

theCOUNTRYWEB

for RURAL WOMEN & their FAMILIES

TRANSITIONING
SOPHIE'S OPEN KITCHEN
5 TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL
CROWDFUNDING
FAMILIES IN RECOVERY
MEN'S MATTERS:
AVOID BEING A VICTIM
OF CHANGE



THE COUNTRY WEB

The *Country Web* annual is produced by Department of Primary Industries Rural Women's Network (RWN) and is distributed free. For more about the RWN see page 5.

DESKTOP PUBLISHING

Allison Priest

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CONTRIBUTIONS

Letters, stories, poems and photographs from rural women and their families are welcome.

FREE MAILING LIST

You can download *The Country Web* from our website and receive an email alert when a new edition is available. See our website to subscribe. If you live in NSW and would like to receive a copy in the mail contact RWN.

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COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS

1. Information on how to enter and prize details form part of the Terms & Conditions. By entering the competition, entrants accept these Terms & Conditions. 2. To enter, you must provide your full name and postal details, and in 25 words or less answer the competition question. 3. Entries must be posted to the stated address by the stated date. 4. This competition is a game of skill. The best answer as judged by the RWN will win. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Prizes cannot be transferred or redeemed for cash. The winner will be notified by mail within 14 days from the judging date.

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Regular features

Editorial 3 | Calendar 3 | Across my desk 4 |
Letters 5 | Parenting 16 | Communities in focus 25 |
Men's matters 31 | Women leaders 33 | Health 41 |
What's new 46 | Resources 46 |

Features

6-8 | Growing primary industries

Meet the 2016 NSW-ACT RIRDC Rural Women's Award winner Sophie Hansen and finalists; Hannah Wandel, Fiona Mead and Aimee Snowden. Plus, details on how to apply for the 2017 Award.

9 | 5 Must have's for your networking toolkit

The power of a great network can't be underestimated—especially when it results in new clients, the next job, or new opportunity.

16 | Managing life transitions

Change is an inevitable part of life, however, sometimes we don't see the broader impact of life transitions until we are trying to deal with the consequences. Melinda Philips from Good Grief Ltd provides advice on useful points to consider when managing the changes and losses that come with life transitions.

22 | Local is Lovely: St Joseph's kitchen garden

St Joseph's is a small school in the Central Western town of Molong. And its new kitchen garden is nourishing its 50-plus students on every level. Jane Shannon, the woman who drove the whole thing, provides some fantastic advice on how you can do something similar at your school.

26 | Families in recovery

Are you struggling with a loved one's use of alcohol or other drugs? Do you want to live without the chaos? Anne Leigh from Families in Recovery shares her strategies for dealing with the situation in a healthy and productive way.

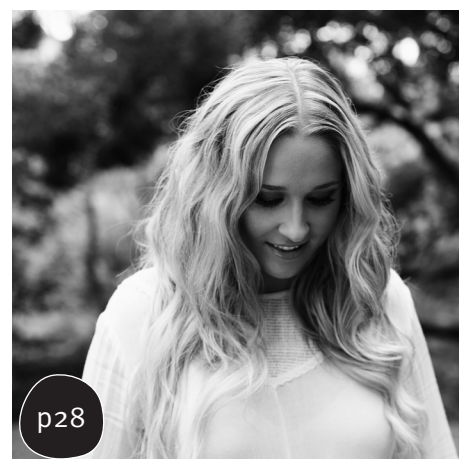
36 | Money: Life transitions and your finances

During our lifetime many aspects of our lives will change, bringing highs and lows of certainty and uncertainty, comfort and fear of the unknown. There are many agents of change—graduating from high school or university, getting married, having children, changing careers, death of a partner or divorce and retirement. Whether these transitions are expected or out of the blue, each one has the potential to change our lives as we know them.



p12

Kasia Gospos is one incredibly courageous woman. Here she shares her top 5 tips for a successful crowdfunding campaign.



p28

The NSW Rural Women's Gathering at Broken Hill features a fabulous line-up of speakers, entertainers and workshop presenters, information stands/ displays, tours, and an interactive session run by the RWN on 'What Rural Women Say'. Register now so you don't miss out. This is one event not to be missed.

Editorial: Farmers adapting to change

Cindy Cassidy, Ariah Park

As the 2015 RIRDC Rural Women's Award winner for NSW-ACT and in my role with FarmLink, I am driven by my commitment to the future of Australian farming. This passion and drive comes primarily from my family who are fifth generation farmers.

I believe research and innovation are key to securing our farming future. When I think about the future of farming in this country I envisage: productive, profitable, sustainable farms; prosperous, healthy farming families; and robust, vibrant rural communities.

A future that is as positive as it is achievable is dependent on: recognition at a social and government level of the important role that our farmers play; development of sustainable farming systems; and ultimately, the ability of our farmers to adapt to change.

Farmers feed and clothe the nation. The food and fibre that they produce supply the needs of Australian citizens and those of our neighbours. Our agricultural sector is an important source of export income and it is a food security asset. It is encouraging to see this recognised in the Agricultural White Paper, along with a growing social awareness of where food comes from. But we can take it further. Farmers should be feted as heroes.

Regardless of what each of us do day to day, it is our farmers who truly put dinner on the table and the shirt on our back. Focusing on the mental health and wellbeing, as well as the social, physical and financial wellbeing of our farmers as a national priority is important in securing the future of farming.

Reaching the stage where our farming systems are sustainable as well as productive and profitable delivers benefits for all Australians. And it is often our farmers who are best positioned to preserve and enhance our land and water resources. They have considerable personal wealth and family history invested in their land and water. The motivation to protect and enhance these natural resources for both productive and personal reasons represents a real asset to the pursuit of sustainable farming practices.

The opportunity to work with farmers to achieve sustainable environmental, economic and social outcomes is real and one that is being recognised in our evolving approach to Landcare, amongst other things.



Public opinion and government policy that recognises and supports farmers in their pursuit of a prosperous future is one part of the equation. The other is very much about the farmers themselves.

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution is often referred to as 'survival of the fittest'. When in fact the key element of his theory was that 'it is not the strongest of the species, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change'.

A key determinant of the future of Australian farming is the ability of our farmers to adapt to change. Agricultural research is the key to the creation of new ideas and technologies in response to change. As a nation we invest around \$470 million annually in Agricultural research and development. However, it is the development of technologies and ideas into practices that can be adopted; and the act of supporting farmers in their adoption, that sees us overcome constraints and create more productive, profitable and sustainable farms.

At a recent FarmLink event I was excited to hear one of our members, who had worked on the family farm for more than 15 years, finally felt able to call herself a farmer rather than a farmer's wife. Women represent 50 per cent of the agricultural workforce worldwide. Equally, young people are important sources of farm labour and must be recognised as the future.

I love hearing my young daughter and her cousins proudly describe themselves as farmers. Farmers are a mixed bunch. While they are passionate about producing food for the nation and committed to the ever-changing face of Australian agriculture, our farming future is in fact everyone's responsibility and everyone's reward.

Calendar of events

1 August–31 October

Entries open: 2017 RIRDC Rural Women's Award

The RIRDC Rural Women's Award is a life-changing opportunity for women who are passionate, courageous and who aspire to lead positive change for rural industry and the communities in which they live. The Award champions women from diverse industries and communities, giving women a platform to become part of the national conversation. State and territory winners receive a \$10 000 bursary to deliver a project that will benefit rural people and rural industries as part of their award, with the national winner receiving an additional \$10 000. The award also provides personal and professional development opportunities. To find out more or to enter this year's Award contact Rural Women's Network or visit: www.rirdc.gov.au/rural-women's-award

28–30 October, Broken Hill

Annual NSW Rural Women's Gathering

The 2016 Gathering committee have embraced the theme 'rocks, rust, stars and dust'. You will be treated to a fabulous line up of speakers, entertainers and workshop presenters. There will also be information stands and displays, and a men's program for those bringing their partner. Set under Broken Hill's amazingly vast open skies and captivating landscapes, you do not want to miss this wonderful event that is sure to see you going back home rejuvenated and full of wonderful experiences and ideas. For more details see page 28.

What's next?

The 2017 annual issue of The Country Web will explore the theme 'Connect and Collaborate'. We want to hear from you about creating meaningful connections, mentoring and sharing wisdom, books and people that have inspired you.

Contributions are due by 21 April 2017 for publication in August 2017.

Send your contributions to:
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Connected resilient rural women

The Rural Women's Network (RWN) is a small statewide government program (within Department of Primary Industries), working in innovative ways to share information and promote action on rural women's issues.

What RWN can do for you:

- » Provide information relevant to rural women and communities.
- » Support you to develop and promote activities such as women's days, workshops or gatherings.
- » Connect you with key people, groups and organisations.
- » Share your stories and concerns with decision makers.

Current activities:

- » *The Country Web* annual magazine.
- » RIRDC Rural Women's Award: a leadership and development opportunity.
- » NSW Rural Women's Gathering.
- » *Hidden Treasures Honour Roll*: recognising rural women volunteers.
- » *Rural Email List (REL)*: an online tool to share information relevant to women and communities

Connect with RWN

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f: 02 6391 3543

e: rural.women@dpi.nsw.gov.au

w: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn

b: nswruralwomensnetwork.wordpress.com

Twitter: @NSW_RWN

YouTube.com/nswrwn

Facebook: NSWWRWN

Across my desk

Allison Priest

Rural Women's Network Coordinator

We're transitioning too

The past 12 months has been a time of transition and change for the Network as we review our programs and activities and look at new ways to engage with rural and regional women across the State.

One of our newest engagement initiatives is the launch of our **Rural Women's Network Facebook page**. We invite you to like our page so you can keep up-to-date with information, events, news and resources of interest to you.

Since our last issue our team farewelled fellow member, Novelle Hasling. Readers would remember Novelle for her cheerful greeting when you rang to request additional copies of *The Country Web* or to update your subscription. Novelle was an important member of our small team, providing administrative support and regularly attending events to promote our program. We wish Novelle all the very best in her retirement as she travels and begins many new wonderful adventures. In farewelling Novelle, we welcomed Emma Regan to her new permanent role as RWN Project Officer. Emma has been with the Rural Women's Network in a temporary role until now and I know she is very excited to be joining the team on a permanent basis.

In March this year we held our annual Gala Dinner to announce our **2016 NSW-ACT RIRDC Rural Women's Award** winner Sophie Hansen. You can read about Sophie and her My Open Kitchen Project and our three deserving finalists on pages 6–8. As I sit here writing this column we are two weeks out from the National Award announcement in Canberra where they will announce the 2016 Australian winner and runner-up. I wish Sophie all the best on her NSW Award journey and I hope that you will follow her story over the next 12 months and perhaps even take part in one of her My Open Kitchen workshops to be launched soon.

Applications for the 2017 Rural Women's Award are open and close 31 October. We invite you to nominate yourself or someone you know

for this exciting award. It is a life-changing opportunity for women who are passionate, courageous and who aspire to lead positive rural industry and community change. State and territory winners receive a \$10 000 bursary to bring to life an idea benefiting primary industries and rural communities. They also participate in leadership and development and gain access to a nationwide network of Award alumni. Contact RWN for information on how to apply and to access our NSW-ACT Award mentors.

The annual **Hidden Treasures Honour Roll** has closed for nominations and we are currently preparing the *Honour Roll* booklet, which will be officially launched at the 2016 NSW Rural Women's Gathering, 28–30 October. We will also be releasing the names of this year's Honour Roll nominees via our website and Facebook page.

The **Broken Hill Rural Women's Gathering** committee have opened registrations so make sure you visit their website (brokenhill2016.wixsite.com/rwsd) to download the registration form. Registrations close 7 October. And if travelling to Broken Hill seems a little daunting, the Rural Women's Network is providing two subsidised bus services departing from Orange and Wagga Wagga. The return journey is just \$55. Places are limited to 50 seats per bus so be sure to register soon. Bus registration details are available on the Gathering website or by contacting RWN.

The **RWN website** is in the process of having a 'facelift', with a new design scheduled to go live in October. If you have time let us know what you think of the new design.

This latest 'bumper' issue of *The Country Web* is the beginning of **The Country Web annual** magazine. Once a year we will bring you a bumper issue filled with great stories and information from across New South Wales. The theme for our next issue is 'Connect & Collaborate'. We would love for you to share your experiences around creating meaningful connections, mentoring and sharing wisdom. We also want you to tell us about the books and people that have inspired you and to share poems about life in rural communities. Why not grab a cuppa and sit down and put pen to paper.

A sincere thank you to our contributors and readers for sharing your lives and stories and for your ongoing support as we celebrate 23 years of *The Country Web*. Without you this magazine simply wouldn't be possible.



Letters Write to: Letters, The Country Web, Locked Bag 21, ORANGE NSW 2800

Creatively and colourfully moving forward

I am enjoying reading the creativity articles in the 'Creating & Making' edition of *The Country Web*. Thanks for your efforts and your article, 'Just add colour'. The colouring in passion is spreading. I am giving a talk to a Probus group here in Sydney entitled 'Colouring In'. I will talk about colour psychology as well as creativity and your expert Dr Rodski has given me some more information. I will also reflect on how our lives can be reflected in our colour choices. I hope everything is creatively and colourfully moving forward for you too.

Lynn Champion, Sydney

A note of thanks

Just a note to say the role of the Rural Women's Network is far-reaching and amazing. I love *The Country Web* and the stories of courage, striving and living, it contains. The Rural Women's Gatherings are awesome and the *Hidden Treasures Honour Roll* is invaluable and it gives me great pleasure to showcase as many ladies as I can sleuth out to nominate. Keep up the great work touching lives.

Bernadette Allport, North Star

Creative pursuits

I have just read *The Country Web* magazine for the first time and would like to say a BIG thank you for all the wonderful articles.

Do you think more articles about aged people and what creative things they are doing could be included in future issues? There is a lady in the Yass Writers Group who is 102 years of age and is still contributing in spite of loss of eyesight and hearing. There are a couple of 90-year-olds too.

Valerie Scott, Yass

Ed: Valerie, we would love a story from your writers group about their creative pursuits. Perhaps someone could write an article and submit it for our next issue.

Far from finished!

Like Emma Fitzsimmons' 'From little things big things grow' article in the Spring issue, I too learnt to knit at a young age from my father. He showed me how to finger knit, then using needles I would turn the 10 stitches into 20 and holes were my greatest feat! His patience was better than mine but eventually it all clicked and I was able to knit well. French knitting was another art I learnt using small nails in a wooden cotton reel. This simple form of wool craft has stood the test of time and is still in practice in our family.

I produced my best pieces when I was pregnant with baby number one. Booties, jackets and bonnets in lovely patterns and all well-worn and hand washed. And all made from pure Australian wool.

By the time babies two and three came along I had moved onto shawls, circular and square. One pram blanket was made in sections in

pink and white, which won first prize in a local show. This blanket was used for both our daughters and 21 years later our two granddaughters.

My mother showed me the basics of cooking, ironing and sewing on a treadle machine, while my father taught me how to skin a rabbit, make a good stew and how to knit. These practical skills will remain with me for the rest of my life.

Over the years craft has been an important part of my life, from macramé, to beading, sewing and crochet. There's not many crafts I haven't tried but when all else gets put aside I always go back to knitting.

Some people find relaxation in different ways, for me it's either a good book or some knitting.

Now it's my turn to pass the lessons onto my own children. I haven't given up on my two girls yet, and my grandchildren, along with the story of how I learnt so long ago. From little things big things *do* grow and I'm far from finished yet!

So thank you mum and dad for starting me on this wonderful journey.

Jillian Ferguson, Humula

Country Care Link - providing transport for medical visits

Country Care Link provides:

- » assistance for country people to find short-term accommodation in the city.
- » transport for country people who are attending medical visits or who require a hospital stay in Sydney. Transport is provided by trained volunteer drivers on arrival and/or departure between the airport, railway or bus station and their medical appointment, hospital or accommodation.

When booking transport 48 hours notice is preferred.

For more information phone:

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Monday to Friday

9:30 am to 3:00 pm

Email: ccl@stvincents.com.au

Visit: www.sistersofcharityoutreach.com.au/service/country-care-link



RIRDC RURAL WOMEN'S AWARD

My open kitchen Growing primary industries

2016 NSW-ACT RIRDC Rural Women's Award

This year's Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation (RIRDC) Rural Women's Award recipients are some of our finest innovative thinkers. Recognised for their potential to make significant contributions to rural industries and communities across NSW and the ACT, they join an esteemed group of women who continue to lead the way and drive positive change for primary industries.

Sophie Hansen, from Orange in the Central West, aims to develop an innovative online learning course to teach others how to use social media to grow their businesses.

Fiona Mead, from Narrabri in North West NSW, is developing a 'Rural New Generation Project', which will introduce younger farmers onto the land by providing ideas on innovative pathways to farming.

Aimee Snowden, who lives on her family's irrigation farm at Tocumwal in the Southern Riverina, aims to increase agricultural literacy in primary school aged children using Lego® bricks as a key storytelling tool.

Hannah Wandel, from Kingston in the ACT, aims to develop and implement a leadership program for Year 9-10 rural girls that will build skills, boost confidence and develop strategies to take on leadership roles.

These four remarkable rural women were recognised and celebrated at a special Award Dinner hosted by Minister for Primary Industries, the Honourable Niall Blair, at Parliament House, Sydney in March this year. More than 130 government, industry and community representatives attended the dinner, where Sophie Hansen was crowned winner of the 2016 Award.

Deputy Premier Troy Grant presented Sophie with her Award saying, "Sophie is a deserving winner whose work will have far-reaching benefits. She is an extremely talented woman whose ambition to help others grow their businesses is both inspiring and generous. Her project will empower others to embrace social media, to gain new opportunities and reap long-term benefits to their farming businesses and rural communities."

As winner of the 2016 Award, Sophie received a \$10 000 bursary to develop her vision, the opportunity to attend the Australian Institute of Company Directors Course and 12 months facilitated strategic support to enhance her leadership skills and implement her Award vision, along with networking, media and public relations opportunities.

2016 NSW-ACT RIRDC Rural Women's Award winner Sophie Hansen with finalists Hannah Wandel, Fiona Mead and Aimee Snowden.
Photo by Seth Buchanan.

The three finalists each received a \$1000 Department of Primary Industries Leadership Bursary and six months career and life coaching from Lisa Green of Career Matters (www.eatcakeandhaveitto.com.au).

The RIRDC Rural Women's Award is a life-changing opportunity for women who are passionate, courageous and who aspire to lead positive change for rural industry and the communities in which they live. The Award champions women from diverse industries and communities, giving women a platform to become part of the national conversation.

If you're a woman with a desire and commitment to make a great contribution and you have an idea you would like to pursue why not consider applying for the 2017 Award.

Applications for the 2017 Award close 31 October. To apply or recommend someone for the Award contact Rural Women's Network for more information and access to NSW-ACT Award mentors.

The Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation Award is coordinated by NSW Rural Women's Network, through Department of Primary Industries, and is supported by NSW Farmers, Office of Environment & Heritage, The Country Women's Association of NSW, and Career Matters.



Winner: Sophie Hansen, Orange NSW

Sophie moved to Orange 10 years ago, where she lives and manages a holistic deer farm with her husband Tim and their two children. She studied print journalism at the University of Canberra then pursued a career in feature writing for food and lifestyle magazines, both in Australia and Italy.

With over 15 years' experience as a journalist and food writer, Sophie's work focuses principally on primary industries and producers. She has authored and photographed a book of recipes and stories, *Local is Lovely*. She also writes and photographs a popular blog of the same name. In addition to this, she runs food photography and styling workshops and a series of events on her family's farm, including farm kitchen lunches, farm tours and cooking demonstrations.

Sophie's award ambition is to provide people with the skills they need to take advantage of social media channels to tell their stories, connect with peers and new customers and invite the world into their kitchens and onto their farms. She will use the award to share her experiences and skills in using social media to promote agribusiness and encourage more rural women to become active and collaborative members of online and actual food communities.

As someone whose primary income depends on agriculture, Sophie understands how the success of any business hinges on a positive marketing and media profile.

"I love telling stories and believe passionately in the power of social media to connect farmers in a positive way with networks that will deliver both social and business support.

"I'm a big believer of the concept of conviviality—inspiring people to come together over shared meals of seasonal, fresh food with a joy in the process and an understanding of where the produce comes from. Hence the name of my project—My Open Kitchen."

My Open Kitchen is an innovative online learning course designed to assist anyone involved in primary industries to use social media channels to build their 'social capital', which in turn will deliver transparency, engagement, trust and ultimately financial returns for primary producers.

The flow-on benefits to primary industries are broad and range from improved sustainability of regional agribusinesses, an increase to the vibrancy of small communities and the creation of stronger consumer awareness of, and engagement in, primary industries across the country.

"My Open Kitchen will be delivered as a self-paced online course to help farmers, value-adders, cooks and producers get started

with social media to celebrate the beautiful food we produce and tell our stories through recipes, words and great photos. It's about collaboration, inspiration, conviviality and learning useful new skills."

Through her project Sophie wants farmers to 'virtually' invite the world into their kitchens and through their stories inspire new networks to support primary industries with their choices and voices.

"More than ever, people want to connect with other people—not just products. There is a growing desire from consumers to know more about where their food is coming from. Farmers are in the perfect position to tell these stories and own them. If we don't get connected and develop sound social media profiles, we are missing out on big opportunities, and in some cases, even harming our commercial successes."

So what makes My Open Kitchen different to other social media courses?

"It's visual. It's about food, it's about taking great photos and it's about connecting in a positive and genuine way. The course will cover social media basics in a way that will get everyone excited to get on board. Plus doing the course will connect participants with each other through forums, using hashtags and sharing prompts that will give them an instant support base, just by signing up."

My Open Kitchen will run in six-week rounds as five learning modules, which can be downloaded and printed as required. The course will be coordinated and delivered by Sophie, with some special guests along the way who will teach some of the modules. Sophie will kick off with her first group of students in October.

"My Open Kitchen will teach anyone with a smartphone in their pocket how to connect and network with peers, customers and a genuine support base."

Find out more and register your interest at www.my-open-kitchen.com



Aimee Snowden, 2016 NSW-ACT RIRDC RWA finalist. Photo: Tamara Cadd Photography.

Aimee Snowden, Tocomwal NSW

Aimee Snowden lives on her family's irrigation farm near Tocomwal in the Southern Riverina. In 2014, whilst working in accounting and irrigation, she returned to the family farm to complete university studies in Agricultural Business through Charles Sturt University at Wagga. Aimee was an Australian Delegate to the Youth Ag-Summit in 2015, and is a 2016 Royal Agricultural Society Rural Achiever.

Her affinity with agriculture resulted from growing up on the land. She is passionate about agriculture and excited to be working in an industry that is innovative, diverse and feeds and clothes the world.

As a farm girl Aimee understands the need to promote and create awareness of industry in order to engage future generations. She says it is important to educate children about the value of Australian agriculture, as they will be the consumers of the future.

Aimee's ambition is to increase agricultural literacy in Australian primary school aged children using Lego® bricks as a key storytelling tool. Her aim is to tell children a positive story about agriculture in an engaging way by using photos and stories of a symbolic Australian farmer minifigure in everyday situations on the farm. She hopes that by sharing her creative images of a Lego® Farmer she will start important conversations about agriculture and sustainability.

www.littlebrickpastoral.com
Twitter: @LittleBrickPast

Hannah Wandel, Kingston ACT

Hannah Wandel is a social entrepreneur, gender equality advocate and founding CEO of Country to Canberra. Passionate about country communities and youth, she is committed to ensuring all young women across rural Australia are empowered to take on leadership roles.

Hannah loved growing up on her family's sheep, pig and grain farm. From a young age she was dedicated to enriching primary industries and rural communities. After moving to the ACT, Hannah founded the national not-for-profit organisation, Country to Canberra. As voluntary CEO, she drives the organisation to deliver several programs, including a nationwide essay competition, a blogger team, and a 'Power Trip' initiative that connects young women with high profile politicians and executives to combat gender and geographical barriers to success.

Hannah is an Australian Financial Review/ Westpac 100 Women of Influence (2015), ACT Young Woman of the Year finalist (2015), Layne Beachley Aim for the Stars Foundation Scholarship winner and was a Great Ydeas grant recipient (2014). She is also a Board Director of YWCA Canberra—a not-for-profit organisation supporting women at risk. She was selected to be a Global Shaper, an initiative of the World Economic Forum.



Hannah Wandel, 2016 NSW-ACT RIRDC RWA finalist. Photo: Exclusive Images.

Hannah hopes to break down barriers preventing girls entering male dominated fields and attaining leadership roles in primary industries through 'Project Empower'—a leadership program for Year 9-10 rural girls to build skills, boost self-confidence and importantly, help them develop strategies to take on leadership roles. Her ultimate goal is to see women hold 50 per cent of primary industry board director and decision making roles by 2026.

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Fiona Mead, Narrabri NSW

Fiona Mead and her husband Martin own and run a stud Dorper sheep and winter cropping farm near Narrabri. Fiona is passionate about rural communities and is dedicated to securing the farming future of Australia.

Fiona's career is devoted to primary industries, having worked for a number of agricultural companies. She has formed strong networks in farming sectors throughout Northern NSW.




Fiona Mead, 2016 NSW-ACT RIRDC RWA finalist. Photo: SKWImages.

In her role as a rural financial counsellor, Fiona has become acutely aware of the limited options and barriers hindering young farmers' ability to enter the agricultural sector. This is exacerbated by an ageing demographic of farmers who wish to remain on their farms but not necessarily be involved in the full-time management of agricultural enterprises. Fiona sees the opportunity to develop creative and effective ways of connecting two generations by looking beyond the traditional means of acquiring rural land for agribusiness.

Fiona wants to establish a tenant farming scheme, to be run locally, nationally or by individual agricultural industries, using the knowledge and experience gained through a 'Young Farmers Tenant Scheme' she and her husband accessed when they first started farming in Zimbabwe in the 1980s.

Her 'Rural New Generation' initiative would facilitate younger farmers to access land by providing ideas on innovative pathways and assist emerging and ageing farmers to acquire knowledge that will ensure they have the tools and skills required to move into shared agricultural enterprises. She believes this will strengthen rural communities and enable a new generation to access opportunities across primary industries and provide ongoing connections for older generation farmers as they transition out of hands-on agriculture.

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5 must-have's for your networking toolkit

Toni Courtney

The power of a great network can't be underestimated—especially when it results in new clients, the next job, or new opportunity.

"Networking is the key to success in business," says Keith Ferrazzi, author of *Never Eat Alone*, a book about the power of relationship building and networking.

Someone said to me recently, "Your net worth is the quality of your connections. It's all about who you know."

The reality for most of us though is that networking takes us out of our comfort zones. Why? Because you're putting yourself in front of people who are forming their impressions of you quickly. You're vulnerable. You want to fit in, be liked and rated well.

How to overcome feeling nervous or anxious

According to UK research, about 50 per cent of people in the room at a networking event will be feeling anxious. Here are five steps to help you feel more confident and courageous.

1. Choose a great attitude

Rather than deciding how it's going to be before you get there (which is usually negative), instead be open, curious and create it the way you want it. To do this:

- » Be present with others rather than focused on your inner voice.
- » Be interested rather than being interesting.

- » Give before you get—show someone how you can help them first.

2. Build rapport quickly

Networking is all about building trust fast, so engage in open ended questions that find common ground and build a conversation from there, for example: "What's your interest in coming along tonight?" is a good starter.

Take the effort to get to know someone genuinely and learn what they care about, moving beyond the "what do you do?" question—even if it's a short conversation.

Show the real you. It's the only way you'll create meaningful exchanges and manifest the potential for an ongoing authentic relationship.

3. Have an answer for the "what do you do?" question

It's a good idea to have a couple of different ways to answer this question, depending on who's asking, how formal your conversation is and when in the conversation you're asked. For example, two frames for your answer are:

- » Informal/high energy: talk about what you're passionate about and the difference you make (emotional answer) when you're already engaged in conversation.
- » Formal/low energy: talk about what you do in the context of your expertise, experience or problems you solve (rational answer) if it's the first thing you're asked when you've just met someone.

4. Know how to join a group

Joining a group engaged in conversation can be awkward, especially if you're not immediately acknowledged and welcomed in. The secret is to listen. Listen to the conversation and think about how you can add value to it. A great way to contribute is to pose a question—a good quality question will help establish credibility with the group, especially if it leads the conversation forward.

5. Know how to leave a group

Always acknowledge the person/people you're leaving. Here are some examples:

- » "It's been good to meet you. I'd better pop around and meet a few more people before the end of the evening," or;
- » "It's been great chatting with you. I'm sure you'd appreciate getting to meet other people here tonight too, take care and enjoy the rest of your evening".

In conclusion, networking well is worth the investment of your time and effort, especially if you follow through and continue to build the relationship by giving meaningful value.

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www.tonicourtney.com/blog



Transitioning from stay-at-home mum to app entrepreneur

Beck Keyzers, Orange

I am a mother to two wonderful boys aged three and six years old. My eldest has autism.

Autism or autism spectrum disorder is a lifelong developmental condition that affects how a person relates to his or her environment and interacts with others. People with autism can find it difficult to communicate, socialise and learn new things. They may also have unusual and repetitive behaviours and interests, such as avoiding loud noises, sniffing objects or touching certain textures.

About one in 100 people have autism—almost 230 000 Australians—and it affects almost four times as many boys as girls.

Like many Australian mums, I never thought autism would be a part of my life.

After a career working in special schools and as a disability support worker, when we found out I was pregnant my partner and I decided to move to Orange, his home town, to be near family. I had a few problems throughout my pregnancy and finally after an emergency C-section, Kaiser was born. He was perfect—healthy and happy—and my new role as a mother was by far the best.

As a baby, Kaiser was very easy to please, always laughing and he never complained about anything. He reached all his milestones

on time and as far as I was concerned his development was spot on. At two years of age he experienced his first day at family day care.

I received a phone call after that day to come in for a chat. That chat turned out to be a suggestion that my beautiful, happy son could possibly have autism. They gave me a number to call to make an appointment with the local early intervention service.

After an intense assessment period Kaiser was formally diagnosed with Autism and severe language delay at age three. I wasn't overly concerned and thought I would just need to get him some speech therapy. Little did I know that I would need ongoing assistance to ensure his needs could be met. This included speech therapy, occupational therapy, early intervention, a preschool that could assist him in a mainstream environment and learning to provide him with coping skills to deal with anxious situations. I found the experience really challenging and confusing.

Kaiser's brother Xavier was born during this process, which made things incredibly hard. It wasn't easy to help him with a newborn to also look after. However, Xavier has helped him in many ways in terms of communication and social interaction.

Watching them grow together has been very encouraging and it has inspired me to offer a resource for families to access services and information relating to autism.

Since Kaiser's diagnosis I have met other parents like myself who are unsure of where to go when their child is autistic or is undergoing an autism diagnosis.

Some services don't advertise on the internet and others have huge waiting lists, while some just don't fit my sons needs.

Developing a relationship with the educator or therapist you choose is first and foremost. Your child has to enjoy attending sessions and feel safe and happy while doing so.

I came up with the idea for the Autism Link app to help families find local support services, relevant information, resources and much more.

Early intervention is crucial to ensure that kids get the support they need. The Autism Link app will hopefully give families choices to explore other options, especially if what they're using is not working for their child and family.

Becoming a business woman almost overnight has presented me with a number of challenges. I'm now preparing the business case and technical requirements for the app, finding funding to pay for the development and transforming myself from a stay-at-home mum to the founder of an app start up.

I'm working with Bathurst-based mobile app company Appiwork, who have believed in me and the difference I'm trying to make for families from the very beginning. It really does help to surround yourself with people who want to see you succeed when making an important transition in your life!

The Autism Link app will be free for families to use and the funding for the project is based on service providers paying to promote their services. I really hope to create a wonderful resource for families just like my own.

At the end of the day, I am still a mum who just wants to offer the right information to families. Because we all want the best for our children. We don't need to be afraid of autism, we need to embrace it and help children to live happy, connected lives.

More information

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Rural Resilience Program

Jen Haberecht, Rural Resilience Officer, Coffs Harbour

Life is full of transitions. Four years ago I did not think I would be a rural resilience officer, based at Coffs Harbour.

I grew up in Albury and then moved to North East Victoria. I have always been surrounded by small business, including an electrical business, a trout farm, an olive grove and a bed and breakfast. Much like many farming businesses, we weren't exempt from natural disasters, such as the 2003 fires and drought.

I have always enjoyed working with people, so it's not surprising that I completed both my bachelor and masters in social work. Having worked with individuals and communities for over 25 years, I believe to increase capacity, it is important to build relationships and partnerships by drawing on the strengths and assets, within individuals, groups and broader communities. These strengths become quite evident during natural disasters.

I started working for NSW Department of Primary Industries in 2012, initially based at the Grafton Research Station. I often say that I was inducted into the job by the storms in December 2012 and floods along the North Coast in January 2013. I recall sitting in a meeting with industry representatives who were producers of avocados, sugar cane, macadamias, blueberries, stone fruit, cattle, soya bean, dairy, custard apples, citrus, bananas, mangos... and the list goes on. They were all affected by these events, in many and varied ways. I spent many hours in the Clarence Valley Recovery Centre and participated in meetings at the floodgates within Kempsey Shire, listening to people's stories and hearing the social and emotional impact of these floods. The themes that emerged during this time included:

- » Prioritising farm activities over personal needs.
- » Cumulative impacts of natural disasters, not only farm infrastructure and financial reserves, but personally as well.
- » Farmers are ageing, without succession plans.
- » Farmers making decisions at times of crisis.

- » Strengths of families working together and concern for others wellbeing.
- » People needing support to access services.
- » Concerns for the future of agriculture and the next generation.

These experiences have enhanced my appreciation of the impact that natural disasters have on agricultural industries and their families, and has largely influenced the work that I have been doing along the North Coast and into the Tablelands.

Some activities that I have worked with different organisations to deliver include:

- » Providing 'working with men and difficult emotions' training to community organisations.
- » Men's health and wellbeing sessions.
- » John Harper's Mate Helping Mate.
- » Suicide awareness training.
- » Writing workshops.
- » Leadership training for women.
- » Disaster leadership training.
- » Low stress stock handling.
- » Low stress conversations.
- » Farm safety.

Working as a rural resilience officer is not all about 'doing' stuff on the farm. My story demonstrates that our journey is about listening, learning and linking people, to create opportunities that foster business and personal resilience and build capacity. Resilience is a process we need to continually work at building.

The RRP can help farming families by:

- » Creating opportunities to connect with others in farming communities, as well as connecting with support services.
- » Providing information, tools and development opportunities that build skills, knowledge and experience.

- » Supporting families while recovering from adverse events and helping them prepare for the future.
- » Listening to farming needs and issues and communicating these to policy makers.

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Women in focus: Top 5 tips for successful crowdfunding

This story originally appeared on www.womeninfoocus.com.au. Women in Focus is a CommBank program supporting women in business and community.

Kasia Gospos is one incredibly courageous woman. As we are increasingly encouraged to step out of our comfort zones to seek out new experiences, Kasia took a leap of faith from a great height and landed firmly on her feet.

As a successful management consultant in Poland, she couldn't have imagined the sacrifices and rewards that would come from stretching her career and herself as a person to the limits. Eight years later and a world away from her homeland, Kasia is paving the way for change and leading tens of thousands of women as founder and publisher of *Leaders in Heels*, a leading Australian online community and magazine.

One of Kasia's more recent significant achievements, a successful crowdfunding campaign with the first *Make Your Mark* leadership notebook in 2014, gave invaluable insights that helped shape her second campaign, which has recently finished exceeding funding expectations also.

Here this incredible feminist and change maker shares with us her *Leaders in Heels* journey, from her humble beginnings as a blogger to collaborating with designers and publishers to make a positive and unique impact on the complex issue of gender equality.

What inspired the *Make Your Mark* concept?

In 2008 I left my life in Poland behind and moved to Australia. In this new world I encountered women from many different walks of life. I realised that some women succeeded in shaping their career and life, while other women didn't. Intrigued, I started interviewing successful women in Australia to



connect with them, learn from them and then share their experiences with other women. *Leaders in Heels* was born.

Since my humble beginning as a blogger *Leaders in Heels* now has hundreds of interviews with successful women and articles covering leadership, success, career development and entrepreneurship. We also organise events, are active in the gender equality space and offer inspirational prints and eBooks. The blog has been visited over a million times!

As an analyst at heart and always curious about why certain women are more successful, I ran my own research and collected over 200 responses from *Leaders in Heels* readers about what makes a successful female leader. I found that there were six common traits that they all used in their life.

They were passionate about what they did, which gave them energy to stay long hours or not to give up—even when the odds were against them. They were creative in achieving their goals, no matter if it was about implementing new products or running effective meetings—they looked for innovative ways of doing things. Passion was giving them confidence to stand up for their beliefs and determination to keep going when things were falling apart. And lastly, they were kind in their actions.

These traits are now part of the *Leaders in Heels* manifesto which, for me, is a road map to become a leader in every aspect of my life.

The *Make Your Mark* stationery was created to bring to life the *Leaders in Heels* manifesto and help women develop these daily leadership traits by creating a habit.

Who did you collaborate with to create such functional, inspirational and supportive content for *Make Your Mark*?

I love the power of collaboration and when women do amazing stuff together. The *Make Your Mark* journal has been reviewed by Australian leadership experts Ozlem Beldan, Catherine Nolan, Sonia McDonald, Lisa Phillips and Natalie Goldman, as well as my mentor, Devika Mohotti. I met all of these women through *Leaders in Heels*. They've also contributed to *Leaders in Heels* and provided some of the content.

Why crowdfunding and how has it disrupted traditional funding?

Crowdfunding allows literally anyone with an idea to share the project with the world and start raising funds. There are many amazing projects that were brought to life by creatives who were supported by the crowd, projects that otherwise would not have come to life as they may have not been considered safe enough for investors.

As I already had a community of women interested in leadership, crowdfunding seemed to be the most obvious way of raising funds. I see the crowdfunding as an opportunity to validate the idea, gain some momentum in building brand awareness and presale as much as possible.

It's not only about funding but also about doing it quickly and selling quickly. Crowdfunding enables savings in warehousing costs and it is also much more efficient to bulk ship many orders rather than doing it every day or every week in small amounts. I am obsessed with efficiency and automation.

So what are your top five tips for starting a crowdfunding campaign

1. Platform

The first campaign was on StartSomeGood, which is designed to crowdfund social projects. This time I decided to try Kickstarter. StartSomeGood is a smaller business and therefore they were really supportive in helping me launch the project. However, the benefit of Kickstarter is that it is much more advanced in terms of analytics. The design and user experience on the site is topnotch. It also offers currency conversion and broader payment methods. It all results in higher conversion rate.

2. Time

Last time I had only 12 days due to proximity to Christmas and a large upcoming order from one of the leadership course providers under the condition it was delivered before Christmas. The campaign would have been much more successful if I didn't need to rush. This time I ran my campaign for 39 days.

According to Kickstarter research, the most successful campaigns are 30 days and under so I was going against the research. But I really wanted to enjoy the journey and not rush. I wanted to give myself more time and to feel more relaxed.

3. Goal

If you don't reach your goal, Kickstarter cancels the project and you don't get to keep any of the funds raised. So it is important to be reasonable when setting up your goal. The amount to raise should be the minimum you need to fulfil the project. For me this was a minimum volume required by the

printing company. It is also important to cater for shipping costs and Kickstarter and financing fees (around 10 per cent).

4. Content

A crowdfunding campaign is not an online store. I always treat it as a very personal project—an opportunity to share my story, share my vision on how I came up with the idea and why I need the backers' help.

People are more likely to support you if they relate to you and see there is a real person who is pushing really hard to make her dream happen.

I love to take people on the journey and make them a part of this beautiful project. I also firmly believe that these products are the change makers in the empowerment and gender equality space, and through crowdfunding I have an opportunity to share the message with the world!

5. Marketing

The most important lesson I learnt is that marketing starts before the campaign starts. I purposefully designed different marketing strategies to attract my tribe before I launched the campaign.

Two months before the campaign I already had a pre-launch landing page where people were able to register to be notified about the campaign on day one. One month before the campaign we ran an amazing giveaway, 'Be Empowered', with over \$2500 worth of leadership books (including Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In* and Ariana Huffington's *Thrive*), eBooks, online courses, motivational prints, inspirational stationery and coaching sessions—most of the products I was able to source from our generous contributors and supporters of *Leaders in Heels*. We had over 1700 entries for this competition.

Lastly, I used Jeff Walker's technique from *Launch* to maintain the momentum when communicating with my audience. I also ran a fun image-based survey letting people design their ideal stationery product. It not only helped me learn a lot about my audience but was also a fun way of communicating what was coming and that I really care about their needs.

Was the campaign a success?

I managed to get the campaign over the line, and then some, raising over \$AU23 000. From the bottom of my heart, I want to say thank you to everyone who backed me for believing in this project and bringing the *Leaders in Heels* stationery to life!

You can find out more and order your books from www.leadersinheels.com.

Supporting men in distress: A new resource for women

Dr John Ashfield PhD

We have somehow grown up with the idea that men are an open book and can be easily understood. Yet just as men generally acknowledge that women can sometimes be hard to understand, increasingly women, out of genuine concern for the males in their life, want to know more about what makes men tick and especially, how to help them when they are in distress.

In his new book, John presents information in a simple and readable format and provides vital strategies for responding to males in distress, as well as lots of insights for understanding what makes men tick. The booklet contains a whole range of topics chosen to 'get inside' the most common issues and challenges encountered by women in their struggle to understand and respond to men in distress.

2014 Australian RIRDC Rural Women's Award winner Pip Job says, "This book is a crucial read... for women and men! It highlights the differences between men and women in times of distress and delivers some golden nuggets along the way.

"As women, we all too often want to help our men in the same way we help our girlfriends, but this book provides bite-size chunks of information about the mental health and wellbeing of men and how we can help them. The example prompts that are included will help us have those critical conversations.

"Every woman will be able to glance at the contents page of this resource and find a situation they can relate to. This book will be your lifelong mentor."

More information

For more information or a copy of *Support Men in Distress* contact Sharon at You Can Help Publishing.

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I am an Australian— Just like you

Dai Le, Sydney

"The true optimist not only expects the best to happen, but goes to work to make the best happen. The true optimist not only looks upon the bright side, but trains every force that is in him to produce more and more brightness in his life."

Christian D Larson

The crisis in Syria and the Middle East and the exodus of refugees has made me reflect on my own personal journey.

Like many of you, I lead a busy and hectic life. I'm often caught up with life's daily routines: from paying bills, picking up my son from school, keeping the house clean, going to work, attending meetings and so forth.

I almost forgot the impact of the 'boat people' journey; the sacrifices my mother was forced to make, fleeing war-torn Vietnam, and the challenges we all had to overcome to rebuild our lives here in Australia. Being uprooted from your birthplace and being forced to flee were not something a young child should have to go through, nor would they forget.

Seeing images of small boats on the sea reignited memories of my own family's escape just before the Vietnam War ended on 30 April 1975.

Following that conflict, hundreds and thousands of Vietnamese escaped communist Vietnam, including my family. Many ended up in refugee camps in countries such as Malaysia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand. These camps were set up by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). While my family were lucky to survive the boat journey, hundreds and thousands of Vietnamese died at sea.

I remember our boat encountered a huge storm one night. We were literally staring death in the face. The boat pounded so hard against the ocean I thought I would fall overboard. The rain was pelting my face and the wind was howling. It felt like the night and the ocean were going to swallow us up.

We had nothing to protect us except for a plastic tarp. We huddled under that tarp; my mother holding her rosary in one hand praying, while the other arm held my youngest sister. I held onto my middle sister. I kept thinking there was no way we could survive this. Our boat was too small to withstand the storm. But we survived the treacherous sea journey for another week or so.

I think the issue of identity, of who is an Australian, and what makes for an Australian society, is now more important than ever. With the continuing increase in conflicts around the world we will continue to see an increase in the movements of people seeking asylum, a safe haven, away from the daily bombings, fighting and uncertainties in their birth countries. Also with climate change related weather events we could potentially see another type of refugee develop—adding to the tide of displaced people. These asylum seekers will face the fact that their lives will be in a state of limbo, their identity will be challenged and their acceptance tested. And who makes up these asylum seekers? The majority are people like my mother and myself... women and children caught up in the crossfire of opposing forces or circumstances beyond their control.

I was just seven years old when I witnessed my birth country crumble in front of my eyes. I watched as people, confused and frightened,

scrambled to get onto boats, screaming and crying as they rushed anywhere their feet could take them. It was total chaos.

I remember lying on that boat surrounded by strangers as I stared into the night's sky.

Where were we going, I thought to myself? What was happening? Why were we there? Why did we run? Why was I on that boat with strangers? Why were the women crying? Would I go home soon?

I don't know if you can put yourself into that situation? Can you take yourself there? It is hard to localise what it means to lose everything, until you have lost it all. It is hard to imagine and put yourself in the situation where your village is bombed heavily, or invaded by your enemies, unless you have been there. I can guarantee you it's unimaginable until it happens to you. It is hard to describe in words the feeling of being uprooted from your birthplace, your motherland—the sense of hopelessness, confusion, loss and fear. Fear of the unknown, fear for the future. I didn't know what was going to happen to me, my family, to my life.

Our boat journey took us to Hong Kong refugee camps, where we stayed for almost a year before we were accepted for resettlement in Australia. My mother, two younger sisters and I were processed by the UNHCR and then flown to Sydney on 5 December 1979.

Australia was known back then within refugee camps as a big island, with one of the best education systems in the world. So when my mother chose Australia, it was because of its education system.

We arrived with one suitcase and no English. Australia had just emerged from the White Australia policy, which meant there was hardly an Asian face around. I learned later that the Chinese had come here during the gold rush in the 1800s. But in the 1970s, as an 11-year-old I felt there weren't many people who looked like me.

We were taken to a migrant hostel in Fairy Meadow, a suburb in Wollongong. As soon as we settled into our one bedroom unit, in a red-brick block, I couldn't wait to shed my refugee clothes and my 'old' self. I made a conscious decision to erase as much of my 'old' self as possible and start afresh. I wanted to become 'Australian' as soon as I could. For me, that meant I had to learn to speak English quickly. I also learned to make new friends so I could practice my speaking; I was looking for opportunities to grow into a

new person. Part of me wanted to strip away my Vietnamese heritage completely so that I could become a 'true' Australian.

So from the young age of 11, I worked hard to 'blend in', to embrace the Australian way of life, to speak English as fluently as I could, and even to learn to eat vegemite on toast!

Did I succeed? Am I a local? Local to where? Am I now as local as those born here? Am I as local as many of you reading this?

In the mid-80s, my mother decided to relocate us from the steelwork city of Wollongong to Bossley Park, a suburb in Sydney's South West near Cabramatta. In that period, there were more refugees from South East Asia—including Cambodia, Laos—who had resettled in the region (because of the migrant hostel there). My mother wanted to be part of the local community. She wanted to move closer to an area where she could relate to the people, the language, the food and the culture.

My sisters and I had to re-localise ourselves. We had left behind friends we made since we first arrived. While it might look from the outside that we should 'blend in' into this very culturally diverse community, it took us a while to 'fit in' because from my perspective there were more Asian Australians in this new local area than where we came from in Wollongong.

Cabramatta was known as Vietnamatta. Many Vietnamese refugees have called it home since their resettlement. It is a suburb where the Indo-Chinese refugees, as we were identified, have become comfortable to be 'local'. And as they felt more 'local' in this area, they started to build homes, set up their businesses and raise their families. But then the wider Australian community started to question their 'local' identity.

How Australian are these newly arrived migrants? Why don't they integrate into the wider society? Why are they all living in one area? Why don't they spread out?

I too questioned this. While I might have looked 'local' and should have fitted into this Indo-Chinese community, the decision I made to be 'Australian' prompted me to do what I could to leave this local community and move to another, where I felt I would belong 'better'. Unconsciously, I think I developed friendships with people who were mainly non-Asian Australians.

I found my niche in journalism and thrived. I was determined to be accepted in mainstream media. I did not want to be just an 'ethnic' reporter. But that was a challenge.

Being the only Australian journalist of Asian heritage in the industry at the time, and especially coming from an area with a high Indo-Chinese population, any stories on 'ethnics' would be assigned to me.

I am an Australian and I should have been able to do general stories, not just ethnic specific. How else would I learn and develop my skills? But my English and accent held me back from progressing up the reporting career ladder, especially on screen. I would argue that being Asian-looking was also a hurdle for me. But I didn't for one moment let those hurdles stop me. I persevered and did not allow the barriers within the organisation to turn me into a victim.

I continued to give my best, constantly learning, producing, trying and creating story after story. My aim was to better myself, improve my journalistic skills and to contribute. At the end of the day, what was important for me was that I had the privilege to be on this journey, to meet amazing, extraordinary people, whose stories captured the essence of humanity—and captured the hearts of those who heard them.

In October 2014 I was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was another challenge I had to confront. It made me reflect on the milestones in my life and the battles I had to fight to fit in and be part of mainstream society.

I could have died on that boat journey. But I didn't. I could have died if I had not discovered that lump in my breast. But I found it and here I am today. I completed my cancer treatments on 30 April 2015—exactly 40 years since the war ended in Vietnam.

With all of these personal challenges, including my foray into politics, I came to realise that I have choices: it is my choice to feel accepted or rejected; it is my choice to feel local. I am an Australian. I was a refugee. And I am of Vietnamese heritage. I don't need validation from people to feel that I am Australian.

The road to becoming local is not easy. When we as a community talk about resettling refugees, we must remember that the journey will not simply end when they reach our shores. As I learnt, the journey to become a local may take many years. For those on that journey I encourage you to be optimistic.

Dai Le is CEO and Founder of DAWN—a network for professionals passionate about culturally diverse and inclusive leadership.

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The Young Farmer Business Project

Government and industry share a vision of getting more young people started in the business of agriculture. The Young Farmer Business Project (YFBP) is a joint initiative between Department of Primary Industries and NSW Farmers Young Farmers Council. Its central objective is to help young people overcome business related barriers of entry and expansion in agriculture.

Entering the business of agriculture can be very challenging—requiring skills, resources and connections to be successful! The Young Farmer Business Project aims to:

- » Provide knowledge and skills to improve social and business resilience, manage risk, execute effective plans and make decisions that ensure viability of agricultural businesses.
- » Provide access to new business ideas, tools and techniques.
- » Support access to a range of products and services that engage with a wide diversity of skills, knowledge and experience within the agricultural business sector.
- » Support access to a range of products and services that engage with a wide diversity of skills, knowledge and experience within the agricultural business sector.

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Parenting: Managing life transitions

Melinda Philips, Good Grief Ltd

Many transitions, large and small, occur at the beginning of the calendar year in Australia. Children start primary school for the first time and young people may start high school, their senior secondary years or further study. Family relocations due to work or study may take place over the long summer break and new jobs may also commence. We know that change is an inevitable part of life, however sometimes we don't see the broader impact of life transitions until we are trying to deal with the consequences. The following tasks, based on the grief theory of J William Worden (2009), and part of The Seasons for Growth® programs, highlight useful points to consider when managing the changes and losses that come with life transitions.

Task 1: Accept the reality of the change or loss

Lovely anecdotes abound about small children, who, after attending their first day or week of school, declare that they've finished with school and are ready to go back to how life was. Similarly, the shock of high school's size and speed, or the scale and freedom of university life, or the unfamiliarity of a new job can have the most well-adjusted person in firm agreement with our five year old friends. However, one cannot go backwards in life. Change is inevitable and working toward accepting both the reality and the significance of the transition readies people to participate in the new experience.

Accepting the reality of the change:

- » Keep to some routines (where possible), or establish new routines. Routines give time and mental space for changes to be processed and accepted.
- » Not everything changes. Take the time to remember and enjoy the parts of life that are staying the same.
- » Rituals can help. Participating in end of year concerts and parties, farewell work dinners and small, personal/family rituals can help people of all ages come to terms with the change. Orientation days, welcome morning teas and other occasions serve a similar purpose in marking new beginnings.
- » Remind people in transition that they are not alone. Many people will be experiencing similar thoughts, feelings and challenges if they too are starting or changing schools, further study, jobs or locations.

Task 2: Work through the pain of grief

Change and loss impacts on each of us differently and people experience and express their hurt in a variety of ways. Each person will need to work through a range of reactions—thoughts and self talk (why did I take this job? Will I make friends?), feelings (fear, anxiety, sadness, excitement), physical responses (headaches, stomach upsets, sleep changes) and behaviours (withdrawing, need for rest, hyped behaviour). This work takes time and energy for both children and adults.

Working through the pain of grief:

- » Bodies are under stress in times of change and transition. Self care needs to be a priority—eat properly, drink enough water, sleep well, fit in a little exercise and spend some time outside.
- » Listen to how people are feeling. Remind people that they have your support.
- » Talk about what works for you when feelings of sadness, frustration or loneliness arise.
- » Remember past successes. Previous changes and transitions that have been managed can serve as a useful reminder for people of their personal strengths and provide confidence for the future.

Task 3: Adjust to the new environment

This task varies greatly from person to person, depending on what new skills might be needed. Children, young people and adults need personal skills, relationship skills and learning skills to succeed in unfamiliar learning environments.

Adjusting to a new environment:

- » New surroundings can be daunting. Take the time to become familiar with the new environment and new travel routines.
- » Personal skills: encourage positive self talk and problem solving. Talking about past examples of these can help children and young people draw on previous experience.
- » Relationship skills: people need a sense of belonging in their new environment. Social skills (saying hello, smiling, making eye contact and listening) are skills that can be practised at home, and can help children, young people and adults make connections with others.
- » Learning skills: asking for help and information is how people learn and is normal behaviour in a new environment.

Encourage help seeking as a worthwhile learning strategy that builds independence and confidence.

- » Build in downtime. Adjusting to a new environment can be physically and mentally draining, so make sure there is time to relax in favourite ways—familiar TV shows, hanging out with friends or the family pet, reading or playing sport.

Task 4: Find an ongoing connection with what's been lost while living in the new, changed world

As time passes, the new way of things generally gets a little easier. Routines are established, friendships and connections are made and the environment becomes more familiar. Children, young people and adults most often move into a space where they can look forward and be pleased with small, achievable steps toward new goals. However, this does not mean the connection with what was needs to be lost—some precious parts of how things were may be able to be part of the new world, or at least remembered and talked about.

Maintain ongoing connections while living in the new, changed world:

- » Provide opportunities to talk about how things used to be, as well as how they are right now.
- » Make sure connections and support are available. Maintaining different friendships (from past and present, inside and outside school and work) can help ensure there are people around to talk to or share stories with.
- » Be flexible with additional support or time to participate in day-to-day life and get tasks done.
- » Sometimes people need additional support to manage changes and transitions. If the child, young person or adult doesn't seem to be coping talk with them about it and be ready to speak to appropriate people for additional support.

Change is a normal and natural part of life. People are often surprised by the experience of hurt and sadness alongside excitement and happiness as a result of life's transitions. It can be reassuring to know there are things people can do to actively manage big life changes or support others to manage. If you are helping somebody manage a life transition, some of the small gestures of support described above can show that although you know change can be hard, you believe in their capacity to cope and, in time, flourish in their new environment.

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Country to Canberra: Empowering young women to reach their leadership potential

Hannah Wandel, Country to Canberra



Country to Canberra empowers young rural women to reach their leadership potential. Founded in 2014, we run national initiatives that provide leadership opportunities, encourage ambition and uniquely, connect young rural women with motivational mentors to break down gender and geographical barriers to success.

What are you going to do when you finish school?

At 16 years old, this was one of the toughest questions I had to answer. My response would switch from doctor to food critic extraordinaire in a matter of minutes. This pressure still exists for today's teens, but rural students are faced with additional layers of complex decision-making.

Do they move away from home to attend university? Should they take over the family farm? Can they study remotely and if so, will they be as successful as city based students? As if that's not tough enough, young women face additional challenges such as increased discrimination, self-confidence issues and unconscious bias, with a 17.9 per cent gender pay gap to boot.

Two years ago, after pondering this crucial and transitional phase in a young woman's life, I took a leap of faith and founded the

nationwide not-for-profit organisation—Country to Canberra—to empower young rural women to reach their leadership potential.

Country to Canberra helps 13-18 year olds build their leadership and goal setting skills, educates girls about gender equality, creates mentorship opportunities and helps young women develop strategies to take on leadership roles in primary industries, politics and business. Ultimately, we're strengthening young women's capabilities, which in turn, will strengthen rural communities.

In two short years Country to Canberra has grown to encompass a national volunteer team, multiple sponsorship deals and importantly, has positively influenced dozens of bright young women to reach their potential through our programs.

Our flagship initiative is a leadership competition about gender equality and empowerment for high school students in rural and remote regions, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Students are asked to submit a two minute long video or podcast, or a 400 word essay, blog post or story addressing a specific question. We publish the top 25 videos and essays and then select multiple winners, who receive an all-expenses-paid Power Trip to Canberra to meet inspiring leaders. Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, Deputy Opposition Leader Tanya Plibersek and Deputy Nationals

Leader Fiona Nash are just a few of the women who have been involved in our life-changing program.

During the 2015 Power Trip, we held a magical Powerful Women's Breakfast where an all-star cast of leaders shared career advice. *HerCanberra* Editor In Chief, Amanda Whitely, encouraged the winners to take risks after she left a safe career to start her dream business, which blossomed into an entrepreneurial success. Winners also went on radio, watched Question Time, made videos and were hosted by Senators Anne Ruston, Jacqui Lambie and Jan McLucas at an evening event. Additionally, they connected with university students from Raising Hope Education Foundation, who are providing ongoing mentorship.

Excitingly, in 2016, we are going bigger and better. There will be even more winners who will each receive public speaking training from TEDxCanberra, a full leadership day at the Australian National University (yoga included!), the opportunity to meet Defence senior leaders and more.

With three-quarters of Aussie girls negatively affected by sexism, and 33 per cent believing it is easier to attain their dream job if they were male (2014 Plan International Study), I was heartened to hear of the Power Trip's life-changing impact. Former NT winner Nooria Muradi summed it up perfectly, saying "the Power Trip helped me believe in myself and speak my true mind."

Our program's overwhelming success has been highlighted by countless media outlets, events and schools around the nation. Thanks to our sponsors and supporters our volunteers are delivering additional opportunities, like our Blogger Team initiative, which bands together young rural writers to publish amazing articles on our website and social media. We're also dedicated to creating new programs that embolden young women and we're always eager for additional support to make these dreams a reality.

Leaving the high school safety net can be tough. But through Country to Canberra we believe we can make transition less about fear and more about opportunity. It needn't be a choice between agriculture or accounting, or country versus city. If we equip young women with self-confidence and high-performance skills, they will achieve lifelong success and bolster the prosperity of rural Australia.

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5 ways to turn risk into a win

Kathleen Fisher, Knowsley VIC

I would never skydive, bungee jump or swim with sharks... and yet I consider myself to be a risk-taker.

How can that be?

Because I believe there's a big difference between being a daredevil and taking risks. For me, the key to successfully undertaking any risk is to be calculated. Name a person who has achieved significant things by flying by the seat of their pants. I'm sure there have been a select few, but their names certainly don't drip from the tongue.

I did a quick Google search for evidence to back up my claim and came across a *Forbes* magazine article that quotes Leonard C Green, an academic and entrepreneur who has changed the world in ways anyone reading my words today can only dream of.

"Entrepreneurs are not risk takers. They are calculated risk takers," Green says.

That is, they don't act on a whim, follow a trend or wake up one morning with a crazy idea—instead, they have a goal, create a written plan and step outside their comfort zones to turn their dreams into realities.

How does this relate to me?

Just over 12 months ago, I sold my house and bought a farm... not only in a different town, but in a State I'd never been to. And I did it all on my own while my husband was overseas on a two-year posting for work!

People thought I was mad. The most common thing they said was, "You won't know anyone. Won't you be lonely?"

Actually, no... because I had a plan.

I should say 'we' had a plan. My husband and I had dreamed of owning acreage for 10 years. He's a city boy from another country (Zimbabwe) and I'm the fifth generation of an Australian farming family (which greatly helped).

In my late thirties I reconnected with my childhood love of horses and very quickly started breeding high-end Appaloosas and quarter horses on a boutique level, with the help of wonderful mentors.

As you can imagine, living on a quarter-acre block in town and relying on friends with a few acres on the edge of town to agist broodmares only goes so far in horse breeding. Something had to give.

It's not easy to synthesise the last year into a series of how-to steps of advice for anyone ready to transition toward a risk-worthy dream, but here are my top five tips:

1. Know your limits

Depending on perspective, I'm either blessed or damned to have an interest in personal financial management. Either way, as the one with this 'gift' in my relationship, I had a decade to plan for buying acreage, which is no mean feat in today's agricultural climate, where you either inherit or save and invest like crazy to afford a (small) property. I knew exactly what we could afford versus what we were prepared to commit.

2. Have a realistic wish list

I'm my parents' daughter when it comes to land. The fact is that any entry level farm for sale is going to be run-down—there will be rubbish everywhere and the fences will be a mess! However, I had two musts... the first was that the soil and its potential productivity had to be topnotch. This, of course, meant sacrifices elsewhere—and the primary one was a house in desperate need of work.

My second must was that a new location needed to have good job opportunities. While my skill set is easily transferable, my husband's is limited to certain geographical areas, which narrowed the field considerably.

3. Draw on your networks

In this age of Facebook and other online networks, we have a wealth of resources and support as close as a mouse click. As soon as the purchase of our property was confirmed, I hit my social networks and asked for contacts in my soon-to-be home. As a result, I already had half a dozen friends lined up before I moved, who have since supported me through everything from running out of water to pets dying!

4. Make your own way

Many of us feel there's a general lack of responsibility in our society. One way I see this played out is the assumption things must come to us, especially socially. However, I believe life is what we make it, which means we can live pretty much anywhere when we make the effort. As such, I joined the clubs and associations that matter to me as soon as I moved. Getting involved is not always easy (and I often vow never to join another committee again!), but it's the best way to meet like-minded people, create a social life and feel you have a purpose.

5. Choose your attitude

To be honest, there are many times I would have gladly given up over the last 12 months. Most notably when sewerage gushed up through both showers, I didn't have a single gate on the entire property that actually closed and I unwittingly bought a horse infested with a frightening and contagious equine disease.

However, I had a choice—crumple under the weight of the drama or get on and solve the problem. The fact is, to use an old term from school, life often 'sucks'.

However, I believe what happens to us is often not as important as how we react, which is why I choose to see problems as opportunities or learning experiences. Giving up is often not a luxury we have, which makes seeing the silver lining on every cloud an absolute necessity.

In the last issue of *The Country Web*, Jessica Green's wonderful article 'Everyday gratitude' resonated with me. Whenever you're in doubt, focus on what you have and the joys of being alive.

How blessed we are to live in a country where the government values the contribution of rural women enough to give us resources, a magazine and an opportunity for our stories to be told!

What Once Broke Me

Country Web reader giveaway

Born in the late 1960s, Rosie Banyan grew to learn how to mask dysfunction. Living mostly in her head, Rosie thrived in the academic world of finance and business.

Rosie's bubble burst just after the birth of her fourth son. A wave of postnatal depression debilitated her and forced her to look at the horrors of her sexually abusive childhood.

Reeling from the blocked pain and memories, Rosie sought answers to who she was and how she had become a slave to the numbness required to survive.

"In 2003 I was transported back to the fear, confusion and grief that I lived so long ago. I felt trapped. I used to leave my body and escape the world when it was like this. After working so hard I finally reached breaking point. I wanted to hide and to scream. I wanted out.

"I had to revisit my childhood horror of sexual abuse to finally forgive and release my past. I learnt to trust unconditionally, let go of controlling everything in my life, to be needed

by everyone and the expectation of a desired outcome. I discovered that deep within me sat a silence."


What Once Broke Me follows Rosie for eight months on her spontaneous trip from Australia to the African island of Mauritius as a way to explore and heal. Towards the end of the book she travels with her two youngest boys to live in a small urban village in Vanuatu, with the desire to discover a simple life, living without power, running water or first world amenities of any kind.

"I want everyone to know that you are not just stuck with a broken life, but instead those things that have been taken from you can be healed, changed and released."

ISBN 978-1-5035-0805-7


Country Web has 10 e-book vouchers to give away, courtesy of Rosie. To win a voucher, simply tell us what is the name of Rosie's meditation download. (Hint: you'll find it on her website. Entries close 14 October. See page 2 for competition Terms & Conditions.





**SCHOLARSHIP
GUIDE**

Where will a scholarship
take you in 2017?



www.cef.org.au

Is your child ready to take the next step in their education but you are wondering how you will afford to pay for it all? The Country Education Foundation's Scholarship Guide has all the tips needed to apply for financial assistance to help get your child on their way to further education.

Each year thousands of scholarships are awarded to students all over Australia to help ease the financial costs of higher education and training.

Scholarships have helped CEF recipients get started on their dreams to become nurses, teachers, accountants, journalists, musician and even astronomers. The sky's the limit when the support is there for further study and training.

The 2017 Scholarship Guide has the best scholarships for rural and regional students on one easy to use website. Search for the right scholarships and apply in just a few clicks.



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I will be at the NSW Rural Women's Gathering at Broken Hill on 28-30 October. Come and say Hi or see my Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/3Bumpsmaternity



Danny and Rocco finding a good use for weed blackberry.

Our journey into farming

Liane Corocher, Hunter Valley

Moving from a beautiful new home in close proximity to friends and shopping centres to a 'renovators delight' on a 20 km stretch of windy dirt road may seem crazy to some. However, this represents the start of the journey into farming that I am currently making with my husband and four young sons.

Over the last 15 years we built our dream home on a small property near Paterson, increased our family to six and started raising our own livestock for meat and milk in an attempt to satisfy the ferocious appetites of our growing boys.

We quickly realised that the experience of raising our own livestock, helping our boys to connect with their food and allowing them to grow up with plenty of space and fresh air was getting restricted by the small size of our property, the abundance of rocks in the soil (not a great medium for growing good pasture or vegetables) and the increasing pressure from surrounding development. We also found that other families wanted to experience the same thing and the demand for our produce and 'lifestyle' was exceeding what we could produce on our small property.

So we started thinking. Could we do this on a larger scale on a more productive farm? Could we take the risk of moving our boys to a new town, new schools and a new community?

Could we leave the dream we had created over the last 15 years on our existing property and create a new dream and future for our boys in farming? Of course we could. But it would take a lot of hard work to get there.

I am not a huge risk-taker, so everything had to be researched and planned with all the risks listed and measures put in place to manage the risks. We also had some challenges to consider along the way—major back surgery for my husband, a child with special needs and the high cost of productive agricultural land!

Selling our property was the easy part—once I realised that confiscating the Lego and keeping the kids outside were the keys to a tidy house! The hard part was finding a farm within our price range that was productive, had future growth potential (or the ability to lease land nearby) and met our ever increasing list of criteria. We also wanted to make sure our adventure was shared by all of us, so we had to find a farm that our boys actually wanted to move to. And we finally found it.

I should have realised that we had found the right farm when we saw our boys stripping off to have a skinny dip in the river. Our eldest son Jesse was quick to point out that he didn't join in (nudie swims with your family is not something a teenage boy wants to think

about). However, we had a few other criteria to check off to make sure this new farm was the one:

- » Located on a school bus route—important for our kids to meet other kids and give us extra time to work the farm.
- » Located within a 60 minute drive from work—I love my job and the extra income would help in establishing the farm.
- » Located within 90 minutes of a major city with access to TAFE and universities so our boys have options for further training and education.
- » Good local schools with transition programs and special needs classrooms—to help kids who suffer anxiety to transition slowly and kids with special needs to get the support they need to learn and be happy.
- » Water security—access to a water license, bore or substantial dams.
- » Good soils—from experience, it can take years and lots of money to build good soils.
- » A house (in whatever condition) overlooking the farm—to keep an eye on our boys driving tractors, riding motorbikes, etc...
- » Fences and yards in fair condition—we wanted to be able to raise livestock immediately, even if only a small number.
- » Immediate access to a large shed—this meant we could make the move gradually (this is due to having a husband who is a hoarder and can't get rid of anything as 'it may come in handy one day').
- » A stable river system higher in the catchment—so we can minimise any erosion or weed issues.
- » Good community and farming networks—we place a high value on community and to be honest, as new farmers, we need all the help we can get!

One aspect that made our move less stressful was the good relationship we had built with our agribusiness finance manager and accountant. A business loan is required to purchase any farm over 120 acres, which means a higher interest rate and shorter loan term. Having a good relationship meant we could discuss different finance scenarios, develop financial plans and structure the loan to meet both our immediate needs and future plans for the farm.

I won't say it's been easy. It sounds romantic, but spending hours in front of a computer doing budget forecasts, searching for documents you urgently need yet they were filed in a mystery location and dragging four children around farms hasn't been fun. There have been times when it has been very stressful and we have doubted our decision.

We understand that this is just the start of our journey and that there will be many more challenges in the future associated with making a small farm profitable. However, keeping a positive outlook and our end goal in sight has helped drive us through the more difficult times. And, I will say, the picture of our boys swimming nude in the river always puts a smile back on my face.

Life starts at sixty, depression and anxiety shouldn't

While getting older has joyful advantages, such as grandchildren, the end of mortgage repayments and feeling more confident, ageing can also put people at increased risk of developing depression and anxiety.

Physical illness and chronic pain can get people down. Experiencing personal loss, which could include losing a loved one, independence, health or a job, also may be psychologically distressing.

As people age, things happen in life that can make them more susceptible to developing a mental health condition. Feeling sad or miserable most of the time or cutting themselves off from friends and family could be signs that someone has depression or anxiety.

Everyone feels down or anxious occasionally, but when these feelings persist for more than a few weeks, it's time to talk to someone who can help.

As well, older people shouldn't attribute physical symptoms like unexplained aches and pains, stomach upsets, appetite changes and sleep problems just to 'getting older'. These can all be symptoms of depression and/or anxiety and can be treated by a health professional.

These conditions are common and we encourage everyone to pay just as much attention to maintaining good mental health as they do to remaining physically healthy. It's not a sign of weakness to seek help and older people shouldn't feel they have to put up with doing it tough.

www.beyondblue.org.au

They didn't think Facebook would work for their business

Sonya Martin

Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner

On Wednesday Tracie Johnson's business didn't have a Facebook page—by Thursday, 150 000 people had seen her first post.

Tracie and her husband Coel are partners in CT Johnson Shearing, a business they started 12 months ago. Coel has been shearing since he was 17 and the couple decided it was time to capitalise on his experience and reputation by starting their own operation.

Today their team of shearers, shed hands and wool classers could be anywhere in Australia where there is a flock to be shorn. Travelling with their own food supply (and a cook who knows what to do with it), they spend weeks away on a property, shearing large flocks of sheep.

"It's hard work," said Tracie, "and every business is challenged with the issues of finding ways to generate new business." The drought has taken a toll on flock sizes and competition can be tough. "You have to look at different ways to increase revenue and build brand recognition."

It was the quest to grow the recognition of CT Johnson Shearing that led Tracie to sign up for our Regional Activation Program's new interactive workshops. Her hometown, Deniliquin, was one of the first NSW communities to be offered workshops, together with Mullumbimby and Gilgandra.

Tracie signed up for a Social Media Workshop, even though she was skeptical that her business would benefit from being online at all, let alone in social media.

"This is basically a word of mouth business," she said. "Being a service business and in the agriculture sector, I didn't think social media and online marketing would have any benefit to us."

"Social media is only going to get bigger and the agriculture sector is moving forward so I thought it was worth trying," Tracie added.

The night after the one-day course, Tracie went home and set up the CT Johnson Shearing Facebook page. Her inaugural post was two pictures. In the first her husband Coel holds an impressively woolly

sheep found by the team on a property in Deniliquin. The second picture shows their son dwarfed by the giant fleece that came off the sheep. Using her newfound social media skills, Tracie also shared the picture with other Facebook pages she thought would be interested, like the R.M. Williams *Outback* magazine page. The post has been shared over 400 times and as a result it's been seen by over 150 000 people.

Tracie's business philosophy is that success relies on continuous learning and in this case that motivation to step outside the norm has paid off in spades.

Attending the Social Media Workshop has turned Tracie from a curious skeptic into a believer and has connected CT Johnson Shearing to a new audience.

Her next project, inspired by the success of the CT Johnson Facebook page, is a website with videos and photographs showing the company's professional shearers in action all over Australia.

More information

t: 1300 795 534

www.smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au



Local is lovely: St Joseph's kitchen garden

Sophie Hansen, Orange

St Joseph's is a small school in the Central Western town of Molong. And its new kitchen garden is nourishing its 50-plus students on every level.

St Joseph's has a terrifically hardworking Parents and Friends committee, and they're also a very handy lot. So when it was decided that their regular canteen should start up again after a long break, the committee knew they wanted fresh produce on the menu. And yes, they decided to grow it themselves, at the school.

Plans were made to start a garden on the school grounds—from scratch. It didn't take long to prepare the beds and get the ball rolling.

The kitchen garden was officially opened by ABC's *Gardening Australia* host Costa Georgiadis on 25 September last year and each St Joseph's student now plays a part in caring for and enjoying their new project. Plus everyone gets to enjoy its spoils via their canteen orders. How good is that?!

Here's the story of the St Joseph's kitchen garden, plus some really fantastic advice on how you can do something similar at your school, direct from Jane Shannon, the woman who drove the whole thing. Jane also shares their canteen's recipe for spinach cob loaf—an old school classic that deserves to get taken on every picnic, and will be the first thing eaten at every one. Plus the lemonade made in huge batches to sell at a school fundraiser. (visit Sophie's *Local is Lovely* Blog for the recipes: <http://local-lovely.com>).

How did the kitchen garden get started?

The P and F committee started talking about a kitchen garden in spring 2014. This followed the re-establishment of the school canteen, which was started up again after a break of some years. We were keen to set the canteen up under the healthy canteen guidelines, and for us that meant incorporating garden-fresh food. We started the process by looking at a

suitable location, design and what materials we needed. From there we got quotes, hunted around for grants to fund the project and put a plan and a budget together.

We decided not to tap into the school's town-water supply to maintain the garden. Instead, we installed a small water pump, purchased with some money we'd raised, to make use of the (at that time) inaccessible tank water from our school hall. One grant application was successful and money from this went towards the purchase of our raised beds.

How long did it take to get up and running?

Discussing the 'how, what, when and where' took a little while, as we wanted to make sure we got it right! During term four, 2014 we worked out the logistics of the project, with the aim of taking delivery of the materials for construction in January of 2015. A group of parents and children got together at the end of the summer holidays and constructed the garden—many hands make light work, so building the garden itself took a day from start to finish. Planting happened within the first few weeks of term one, and we had our first harvest by early winter.

What advice would you give other schools setting out to start a garden like yours?

Being a small school, our P and F and teachers work very well together, and we have a great band of merry workers... so I think that played a big part in making this project come together so quickly! My advice would be to plan ahead and seek out and apply for any grants that your school may be eligible for. Also, there are suppliers who will happily advise on the most appropriate heights and sizes of garden beds, etc... and may have specials for schools. Local suppliers and tradies were also very helpful and generous to us with their time.

What has been the best part about setting up this garden?

Seeing the children enjoy getting their hands dirty—the excitement of finding wriggly worms and of course, the digging and

planting, nurturing and then harvesting their very own produce. It's wonderful to see them all hoeing into raw vegetables like broccoli, heirloom carrots, snow peas and celery straight out of the garden.

Any tips on delegating jobs in a school garden?

In our case a jobs and responsibilities roster is part of school life, and watering the garden became part of this system. This means that there are children given the responsibility of watering each week, so watering doesn't get forgotten about. Most important!

How do you incorporate produce from the garden into the school canteen?

In summer this is easy! We have lovely fresh salads on the canteen menu and we've had an abundance of rainbow chard, which has meant some delicious spinach cob loaves (even the kids who 'don't like spinach' think it's delicious). Through the winter there was bolognaise, nachos and homemade chicken soup on the menu, in which beautiful fresh celery, carrots and herbs were used. We also make a point of using the celery, carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers and radishes from the garden, chopping them up to put on the windowsill for the children to help themselves.

Why do you think it's great for schools like yours to have a garden and involve the kids in it?

It teaches children so much about all sorts of things. As well as being a useful tool for the teachers, giving them scope for teaching things like science and numeracy, it's a wonderful learning experience in terms of sustainability, being waterwise and in teaching self-sufficiency. It teaches the seasonality of foods and that everything has a beginning and an end. It gives children such a boost, knowing they can grow something they can actually use. It's also brought people together (children, parents, teachers, friends, helpers) in a completely different scene, which has been terrific.



Can you tell us about the garden's opening and having Costa there?

The garden opening was a fabulous day for the school and the local community. Having a celebrity in town was so exciting—especially one who was so enthusiastic as Costa! He arrived at around 10 am and barely had time to don his well-known bib and brace overalls before being surrounded by keen gardeners, from toddlers to people in their 80s, all keen for a chat about their favourite topic. Meanwhile, the dads built a scarecrow (our Costacrow!) and a good sized crowd mingled and browsed the garden-themed stalls, whilst enjoying a glass of St Joseph's lemonade, morning tea and a delicious fresh lunch served by our P and F.

Eventually, the crowd focused on the task at hand, which was to plant the 'mini orchard'. A selection of dwarf fruit tree favourites, selected for their suitability for children, was planted, mostly all by Costa, with a band of merry little helpers. The children got in and did a lot of the hands-on.

We finished the day with the official opening of the kitchen garden, which involved a very funny, animated and also moving talk by Costa, and a pair of golden secateurs from the cretaceous period! He focused on the wonderful legacy the older students are leaving behind as they move on to the wider world. A food garden is such a precious gift—generations of children coming through the school will benefit for years to come.

You mentioned that Costa showed you all a great way to plant the dwarf fruit trees, can you share his advice?

Costa had asked us to prepare the site and have lots of organic matter, including manure and hay for mulching. We were able to supply him with mountains of sheep, cow, chicken and even mouse (from Doolittle Farm) manure! He was most impressed!

- » Holes were prepared with gypsum, ag-lime and dynamic lifter.
- » Costa backfilled the holes a little and added his special ingredient, Rock Dust.
- » Trees were placed into the now shallow holes so that their bases were just above ground level, and planted under layers of mulch and manure. This formed a 'cocoon' around the tree, to help conserve moisture and nutrients. We will keep adding to these layers in time.
- » After planting, trees were well watered and given a dose of organic liquid fertiliser, courtesy of Baa Baa Brew.

Letting go to make room for something new

Kath Henry

As a midwife I became skilled at intuitively recognising when a woman was entering the transition phase of labour. In some cases the well-established rhythm of contractions and rest pause, the stillness allowing deeper rest with time to regroup and reposition in preparation for the birth. In other cases a crescendo occurs, if not harnessed it can lead to an unwanted obstructed labour. It is meant to be transitory this place between the pain of labour and birth.

As in birthing, so in life, we are not created to remain stuck in transition but rather to harness the strength of change to allow a new transformation. Of course this is made easier if the change is chosen, the transition well supported and room has been made for the newness to be embraced.

What happens when the change catalyst is unexpected? When there is no space or time to process?

As I write I am on a plane, in 'transit', up the coast. I have just looked out the window to discover the land and ocean are reversed to the alignment they should be in, given the direction we are flying. My mind is trying to rationalise the scene below as the pilot announces we have turned back and will be circling in transit as there is an unexpected landing queue. I watch as passengers become restless, looking at their watches, sighing—life doesn't leave room for unexpected transits.

I am in my own internal transition, however, this birthing is a type of letting go rather than preparing to hold something new.

This year I have let go of many of the roles that have given me a sense of identity. Both our children have moved from home, our daughter to be married and start a new life with her husband and our son has moved overseas to complete his studies. I am officially an empty-nester.

I had, until several months ago, the role of daughter and carer to my ageing mum as Alzheimer's had started to creep in and steal my mother's memories. However without

warning my mother left this earth. Hair done, having had lunch with friends, she quite literally dropped dead from a heart attack.

All this letting go has left me feeling vulnerable, searching for meaning rather than identity as I allow my heart to catch up with reality, in this landscape that has held both celebrations on the one hand and on the other layers of grief.

As I circle this space I want to move on, yet I know there is a work in the waiting, in the emptiness, in being emptied.

I had a remedial massage the other day and learned that this type of massage is synonymous with pain, pressure and release. I discovered my muscles had circled into tight knots that required informed pressure to release.

I am in a place of pressure to release the roles of life, to realise meaning can be expressed through our roles but not in them. I want to be and become. So I am waiting here and unravelling as I excuse myself from the busyness of life. I will wait with myself, to become the midwife to my own transition in this sacred undefined space.



From small beginnings

Marama Warren, Milton

Rug maker, farmer and grandmother Miriam Miller and Jacqui Thompson are friends and neighbours from Milton who have not let distance be a barrier to following their passion. Last October I followed (by email), the entertaining adventures of these two remarkable country women (in their 80s) as they travelled to Tel Aviv, Brussels, The Isle of Uist in Scotland, the USA and Canada.

Miriam's family emigrated from England when she was 13. They lived in North West NSW for several years before moving to Nowra where she later met and married dairy farmer Alan Miller.

In the 1970s Miriam set out to make a rag rug to cover the hardwood floor in the big old family homestead. Her grandmother had made rugs in England and so she asked her father (who had helped his mother make these mats when he was a young man) to help get her started.



Rug makers
Miriam Miller and Jacqui Thompson

No one else seemed interested in this old craft but Miriam persisted and slowly, over years, made several large rugs for her home. Her four children were enthusiastic and helped cut up recycled clothing and worn blankets to make rugs.

In 1994 *Australian Country Craft and Decorating* magazine featured an article about Miriam. Her friend Jacqui Thompson thought it was timely to get others involved as people were beginning to be interested in recycling. Jacqui placed a notice in the local newspaper inviting others to a meeting at Miriam's house on the first Friday of every month. Seven people came and the Narrawilly Proggy Ruggers was formed and has been meeting ever since. People travel from Sydney, Canberra, southern and western NSW to come to Milton and rug days are so popular the group now meets twice a month.

In 2001 the Australian Rug Makers Guild was formed and Miriam was elected President. She also published the first book on rug making in Australia, titled *Proggy & Hooky Rugs*.

Miriam and Jacqui have travelled the globe meeting fellow rug makers, sharing ideas and giving workshops—often overcoming language barriers by connecting through craft. Rug making has enriched these two women's lives as well as the lives of others. They have hosted many international ruggers in Milton and even visited The Gambia in West Africa to work with a charity teaching blind and partially sighted people to make rugs so they can earn a living.

"From such a small beginning, living in a small rural town and reviving an old craft where people treasured every small scrap of fabric, we now have friends all over the world and use Skype to talk with people wherever they may be, show each other our rugs, send messages by email and share information through blogs and YouTube," says Miriam.

These two passionate rural women have created a craft revival trend and become part of a vibrant international community that has brought the world to them as well as opened doors to take their skills and knowledge out into the world.

More information

Narrawilly Proggy Ruggers
www.shoal.net.au/~narrawilly

Talking about death is part of life!

Sydney Morning Herald, August 2015

Community group The Groundswell Project has spent the past six years creating awareness about dying to help overcome reluctance to address the issue.

Dying to Know Day, held annually on 8 August, is a day dedicated to bringing to life conversations and community actions around death, dying and bereavement. D2KDay, launched in 2013, has seen 285 events held and has sparked thousands of conversations around the topic.

As part of their campaign the group has come up with 10 things people need to know about death.

- » **Make a plan.** Fewer than five per cent of people have an end of life plan.
- » **Write a will.** Only 55 per cent of people who die have a will.
- » **Tell someone what you want.** Of those who know they are dying, only 25 per cent will have spoken to their families about their wishes.
- » **Only 30 per cent of deaths are unexpected.** Make a decision about how you want to die while you have time.
- » **Doctors don't die like the rest of us.** They are more likely to die at home with less invasive intervention at the end of their lives.
- » **Earlier referral** to palliative care means living longer with better quality of life.
- » **You don't need a funeral director.** DIY funerals are now more popular.
- » **The majority of Australians choose cremation** but there are alternatives including natural burial, burial at sea or donating your body for research.
- » **We don't grieve in stages.** Only 10 per cent of mourners need professional support after a death.
- » **60 per cent of people** think we need to spend more time talking about death.

More information

www.thegroundswellproject.com
www.dyingtoknowday.org

Communities in focus: Positive farming footprints

Create a positive future for your family farming business

Pip Job, Department of Primary Industries

When I speak to farming families, I am often asked for advice or insights relating to succession planning. More often than not, people wish to share their succession horror stories or the deep fear existing in family members to even whisper the word succession. Recently I had a lady share with me how wonderful their succession process went and that the whole process was driven by her husband. Unfortunately, post implementation of their new plan, her husband struggled with the change in leadership and struggled with the shearing team, looking to his son for guidance and direction. His mental wellbeing deteriorated as a result; despite the best of intentions to undertake succession. One might ask if the transition of the succession plan required deeper exploration.

One thing I have learnt is that transitioning to something new requires so much more than a nice paper plan. There are foundational requirements that will make the transition process smoother and also sustain the wellbeing of everyone in the business. Farm families must be aware of their strengths and weaknesses across factors such as family communication, business acumen, mental wellbeing, passion alignment, work-life harmony, their attitude towards learning and leadership styles.

Communication is essential and effective communication can lift a business from good to great. Not everyone is a great communicator, but there are strategies that can be put in place by a family to improve their communication skills. Simple strategies such as weekly meetings to discuss operational matters (who will do what, what's needed) can remove significant stress whilst also being great for business acumen. Quarterly strategic family meetings to review budgets and plan for the quarter ahead are also highly beneficial for both the business and the people in it.

Creating an environment in your family business where people are safe to introduce new ideas and provide feedback on aspects of the business is easier said than done. Sometimes great effort is required as an individual to break old habits and to foster a new culture of communication in the family. Most often, the way we communicate is inherited from our parents and a transition to a new communication style can be difficult and require great determination and resolve. Becoming more aware of ourselves and exploring personal development is a great way to help you improve your skills and there are all sorts of courses, books and online resources at our fingertips these days to explore.

Farm family businesses need to enhance their business acumen and this is an important part of transitioning ownership to the next generation. Understanding the passions of people in the business is important. As too is financial literacy and having business goals, and a strategic decision-making framework to work within is crucial. Family farms are a complex business model; meshing business, family and life together. Adding layers of stress (climatic, economic, etc...) make our investment in our own mental wellbeing crucially important. There are so many balls to juggle in agriculture, but after all, with practice, we can master it.

The new Positive Farming Footprints workshop delivered through DPI is a workshop developed by Pip Job, 2014 NSW/Act

& National Rural Woman of the Year and is now approved through the Rural Assistance Authority for the NSW Farm Business Skills—Professional Development Program.

The one-day workshop walks farm families through the diverse range of people problems that can stop a business from reaching its full potential. The interactive and engaging style ensures that families leave with a greater insight into their strengths and a list of areas in which they will work to strengthen and provides them with a range of tools and tips to take home and apply immediately.

More information

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Families in recovery

Are you struggling with a loved one's use of alcohol or drugs?

Anne Leigh, New England

Transition is usually understood to mean a process, or period of changing from one state or condition to another. Commonly used synonyms include conversion, transformation, adaptation, adjustment and my favourite, metamorphosis—think caterpillar to butterfly.

But this semantic definition implies that our daily reality consists of stasis and I'm only now, at the ripe old age of 58, beginning to understand that nothing, that is, no thing, exists in stasis. Physics explains this much better than I could, but in essence, our every breath in life is a transition, at a cellular level from what was, to what is right now.

Yet, even though our bodies are shedding and recreating our cells constantly, we humans generally conspire in a shared illusion of solidity—we like things to feel familiar and think that life is predictable, for the most part. Change rankles if we haven't asked for it.

Six years ago I left inner-urban Melbourne for the green and pleasant land of the New England Plateau. I was aware that my life would change—that was obvious—but what wasn't obvious in those early days of 'resettlement' was that my entire inner life would also change.

I was no longer a community development coordinator (not yet employed), I wasn't in the role of a mother (both daughters lived in different States), I wasn't in the role of wife/partner, (I'd moved to NSW months ahead of my husband, who had to remain in Melbourne to wind up his business), so not a spouse either. I remember sitting on the verandah of our new (very old) house and realising I didn't know a soul in my new life. I felt like I'd been cut adrift from my moorings—and it felt strangely unsettling, to say the least.

As I pondered the adjustment discomfort I was experiencing I reflected that change causes particular and significant disturbance for those who haven't set out to create change in their life, and especially not within their family relationships.

This led me to remember the many families I'd worked with over a 20-year period; people whose lives had been thrown into chaos by another's problematic alcohol or other drug (AOD) use, whether legal drugs like

prescription medication and alcohol, or illegal substances like heroin, cannabis and, in more recent years, methyl amphetamine (ice).

The stigma of 'drugs' renders families of drug users largely invisible in our community, and ordinary families, just like us, who find themselves in this situation, fear judgement and rejection by their friends and neighbours. It's a terrible situation to be in as a family, especially for parents. You can imagine when people are out socialising in their friendship or work networks and other parents are talking about their grown-up children and how well they're doing. Many parents have said how they dread anyone asking them about their young adult drug user; they don't know what to say, so they 'cover' for them if they're living a drug-dependent life.

Stigma places huge pressure on a family to keep up a coping facade. This also applies to legal drugs, like alcohol. If the drug user is living in the family home, the parents, partners and children spend a huge amount of energy trying to pretend that things are okay when they're not and, over time, this takes a really big toll on their mental and physical health. This is all exacerbated when the drugs are illegal and that creates an additional layer of difficulty—that now my child, spouse, parent or sibling is seen and treated as a criminal because of what essentially is a health issue.

One of the most common causes of anxiety for parents of drug users is a pervasive sense of guilt. Parents see other families where there are no (apparent) problematic drug issues and torture themselves with the thought that somehow they have contributed to their young adult's drug dependence. Constant self-scrutiny is corrosive to other family relationships, especially where each parent's values differ so that there cannot be a cohesive family response to the unsafe drug use happening in their midst.

In fact, the current science attributes a range of factors to someone becoming drug dependent. Parental or spousal blame is way too simple. This is a complex problem for society and government, which is why I think we deal so ineffectively with it, as a society, or as policy makers. It involves among other

intangibles, a person's genetic inheritance, their personal resilience, or coping capacity, their exposure to and influence by others, usually peers. It would be impossible to qualify or quantify accurately the reasons in each individual case.

The many reasons why someone ends up drug dependent are a red herring for the rest of the family; it confuses the issue by allowing them to focus solely on the drug user's trajectory, when they need to be able to focus on their own needs.

Families benefit by knowing what responses can make the problem worse and what responses can actually help all parties. For example, parents are biologically programmed to protect their children. We just forget that there comes a time, when our child becomes an adult, when we can't do that anymore; we can't save them from themselves. For spouses, adult children and siblings too, the urge to rescue situations is strong, but only when the drug user is allowed to experience the consequences of their choices do they gain opportunities to make different (better) decisions with different (better) outcomes.

Families in Recovery

Are you struggling with a loved one's use of alcohol or other drugs?

Do you want to live without the chaos?

If you are and would like to talk to someone about a range of strategies for dealing with the situation in a healthy and productive way, Families in Recovery offers a number of services including individual consultations and workshops.

Anne Leigh—Specialist trainer/facilitator

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e: contactus@FamiliesInRecovery.com.au

www.FamiliesInRecovery.com.au



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In other words, when families stop 'cushioning' their drug user from the natural consequences of their problematic drug use. i.e. no money, no job, nowhere to live, burnt relationships, debts, poor health etc..., the drug user is faced with a very different daily reality and may be in a position to consider their quality of life.

Stopping rescuing behaviours sounds really easy. It's actually one of the hardest things a parent ever has to do, with the degree of difficulty exacerbated by the absence of any helpful literature in the myriad 'parenting' books available. There are, after all, no chapters entitled: 'What to do if your child grows up to be drug dependent'. The very lack of public discourse creates a sense of shame and blame for parents who are usually the very people most concerned with the health and happiness of their young adult drug user.

Families unfamiliar with the phenomena surrounding addiction or drug dependence think that 'saving' the drug user from the consequences of their drug related behaviours will magically cause them to reduce or even stop their unhealthy drug use. However, we know that the desire to change behaviours, in this case to reduce or stop using drugs at dangerous levels, has to come from the individual concerned. No amount of threats, coercion, blackmail or manipulation on the part of the family (who are motivated by a genuine desire to somehow just make them stop!) will improve the situation and can sometimes actually make things worse.

Both the drug user and the family are under extreme stress in this situation and families need to learn how to look after their own needs as a primary focus.

Generally speaking, someone who is drug dependent is either actively 'using' or in recovery. People sometimes mistakenly interpret 'recovery' as 'cured'. However, one's vulnerability to drug dependence, or any other addiction can remain for a very long time, even if the person abstains from drug use. There are recognisable stages and personal development occurring through a drug dependent person's life and so recovery is viewed as a process, rather than an outcome or a single event. There are many definitions of recovery; I like this one, which comes from the United States: *"Recovery is a process of change whereby individuals work to improve their own health and wellness and to live a meaningful life in a community of their choice while striving to achieve their full potential."*

The families of drug dependent people also have their own recovery process too. This is the growth and development that they go through during their loved one's concurrent process, except for families it's about managing things like anxiety, instead of drug cravings, and learning to respond differently to the things that cause conflict for families. Families too learn to meet their own needs, eventually, by drawing on their own inner resources and becoming untangled from the quite toxic dynamic that can result when two people or groups—the drug user and the family or parent—try to control each other.

These days my work doesn't include the drug user, as their needs and wants are often at odds with what the rest of the family needs and wants. The family needs support and information especially if their drug user remains determined to use drugs at problematic levels.

So a huge part of finding a way out of the maze of confusion and high stress levels is finding the inner strength to reach out and ask someone for help.

This is where we come back to the alarming issue of 'change' I spoke of at the outset. In my work with families, in order to put one's hand up for help, families must be able to withstand and overcome the sense of dread that can accompany feeling out of control, or knowing that one cannot do this alone.

Needing to get professional help can feel synonymous with the collapse of the family's structure—what was secret will now be uncovered. This can manifest as a sick-to-the-stomach anxiety which requires much courage to move through, as it can seem like disloyalty, or betrayal, especially if there has been a verbal or even tacit agreement that 'we won't tell anyone'. The risk of physical assault also sometimes has to be reckoned with. Asking for help is no small achievement.

Having worked with many families affected by problematic AOD use I have seen the outcomes and effects of seeking help and the consequent skills development and personal empowerment that ensues. It's a very hard trek—I liken it to a mountain trek—it can be a marathon moving toward recovery, but the alternative is a marathon that can seriously undermine positive family functioning. Marathons are doable if you know where you're aiming for and you've learnt how to use the right equipment. What starts out as a frightening family experience can result in a life-enhancing metamorphosis for each family member who takes up the challenge.

From work to gym, without leaving the farm

Ellen Day, Broken Hill



Earlier this year Department of Primary Industries Rural Resilience Program took health and fitness into the bush. Outback families kept telling us how difficult it is to exercise regularly, and without easy access to a gym, motivation and personal resilience can take a dive. It's a vicious circle. So, we engaged Wildflower Fitness Australia, with sponsorship from Red Cross Australia, and hit the road.

Launching the program at Broken Hill Agfair Field Days, community workshops were organised in Menindee, Tibooburra, Milparinka and Woodlands station via Pooncarie. A final workshop and retreat was also supported by the Royal Flying Doctor Service and CentaCare through Australian Government Drought funding.

The program, designed for women living in the outback, included coaching on fitness techniques, goal setting and motivation, and showed participants how to use the environment and turn their surrounds into a personal gym.

Feedback from some participants included: "Thanks to this workshop I may have my mojo back,"; "This day was just what I needed!"; "I expected boot camp. Instead I am going home to turn my station into a huge outdoor gym."

Exercise and fitness struck a chord with the cohort of young mums who do not often see it as a priority to put themselves before their children, school and work on the station. This time they did!

More information

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DPI Rural Support Worker
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Rocks, Rust, Stars & Dust 2016 Broken Hill Rural Women's Gathering, 28-30 October

The 2016 committee looks forward to welcoming you to Broken Hill. We are planning a creative event around our theme—rocks, rust, stars and dust. Your hosts for the Gathering are Dr Natalie Shepard—mentor, coach, author and speaker, and Sandra Martin of Wild Wacky Wonderful Women.

Included in a fabulous line-up of speakers, entertainers and workshop presenters, there will be information stands and displays, a special session on 'What Rural Women Say' run by the Rural Women's Network, a men's program for those bringing their partner and a range of local tours featured as part of the 60 fabulous workshops on offer throughout Saturday and Sunday.

As well as all of this you will get to experience the magic and culture of Broken Hill—the world's largest silver, lead and zinc deposit and the first city in Australia to be included on the National Heritage list.

Broken Hill has amazingly vast open skies and captivating landscapes. We hope you will join us for a wonderful event that is sure to see you going back home rejuvenated and full of wonderful experiences and ideas.

Guest speakers



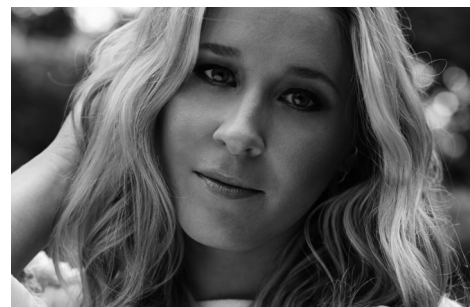
Tania Kernaghan is one of this country's most loved and respected performers. She is a passionate Australian, sharing her love of the country and its characters through her stories and songwriting. A very accomplished horsewoman, she feels just as at home in the saddle as she does in front of a television camera or performing on stage. When it comes to entertaining, Tania is one woman who certainly delivers the goods. Her voice is pure and her dynamic personality and ability to capture the hearts of her audiences will definitely leave you wanting more.



Stephanie Dale is an award-winning Australian author and journalist. In 2014 she founded The Write Road and has a background of 25 years in media, politics and publishing. Her project started on a hunch—that geographically isolated people might want a hand telling their stories and her definition of isolated has since grown to include those who are socially, domestically, institutionally and/or culturally isolated. Stephanie is a passionate advocate for the visibility and voices of everyday people and is dedicated to ensuring everybody has the tools and inspiration they need to tell their story, their way.



Susan Bryant has been an advisor for 26 years and, specialising in rural capital, has worked with some of Australia's wealthiest dynastic families. She is about helping families to find their own stories and breathe life into their dreams. Using a six-step plan her process starts with each family's most deeply held values and works through to specific personal and financial outcomes for each generation. Susan is an experienced speaker whose passion shines through in her presentation. She is a firm believer that family is at the heart of everything we hold dear.



Catherine Britt has a voice that instantly gets your attention, but unlike others, it is the craftsmanship of this singer/songwriter who unashamedly boasts a worthy story to tell that truly keeps her audience enthralled. Her recording career commenced in 1999, when at age 14 she released her first EP, followed in 2001 by her debut album release. Since then she has released five more studio albums as well as a 'Best Of' album and has collected along the way accolades, a legion of fans and a mantle of awards. Catherine's drive to better herself and continue to improve as an artist, is what has led her to continue on as one of Australia's most successful singer/songwriters and businesswomen.

Entertainment



The Janes are brilliant, inspirational, funny, emotional, flawless and fabulous. They burst onto the Australian folk music scene in the early 1990s, arising from a desire to explore and showcase pure bluegrass harmonies and any other vocal style that took their fancy! Quirky, warm and funny, there is a joyous interplay between The Janes members on stage that is not scripted and very inclusive. People leave their shows feeling uplifted, entertained, inspired and like they have been held in a very warm embrace.

Options Dinner

In addition to the traditional Gathering Dinner, which will be held on Sunday evening we are offering an Options Dinner for the Saturday evening where you get to choose your adventure.



Option 1: Rock the Frock

If you love the nightlife, Daaahlings, do we have a treat for you! Broken Hill's iconic Palace Hotel is renowned as the unofficial home of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert. Enjoy champagne and canapes as you watch the sun set over the Silver City from the hotel's heritage balcony. And Daaahlings! Did we mention the magnificent architecture? The murals? The staircase? Adjust your feather boa and look up! Esther and the Palace team have created a sumptuous menu for your dining pleasure, and your live entertainment for the evening will be the internationally renowned mistress of ceremonies Miss Philmah Bocks, who will take you on a journey of fabulous frocks and spectacular songs. A naturally gifted and delightful hostess, Miss Bocks is drag at its finest. Gorgeous, glamorous and shrouded in glitter, she is your ultimate social lubricator. Glitz, glamour and over-the-top opulence will be the order of the night, as you forget the real world and become one with the world of music, song and dance.



Option 2: Rustic Rhythm

Awaken your senses to evoke pleasure in a variety of art forms. Bring art to your palate at the Broken Hill Regional Art Gallery. Chef Summa will prepare a sumptuous feast, presenting artworks buffet-style. This gastronomic exhibition includes a full meal served in the main gallery. You will be

entertained by the dulcet tones and soothing sounds of the Broken Hill Civic Orchestra. Entering the gallery, you will be greeted by the ambience of this delightful heritage award-winning building. You will be able to stroll through the rooms and feast your eyes on the visual delights.

Option 3: Hang Out With the Stars

Hang out with the stars at our Outback Astronomy dinner. Join us for canapes and drinks, followed by BBQ meats, gourmet salads and dessert—then sit back and enjoy a sky show that combines mythology and science. Includes motel pick-up and transfer to the original Royal Flying Doctor Service communications base (best remembered for its visit by Queen Elizabeth II in 1954). Now known as The Space Base, it is the home of Outback Astronomy, a visitor destination that has rapidly reached world acclaim. Our skyguide Linda will deliver real-time commentary on the wonders above, as she guides you through a personalised cruise of the Milky Way. All that's required from you is **warm clothes and a blanket**, as you lay back in your camp chair. Be enchanted by a world of Gods and galaxies amidst the panoramic view of an Outback sky.



Option 4: Dust or Bust

Silvertown is Broken Hill's cultural satellite. In its heyday the old mining town boasted a bustling community that included a newspaper, a hospital and even a football team. These days the settlement is famous for its landscape and backstory. It has been featured in hundreds of movies and commercials—the most famous being *Mad Max*. The pub is an Outback icon.

Far from being a 'ghost town' Silvertown has inspired a generation of artists and is now a tourism mecca for visitors from all over the world. Enjoy an Outback night to remember. Hosts Peter and Patsy have organised a special evening of hearty country fare and entertainment by Golden Guitar winner Catherine Britt. An added bonus will be a visit to the celebrated Mundi Mundi Lookout for a panoramic view of the sunset over the plains.

Event information

General enquiries:

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m: 0427 639 761
e: brokenhill2016@gmail.com
Facebook: RWGBrokenHill2016
Twitter: @rrsdbrokenhill
www.brokenhill2016.wixsite.com/rrsd

Registration

Visit the Broken Hill Gathering website for program and registration information.

Full registration costs \$250 per person.

The Gathering will start 4 pm, Friday 28 October and will finish with the Gala Dinner on Sunday evening, 30 October.

If you do not have internet access please contact RWN and we will be happy to forward you the information by email or post. Email: rural.women@dpi.nsw.gov.au or call Allison on 02 6391 3620.

Partner tours

Our exciting partner tours are sure to keep your man occupied over the weekend and will include a day at historic Mount Gipps Station, Whites Mineral Art & Mining Museum, Broken Hill Solar Plant and sausage making and tasting with your tour guide Danny Byrnes.

Accommodation enquiries

For assistance with accommodation contact Sonja O'Connor on 08 8091 2501 or email: floods creekstn@gmail.com.

Travel

Travelling to Broken Hill may seem daunting, but it doesn't have to be! DPI's Rural Women's Network are providing two subsidised bus services travelling from Orange across the North West and Wagga across the South West. A return trip is just \$55. To book call Emma on 02 6391 3612 or email: emma.regan@dpi.nsw.gov.au.



DPI delivers first Right to Farm Policy in New South Wales

Rob Williamson

DPI Land Use Planning

Farmers and industry groups in NSW have been calling for years for a clear 'right to farm', enabling them to undertake their lawful agricultural activities without conflict or interference arising from complaints from neighbours and other land users. Attempts have been made in the past to legislate for a 'right to farm', however it never won the support of Government. At the last election, the Government committed to consider proposals for a Right to Farm Policy in 2015.

NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) took to the task with gusto, focusing on open genuine consultation across government and industry. The end result was to develop a sensible and workable policy that would deliver the outcomes that agricultural businesses were seeking.

This policy brings together a suite of responses, including:

- » Reinforcing rights and responsibilities.
- » Establishing a baseline and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of land use conflicts.
- » Strengthening land use planning.
- » Ensuring ongoing reviews of relevant environmental planning instruments include consideration of options to ensure best land use outcomes and to minimise conflict.
- » Improving education and awareness of management land use conflicts considering potential future legislative options, should additional Government intervention be required.

By helping create a positive business environment, the NSW Right to Farm Policy will assist in driving development and production in the agricultural sector. NSW Farmers was the key industry stakeholder for this policy, working hard with DPI to get the agreed outcomes.

More information:

t: 02 6391 3166

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

Careers in primary industries: Environment and sustainability

Jess Fedorow, Schools Program, Department of Primary Industries

Australian agriculture continues to improve management practices that impact on the sustainability of our scarce physical resources and deliver better environmental outcomes.

There are endless employment opportunities in primary industries regardless of your qualifications and experience. Likewise a successful background working in our primary industries sector can lead to many other exciting and unexpected career pathways.

Environment and sustainability careers with Department of Primary Industries include:

- » Land use planners.
- » Irrigation specialists.
- » Natural resource managers.
- » Climate change researchers.

Carlie Darling is Program Coordinator, Sustaining the Basin: Irrigated Farm Modernisation Program (STBIFM). We asked Carlie to tell us a little about her role and the type of skills needed for the position.

I studied psychology and began my career as an academic, tutoring and lecturing in psychology and working as a research assistant while completing my PhD in Psychology (neurophysiology) at the University of Wollongong.

I went on to pursue a post-doctoral fellowship in Neurophysiology for the University of Newcastle before being offered a program coordination role for a statewide rural mental health program. My time in this role gave me an excellent foundation in program coordination and management, which led to my current position as Program Coordinator of Sustaining the Basin: Irrigated Farm Modernisation Program (STBIFM).

STBIFM aims to achieve water savings by improving on-farm water use efficiency and reduce the direct extraction of water from water management areas.

Carlie Darling, Program Coordinator, Sustaining the Basin

This program will improve the long-term sustainability of regional communities by allowing irrigators to adapt to reduced water availability and update infrastructure.

As a program coordinator I work closely with the management team to manage and assist with program implementation tasks.

For a role like this you need excellent skills in communication, financial management and reporting, project management and stakeholder activities and logistics. This role has been quite a challenge, being so different to my initial field of study. I often find myself in a foreign environment as a new project evolves, but my skills are integral to bringing that project to life.

Working as a program coordinator for DPI has provided me with a wealth of opportunity in a dynamic work environment. I love the diversity of my role and the challenges it brings. The workload is high volume and requires meticulous attention to detail. This can mean the job is high pressure at times, but it keeps life interesting!

More information

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www.dpi.nsw.gov.au



Men's matters: How to avoid being a victim of change

Dr John Ashfield PhD

Australian Institute of Male Health & Studies

"...change can turn out to be a real tonic. It can lift us out of a rut and present us with an opportunity to experience living more fully and humanly in the present moment."

Adjusting to the pace of change in modern life can be very challenging. Many involuntary changes are foisted on us with the potential to produce all sorts of reactions in us. We may find ourselves feeling powerless, angry, anxious, perhaps mentally overloaded and even somewhat 'paralysed'.

The world we once knew and which we counted on to remain largely the same is changing fast, and we are faced with the considerable challenge of making the transition into a different future, and having to make lots of decisions that will determine the shape of our future.

It goes without saying that we need first to have a clear and calm head to attempt this transition, and we may need to seek advice and support in a way we've never had to do before. This will invariably require us to be flexible, creative and open—and maybe that can be a bit challenging for some of us.

Without realising it, we can sometimes become rigidly attached to certain ideas, assumptions, routines, familiar patterns and conventions—in the hope of maintaining life

in a certain unchanged form. But is this good for us? As H.L. Mencken once said, "It is the dull man who is always sure, and the sure man who is always dull."

In the process of trying hard to maintain the status quo we can unwittingly imprison ourselves within our own insecurities, retarding our growth in resilience and our capacity for much needed new thinking.

And let's not overlook that coping with change and transitioning to something new always involves some degree of loss (as the old gives way to the new) and consequent grief—grief that we must experience and deal with, not merely deny. Life simply can't progress or flourish otherwise.

Yes, this is all a very 'tall order' and it requires every bit of grit we can muster to get life on track—well a new track anyway. And we must make ready for the journey, by taking care of ourselves in ways perhaps that we have paid little attention to before, and by avoiding some things that are creeping into our lives that are unhelpful, like using too much alcohol, eating poorly and not staying in good physical shape—all of which will likely have an impact on our mental health.

Making sure we get enough rest and exercise (most importantly that isn't associated with stressful work), that we manage stress through recreation and calming activities, and pay attention to our relationships, are all essential for coping and resilience.

Of course change can turn out to be a real tonic. It can lift us out of a rut and present us with an opportunity to experience living more fully and humanly in the present moment—where we taste, see, hear, feel and experience things with a whole new interest and intensity; things previously neglected or overlooked.

Perhaps the most important strategy for coping with change is to get back to our core values and to focus on the people and things of most importance to us. We may need to become far less attached to the material things that are increasingly so subject to change—and that are so easily lost; instead, focusing more attention on cultivating whatever can nourish a stable sense of wellbeing, a sense of belonging, of caring and having others care about us.

Properly nurtured, these things can provide us with the dependable inner resources to help keep life hopeful, meaningful and functioning in perspective. They can provide us with 'psychological buoyancy', a place to go when we need to 'catch our breath', and the emotional resilience to avoid being intimidated or overwhelmed by change now and in the future.

Rural Adversity Mental Health Program (RAMHP)

We all know someone who has experienced a mental health issue. It might be your father, a neighbour, your bank manager, your best friend's daughter, or even yourself.

Sometimes, you might not be aware that a person is struggling. Sometimes, all a person needs to begin their recovery is for someone to recognise the signs that they may be struggling and provide a listening ear.

Senior Project Officer, Claire Gander says RAMHP can help by ensuring that people dealing with mental health issues are identified and linked with the care they need.

"If someone you know isn't travelling well, we want you to notice and to be able to provide a listening ear and some gentle guidance to support them to find help and feel better.

"We want you to be able to identify signs of mental health issues in yourself, as well as those close to you. And we want you to know that help is available and how to find it," said Claire.

RAMHP coordinators provide one and a half—three hour Workplace and Community Support Skills Training courses that provide information on:

- » How to look after your mental health.
- » Signs that a person may be struggling.
- » Finding and providing help.
- » How to have a conversation with someone you're worried about.
- » How to help someone at risk of suicide.

Tips for talking to someone you're worried about:

- » Find out where help is available.
- » Choose an appropriate time and place.
- » Be mindful of your stress levels.
- » Listen and show empathy.
- » Don't be dismissive.
- » Reassure and offer hope for the future.
- » Be respectful and discreet.
- » Remember, help is available and recovery is possible.

More information

t: 02 6363 8444

e: ramhp@newcastle.edu.au

www.ramhp.com.au

Robyn's story: From grub to butterfly

Robyn Warwick, Narrabri

I am now a strong, independent woman that wears strong colours and had the nerve to paint my house purple, when the norm was green, cream and white. But I wasn't always this way.

Looking back to a vision of myself as a young child, I see someone who was colourless. My most important aim was to be good and not rock the boat. Back then and still to this day my siblings would refer to me as the 'goody two shoes'. Mum would say she didn't know I was there and that I was never any trouble.

This urge to please was never too far from the surface. I never voiced my opinion about moving all the time. I was never asked for my opinion, or how I felt continually experiencing the sense of not belonging. I was looking in on life.

When I married, I swallowed my sense of better judgement and moved in with my in-law's to a flattened out petrol tin house. The aim was to save money and build our own home.

The time finally came to subdivide the land and have a block of our own, but my mother-in-law refused to give her only child his independence. On top of this was the revelation that they were going to build a section of their own, attached to our house. I protested for a little while, but eventually caved in.

It wasn't until I became a widow at 29-years-old, when my husband died in a car accident, and with two little children to protect, I was left with part of a house on someone else's land, that the colourless shell began to crack.

So began my journey of strength—a two-year legal tug of war and bravely standing up to my mother-in-law, when a clause in the agreement for the land was for them to have custody of my children one weekend a month.

I remarried; this time, a restless man who only wanted to be a truck driver, after spending seven years in the army. Money was tight trying to keep two households—one at home and one constantly moving up and down the East Coast—and when mobile phones came into vogue a \$1000 a month phone account

was the norm. Driving a truck was a lonely life, and the lifestyle impacted on his health, his physical form and his moods.

Investigating my family tree had been an ongoing hobby for many years, searching for relatives and trying to fill the gaps in my childhood. The end result was something that never crossed my mind—I discovered we had an older sister who was adopted out at birth.

The unbelievable event happened, when 16 years and five days after my first husband was killed in an accident, my second husband was hit by a car, whilst walking across the road to his truck, and died at the scene. Once again the responsibility of raising our daughter fell on my shoulders, so more strength was needed.

The child within me still felt responsible for other people and I became a carer for my first mother-in-law and my own ageing parents. I carried this feeling through to my chosen career as an advocate, trying to solve other people's problems.

It wasn't until I waved goodbye to my youngest child, as she walked through the departure gates heading to Japan as a Rotary Exchange student, that I gave myself permission to ask.

For the first time I was free to do whatever I wanted. But what? I was 53-years-old.

I threw myself into knowledge and education and became a qualified remedial massage therapist, reflexologist, level two reiki practitioner, all the while still working as an advocate. I finally put on the cap and gown at 57-years-old and achieved a Post Graduate Diploma in Social Science—Community Service.

While happy with my achievements, for some reason I felt that studying was just another form of responsibility and I longed for something more. So I traveled to Japan twice and then to the centre of Australia—they were all such wonderful experiences. Discovering who I really was and what made me tick was daunting but amazing.

The time came for me to begin another decade and so I decided to face my 60s with vigour, energy and to define my fitness. I started riding an exercise bike, lifting weights and continuing with my yoga.

Another challenge raised its head, when a moment occurred where my focus wasn't totally concentrated on the road and I had a car accident that destroyed the car I was driving and the oncoming vehicle. Thankfully everyone escaped injury, something I will be forever grateful for. I however, suffered injuries that have led me down an entirely different path.

With my right elbow totally smashed and requiring reconstruction with plates and screws, I was told my arm would be permanently stiff. The flow on effect of all this was the knowledge that depression had wrapped its arms around me, threatening to overcome my existence and place a veil of grey over my eyes and around my heart.

There had been a few times in my life when I had to draw upon my inner strength to continue living the best I could but this would be my biggest challenge yet.

A path of awareness, a path where depression started out as my enemy, has now become my friend, making sure I appreciate and I am aware of every day and the path of putting my thoughts, feelings and emotions down on paper. This experience has steered me to Bellingen and Camp Creative and to a class of incredible people who guided me down the path of a fledging writer.

What is ahead of me? What is around the corner? I do not know. One thing I am sure of now is that I am strong, I am colourful and I can be seen.

More information

www.campcreative.com.au
PO Box 561, Bellingen NSW 2454

Women leaders: Mona Shindy

Jane Gilmore, this article was originally published on Women's Agenda

Mona Shindy, winner of the Telstra Business Woman of the Year Award, is not the typical privileged white corporate success story.

Captain Mona Shindy (pictured below) has seen 26 years' service in the Royal Australian Navy. She has won numerous awards and achieved seniority in an organisation not traditionally given to promoting women. Mona immigrated from Egypt when she was three-years-old, and is rightly proud of the success and the she has found in Australia.

What effect do you think winning this award will have?

I think it will give a lot of women in the defence force confidence in themselves and confidence to see themselves as legitimate business leaders and operators, not just public servants. Because they are doing genuinely important, complex and difficult tasks. Similar to or often even harder than people in civilian life. So this is a really powerful recognition of that work.

Also women in my position, from diverse backgrounds, who have come to Australia as immigrants, or even second generation, where there is still some differences that can make them a little unsure about whether they can succeed. To be able to see somebody who has, and has been honoured in such a great way, I hope that will give people some inspiration and encouragement.

Who's been your inspiration?

I've known lots of inspirational people, but I'm more the kind of person who just watches a whole lot of different people. I don't necessarily engage a huge number of mentors or role models. I learn things from people through observation. So there are things that I watch in people and I think, 'wow I really liked that about that person, that affected me in a very positive way, and I'd like to emulate that.' By the same token, I also observe behaviours that I say to myself, 'I will never ever be that type of person.'

I've also had some fantastic personal role models. My mother is the most wonderful example. With the early death of my father, we were left with a family of young teenagers and very small sister—she was only five. Mum really took it all on and she made us believe in ourselves, she got us all through

school and university; she is a really gutsy woman. To have done all that, on her own, with no extended family support here in Australia as a first generation migrant, she's a great role model.

Also, there's lots of male role models too. I've got a couple in particular who have made an effort to really give me some guidance along the way and have really helped with the training I've received and the opportunities I've been given. They really supported me all the way and I really value those people and the contributions they've made to my career.

You're now a role model for young women? What do you most want to show them about your career?

I've always been very honest with who I am, it's very important to me to be true to myself, and it's also important that people that I work with are also true to themselves and are able to express themselves. Allowing people to have that freedom, allowing them to tell you the truth about how they think things should be done and how they see things from a different perspective. Allowing that two-way dialogue, weaving in everyone's ideas together, ensures everyone to be part of the vision of where we're going and how we get there, I think that's really important.

I love to see young people feeling that they're respected and valued for who they are—it's not about trying to be something they can't or put on some kind of act, it's just about who they are. I think that's how you get the best out of everyone.

What would you say to young women who want to make a career in a male dominated field but who might be intimidated by the challenges of attempting it?

Do whatever it is you dream and hope to do. No matter how many setbacks along the way, pick yourself up and keep going. I would say to those young women that if you're good at maths or science, if you're good at those things, be proud of that, be proud of the talent that you've got and use it to the best effect you can. And don't be afraid. Sure you might come across some

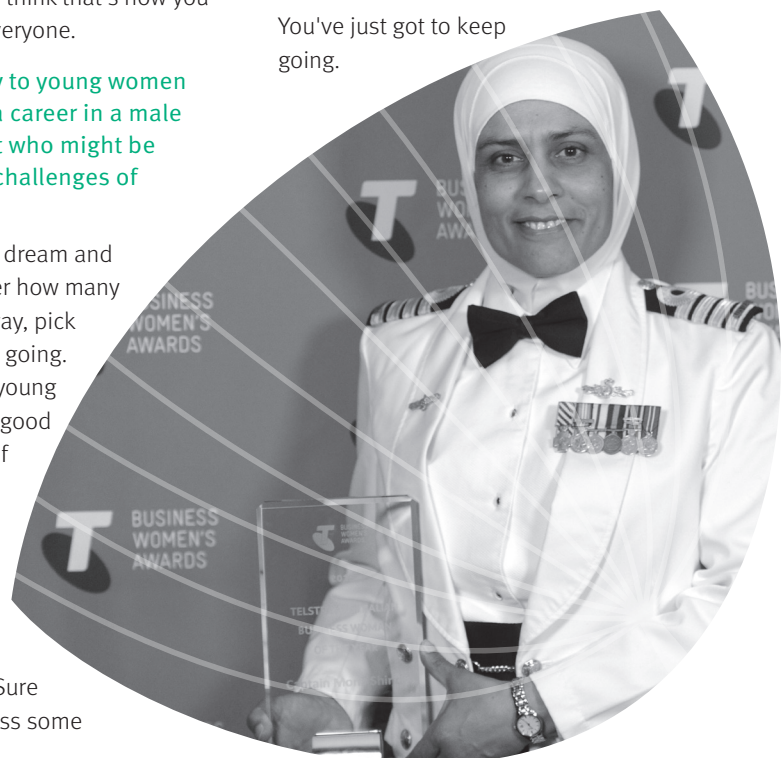
blocks in your life, or certain people who might not give you the same opportunities as a male counterpart, but just as often as you meet those people, rest assured that there are truly excellent people in the workforce too. And it's just about keeping at it until you find those champions, those people who will back you and support you, even when you fall down. Don't give up, you will succeed.

It's certainly true that you're facing even more challenges being not just a woman, but a Muslim woman in a white male dominated organisation, and you've overcome them, but perhaps not everyone has that strength?

No that's true, everyone has different levels of resilience, that is absolutely true, but for me, what drives me is the hope for a better future. So I figure that whatever I can do, however hard I can work to make that little bit of an inroad into my career, that's one less bit of work the next generation has to do, and that's worth it. If we put that bit of effort in today, that's one less thing the next generation has to do tomorrow.

And it's just a matter of time. I really believe that, there are so many things people thought we could never do. Whether it's technological advancements or huge cultural changes that happen in organisations or communities, they can and they do happen. That's why we can never lose hope and we shouldn't be afraid to keep working for change, even when it seems too difficult.

You've just got to keep going.



Celebrating courage, celebrating seasons

By Stephanie Dale, Byron Bay

It was the middle of a New England springtime, mid-November 2015; Liz Chappell cast her eyes around the visitors in her garden—570 of them, over two days.

They were there for the garden—and they were there for her.

This was the moment Liz had chosen to launch her book, *Celebrate the Seasons: Garden memoirs from New England*.

"It was overwhelming," said Liz. "Wonderful. To be honest I still don't think it's actually sunk in that I've done it. I've written and published my book."

A year ago, Liz was a riot of confusion and reticence about the project.

She had 20 years of gardening diaries up her sleeve, garden notes she'd kept since moving back to Glen Innes from Sydney to live in her parents' home—to the house and garden originally built by her great grandparents.

"It was very daunting. I wasn't really a gardener—then again, they say the gardening gene kicks in around 40. I was 39."

As well as the diaries, Liz knew from experience tried and true there was a significant gap in the market for advice about gardening in the New England district.

"Our climatic region runs from Tamworth to Stanthorpe. It's very cold and we're on the edge of a monsoon pattern."



"To be honest, I learned more from other gardeners and English gardening books than I did from Australian gardening media, largely because our media focuses on the coastal areas, where most people live."

Liz, who for four years wrote a regular gardening column in the local newspaper, thought she would pool her articles for the book—only to find she didn't have enough material. She needed more. And she needed photos. Good photos. Photos of greater quality and expertise than she was capable of producing.

"These were my stumbling blocks. When it all felt too much I'd shelve the project, again and again, then I'd dig it out and work on it in fits and starts.

"This went on for three or four years—but the idea just wouldn't leave me alone!"

Then The Write Road came through town, with writing workshops dedicated to new and unpublished writers.

"When I saw the workshops advertised I knew this would be my starting point. They were absolutely wonderful, extremely helpful.

"The first workshop crystalised my ideas and the second gave me practical guidance on how to approach the project.

"Through the workshops I understood that even though I was writing a gardening book, it was also my story—that it was important to tell my story—and I gained the confidence I needed to commit to the project."

For a solid year, Liz dedicated herself to the book, full steam ahead. In 12 months she wrote, produced and published her book. And she found a skilled photographer willing to work with her in return for a share in profits.

"I rang a former colleague who lived in Brisbane, Kim Woods Rabbidge. I said, 'If I go ahead with this crazy idea would you be willing to work with me, and if we get rich and famous we can share it.'

"Kim was wonderful to work with—I'd ring her at short notice and say, 'The rose is blooming!' or, 'The frost is

coming!' and she'd jump in the car and drive down. I was very privileged to be able to work with her."

By far the most significant aspect of Liz's journey has been the rollercoaster ride of validity and credibility.

"I'm a self-taught gardener, I don't have degrees and qualifications. The past few years have been a rollercoaster ride of overcoming voices in my head saying, 'Who do you think you are to write this?' and then this other voice says, 'You must do it!'

"I was 65 and I knew if I didn't do it now, I'd never do it."

Once she knuckled down, Liz said she loved every minute of the writing process.

"I had a strict daily routine. I'd garden until lunch, then write until the 7 pm news or my husband started cooking dinner, whichever came first.

"I loved pouring words onto the page; finishing was a bit of an anticlimax really.

"And then I got the design concept back—and I cried; it was really going to happen. Up until that moment there was still every chance it would go back into the too hard basket."

In six weeks Liz sold more than half the 2000 copies of the book sitting in her hallway.

"It was like having a litter of puppies—delightful at first, then you have to find homes for them all!"

She said the journey has been life-changing.

"Some moments have been terrifying—such as when I had to ask people I greatly admire and respect for endorsements. And some moments have been absolutely incredible—such as when I received the endorsements.

"The book has given me courage and confidence to play with the big kids in the garden media world.

"I could have gone my whole life thinking I can do that but never actually doing it. The book has proved to me that I can do it."

Lynne opens her home and heart to children in crisis

When Barnardos Australia foster carer Lynne Sawyers (pictured), took in her first foster-child she couldn't have guessed that she would still be caring for children in crisis almost 20 years later.

Lynne, from Orange in the Central West, has four adult children of her own and has fostered more than 200 children and young people during the last two decades.

She says she loves all of the children that have come into her home and considers them all to be family.

"And they know it! I've got some lovely cards and notes that they've left over the years.

"I have what I call a 'Wall of Fame', which I started with my own children when they were very young and would come home and do Christmas drawings and I would put them up on the wall each year. But I've got such a wall full now that three-quarters of it is from the foster children and it's wonderful."

Lynne encourages anyone who is interested in fostering to give it a go.

"Barnardos will call me and say they have one or two (or it could even be four) children and could they come and stay for one or two nights? I usually say yes, because if it's an emergency (especially if late at night), children need to go somewhere quickly because their life is upside down as it is.

"When children arrive I open the door and say, 'Welcome, come on in. Would you like a drink? Would you like something to eat?'

"If it's really late at night sometimes I put the TV on for a moment with a cartoon to ease them into relaxing a little bit. If it's through the day I get the games out and sit down and play a game with them or we do some cooking or take a walk around the garden—that's usually a good thing as most kids love gardens.

"Some children can be quite withdrawn. Some don't want to communicate with you and they just want to sit in the corner, which is very sad. It's something you just have to work around.

"I simply let them know that they are important and that they can come and talk to me when they are ready."

Lynne says being a foster carer is wonderful because the children appreciate the kindness and the love they are given.

"They may not have experienced anything like that before. And everyone needs to be loved, everyone needs to be told how special they are."

Her advice for those that are considering becoming a foster carer?

"If anyone is interested in fostering or has ever thought about it, they could just get in touch with Barnardos and make enquiries. Try it, and if you find it doesn't suit, then that's fine.

"You don't have to be a full-time carer, you can do it part-time and you can just provide respite for very short periods of time—it could be overnight or it could be for another foster family who has to go somewhere and the children can't go with them, so they'll come to your home on respite."

More information on becoming a foster carer

The children and young people who turn to Barnardos for help have been exposed to exceptionally difficult circumstances in their young lives—abuse, violence, poverty, drug and alcohol issues, mental illness, homelessness and disability. That is why they need you.

Barnardos Australia is currently looking for foster carers to look after children/young people aged between 0–18 years old. Foster carers must be at least 21 years old and can be single, married, with or without children, young or old. Carers receive ongoing training and 24/7 support, along with a generous non-taxable allowance and will be eligible for Centrelink entitlements.

If you are interested in becoming a foster carer contact Barnardos.

More information

t: 1800 663 441

www.barnardos.org.au/wecare



Money: Life transitions and your finances

Jo Stephens, Financial Adviser

Life is ever-changing. During our lifetime many aspects of our lives will change, bringing highs and lows of certainty and uncertainty, comfort and fear of the unknown.

There are many agents of change—graduating from high school or university, getting married, having children, changing careers, death of a partner or divorce and retirement. Whether these transitions are expected or out of the blue, each one has the potential to change our lives as we know them.

Change is often angst ridden and emotionally and financially challenging. Whilst this angst cannot often be eliminated, forward planning may minimise the impact, particularly financially.



As a financial adviser many people assume my role is solely as an investment adviser, and whilst that is definitely one small but significant facet, my primary role is to explore what is important to my client and understand what it is they wish to achieve. Financial advice is a multifaceted discipline that draws from many different knowledge areas and life experiences. My role includes educating the client so that when they make a decision they are making an informed one that gives them the best possible opportunity for success.

Agents of change

Graduating high school is an exciting time as we take our first steps into the adult world and is a time of great opportunity with many paths open to us. Do we continue with our education? Do we enter the workforce or even take a gap year and explore the world?

Once we are past the pain of HSC results and selecting a university, choosing to continue our education may also mean accessing Centrelink payments to assist with accommodation needs and supplies. How will the course be funded? What will that mean for the future?

Entering the workforce means thinking about superannuation, perhaps a first car, or moving out of home and becoming truly independent for the first time. What is the right way to choose a super account? Why is it important to worry about something that won't happen for another 40 or 50 years anyway? Budgeting and saving can become a priority to assist in buying that car or to pay rent and other bills.

Choosing to go down the path of a gap year, whether spending the year at home or abroad, also brings in the need for budgeting and saving. A gap year can assist you through the tough decisions of continuing with education or moving into the workforce.

The transition from single to married life is often the beginning of joint finances and perhaps the purchase of a first home. Understanding each partner's financial philosophy, including budgeting and saving habits can make a big difference. Protecting your own lifestyle can become a priority.

Married life can evolve into married life with kids; bringing with it more considerations and responsibilities. Saving for future education costs and learning to survive on one income are two considerations many of us have been through or will go through. The extracurricular costs of children has a large impact on the family budget. Ensuring your income and lifestyle are well protected is essential.

Unexpected life changes such as the death of a partner are often emotionally overwhelming. This is not the ideal time to begin thinking whether you can now afford

the mortgage. The loss of an income from the death of a partner will have a financial impact. You may also need to consider what to do with any life insurance payout, how to make it last. The surviving partner needs to consider their future—can their current lifestyle be maintained? Refocusing on budgets and savings plans is essential.

Retirement

Retirement is one area where people often seek my advice too late. Retirement means you will be reliant on your superannuation, savings, investments and wealth created personally over your working life with perhaps some government assistance thrown in.

Funding one's own retirement should be of paramount concern for those of us aged less than 45 years as access to the aged pension may gradually become more restricted. Retirement savings can be more easily achieved by doing a little for a long period of time rather than a lot in a small amount of time. Many people believe they can put in lump sums of money as they approach retirement to ensure their financial future in retirement, and while this may be the case for some, many of us will need to use the benefit of compounding interest on top of our contributions if we wish to have a worry-free retirement. Seeing an adviser five years before retirement does not allow for many wealth creation strategies to be effectively employed, whereas those who see an adviser quite early in their careers or even 10 to 15 years before retirement, are more likely to have a higher success rate of living the retirement they desire.

Many considerations go into retiring, especially for farmers and business owners. What to do with assets held such as farmland or a business and its premises? How do you effectively use these assets to fund retirement? As financial advisers, we can assist in succession planning for farmers to pass land onto the next generation. We can provide strategies that will minimise capital gains tax for assets sold and assist you to use the benefits of the sold assets to fund your retirement.

Can I help you?

A financial adviser is a strategist who assists you at critical points in your life to achieve what is important to you. As financial advisers, we can assist you in creating a roadmap to achieving your goals and helping redraft it when you are faced with unexpected changes. At enrich SMSF, we fundamentally believe the engagement and relationship with the client is paramount. We can assist you in holistic advice, including savings plans, investments, superannuation, risk insurance, aged care advice and estate planning.

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Transitions of life

Lynda Williams, Biblah Farm

I have had numerous transitions throughout my life that took me away from my home at Wongali, Nevertire.

My first transition was going from Warren High to boarding school in Sydney at the age of 14. This was a big shock to the system—to leave the wide open spaces of home for the confines of inner city living. The city does give people opportunities though, so after school I completed my nursing training there. At the end of my course, I longed to get back to the country. It surprised me that some of my nursing friends in Sydney (that came from the country) weren't keen to get back there too.

I took a position at Dubbo Base Hospital. It was great as I had several friends there, so it was easy to find people to share a house with as well as people to socialise with. In those days we loved going to B&S's. It was a great way to meet people and catch up with long-lost friends from all over the countryside.

My next transition from Dubbo was a trip overseas travelling around the world. I was lucky enough to find a great travelling companion in my nursing friend Shazza, from Walgett. We had a lot in common and never had a dull moment. We split up for six weeks in the UK to work and make some money. It was an amazing experience and one that I would recommend to everyone.

Returning from my trip, I had to transition back into working life. It was difficult to get a full-time nursing position so I found myself with temporary positions in Ivanhoe, Walgett and Tottenham. This was a great experience meeting people and broadening my nursing expertise in such things as venipuncture, cannulating and even suturing at Tottenham Hospital. I would work in these towns for a while, then come home in between times and give Dad and Mum a hand at Wongali. That was the good thing about being in the country, it always enabled me to get home frequently, and there's no place like home!

After a while I started a full-time nursing position at Parkes Hospital. Parkes was a wonderful place to live and work, with extra-friendly people. I thoroughly enjoyed my time there. On my days off I would venture home or over to Coonamble to see my boyfriend Tim. Whilst at Parkes we became engaged, which led me to the biggest transition of all.

Tim and his brother Neale purchased Biblah Farm during our engagement, which was to become our new home. Biblah Farm is situated 65 km out of Coonamble. About 20 km of the road was bitumen and the rest dirt. Even though I consider myself a country girl through and through, to begin with, this place, way out of town, seemed quite isolating to me.

Over the years we have happily settled into life at Biblah Farm. We have had the odd drought and rain at harvest time, but on the whole we are going alright. I have ended up with my great friend Shazza (now called Shar) just down the road; how lucky can someone be? Tim and I have four beautiful children, who have now made their own transitions to boarding school and university.

I wouldn't be anywhere else in the world and I hope we have instilled the love of country life into our children.





Greg and Angie Wilton from Mullumbimby.
Photo courtesy of Kate O'Neill, Mullumbimby
Farmers Market

Small business program makes getting advice a piece of cake

Sonya Martin, Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner

Greg and Angie Wilton from Mullumbimby have cooked up a successful business creating delicious pastries, cakes, tarts, breads and savory delights.

"Keeping up with demand is our biggest problem," Angie said. "We go to the farmers' markets in Byron Bay and Mullumbimby and sell out every time without fail."

"We could easily sell another 25 per cent but we can't bake enough because we just don't have the space."

The Wilton's started small five years ago and their wholesale bakery grew organically until they came to a fork in the road 18 months ago. They had to decide whether to continue down the wholesale path or follow Greg's dream as a baker with a retail outlet.

"We take pride in what we do. If we had gone big with the wholesale business, we would have become more of a production line."

"By moving into retail instead we could keep our boutique, artisan approach. We wanted to be the ones who controlled how the product was displayed and treated."

"More importantly, we really cared about how our customers talked about the product. It was a no-brainer in the end."

The Wilton's made the decision to open Scratch Patisserie in Mullumbimby to maintain their 'made from scratch, baked with love' philosophy.

The shop opening coincided with the birth of their second child, a time Angie now describes as, "Crazy!"

Growing week-on-week is the worst small business problem to have, but growing has made Angie and Greg appreciate the importance of building structure into their business.

"We were feeling a bit overwhelmed. We felt like we weren't managing the business as well as we could. We've never had a business plan, although we've attempted one many times and when we became responsible for eight staff we knew it was time for goals and more of a focus."

The Small Biz Bus couldn't have driven into Mullumbimby at a better time.

"I jumped on the bus six months ago to get some advice and see if someone could point us in the right direction."

Firstly, Angie and Greg were connected to a local Small Biz Connect business advisor, Sam Tebbutt, who started helping them with a business plan.

"It was really practical advice. It also plugged us into another service the Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner was offering—the Regional Activation Program."

The Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner launched the Regional Activation Program to better reach regional small businesses. The program achieves this aim by engaging with regional communities to activate small business opportunities through specialised programs, assistance and tools. After visiting each town participating in the program and working with key stakeholders, a series of workshops were developed.

Two workshops were held in Mullumbimby on topics local businesses felt would assist them the most—Visual Merchandising and Women in Business.

"I really liked the Visual Merchandising workshop. It came at a good time because we were developing a range of packaged products for our biscuits, jams, chutneys and relishes."

"The workshop took us through all the stuff we needed to know, like making sure labelling and packaging was perfect and targeted to our customers. Brian Ambler from Australian Retailers Association took the workshop and also came around the next day to give us advice specific to our display and setup."

Following the workshops the Wilton's took action.

"One piece of advice that really stuck was that we needed more of our logo image and colours around the shop to help us to get the brand message out. Now we have a great big plaque of our logo on the wall as you come in."

"Brian also made suggestions about signage, and we're putting more under the awning on the street front. The idea is that people will see us out of the corner of their eye and be tempted to come in."

As well as the suggestions, Angie said she really appreciated the confirmation of all the things Scratch Patisserie were doing right.

"It was great to get encouragement that we're doing a good job. Brian said the place looked great."

The Regional Activation Program also held a Women in Business workshop in Mullumbimby, which Angie also attended.

"I've made some good contacts and have already been able to do some business with a woman who runs food tours in the region."

A quick glance at the pastries, cakes, tarts and tortes on Scratch Patisserie's website leaves little doubt about why the business is growing. Greg and Angie continue to work with their Small Biz Connect advisor to plan and prepare for that growth.

More information

t: 1300 795 534
www.smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au

Smart ways to leave farming

Ted O'Kane, Goulburn
DPI Rural Resilience Officer

Respected Monaro grazier and cattle breeder, Howard Charles, cites a number of logical reasons for 'half retiring' and leasing his property but admits that if it were not for his wife Anne's declining eyesight, he could well have put the decision off for some time yet.

Breeding his celebrated Kydrabah Murray Grey stud cattle and merino sheep, it would have been easy for the still fit 72-year-old to maintain the status quo and keep running his 1375 hectare Nimmitabel property, Rockybah, as he has done since 1980.

But with neither of his adult children interested in taking over the farm and, by his own admission, starting to feel his years, Howard knew retirement was something that could not be put off forever. Still, he concedes that, "Anne's eyes (she has macular degeneration) were the real catalyst for the change."

The change though is a transitional one where the Charles' remain happily living in their home among the magnificent country garden Anne has developed from something akin to a moonscape 35 years ago. They remain happy to do so, contributing to the local community they love, as long as Anne's eyesight allows her to drive.

"I can't stay here if I can't drive and Howard has to drive me everywhere. We don't know when that will be, but when it happens it will mean moving to a town," she says.

The flexible lease arrangement the Charles' negotiated with two local landholders, Jim Haylock and Charles Keighley, in September 2014 also means Howard remains involved to some extent in both management and the physical running of the property.

Anne and Howard enjoying their 'half retirement' at their home, Rockybah

"I do believe that farming is a young person's game, not only physically, but keeping up with the technical advances as well. I am now what is called the 'weeds, wire and water man' and that's a bigger job than I thought," Howard explained.

"I'm only half retired so I am not walking around saying, 'What will I do now?' But if Anne's sight deteriorates quickly, we are in a better position to change our arrangements than if we were still running everything."

The innovative lease was negotiated by farm consultant, Jim Symon, McMichael & Associates, Albury, who consults independently to all three parties. Two events on flexible transition options have been held (one in Cooma in 2015 and most recently August 2016) where Howard outlined aspects of the lease and answered questions for people wanting to know more about the process. The lease conditions provided a good example of how a well-considered and flexible lease could provide a viable option for farmers wanting to retire from the business but still wishing to live in their own homes, he said.

Based on the rationale that farm wealth was built from the capital growth of the asset more than from income, Mr Charles wanted a lease that prioritised the protection of the asset.

"We built flexibility into the agreement that meant the lessees weren't put under pressure when the season gets tough. We certainly needed an income but our main focus was to protect the asset. It's not perfect but we are still working on it," he said.

Mr Symon said the lease aimed to bring the right people together in a deal that wasn't necessarily about maximising monetary gain but rather tried to meet everyone's needs in a way that was sustainable. This was the key, he said, to the success of any farm lease.

The lease of Rockybah has also provided an opportunity for Jim Haylock and Charles Keighley to expand their grazing enterprises through a newly formed business partnership, although they were not previously close friends and live some distance from each other and the lease property.

The partnership runs merino wethers and agistment cattle, allowing the flexibility to trade in line with seasons and also to minimise labour. Farm jobs are prearranged

and performed together. For both Jim and Charles, the deal provides extra scale and income for their farm businesses and the possibility of being able to hand a viable operation onto their children.

"It is a good short-term option to increase income but should also lead to me being able to increase my capital base as well—depending on whether the kids want to carry it on. There is no need for me to knock myself into the ground into my 60s and 70s if the kids are not interested," he said.

Similarly, for 59-year-old Mr Keighley, leasing more land as an adjunct to the 890 hectare property, Woburn, he owns at Bungarby, will hopefully assist at least one of his three sons to get a start in farming.

"We are talking to Jim Symon now about farm succession issues and while Woburn still needs a lot of investment, we hope we can set up the transition to the next generation over the next 10 years or so," Mr Keighley said.

More information

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Charlie, Harry, Bill and Simone Dudley with city students, Caitlin Pollitt and Kate Milne at the Finley Show

Bridging the urban/country divide

Innovative program gives city teens a chance to spend a week on farm

Tanya Soderman
Rabobank FX Program

Ten city teenagers from Muirfield High School in Sydney's west were given a taste of 'life on the land', spending a week with five farming families in the Riverina last September.

The visit was part of an innovative Farm Experience (FX) Program, developed by agribusiness banking specialist Rabobank to help bridge the 'urban/rural divide', giving city teenagers the opportunity to spend a week on-farm, living with a farming family and learning about life on the land and food production.

The FX Program resulted from a national survey undertaken by the bank that showed for city kids, spending holidays on the farm with their country cousins is largely a thing of the past, with three-quarters of city-based teenagers knowing little or nothing about farming.

Year 10 students, Caitlin Pollitt and Kate Milne were two of the city teenagers who jumped at the chance to spend a week on-farm, travelling over 700 km to Bill and Simone Dudley's 3000 hectare beef and cropping property, Cornalla East, between Deniliquin and Tocumwal.

Immersing themselves in country life, Caitlin and Kate spent the week mustering cattle, helping out with the shearing, marking lambs, vaccinating cows, monitoring the wheat crop and myriad other day-to-day tasks associated with running a farm.

"We couldn't believe how hands-on we would get," Caitlin said. "From herding the cattle from the passenger side of the truck, to working the stock in the yards and helping with the tail docking."

Kate agreed, saying, "A lot of people get the impression that farmers just ride a tractor, but it is so much more than that, with farmers constantly faced with decisions that have an impact on their whole livelihood."

Farm host Bill Dudley said his family got involved in the FX Program to "challenge some of the perceptions held in the city.

"We wanted to show the sophistication of modern farming practices, and how we as young farmers, manage the complexities of running a farming business," he said.

Mr Dudley said his family had also learnt a lot from the two girls and how, despite their different backgrounds, they were not too dissimilar from his own children, sharing an interest in sport and community participation.

Rabobank's head of Sustainable Business Development, Marc Oostdijk said the FX Program not only gave "city students the opportunity to discover firsthand where food and clothing comes from, but also opened their eyes to the range of exciting careers in agriculture."

"We hope that by experiencing rural life, students will take back to their families, as well as their schools and communities, an understanding of farming life. And that they will then take it one step further by considering a career in agriculture," Mr Oostdijk said.

To give students an insight into the range of occupations outside the farmgate, they spent a day off-farm touring local agribusinesses.

Both Caitlin and Kate said it opened their eyes to the range of "other professions you could have".

"Even if I wasn't involved like Bill is on the farm, it solidified my mindset to the many other opportunities in the industry," said Kate.

For Caitlin, the experience has also changed her mindset, giving her "a lot more confidence and independence. As I had to do things for myself and when you are working as a team you have others depending on you," she said.

Mr Oostdijk said the FX initiative, which has run programs in Rockhampton, Geraldton, Narrogin, Albury and Kadina in 2015 and early 2016, with plans afoot for programs in Moora, Kadina and Albany in late 2016, was a direct initiative of Rabobank's Client Councils—groups of the bank's farming clients around Australia who meet to discuss issues and implement ideas to contribute to the sustainability of rural communities.

"Our Client Councils give our farming clients the opportunity to canvas the big issues facing the sector, and the challenge of retaining and attracting youth into agriculture is one of their four key objectives," he said.

"The FX Program is a great example of how big challenges can be tackled on a small scale to make real, long-lasting differences."

More information

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Women's health: 3 steps to treating perimenopause

Jeff Butterworth B.App. Sc, N.D

If 50 is the new 40 and 40 is the new 20, then perimenopause seems to be the new PMS. It's very common and affects women between the ages of 35 to 50 generally, and we are seeing it starting to happen on a more frequent basis and in younger women.

During the years before menopause levels of progesterone typically decline, while estrogen levels remain stable or even increase. This creates a situation commonly referred to as oestrogen dominance as the ratio of progesterone to oestrogen changes and triggers the following symptoms.

Some of the symptoms that women suffer when progesterone declines include: weight gain, increased PMS, breast swelling and tenderness, mood swings, poor memory, irritability, poor sleep, water retention, aches and pains, heavy periods, fibroid growth.

Another hormone which is influenced is testosterone. Testosterone levels may start to decline during this phase and can be quite difficult to observe. These symptoms can be: reduced sex drive, reduced response to sex, reduction in general sense of wellbeing, reduced energy and ambition, depression and reduction in muscle mass.

The final piece to the puzzle is the reduction in oestrogen levels leading into menopause. The ovaries reduce production of oestrogen, which triggers the elevation of follicle-stimulating hormones and luteinising hormone, which triggers the characteristic symptoms of menopause. The ovaries continue to produce some oestrogen along with the adrenal glands, however if the drop is dramatic and the adrenals cannot cope then symptoms can be dramatic until the body balances itself and may include: hot flushes, reduced energy, night sweats, vaginal dryness, depression, mood swings, dizziness, headaches, memory loss, urinary incontinence, arthritic aches and pains.

So it is critically important that from the age of 35 and leading up to 50 that women are aware of the changes that are starting to occur and support the endocrine control centres during this phase to avoid these symptoms and ensure a healthy menopause.

If these symptoms are suppressed with hormonal treatments or ignored, then the underlying attempt of the body to try and

manage this transition naturally is sabotaged and it leads to a range of other issues, such as: weight gain, thyroid reduction, skin breakouts, mood swings, depression, irritability, insomnia, premature ageing and premature menopause.

3 simple steps to treating perimenopause naturally

1. Diet and lifestyle

Eating a low processed, alkaline and high antioxidant diet is important to allow the bodies detox and elimination systems to work efficiently. One of the reasons why oestrogen increases is because the body lacks the ability to metabolise oestrogen in particular. So it requires optimal liver and digestive function.

If liver function is sluggish then many of these symptoms develop so we suggest taking an additional liver support supplement containing natural amino acids and herbal medicines.

For digestion it is important to take fermented drinks and vegetables to build up the gut's natural balance and defences. These bacteria assist in the breakdown of hormones excreted by the liver. Our eight week program has recipes for these drinks.

2. Manage stress levels

Stress is a common issue with women at this stage of life with busy lives, running households and careers to manage. Often women take care of themselves last and stress impacts on the endocrine balance. The adrenals become exhausted and cannot take up the additional production of oestrogen leading into menopause and the result is the dramatic symptoms of menopause. So managing stress is critical. Ensuring adequate sleep, regular exercise, yoga and meditation are all really important to ensure stress levels are kept to a manageable level.

3. Balance the hormone control centre

We know hormones are starting to shift at this time of life towards menopause. It largely depends on how well your body copes with this process. Your hormonal control centre, the pituitary and hypothalamus axis is the centre that regulates your hormones. What we often find is diet and lifestyle sometimes are just not enough to correct the underlying imbalance.

This is where some key herbal medicines come into play. Sage, vitex and black cohosh when combined together have a unique synergistic effect that nothing else can achieve. Luckily, Happy Hormones contains the perfect ratio of these three herbs.

Happy Hormones works directly on this control centre to allow the body to balance its own hormone levels naturally. And let's not forget this is a natural process. You should not have any symptoms. Women living a traditional lifestyle and eating traditional foods don't experience menopausal or perimenopausal symptoms. So it's very much a western condition and we need to rely on natural medicines to allow the body to control its own hormone levels.

The current approach to treating perimenopause in particular is to replace any deficient hormones, namely progesterone and testosterone or DHEA, which is another hormone which is reduced. Although there may be initial relief the problem with this approach is threefold.

First, when you provide the body with an external hormone it immediately reduces its own natural production. So when menopause rolls around the situation is only compounded.

Second is the oestrogen levels stay elevated. This does not treat the issues of oestrogen dominance and having prolonged elevation of oestrogen is not good for the body on many levels relating to cancers.

Finally, the supplementation of hormones confuses the endocrine system, leading to the body lacking the ability to control hormone levels, resulting in further hormonal imbalance.

It's a slippery slope once you get onto it, however thankfully there are effective natural options that can help you to regain your health and restore a natural sense of calm and balance.

Jeff Butterworth is a Naturopath with over 20 years experience specialising in treating hormonal disorders. Jeff developed the Happy Hormones (www.happyhormones.com.au) program after discovering a unique way of treating hormonal disorders that has long lasting and dramatic results. See page 47 for details on the Happy Hormones program.

The Podmore Foundation

Returning opportunity one determined student at a time

Narelle Sargent, Podmore Foundation

In 2007, a group of Duntroon classmates from the 1970s, all but one from immigrant or single-mother families, established the Podmore Foundation in gratitude for the vocational and university education they had received at the Royal Military College of Australia. Four years of boarding at Australia's premier military leadership training institution had been a transformational experience that provided them with military careers that became foundations for successful civilian careers.

Podmore now involves a diverse group of Australians who want to create educational opportunities for others in gratitude for the education they have received. Podmore's motto, 'Returning Opportunity', is about giving talented and determined young people the opportunity to reach their full potential. Podmore's purpose is to gather the human and financial resources necessary to create conditions for as many young people as possible to have their lives and prospects transformed by a good education in good company.

In 2008, Podmore partnered with Yalari in the education and empowerment of Indigenous children from Australian rural and remote communities and towns. Yalari currently sponsors nearly 200 Indigenous children to study at 28 of Australia's finest independent boarding schools. Yalari and Podmore raise funds to cover the significant financial gap between the means-tested ABSTUDY scheme and costs of a boarding school education. The two organisations also cooperate to provide the support and friendship required by these young people, many of whom study hundreds of kilometres from home.

Each year, Podmore hosts a Spring lunch in Canberra to celebrate scholarship recipients' achievements, introduce and promote the work of the Foundation and encourage support. At the October 2015 luncheon, guests were introduced to a remarkable young woman, Jessa Rogers (pictured)—a proud Wiradjuri woman and PhD scholar at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at the Australian National University in Canberra.

In 2014, Jessa was awarded the ANU Vice-Chancellor's Staff Award (Reconciliation) and the 2015 Minoru Hokari Scholarship for her PhD research, which looks at the experiences of Aboriginal and Maori girls attending boarding schools using photoyarn, a method she is developing. Jessa has been working with Yalari scholarship recipients, including the Podmore students in Canberra, to understand their personal stories of determination, commitment to their families and communities, their struggles to excel in schooling far from home and the challenges of growing through their boarding school experiences.

In her keynote address, Jessa told her story—born in Canberra and raised in Queensland, Jessa realised quite early that her family did not have a lot of money.

"As a child, you notice things that others have that you don't and while this never bothered me so much, I realised in my early primary school years that education seemed to be the factor in determining those who had lots of opportunities and those who had little."

Jessa remembers asking how people "got good jobs" and hearing about 'university'—somewhere no one in her immediate family had been.

Her parents, both with Year 10 educations, raised her to work hard. Jessa wanted the chance to attend a good school and go on to university (whatever that was). With the help of her parents, Jessa was awarded a scholarship to Nambour Christian College from Year 7.

"You are braver than you think
and stronger than you seem.
The journey of education is a
wonderful one, one that will allow
you choice in life and the ability to
contribute much to your people."

Working solidly for the next five years, Jessa started Year 12. In the first few weeks of term, she discovered she was pregnant.

"I thought my schooling was over," remembers Jessa. "Luckily for me, someone believed in me."

That someone was the same person who had awarded Jessa her scholarship five years earlier, the principal of Nambour Christian College, Mr Bruce Campbell. Mr Campbell and the school supported Jessa tirelessly. Not only did she continue her Year 12 studies, she graduated with an ATAR of 92, two subject awards, the Creative & Performing Arts Shield for that year and a 10-day-old son.

"I realised what I had known all along," said Jessa. "Education is the key to unlocking brighter futures for students from all backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students."

To get to and from university, Jessa travelled four hours a day by train. She raised her son and completed two degrees, in creative arts and education. Inspired by her own scholarship, teachers and principals, Jessa then accepted a role as a support officer working with Aboriginal boarding students in Brisbane.

That work, combined with her experience as a scholarship student and being an Aboriginal woman, became part of Jessa's practice in Indigenous education. In the years following, Jessa drew on the lessons learnt with those students as she completed her master's degree and began lecturing pre-service teachers in Indigenous education.

In the final years of her PhD, Jessa has interviewed 45 students in boarding schools across Australia, including five Podmore scholarship recipients at Canberra Girls Grammar School. Jessa highlighted two key learnings from her research.

"For our young Indigenous leaders attending boarding school, they face many pressures, sometimes unknown to either family or school. This 'in-between' space is one that is not researched and is an important topic to yarn because of the pressure it places on our students."

The push and pull between expectations of family and school can be over many things. Expectations are not often made clear, leaving students feeling stuck in the middle, unable to meet both sets of responsibilities.

"For students to succeed, we have to work together," says Jessa. "The burden should not be placed on our students' shoulders, navigating the expectations of two important structures in their lives while working towards their own goals for their people, culture and families."

It is at these crossroads that organisations like Yalari and Podmore come to the fore—providing support and friendship to these young people, aged anywhere from 11 to 18, as they traverse a brand new world far from home.

The other key challenge is that attending boarding school changes the girls. "Their language, world view, ability to accept certain lifestyle norms and their connection to family and culture are all spoken about as changing when our kids move away for their schooling," she says. "The concept of 'walking in two worlds' is often used to describe the two sets of cultural norms Indigenous students become comfortable living and acting within."

The dedication and commitment boarding school students have to remain away from home and work solidly toward their goals, often in the face of many challenges, inspires Jessa.

To the Podmore scholarship recipients present, Jessa offered this advice, "Today, I say to those brave and dedicated young leaders making sacrifices in the hope of brighter futures, don't give up. You can do it. You are braver than you think and stronger than you seem. The journey of education is a wonderful one, one that will allow you choice in life and the ability to contribute much to your people. It is a worthwhile, but difficult journey. Boarding schools are funny places, where you gain new friends that become family, learn independence and understand the ways of a different world. Just don't lose who you are. You can be whoever you want to be, but never forget where you came from."

The willingness of the Podmore and Yalari scholarship recipients to contribute to society and think of others is reflective of each of their kind and caring spirits. These young women and men will grow to become our next generation of Aboriginal leaders, in our communities, in their families, in their own homes, and most importantly, in their own lives.

The Podmore Foundation, Yalari and their many supporters across the country are committed to supporting these students and those who will come after them. Like Jessa, they have based their philosophies on education being the key to brighter futures. As Jessa says, "When the door opens for us and we find a way through, it is our responsibility to assist those coming behind us."

Of Podmore and Yalari, Jessa has nothing but praise. "You are doing wonderful things," she said through tears at the end of her address*.

Since 2008, eight Podmore scholarship recipients have completed their secondary schooling. Seven have continued with tertiary and vocational education and one works as a doctor's receptionist in her hometown. In 2016, the first Indigenous boy to enroll at Canberra Grammar School on a Podmore scholarship began his secondary schooling in Year 7.

** In line with her vision for the future, Jessa Rogers became the inaugural Principal of the Girl Academy on Cape York at the end of 2015. An initiative of the Cape York Partnership, the Girl Academy is giving a second chance to disengaged girls and young mothers to recover their education and culture and to build a good life for themselves and their families.*

You can support the Podmore Foundation by becoming a member, establishing a scholarship or making a donation.

More information

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Tocal students prove they are more than equal

In 1965 the generosity of Mr CB Alexander allowed the opening of Tocal Agricultural College with its initial enrolments consisting of 15 young, male students.

It was not until 1972 that the first intake of female students occurred. At the time they made up just six per cent of the total student population. Since then, Tocal has paved the way for women to claim their rightful place in Australian agriculture, with female numbers at the College in 2016 accounting for 62 per cent of full-time enrolments. In fact, in 2012 the proportion of females in full-time courses peaked as high as 72 per cent.

No doubt the very first female students to enrol at Tocal were pioneers, entering into what was then considered a mostly male domain. However they proved themselves incredibly capable and many have gone on to achieve great things in Australian farming. There is no doubt that their examples have made it easier for female students at Tocal today to follow their ambitions without fear of sexual prejudice.

Often Tocal's female students have proven far more than equal to their male counterparts. In 2015 the Dux awards in all three full-time qualifications went to female students. Even the very practical and hands-on Certificate III in Agriculture course, with a large component of technical competencies (including tractor, quad, motorbike and chainsaw operation, fencing and chemical application) saw

females take out the top three placings in the course. Furthermore, their dominance was not just due to an overwhelming weight of numbers either as in this course the ratio of females to males was almost exactly 50:50.

Last year's Certificate III in Agriculture Dux, Ann Shipman, is an excellent example of how a person's tenacity, enthusiasm and capability can break down traditional stereotypes. Very early in her first year course Ann answered an advertisement to undertake haycarting on a local, Maitland area farm. The owner, Des Richards, was so impressed with her attitude, work ethic and skills that he says, "Ann proved herself physically equal to any male I might have employed and since then I have not hesitated to employ females to work on my farm.

"Ann was competent and hard working. She assisted in hay making, beef cattle work and turkey growing. All these activities might be considered commonly occupied by males but Ann proved to be more than their equal," Mr Richards went on to say.

Ann was equally impressive when undertaking a practical work placement on an Upper Hunter beef property. Based on her strong performance during that week she was offered part-time work on the Merriwa property before securing a stationhand position with them at the end of the year.

The farm is now supporting her to complete her Certificate IV in Agriculture qualification as part of the Tocal Traineeship program.

Recently Ann was encouraged by Tocal to apply for the Women's Network Hunter scholarship for women in non-traditional or male-dominated trades. She was delighted when successful and awarded the \$500 prize money in front of a group of leading Hunter women at the presentation held at Tocal.

The ceremony was reported on by the local newspaper, *The Maitland Mercury*, which quotes Ann thanking her supporters.

"I come from a family that's very supportive, especially my father. They always told me 'you can do it', regardless of gender. My co-workers and my boss too. Gender doesn't matter, they treat me as an equal."

It was fitting that Ann asked Tocal agronomy lecturer, Carol Rose, to support her on the day. Before joining Tocal, Carol forged a formidable reputation in the once male-dominated role of District Agronomist. She did this on the Mid North Coast and in the Upper Hunter Valley during a time when women were seldom seen working on a farm, let alone advising. Her technical competence and practical problem solving ability had even the most chauvinistic farmers flocking to her field days and workshops in search of help.

Today, Carol is but one of many females in significant roles at the College who, by example, encourage younger women to strike out on their own path in agriculture.

For example, Jill Clayton is Certificate IV Coordinator and Animal Genetics lecturer who co-designs the Tocal Brangus herd's breeding program. Simone Harvey is Horse Breeding Course Coordinator and multiple national Australian Stock Horse champion rider. Steph Teterin is Off Campus Coordinator with skills so versatile she can train two-wheel bikes, use her contracting experience to teach fencing skills or lead a Tocal team to Inter Collegiate Meat Judging success where she has been awarded the Tom Carr Award for Coaching Excellence.

On top of this Tocal has women in other prominent positions such as Chair of the Tocal Advisory Council, Numeralla Free Range Egg Farm Manager, Education Delivery Manager and College Registrar.

Where ever you look, Tocal's female students (and staff) are proving more than equal!

More information

t: 1800 025 520
www.tocal.nsw.edu.au

My Australian story

Betina Walker, Barellan

We purchased our farm in December 2000. The following year the millennium drought started—it went for nine years. In 2008 Robert and I decided to walk off our farm, locking the front gate and leaving to take up a managerial position at a caravan park on the Hawkesbury River near Sydney.

We were mentally and physically exhausted. Neither of us had lived near a major city so it was our massive change. Whilst there we kept meeting chefs or people in the food industry and they would always ask what we did for a living. We would reply, "Farmers from the Riverina." They would then ask, "What do you grow and how are you value adding?" At the time I had no idea what value adding meant.

One of the chefs took me around the Sydney Farmers Market. It was amazing and gave me a burning ambition to create something with our cereal grain so that we would never be at the mercy of grain companies again.

We were forced to return home to the farm as the whole of the Riverina was in flood, including our farm. A friend had flown over our property and sent pictures through on email urging us to get home.

We packed our belongings and headed home to the devastation. Fences were washed away, the house was damaged and there were livestock drowned in the paddocks that had to be buried.

Six months later, once we were back on our feet, we formed Whisperingpines Organics. We purchased our first Austrian stone ground flour mill and started making fresh organic flour. We would travel to farmers' markets in the Riverina and Canberra promoting and selling our fresh, locally made, from the paddock to the plate products. The reaction from customers was inspirational.

We are now into the fifth upgrade of our flour mill and our flour and rolled oats are distributed Australia-wide. This year we also started exporting our flour and rolled oats to China and Hong Kong. In April we held our first pop-up restaurant on our farm called 'One Night Only' at the Mill Restaurant. It was amazing. We had a bus load from Canberra and Griffith, as well as guests from as far as Melbourne and Sydney. We sold out of tickets within three weeks.

From our experience we have learnt to embrace change, as scary as it sometimes is. Without this experience our family would not have the business that we have today.



Next generation of agricultural leaders

2016 Horizon Scholar, Jess Capps has a clear career goal—to help feed the people of Australia in the healthiest and most ethical way she can. Her scholarship, supported by the Grains Research & Development Corporation, will set the University of New England student up with networking and work placements to achieve her ambitions.

The Capps have come from generations of farming, and while Jess' family now live in the town of Buxton, in the southern highlands of NSW, her connection with the land remains strong.

"I've always been surrounded by my grandparents' and cousins' farms, and have been active in agriculture right through school as part of the show cattle and sheep teams. I love that agriculture is the foundation of society—without it we don't have food and we don't have clothing.

"Without soils you can't grow plants, and plants produce energy from the sun, which then transfers through the food chain, so it just fascinates me how agriculture provides the building blocks of society," she explains.

Jess is studying a Bachelor of Rural Science, and is grateful for the opportunities Horizon provides to complement the course.

"You get an annual \$5000 bursary to go towards your university education, but it is so much more than that. All the benefits that come from the workshops, the media training and more, are such valuable skills to have."

Jess is planning a career in genetics and is confident the Horizon Scholarship will help her achieve her goals.

"The program will help me meet people in the industry through work placements, which will give me a more well-rounded view of where I am heading in agriculture. I'm particularly interested by the potential for transgenic organisms, such as BT cotton, to increase yield and reduce the need for pesticides, adding to the sustainability of our food production system."

An initiative of the Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation, the Horizon Scholarship supports young people passionate about agriculture. Recipients receive \$5000 per year for the duration of their degree, professional development workshops and mentoring, industry work placement and opportunities to network and gain knowledge at a range of industry events.

More information

t: 02 6271 4132
Facebook: @horizonscholarship
www.rirdc.gov.au



Resources and what's new

A Helping Hand for Western NSW—Pathways to Services

This new booklet aims to provide ongoing information on local support services in Western NSW, covering mental health concerns, family and relationship services, as well as other rural support services that deal with financial and agricultural issues. The booklet includes sections on each Local Government Area plus information on district-wide services and 24 hour support. Download the booklet online for free.

📄 www.ramhp.com.au
☎ 02 6881 4034

Conversations Matter

Conversations Matter is a practical online resource to support safe and effective community discussions about suicide. The resources provide practical information for communities and professionals to guide conversations about suicide. The resources are the first of their kind internationally and have been developed with the support of academics, service providers, people with lived experience and community members in New South Wales and across Australia.

📄 www.conversationsmatter.com.au

Drought Hub

DroughtHub provides a one-stop online destination for information on a vast range of services and support available to primary producers, their families and communities

to prepare for and manage drought conditions. It has sections on finance, skills and training, transport for animal welfare, resources, research and development, wellbeing, drought, Commonwealth support services and case studies.

📄 www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub

Get in the Loop!

Loop is a new SMS subscription service providing farmers with information directly to their mobile phone. Subscribers can choose the types of messages they want to receive, such as: funding opportunities, general farming news, new ideas specific to farmers, events and more. Subscribe now and be one of the first to receive Loop messages. For more information SMS or call Pip Job, 0437 241 688 or Sonia Muir, 0427 032 128.

📄 www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/loop

Grant Writing Guide

Regional Development Australia Central West's *Guide to Successful Grant Writing* will help individuals and organisations to develop an understanding of how to apply for funding assistance. The guide will help you identify which grants will support your project, research and collect background material for your proposal, clarify the components of grant applications, learn to write an effective application and have confidence in the final result.

📄 www.rdacentralwest.org.au
✉ admin@rdacentralwest.org.au
☎ 02 6369 1600

MindSpot

MindSpot is a free telephone and online service for Australian adults troubled by symptoms of anxiety or depression. The service provides free Online Screening Assessments to help you learn about your symptoms, free Treatment Courses to help you recover and assistance to find local services that can help you. The service operates 8 am to 8 pm Monday to Friday and 8 am to 6 pm Saturday.

📄 www.mindspot.org.au
☎ 1800 61 44 34

Stayin' On Track (online resource development by Aboriginal men for Aboriginal dads)

Stayin' On Track is an online resource for young Aboriginal dads. It's a site for mentoring and supporting ya mates to stay on track and be good dads. It was started by a group of Aboriginal dads from around NSW who got together and shared their experiences about fatherhood. They built this website to pass on some useful information to other young dads. The stories dads shared centred around themes about pride in being a father, tough times, culture, the emotions on finding out, feeling down and role models. Stayin' on Track showcases some of these stories and aims to acknowledge dads who are doing great work sharing their insights with other young dads.

📄 www.stayinontrack.com

NSW Women Entrepreneurs Network

A new online portal created by government and industry to provide relevant information in a one-stop-shop for women in business in NSW, regardless of the stage of your business, to support and grow your business.

📄 www.wonnsw.com.au

Snippets—Little stories from the Country Women's Association of NSW

Snippets is a new blog by Annette Turner with bits and bobs about life as the new president of the Country Women's Association of NSW.

📄 www.cwaofnsw.wordpress.com

Protecting Yourself Online—What Everyone Needs to Know

For most of us the internet is part of our daily routine for keeping in touch with friends and family, working, studying, playing games, shopping and paying bills. While the internet offers us many benefits, there are also a range of safety and security risks associated with its use. Being aware of what risks you face online will help you make informed choices about how you use the internet. There are no absolute guarantees that you can protect all of your information online—but by following the advice in this booklet you can significantly reduce your risk of becoming a victim of cyber crime.

📄 www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/CyberSecurity

**FREE
ONLINE
ASSESSMENT**

GO TO YOUR HAPPY PLACE

HORMONAL IMBALANCE IS AT EPIDEMIC LEVELS IN OUR SOCIETY AND HAS VERY REAL EFFECTS ON WOMENS HEALTH AND WELLBEING.



'Everyday I talk to women who have had their lives and relationships severely affected by their hormonal imbalances. From teenage girls, young women, middle aged and menopausal, they all have similar stories to tell about the way they are feeling; their mood swings, feeling irritable, cranky, anxious and depressed, not to mention the physical symptoms of hormonal imbalance.

That's why in conjunction with Naturopath **Jeff Butterworth**, we have created a holistic, simple and achievable program for women to follow to correct these imbalances and help women lead a healthy and happy life.

Hormonal symptoms are not normal and now there is a solution.' **Lisa Curry**

To find out more information about the program and take the complimentary hormonal assessment profile, log onto www.happyhormones.com.au



go to your happy place 

NSW DPI

RURAL WOMEN'S
NETWORK



www.facebook.com/NSWRWN

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www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn/country-web

The Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act 1998 obliges the Rural Women's Network to make you aware of the purposes for which we might use the contact details you have supplied us with. This information will be used by RWN for the purposes of disseminating information (including mailouts). Any information supplied by you to RWN will not be disclosed to any other person unless prior consent has been given.

NAME:	
ADDRESS:	
	P'CODE:
PHONE:	
EMAIL:	

☐ Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background ☐ Culturally and linguistically diverse background

Age group: ☐ <20 ☐ 20s ☐ 30s ☐ 40s ☐ 50s ☐ 60s ☐ 70s ☐ 80s+



Rural Women's Network website www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/rwn