at: www.ruralwomensaward.gov.au or contact the Rural Women's Network. Phone: 02 63913620 Email: rural.women@dpi.nsw.gov.au

SPONSORS

The Award is an initiative of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC). The 2008 NSW Award was made possible through the generous support of sponsors.

The national sponsors were ABC Radio, Rural Press Ltd and The Australian Women's Weekly. The state sponsors were Department of Environment & Climate Change NSW, NSW Department of Primary Industries, NSW Department of State & Regional Development and NSW Premier's Department Office for Women.

Anyone interested in sponsoring this high profile event should contact the Rural Women's Network.

parenting ■ helping kids make smart choices

Parenting is hard work. Parents are always treading a fine line between being too protective and promoting independence.

This article was written by popular parenting expert Michael Grose. For great ideas on how to raise kids visit www.parentingideas.com.au and subscribe to Happy Kids, Michael's free email newsletter. Happy Kids will give you heaps of up-to-date ideas to help you raise confident kids & resilient teenagers.

DECISION-MAKING LIKE ANYTHING REQUIRES PRACTICE

Some children want to have a say about everything that involves them. They have no problem letting parents know what they want and how life should be. Other children will avoid making decisions and will happily sit back and follow the lead of others in anything from fashion to food eaten at dinner.

Most parents these days are keen to involve children in family decision making processes. It is smart management to get children's input as they are more likely to stick to decisions when they have had a say.

It is challenging for parents to know when to make decisions for children and when to stand back and allow them to decide. Decision making in families is broken into three areas:

1. Parents decide: these are decisions where there is no negotiation. For example, going to school, bedtime (at certain ages), meal times.
2. Work things out together: these are areas where you and your child negotiate outcomes. For example, when to come home from an outing, TV programs.
3. Kids choose: give your children full authority within reason in some areas. For example, choose the sport they play, school activities, clothing. Each of these areas will vary according to parental values, the age of children and even individual temperament. Some kids want a full say in everything and need to learn that not everything goes their way. Others don't want to make a decision for fear of making a poor choice. Both can be exasperating for parents.

Regular family meetings or get togethers provide terrific forums for parents and children to work things out together. Outcomes are best negotiated in formal settings that ensure sufficient consideration is given.

REWARD RESPONSIBILITY WITH GREATER FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

As children grow and show the ability to make sensible decisions allow them more authority over their lives.

Increasing independence involves greater freedom to choose, which demonstrates trust and faith in their ability to make good decisions. But greater freedom to choose needs to be accompanied by an increase in responsibility and also a willingness for them to experience the consequences of their decisions. Grounding a child for being late home or removing rights to use a computer for a day if they overuse it may be the

best way to remind kids that they have made poor choices! These consequences need to be seen as learning opportunities not as punishments.

All decisions that children make have a consequence – whether positive or negative. A child can use the following three questions to help him or herself assess consequences of a decision they may make. This is a particularly useful guides as kids move into adolescence:

- Is this behaviour safe for me?
- Is this behaviour fair to others?
- Is this behaviour smart and in my long-term best interests?

Children often can't see the long-term consequences of their decisions so it useful to give them information to help them make smart choices.

Some children leap before they look. They need to be reminded to slow down and consider some of the possible consequences of their actions. Decision making is hard work for parents who are always treading a fine line between being too protective and promoting independence. If children are to learn how to make smart choices adults need to equip them with knowledge and skills as well as opportunities to make decisions.

To help children make smart decisions:

1. Involve them in choosing food, family entertainment and fun. Give them a choice between two options, not a smorgasbord to choose from.
2. Develop the habit of inviting their input into a whole range of small issues to help you make decisions. For example, meals, room arrangements and scheduling activities.
3. Toss a coin. If children can't decide between two choices tell them to toss a coin and then go with their gut instinct. It may not be the best decision, but at least they will make a decision.
4. Conduct regular family meetings or organise regular times when you sit with the kids and place some family issues on the agenda. ■

Parent line

13 2055 or 1300 130052

A confidential telephone help line for all parents of children 0 to 18 years of age living in NSW.

Experienced counsellors are available to discuss any parenting issue and to assist over the phone with support and information. They can post written material and connect you to local services if you wish.

Parent Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week including public holidays.

More information: www.centacare.org

Taking the road to the bush

By Jo Wilson-Ridley, Coleambally

We have given up living near family and friends to be in the countryside. We do miss them but we have gained a new life that is relaxing and simple.

My husband and I made a bush change in 2004 from Sydney. We had been living and working in Sydney since 1990. In 1999 we took time off to travel and work overseas. Whilst the excitement of iconic cities such as London, Paris and Rome were thrilling, it was our volunteer stints with Conservation Societies and our jobs in small rural towns (a country pub in Surrey UK and a small remote Youth Hostel in Suffolk UK) that made the biggest impact. It was in the countryside that we made lasting friendships, learnt new skills and lived completely different lives.

Returning to Sydney in 2002 we were stunned by how much the city we had been homesick for had changed. Sydney seemed more competitive and almost too expensive to contemplate establishing long-term roots.

My husband was retraining in the field of Natural Resource Management with the aim of using this qualification to move out of Sydney. I vividly recall detesting the push and shove of the train commute to work. In our last year of living in Sydney I was pregnant with our first child. The train commutes became almost unbearable. Once I was shoved out of the way by a passenger charging for the last remaining seat. I also recall an incident being the only person standing, heavily pregnant, in the vestibule area whilst all other sitting passengers looked away or down at their laptops trying desperately to ignore me. There had to be a better life than this one.

In 2004 while I was taking maternity leave to care for our first child, my husband took up a position in Natural Resource Management for an irrigation company in Coleambally. Not only were we both changing jobs but we were moving ten hours away from family and friends to a town completely unknown to us with a different lifestyle. It did feel at times like the tide of change would swamp us.

To connect with the community I became involved in the local Playgroup. Through Playgroup my children have made their friends as have I.

I have taken on leadership roles in the local Playgroup and then at the Zone level, organising events for Playgroup members in the greater Murrumbidgee Region. It has been an extremely beneficial group to be involved in and one I would recommend.

We have given up living near family and friends to be in the countryside. We do miss them but we have gained a new life that is relaxing and simple. There are no traffic lights in our town. We walk or ride our bikes everywhere. My husband comes home for lunch most days as his work is a five minute walk away.



Jo with her two sons in their backyard in Coleambally

Being in a small community everyone knows you. My children are accustomed to saying hello to everyone when we go down to the shops and they are growing up in a friendly community environment.

We have purchased a home with a large backyard. It's been a challenge for us to learn how to maintain a garden in a semi-arid environment. But we are successfully growing a herb garden, a vegetable garden and for the last three years I've made apricot jam with fresh apricots from our tree.

Living in a small community we've also had the opportunity to be involved in many worthwhile community events that we may not have done if we'd been living in a big city, such as judging the Lion's Club Youth of the Year, Co-ordinating Clean-up Australia Day, adjudicating school debates and being a steward at a CWA cooking competition.

This new life has come with challenges. I initially found the lack of privacy living in a small town confronting. But two years ago when my eldest son was hospitalised with asthma I was touched by people's concern and generosity. People made meals, helped with child minding and washing whilst we were at the hospital.

I came across a saying on my travels that culture truly thrives the further one moves out of big cities. I have been delighted to find this to be the case.

Whilst I miss concerts at the Sydney Opera House, I have been honoured to attend Opera in a most unique country setting at Morundah's Paradise Palladium. I've forgone my visits to the NSW Art Gallery but discovered a wonderful regional art gallery in Griffith. And we are thoroughly enjoying exploring the neighbouring country towns and partaking in enjoyable country festivals such as The John O'Brien Festival and La Festa.

Culture aside, it is the relaxing pace of the country and this effect on our family life that is priceless. ■

The city-country divide

In 2007 the Rural Women's Network captured information and statistical data on life for those living in rural areas in contrast to city dwellers. Part One of this paper was printed in the No. 45 *Country Web*. This second part focuses on selected topics highlighting urban/rural difference. The full report and reference list is available on the RWN website (www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn).

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS

The rapid spread of the internet and other information technology tools have greatly increased rural people and especially farmers' capacity to manage resources during drought. Internet use by Australian farmers is among the highest in the world despite poor access and line speeds in many areas.

With telephone service delays up to three working days and possibly five days over a weekend, we are left without any means of communication at all. The area concerned affects people living on farms, and most are at least 50 km to 150 km from their nearest medical help (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), 1999 p.17).

Farmers increasingly use the Internet for business purposes, information gathering and electronic commerce. Internet banking and education and training are set to grow substantially.



Farmers using holistic management software and tapping into climate change information to monitor aspects of weather such as the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) have become accepted regular farming practices (Rin and Groves, 1999).

INCOME, ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND POVERTY

In 2000–01, wages and salaries accounted for 73% of total gross income in metropolitan areas, and 65% in non-metropolitan areas. Government cash benefits were 10% of income in metropolitan areas, and 15% in non-metropolitan areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2005). While discussions about poverty in Australia usually focus almost exclusively on the poor living in capital cities it is important to realise that the incidence of poverty is higher among people living outside the capital (Hugo, 2000). The *State of the Regions* report published by National Economics in 1998 showed the proportion of people living in poverty is increasing in rural and remote areas.

Higher incomes are concentrated around major cities and in some remote areas, especially those with mining communities and some regional centres (Hugo, 2000). However, it is difficult to accurately compare economic prosperity between

metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas because of the difficulty of accounting for some items such as food grown and consumed on farms. Statistics on specifics, such as cost of living, is only collected for capital cities and gross domestic product (GDP) provided by the rural sector can only be found at a national level. Relative urban/rural wages are also not available; however, comparisons by industry can be sourced.

Poverty and the associated family problems which arise from income deprivation are higher in rural than urban areas. The story is much worse for Aborigines who have a mortality rate over four times that for non-Aboriginal people and a life expectancy about 20 years lower. Stress related problems were also found to be on the increase in rural areas. Health workers reported increased substance abuse, low morale and depression. Longer hours of work also contribute to greater risk of accidents and withdrawal from community activities. With the closure of support services and the difficulty of accessing medical services, families have less access to help (HREOC, 1999 p.4).

HEALTH

The best and most holistic view of health and wellbeing in rural and remote Australia is the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's *Rural, Regional and Remote Health: Indicators of Health*. The report found that 'Australians living outside major cities have shorter life expectancy, higher death rates and are more likely to have a disability compared to city dwellers. This is so even after allowing for the effects of the poorer health of Indigenous Australians' (Gregory, 2005 p.16).

Inadequate, inaccessible and diminishing health services were the principal concern of participants in the Bush Talks (1999) report and people outside major cities were more likely to display unhealthy behaviours such as smoking, be overweight, and drinking alcohol excessively.

For 1998–2000, a man born in the rural Central Darling area of NSW could expect to live 13 years fewer than his compatriot born in Mosman (Gregory, 2005 p.17).

A National Farmers' Federation (NFF) report, *Trends in the Delivery of Rural Health, Education and Banking Services*, published in 1997, showed a critical under-supply of rural doctors. A study by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reconfirmed this in 1998 stating that for those living in the remotest areas of Australia, a primary healthcare supply rate was 35% lower than that of capital cities (Health in Rural and Remote Australia, 1998).

Strong (1998) showed that metropolitan and large rural centres had 400+ nursing home beds per 100 000 people over 70 years of age. The number of beds diminished the more the remote the location with acute care hospital beds being used to compensate. They found nursing-home-type-patients occupying 20% of hospital beds.

Once services are gone from their local area people can have substantial additional costs of time and money to travel to larger centres to receive treatment. Research shows that this lack of