

RAS TIMES

AUTUMN 2024 | VOLUME 22-1

RURAL VOICES

PULL-OUT SHOW MAP

Featuring Exclusive Showtime
Member Benefits

RURAL VOICES

From Booligal to the Southern
Highlands

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN IN AG

With Pip Courtney, ABC's Landline





*The bush hath friends to meet him
and their kindly voices greet him
in the murmur of the breezes
and the river on its bars*

ANDREW BARTON (BANJO) PATERSON (1864-1941)

Rural Voices

The Sydney Royal Easter Show is all about the country coming to the city. Competing and exhibiting annually at the Show is one reason that farmers continue to strive for excellence. At the Show, they are recognised for their hard work, innovation, sustainability and, of course, award quality. For so many of our members, exhibitors and competitors, the Show is not only an annual family tradition, but also an important part of product quality improvement, benchmark development, business networking, and personal achievement.

The Show also provides a forum for farmers and producers to share their stories with the broader community.

Rural voices are important because their stories tell us about life in isolated areas and what it takes to provide the fibre for the clothes on our back and the food on our plates.

We celebrate *Thank a Farmer Day* on the first day of Show. It's the perfect day to talk to the farmers in District Exhibits and the animal pavilions. Hear from them personally how much they love the land and what it takes to do what they do with such excellence and commitment.

Whichever days you come to Show this year, let's celebrate together all Rural Voices and their stories of toil and triumph.

Elizabeth A Nixon JD
Editor, RAS Times
Royal Agricultural Society of NSW



Elizabeth A Nixon JD serves as the Editor of the RAS Times magazine, and as Content Manager for the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW.

Elizabeth holds a juris doctorate law degree from Pepperdine University in Malibu, California, USA, and was licensed to practice law in both California and before the United States Supreme Court. As co-owner of a media production company, Elizabeth has been writing in law and media for over 20 years. Having returned home to Australia, Elizabeth considers her current work with the RAS to be a highlight of her career to date.

Join Elizabeth on LinkedIn

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ON THE COVER
Sandra Ireson, On her 400-head beef cattle station in Booligal, NSW.

Booligal. A pub, a few houses, a playing field and a memorial to explorer John Oxley are the totality of this small settlement surrounded by the vastness of the Riverine Plains of western NSW. It is a lonely and isolated place made famous by 'Banjo' Paterson's famous line 'Hay, Hell and Booligal.' Over the years numerous complaints have been made about Booligal, particularly in summer. Dust, flies, heat, grasshoppers, rabbits (there was a plague in 1890), snakes, drought have all been levelled at the district but then ... isn't that the essence of outback Australia. (Excerpt from aussietowns.com.au)

Located 802 km west of Sydney via Yass, Wagga Wagga and Narrandera, and north of Hay via the Cobb Highway, it has been suggested that the name comes from a local Nari-nari First Nation language meaning 'a windy place'.

Sandra Ireson and her family call it—home.

Just one of the Rural Voices featured in this issue of the RAS Times, Sandra's story is generations-long on the land, with ambition and vision for both Booligal and the greater agricultural community. You can read more about Sandra in the feature article, *Rural Voices*, on page 28 this issue.



Historic Booligal Hotel rebuilt in 1979

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Vicki Hastrich is a Sydney writer, with a special interest in history and archives. She is a novelist and essayist, and is currently working on a biography. The RAS has been privileged to have Vicki write for the RAS Heritage Centre for 15 years.



Olivia Gee is a freelance journalist and has been contributing community-driven stories to the RAS Times since 2021, sharing her passion for sustainability, the natural environment, and the local legends leading Aussie agriculture.

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pride on the line when the best-of-the-best in the country come to compete in the city! It is always great to see the enormous interest from rural and regional press to tell the story of what the locals have done at Sydney Show.

We also prioritise the next generation of agricultural leaders, providing opportunity for advancement and industry networking at youth events like our Young Judges competitions, the Young Woman Competition, the Rural Achiever, the Young Farmer Challenge, and All Roads to the Royal. This year is the 20th anniversary of the formation of our RAS Youth Group where my own time at the RAS first started.



PRESIDENT'S MEDAL DINNER

THE PRESIDENT'S MEDAL IS THE ONLY COMPETITION OF ITS KIND IN AUSTRALIA.

It is the highest honour that the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) awards across the categories of wine, beer & cider, cheese & dairy produce, and fine foods.

This Medal embodies both the iconic heritage and the future-facing mission of the RAS, which is to encourage progress and innovation in Australian agriculture, as well as serving our vision for a community that understands and values award-quality produce.

There is only one road to the President's Medal, and that is through the Sydney Royal Wine, Beer & Cider, Cheese & Dairy Produce, and Fine Food Shows held throughout the year. Champions in these sections qualify to compete for the honour of being President's Medal winner.

The 2024 President's Medal Dinner, compèred by Simon Marnie, offers a fine dining menu incorporating Sydney Royal championship winning products. Guests will also enjoy views over the Main Arena's evening entertainment and fireworks finale.

This is a special evening as all finalists attend, with the winner announced at the dinner. In attendance is Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of NSW. RAS President, John C. Bennett, OAM, presenting the award.

Read more about this year's finalists on page 39 of this issue.

DATE: Wednesday, 27 March, 2024.

TICKETS: www.rasnsw.com.au/presidentsmedal

There is genuine excitement in the halls at the RAS as our Councillors, staff and officials have ramped up preparations for our pinnacle event—the 2024 Sydney Royal Easter Show!

This issue of the RAS Times is a bumper one, full of all the information members need to know. Highlights of Show events, activations, demonstrations, entertainment, and exclusive Member Events and offers. There's even a double page pull-out Show Map in the centre.

As we prepare for our competitions, we are thankful to the many agricultural Shows that happen throughout the year. Regional and rural Shows play an important role because performances and experience gained at local Shows are vital to ensure the Sydney Royal really is Royal Show quality. That's one of the reasons why there is always local

To all our exhibitors and competitors, I wish you the best of luck! To our non-competing members who come to cheer them on and view their works, I know that you will find this year's Show worth the wait! I hope you can join me at the Official Opening Ceremony on Saturday 23 March, 2024.

I am looking forward to my first Show as RAS President. It is going to be a wonderful 12 days celebrating excellence and innovation in Australia's agricultural communities. I do hope to be able to say g'day to many of you during the Show.

John C. Bennett OAM, President
Royal Agricultural Society of NSW

Regional and rural Shows play an important role because performances and experience gained at local Shows are vital to ensure the Sydney Royal really is Royal Show quality.



Welcome to foodie heaven

See you at the Show!

eastershow.com.au





judges, whose passion and precision in executing world-class competitions and agricultural events, make the RAS a benchmark standard across Australia's crucial agriculture sectors.

Given the vast reach of the RAS throughout NSW and beyond, it is a structure that has proven to be highly beneficial to our mission objectives and ensures that each department has deep engagement within their respective industries and communities.

Each of these Committees are in full swing preparing for the 2024 Sydney Royal Easter Show and we are all looking forward to what's in store—the quintessential Show favourites that return each year as well as many new activations and entertainment, and of course our exhibitors!

The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) is a not-for-profit membership-based organisation.

Its mission is to forge the future of sustainable Australian agriculture, improving the quality of produce and animal breeds through competitions, education and events. A highly experienced management team works in conjunction with exceptional staff and expert industry-based Committees.

There are over 30 Committees overseeing each of the many competitions and events which the RAS hosts. All Committees are headed up by experienced Chairs who volunteer their time and expertise. Volunteer stewards, officials and

In addition to the 12 days of celebration that we all enjoy at the Show, what unfolds here has a significant impact not only upon our ability to support regional and rural communities throughout the year, but also upon NSW's economy. It is an organisation that I continue to be compelled and honoured to lead, and I couldn't do it without those who come alongside.

I look forward to seeing you at the 2024 Sydney Royal Easter Show!

Brock Gilmour, Chief Executive, Royal Agricultural Society of NSW

In addition to the 12 days of celebration that we all enjoy at the Show, what unfolds here has a significant impact not only upon our ability to support regional and rural communities throughout the year, but also upon NSW's economy.



IN MEMORIAM

TOM DWYER

It is with deep sadness that we report the passing of Tom Dwyer (Forbes), on 1 November 2023. Tom was a dedicated, lifelong contributor to the RAS, and previous Manager and Court Organiser of the Western District Exhibit at the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

Such was his extensive service, he was awarded a 35-years RAS Service Award in 2012, and both RAS Show Legend and RAS Champion in 2017.

Those who knew Tom, know that he always greeted everyone with a smile and a story. He was considered by all as being dedicated to his passions, generous with his time and knowledge, and always ready to lend a hand.

In addition to Tom's enormous service to AgShows NSW, his accomplishments with the RAS over the course of his life include:

- Exhibitor at the Sydney Royal Easter Show since 1964;
- Steward at the Sydney Royal Grain judging competition for over 10 years;
- Provided grain samples for the Grain Judging competition for over 10 years;
- Provided a wool mural feature for The Food Farm at the 2013 Show;
- Grew, collected and prepared grain samples for over 34 years.

Tom's life is a tribute to agriculture communities across NSW and is exemplary of what it means to be a member of our community. Our hearts and best wishes remain with Tom's family.



Help keep farmers farming

The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW invests over \$11 million a year to support Aussie farmers.

See you at the Show!

eastershow.com.au





The Royal Treatment

Exclusive Member Events & Benefits

Being a Member of the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) means being a member of a community that understands, values and practically supports regional and rural agricultural families and communities who are dedicated to excellence in agricultural sustainability and to award-quality animal breeds and produce.

It also means some amazing, exclusive member-only events and benefits during this year's Show!

ARTS PREVIEW EVENING
WEDNESDAY, 20 MARCH, 6PM-9PM
This premiere gala showcases the stunning array of artwork entered in the Sydney Royal Arts & Crafts Competition.

Live music will add to the air of celebration while you peruse exhibits including portraits, rural landscapes, photographs, sculptures, ceramics, silverwork and so much more.

Mix and mingle with distinguished Royal Agricultural Society of NSW Council members

and be there as first place prizes are awarded to art exhibitors.

Spot something you fancy? You can purchase artwork throughout the night.

VENUE: Arts & Crafts Pavilion

2024 RAS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THURSDAY, 21 MARCH,
AT 5:00-5:45PM

The RAS is a membership-based organisation, governed by a Council comprised of Members



who are elected at the Society's Annual General Meeting.

All financial RAS Members are invited to attend the 2024 RAS Annual General Meeting.

VENUE: Hordern Café, Members Stand

Following the completion of the AGM, Members will be escorted to the Dome for a sneak peek of the District Exhibits display.

DISTRICT EXHIBITS SNEAK PEEK

THURSDAY, 21 MARCH, AT
5:45PM-6:15PM

Be part of the first group to view the iconic Sydney Royal Easter Show District Exhibits inside the Woolworths Fresh Food Dome. Each display consists of more than 10,000 pieces of fresh produce—it's the best of the best of each region!

Volunteers work rigorously around the clock to get everything set just right, with meticulous attention to detail.

In 2024, the Central, Northern,

Southern and Western regions of NSW will be featuring displays.

TYRRELL'S MEMBERS GALA NIGHT

THURSDAY, 21 MARCH, AT
6:30PM-9:30PM

An exclusive preview of the 2024 Sydney Royal Easter Show evening entertainment showcase.

You'll be on the edge of your seat cheering for the rodeo riders, campdraft competitions and high-flying moto-X bikes, with something for everyone from babies to baby-boomers!

You'll be the first to see the 2024 evening entertainment taking centre stage in the Main Arena. This truly magical evening will end with the Show's spectacular fireworks filling the evening sky.

Book now to enjoy the Show over drinks and cocktail-style food.

VENUE: Members Bar, Members Stand.

COST: Member \$75; Guest \$85; Child \$55.

Bookings essential. Book now.
www.rasnsw.com.au/member

PRESIDENT'S HIGH TEA

FRIDAY 22 MARCH, BOOKED OUT
Meet RAS President, Mr John C Bennett, OAM, and enjoy a sumptuous afternoon tea prepared by Sydney Showground's new

EXCLUSIVE VENDOR SPECIALS FOR MEMBERS ONLY

Over 300 exhibitors across the Sydney Royal Easter Show are offering an exclusive 10% discount for all Royal Agricultural Society Members. Discounts are across toys, hair styling, pet products, jewellery, fashion, coffee, desserts, candles, photography, bedding and much more!

Keep an eye out for the Member's Only Discounts logo!



Executive Chef, Cyril Miletto. This is John Bennett's first Show as President, come and make him feel welcome.

VENUE: Hordern Café, Members Stand.

EASTER BUNNY

SUNDAY 31 MARCH, 11AM-2PM

Somebunny must have left the carrots out because the Easter Bunny is coming to the Show and we're so egg-cited!

The best Easter is the one spent with your peeps, so hippity hoppity hop them over to the Members Stand for a fun, personalised photo

with somebunny special—the Easter Bunny!

And just in case you're wondering why the Easter egg has to hide, it's because he's a little chicken of course!

VENUE: Hordern Café, Members Stand.



PIGS & PINOT STUD PIG AUCTION

6PM - MONDAY 25 MARCH 2024

The Sydney Royal Pig Auction is a fantastic opportunity to encourage exhibitors with closed herds to come and compete at the Sydney Royal Pig Show, as well as being the perfect place for pig breeders across the country to purchase some of Australia's best Pig genetics to strengthen and improve their breeding lines. Whether a hobbyist or commercial piggery, there will be something for everyone.

To celebrate the return of the Stud Pig Auction to Sydney Royal, we will be hosting an event alongside the auction, Pigs & Pinot, creating a great atmosphere in the Pavillion during the auction.

We invite all RAS Members & industry professionals from the pig & pork industries to attend & connect.

Find Your Happy Place

It's easy to find your happy place at the 2024 Sydney Royal Easter Show!

All your favourite showbags, exciting carnival rides, show-stopping entertainment, farmyard nursery, cattle judging, sheep shearing, chicken hatching, the much-loved Best in Show Dogs, and so much more. There's something for everyone from babies to baby-boomers!

All the quintessential crowd-favourites are returning. Appreciate the tough competition of the cake judging, admire the art of the flower & garden arrangements, and marvel at the iconic District Exhibit displays filled with more

than 10,000 pieces of fresh produce from across New South Wales.

Put your judging hat on as you watch the best of the best in agriculture go head-to-head in the judging ring, from beef & dairy cattle to miniature goats and pigs, the iconic Merino sheep, and even alpaca!

And before the day is out, be amazed by the horsemanship and talent of stunt riders as they perform horse tricks, twirl ropes and herd 20 head of bison in the Main Arena for the very first time.

The Sydney Royal Easter Show is beloved by Australians and has over 200 years of tradition engaging, educating,

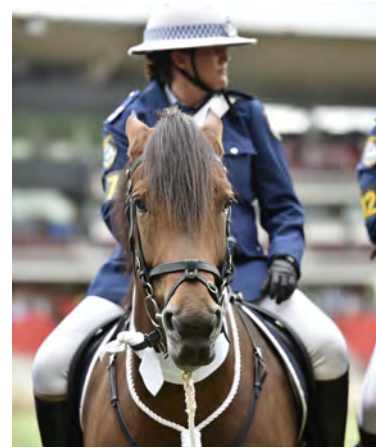
entertaining and uniting our communities. When you come to the Show, you become part of the continuing legacy!

PARADES & CEREMONIES

OPENING CEREMONY

SATURDAY 23 MARCH

The Official Opening Ceremony of the Sydney Royal Easter Show holds tradition near to its heart with marching bands, a parade and inspection of Australian Defence Force troops, a resounding rendition of the Australian



National Anthem, opening remarks from His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, and an address by the President of The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW, John Bennett, OAM. The Official Opening Ceremony will follow the first Grand Parade of 2024, a sight not to be missed.

AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY

TUESDAY 26 MARCH
200 conferees have been invited to take one of the biggest steps of their lives and receive Australian Citizenship, making a pledge and oath to officially call Australia home.

The ceremony, open for all Showgoers to witness, is incredibly moving and serves as a reminder to us all, how blessed we are to live in the land Down Under.

SYDNEY ROYAL HORSE SHOW – POLICE HORSE

You'll marvel at the spectacle of the Sydney Royal Horse Show—Police Horse. Performing Musical Rides, a series of precision drills are performed in time to the live music of the New South Wales Police Band.

This exhibition has received acclaim from many overseas visitors and is considered to be one of the most spectacular police rides in the world.

STREET PARADE

Featuring world class circus artists, dazzling costumes and moves that need to be seen to be believed, you won't want to miss the 2024 Sydney Royal Easter Show Street Parades!

MARCHING BANDS

A Marching Band loves nothing better than a big, appreciative audience, and visitors at the Show love nothing more than non-stop entertainment. It's the perfect combination. Don't miss the musicians, choreography and fabulous tunes!

SHOW FAVOURITES

DISTRICT EXHIBITS

The District Exhibits Competition is an iconic feature of the Show and was one of the exhibits that The Princess Royal, Princess Anne viewed during her bicentenary visit in 2022.

Each display is a unique, creative and elaborate design consisting of more than

10,000 pieces of fresh produce—the best of the best of each region. Exhibiting at the 2024 Show are Central, Northern, Southern & Western regions.

FARMYARD NURSERY

Stroll along the Animal Walk and you will find the Farmyard Nursery—an open-plan indoor paddock with over 750 free-range animals you can pat. Feed the friendly chickens, sheep and goats that wander around, watch playful ducklings on their waterslide, and keep an eye out for the geese and donkeys!

RIVERINA FRESH WORKING DAIRY

A display of modern agricultural technology in action, the Working Dairy offers a behind-the-barn-door look at a modern dairy. You'll see state-of-the-art machinery in operation, watch as cows are milked, and see how today's dairy farmers monitor their herd for maximum performance.

If you've never seen a cow milked before, moo-ve yourself to the Riverina Fresh Working Dairy!

KIDS WORLD

Kids' World Pavilion is outdoors this year creating a new, exciting and interactive

experience for young Showgoers.

With so much to see and do—from face painting and hair braiding to crafts and virtual reality rides—Kids' World is all about fun. Trinkets & toys, squishes & slime, jewels & gems, lollies & lights. A visit to Kids' World is a must for families!

ADVANCE BARK PARK

You had me at WOOF! Have you ever wondered which breed of dog might suit you and your family's lifestyle?

Advice about selecting the right dog or cat for potential pet parents will be available in the ADVANCE™ BARK PARK, which is right next to the dog show rings. The ADVANCE™ BARK PARK will feature dog breeds of all personalities, shapes and sizes for the public to meet, cuddle and take photos with.

You can hug and hang out with the beautiful canines at the ADVANCE™ BARK PARK every day. If you already have a dog, you can ask our team of experts any questions about training, feeding and raising a puppy to be the perfect canine friend. The ADVANCE™ Team looks forward to seeing you there!

PERISHABLE COOKING

Day 1 of the Show hosts Perishable

Cooking judging live, giving both Exhibitors and Showgoers the opportunity to listen, learn and be inspired by the judges' comments. Discover the secrets to a perfect cake and see who will take out the coveted Most Successful Exhibitor Award in the Open and Under 20's competitions.

This is the only live judging event of the Arts & Crafts competitions. Relax in the designated seating area, enjoy the judging commentary, and take on the advice from some of the State's top judges. Watch the tasting and scoring live in action.

FLOWER & GARDEN STAGE

Our team of experts have all the advice you need to get your garden growing like a dream. With tips and tricks about floral design, you can even get your hands dirty in a range of on-stage activities. Bring your questions too—this is your best chance to get all the answers about your garden's needs.

Throughout the Flower & Garden Pavilion, new exhibits are Judged every second day with exhibits remaining on display.

HERITAGE PAVILION

From machinery to show bags, amazing appliances to wearable wool and

everything in between, the Sydney Royal has always been the shoppers' Show. This year we commemorate 100 years since Anthony Hordern & Sons opened a grand flagship store at the Showground in 1924, and today's Heritage Pavilion will be featuring some of the Show's unique shopping trends through the 20th century.

Come down to the Heritage Pavilion to soak up a hundred years of fabulous showtime shopping displays. Indulge in some great hands-on fun activities, and pop into our Snap Happy photo booth—which will be sure to put a smile on your face!

SHEEP SHEARING

The sensational skills of super-speedy champion shearers are showcased every day of Show, along with secrets from the shearing sheds and stories straight from the sheep-shearer's mouths. And if that's not enough, in each shearing session lucky audience members are invited to take up the clippers and give it a go!

ALPACA PROMENADE

We've all walked a dog, but have you ever promenaded with an alpaca? The alpaca walk is now one of the most popular stops at the Show and a firm favourite for anyone looking for a great selfie!

AGRICULTURE COMPETITIONS

YOUNG JUDGES

The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) Young Judges competition is an opportunity for competitors, aged 15-25 years, to try their hand as Judge for Alpacas, Cattle, Goats, Grain, Fleece, Horses, Sheep, Pigs, Poultry, Horticulture and Honey.

Held in conjunction with AgShows NSW, the Sydney Royal Easter Show hosts the prestigious State Finals for the Alpaca, Sheep, Cattle, Goat, Grain, Horse & Fruit Competitions. Competitors must qualify to compete at the Show by winning local, regional show events..

CATTLE

Attracting the biggest and most beautiful beasts from across the country, the Sydney Royal Cattle Show is one of Australia's most prestigious beef and dairy competitions. A win at the Sydney Royal is not only a matter of immense pride for exhibitors but also a major contributing factor to increased auction sale prices.

Consisting of competitions for Beef Cattle, Dairy Cattle, Purebred Steers, and Trade Steers & Heifers, each class will be judged on specific criteria, with structure, yield, temperament, and production being common across all classes.

POULTRY & PIGEON

Chickens, pigeons, ducks, turkeys, geese and even guinea fowl make up the 2500 exhibits in this competition, which has grown steadily since first taking place in 1858.

SHEEP

Australian Merino account for the majority of the world's merino wool, so naturally, competition at the Sydney Royal Sheep Show is fierce.

Merino and Poll Merino (no horns) are judged separately in this premier competition, with judges examining visual characteristics, fleece type, weight, and even performing ultrasound scanning to determine muscle and fat depth.

The Grand Champion Rams and Grand Champion Ewes are then brought together to determine the Supreme Exhibit and winner of the RAS of NSW Supreme Merino Perpetual Trophy.



WOODCHOPPING & SAWING

This year marks 125 years since Woodchop & Sawing competitions first appeared at the Show. In what has traditionally been a male-dominated sport, 2024 has more women entrants than ever before, making up 20% of woodchoppers on the lawn.

Promising world-class action, the Sydney Royal Woodchopping & Sawing Competition is the only competition in Australia to host five world title events including crowd favourite, the 325mm Tree Felling contest.

For the first time at the Sydney Royal, two Women's World Championship titles are being held in 2024:

- 325mm Women's World Championship Sawing Content (Single Handed), and
- 275mm Women's World Championship Underhand.

WRANGLER FEDERATION RODEO CHALLENGE

Rodeos were introduced at the Show in 1931, and ever since the horses, riders, bulls and crowds have kept coming back for more.

In 1935, we invited international cowboys to come and try their luck against the greatest buck-jumping horsemen in Australia, and naturally we reigned supreme.

These days Rodeo comprises the Bull Ride, Bareback and Saddle Bronc, all chasing the elusive 8 seconds, plus the wild excitement of Steer Wrestling.

For six nights only, man will take on

beast and prove once again that the Australian way of rodeo is hold-your-breath, edge-of-your-seat, non-stop thrills and spills.

It's not all just fun and games out there, points earned during competition at the Sydney Royal Easter Show go toward the Australian Professional Riders Association National standings.

At the conclusion of the final round of Rodeo on Tuesday 2 April 2024, a presentation of Champions will be made, as well as the presentation of the Schmidt Family "Argyle" Perpetual Trophy for the highest aggregate point score. ●



Wrangler

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF COWBOYS

Proud sponsor of the Sydney Royal Easter Show Federation Rodeo Challenge

www.wrangler-western.com.au



2024 RAS Rural Achiever Award

The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) is committed to the next generation of agriculture leaders.

The RAS Rural Achiever Award is a state-wide leadership program run by the RAS, recognising young leaders (aged 20-29 years) who are working hard to make significant contributions to their community and to rural Australia.

The program aims to position young leaders with opportunities in primary industries and rural communities by hosting unique industry networking events during the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

The winner of the RAS Rural Achiever Award represents NSW at the National Rural Ambassador Award.

THE 2024 RAS RURAL ACHIEVER AWARD FINALISTS ARE:



GRACE COLLINS
ARMIDALE

Uniting her passion for agriculture and working with young people, Grace currently works two school farms, supervising and assisting during agricultural shows and excursions, as well as showing cattle on weekends throughout NSW. She is currently completing a Bachelor of Agriculture and aims to complete a Master of Teaching, as she sees the need for

accurate and transparent education about farming practices to be taught in schools, both in urban and in rural areas.



GRACE PEARCE
QUEENS PINCH

Grace is a qualified Artificial Insemination Technician who owns and operates ACE Genetics. Grace holds a Bachelor of Animal Science, majoring in Livestock Science and minoring in Livestock Production. Extremely

passionate about her local community, Grace is an active member of the Mullamuddy Bush Fire Brigade and Vice President of the Gulgong and District Campdraft. Grace also takes great pride in her contribution to the family property, maintaining her late grandfather's legacy of super fine merino sheep production. One of Grace's most recent achievements was receiving the 2023 Mudgee Show Society Rural Ambassador Award.



SHANELLE PESCUD
ASHTONFIELD

As a current Marketing and Communications Officer for a Charity and NDIS provider, Shanelle uses her numerous qualifications from the Australian Institute of Management to empower people with additional needs by supporting inclusion, while also striving to maintain the relevance of NSW agricultural shows and societies. Shanelle is the 2023 Newcastle AH&I Show Society Rural Achiever and current member of multiple show societies across the Hunter Valley region, including her role as director of the Maitland AH Show Society. Shanelle uses these platforms to drive the engagement of school aged students to broaden their understanding of the agricultural sector.



JOEL MAGUIRE
PARKES

Holding both a Bachelor of Agriculture and Bachelor of Business with a major in Marketing, Joel has recently established Byng livestock as Co Principle, striving to provide reliable, consistent and profitable genetics to commercial producers, whilst also holding an animal health advisory role for AgriWest

Rural. Through sharing his passion for the industry and involvement in youth and community events, Joel is striving to educate all young people on the importance of agriculture and is working hard to retain our young people within rural communities.



SALLY LEA DOWNIER
TRUNDLE

Sally holds a Bachelor of Agricultural Science and operates a sheep and cropping farm alongside her husband, while also assisting primary producers and landholders across Western NSW affected by flooding, as a Recovery Officer for the Regional Recovery Support Service. In 2018, Sally founded "The Top Paddock", a mental health support service which delivers tailored programs to rural communities in order to educate people on mental health, and to link those who need it to appropriate support services. Sally also volunteers with multiple community organisations, striving to make a difference to all aspects of her community.



REBECCA GEORGE
NYNGAN

After completing a Bachelor of Criminology in 2018, Rebecca moved home to the family farm where she unexpectedly developed a passion for agriculture. Rebecca made a spur of the moment decision during the 2018 Nyngan show to compete in the Showgirl competition, which she went on to win. Through this competition Rebecca learnt the importance of local agricultural shows and discovered a network of people which she now considers her closest friends. Rebecca is involved with the

family business and works closely with her local show societies to ensure rural communities stay alive and connected.



KATHLEEN WEBSTER,
MUTTAMA

Dedicated to providing opportunities to young people who have an agricultural education, and to other arising young leaders, Kate is the coordinator of Youth Competitions for the Wagga Wagga Show Society. Kate also strives to break the mould of young mothers by encouraging young women with children to continue pursuing their goals and their own professional development. Holding a Bachelor of Agricultural Science with Honours, and currently studying for a Diploma of Project Management, Kate is a project manager for MINTRAC, aiming to improve the skills of workers within the meat industry.



EMMA GODSELL
YOUNG

As current President of the Young Pastoral and Agricultural Association, Emma is able to share her passion for rural communities with thousands of people through the Young show. When Emma is not using her certificate 3 in Engineering Trade—Metal Fabrication overseeing the operations within her family's transport company, and carting anything that can be put on a truck, she is working hard to empower women in Agriculture at numerous public speaking forums and educational events. Emma's hard work has been recognised throughout the years with titles such as 2022 Young Show Society Rural Ambassador, and Southern NSW Student of the Year—Innovative Manufacturing, Robotics and Science 2019. ●



Trish, Matt and Peter Mulheron, Swan Marsh VIC

The Woolworths Dairy Innovation Fund has proudly invested \$5 million to support Australian dairy farmers.

The Dairy Innovation Fund was launched in November 2020, to invest a total of \$5 million in around 60 businesses over three years.

These grants have supported on-farm improvements that delivered innovation, efficiency, greater resilience, or enhanced sustainability. Our contribution to farms funded new capital improvements and provided additional funds to help expand existing projects. We're proud to be supporting Peter Mulheron to invest in his farm for the future.

Peter Mulheron received a \$100,000 grant from the Woolworths Dairy Innovation Fund to purchase a modular microgrid system – a shipping container holding mountable solar panels, a battery and an inverter. The microgrid system is transportable, and will allow Peter to power his dairy with renewable energy, and generate revenue when surplus energy is delivered back into the grid.

Scan the QR code out find out more.

Find out more



Enjoy 12 amazing days of non-stop entertainment, animal experiences and competitions, carnival rides and games, showbags and so much more!

2024 MEMBER SHOW INFORMATION

The 2024 Sydney Royal Easter Show welcomes members and their guests. Members can make the most of their time at the Show by taking advantage of these exclusive benefits.

ASSISTANCE

MEMBERS INFORMATION TOWER

Located at the rotunda adjacent to the Members/VIP Show Entry. 1 Showground Rd., Sydney Olympic Park. RAS Membership card collection and general enquiries
Pre-Show Dates: 11 - 21 March 2024
Hours: 8am-4pm (Monday-Friday)
During Show Dates: 22 March - 2 April 2024
Hours: 8am-5.30pm Daily

MEMBER CUSTOMER SERVICE DESK

Members Stand, Main Arena. Purchase merchandise and Member wristbands, and general enquiries.
Dates: 22 March - 2 April 2024
Hours: 8am-9.30pm Daily

MEMBER PHONE ENQUIRIES

Pre-Show Dates: 11-21 March 2024
Hours: 8am-4pm (Monday-Friday)
During Show Dates: 22 March - 2 April 2024
Hours: 8am-9.30pm Daily
Telephone: 02 9704 1144
Service: General enquiries & renewals

SERVICES

PARENTS' ROOM

An exclusive Parents' Room is available for Members and their guests.
Dates: 22 March - 2 April 2024
Hours: 8am-9pm Daily
Location: On the upper concourse of the Main Arena, opposite the Members Stand entrance.

MERCHANDISE

A variety of merchandise will be available during the Show from the Members Customer Service desk in the Members Stand.

BUGGY SERVICE

An eight-seater buggy operates

during Showtime for use by elderly and less mobile Members.

Destinations include P1 car park, Olympic Park Train Station, Accor Hotels and Bus Stop. These are set destinations and we do not pick up or drop off at other locations.

Please note this is a very busy service and we appreciate your patience.

Dates: 22 March - 2 April 2024
Hours: 8am-9pm Daily
Telephone: 02 9704 1144

MEMBER DRESS REGULATIONS

Whether you're enjoying a day watching events in the Stadium, or an evening in Charley Dining Room taking in the entertainment spectacular over dinner, your time in the Members Stand is special. Appropriate smart casual clothing is a key part of the experience for you, your guests and other Members.

Please read the RAS dress regulations before you visit, go to www.rasnsw.com.au/regulations



Members & Their Guests Dining

SHOW DINING AND ENTERTAINMENT

HORDERN CAFÉ

Casual dining in the Members Stand. Don't miss out on the Members only discounted hot breakfast!

Dates: 22 March - 2 April 2024

Hours: 7.30am-9pm

MEMBERS BAR

The perfect location for watching entertainment in the Main Arena. Enjoy live music every night.

Dates: 22 March - 2 April 2024

Hours: 11am-midnight

Live Music: 9pm-Midnight

Venue: Members Stand

CHARLEY DINING ROOM

Charley Dining Room is for Members and their Guests, providing a dining experience the whole family can enjoy.

With stunning views of the Main Arena through floor-to-ceiling

windows, Charley Dining Room is a place of serenity and indulgence amid the excitement of the Show.

Dates: 22 March - 2 April 2024

Lunch: 11.30am-2.30pm

Dinner: 5.30pm-9.30pm

ONLINE BOOKINGS:

BOOKINGS ARE NOW OPEN.

Bookings can only be made by RAS members.

Members bringing guests must ensure their guests have the appropriate access to the Members area.

Call: (02) 9704 1144

Online: www.rasns.com.au/members

DRESS: Smart casual dress code regulations apply in the Charley Dining Room. To ensure your day runs smoothly for both you and your guests, please avail yourself of the dress regulations.

www.rasns.com.au/regulations

NEW 2024 CHARLEY DINING ROOM MENU

The brand-new Charley Dining Room Menu for 2024 includes:

Starters to Share:

- Brasserie Bread, Rosemary & Olssen sea salt butter for 2
- Vannella Burrata, heirloom tomato and basil, with Rio Vista Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- Soft pulled chicken, chargrilled corn, Swiss brown and kale salad Seeds and Tarragon vinaigrette
- Crisp salt and pepper calamari, green mango, mint and sprouts Fresh chilli, Seaweedery Prawn oil

Charcuterie board to share :

- Sunshine Meat double smoked boneless ham
- Sunshine Meat oven roast turkey breast
- Bertocchi capocollo
- Sunshine meat double smoked duck breast
- Gibson Grove Manzanilla olives, cornichons and pickled onions
- Fresh schiacciata, Rosemary and Olssen sea salt butter

Mains:

- Chargrilled Riverina Angus Scotch fillet, potato gratin, broccolini & Merlot jus
- Seared Market fish of the day, roast garlic chats, garden leaves, lemon & herb butter
- Crispy Australian hoki with fries, Zuni pickle, Tartare sauce
- Riverina Angus braised brisket pie, mash potato, peas & gravy
- Crispy chicken schnitzel with mash potato, sauteed green beans & seeds, Mushroom sauce
- Rigatoni pasta, fresh tomato, basil, roasted pistachio, Shaved Pecora Dairy Yarra
- Mountain pepper slow cooked lamb shoulder, Roasted Garlic chats, Davidson plum Gremolata

Desserts:

- Passion fruit tart, Pure Gelato Macadamia Gelato, Strawberry and mint salad
- Gelato Biscoff Sundae

ADVANCE™ is backed by Australian scientific nutrition for all pets

Expert Pet Nutrition™

ADVANCE™



Omega 3 and 6 Plus Zinc

Enhanced levels of natural Omega 3 and Omega 6 fatty acids support a healthy skin and coat and help reduce coat scale. Other nutrients including high quality protein, Zinc and Vitamin A further support skin and coat health.



Antioxidant Vitamin E

Clinically proven to increase antioxidant level. Helps provide a natural defence against Australia's climate.



Fermentable Prebiotic Fibre

Helps support a balanced gut microbiome plus a highly digestible formula promotes healthy digestion, ideal stool quality and reduce stool odour.





A Show Win for Rural Communities!

Sydney Royal Easter Show – Vet Program

For 12 amazing days every year, more than 13,000 animals make the Sydney Royal Easter Show—home. Not your average run of the mill animals, these are the best-of-the-best.

Domestic, livestock and exotic animals from across Australia, come to compete for a win in the premiere Sydney Royal breed competitions at the Show.

Clearly, it is vital to have the very best of veterinary services available on-call for the duration.

At the helm is Dr. Mark Schembri, Chairman of the RAS Veterinary Committee. Harvard educated, Dr. Schembri received the prestigious General Sir John Monash Scholarship in 2009. Awarded by the Prime Minister and the Governor General, the Monash is Australia's equivalent of a Rhodes Scholar.

Every year, Dr. Schembri does something very special at the Easter Show. Not only does he provide the highest care to Show animals, but he is also passing along his knowledge and expertise to vet students.

In a joint education program with the University of Sydney, Schembri welcomes final-year vet students to the Show, teaching them rural veterinary science and encouraging them to work in rural practices.

Agriculture as an industry is at crossroads. While it is core to the prosperity of our country, it is suffering from a lack of skilled workers. There aren't enough people in regional and rural communities to fill all the positions available. Exposing vet students to the work—and animals—that rural veterinary clinics deal with, is a key element to bridging that gap.

Dr. Schembri laughs as he shares, "There is nothing more embarrassing than an owner bringing his animal to a vet clinic, and the vet asking, 'What breed is it?'. In fact, I can recall stories of first-year vet students asking me, 'Is that a goat or a sheep?', and 'Is that cow male or female?'".

This is why Schembri is committed to bringing students to the Show where they can see almost every breed of dog, cattle, horse, goat, sheep, pig, and even alpaca. They learn, hands-on, animal husbandry,

animal anatomy and clinical science.

The program is having success. Robbie Kent, a previous vet student at the Show said, "Getting to know the farmers has been fantastic, and the large animals are really fun to work with." Robbie was so impacted by the experience, that the very next year he moved to work in Scone, in NSW's Upper Hunter shire, north of Muswellbrook.

Another previous student at the Show, Dr. Paul Jenkins, who is now one of our small animal veterinarians, came at it from another angle. What he valued most was knowing that he was working on "people's livelihoods rather than just their pets".

There is so much going on in the background at the Show that Showgoers never see, like vet visits and clinical science lessons. But knowing that the animals they love to come and see are so well cared for, brings comfort and confidence.

This year when you are watching the cows in competition, the horses showjumping, or the kids on Goat Mountain, rest assured that each of the animals at Show are receiving the very best care and attention.

And while you're learning more about agriculture, like how to milk a cow or shear a sheep or parade an alpaca, isn't it interesting to realise that the animals themselves may also be influencing a city vet student to move to the country? Now that's an amazing Show win for rural communities! ●



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Illabo Show

At the heart of all that the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (RAS) does, is a deep commitment to the agriculture industry, which is really a commitment to the greater good of the people and the communities that it operates within.

The role of agriculture communities is vital to the prosperity of Australia, and the RAS could not achieve its mission—to drive the future of agriculture and award-quality animal breeds and produce—without authentic engagement within these communities.

Our partnership, since 2001, with the Prime Lamb Hoof & Hook Competition at the Illabo Show, is a perfect example.

In October each year, representatives of the RAS work with the Illabo Show Team for the opening of competition entries, liaise with the local abattoir for

the processing of lambs, and facilitate data recording during the competition.

The Illabo Show also hosts a High School Section. Students from regional schools that raise lambs have the opportunity to compete. This section is purposed to educate students on raising sheep for meat production.

PRIME LAMB HOOF & HOOK COMPETITION:

The Competition has three stages:

1. Hoof Section: "Pens of 10" prime lambs are entered by growers to be

scanned, ear tagged and classed according to their weight. Lambs are judged on their type, conformation, muscle quality, and consistency across the pen. First, second and third place ribbons are awarded per class, with an overall Champion and Reserve Champion Pen as well.

2. Young Auctioneers: All lambs are then sold in the excitement of the fast-paced Young Auctioneers competition—a showcase of new talent including the up-and-comers from local Stock & Station agencies like Elders and Landmark. Everyone from local buyers to large supermarket chain buyers vie to be the highest bidder.

Both the Hoof Section and Young Auctioneers are a large and popular part of the Illabo Show, providing education and entertainment for Show patrons.

3. Hook Section: From the Pen of 10 lambs, three lambs are chosen at random from each pen to progress through to the Carcase competition.

The RAS facilitates the judging of the Carcase competition and in 2023, worked closely with Gundagai Meat Processors employing their objective carcase measurement technology to measure eating quality. Using Dual Energy X-ray Absorptiometry (DEXA) to measure lean meat yield (LMY), an MEQ Probe to measure intramuscular fat (IMF) and individual animal health reporting, a proprietary GLQ score (Gundagai Lamb Quality Score) is generated. The higher the GLQ score, the better the eating quality of the carcase. The Highest GLQ score is the winner in each class, with an overall Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion Carcase.

JUDGING FEEDBACK

An important aspect of these competitions is judging feedback. The GLQ score data is provided to all growers, not just the winners. Judging feedback is a priority with all RAS competitions because it provides growers with real-time detailed information, from which decisions about livestock management, quality control, and improving the \$/kg yield, can strategically be made.

The RAS values the opportunity to have partnered with the Illabo Show for more than 20 years, as they work hard toward the prosperity of their local communities and the greater good of Australian agriculture. ●

Rural Voices

From Outback Booligal to the Southern Highlands

WORDS OLIVIA GEE

In many corners of the world, the face of farming is female. In areas like South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, women make up the majority of the agrifood systems workforce, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. In Australia, women's participation in agriculture is expanding as new generations take on leadership roles and achieve higher levels of education, setting them on a course to direct the future of the industry.

While roughly a third of on-farm employees around Australia are female, recent data from ANZ shows women are responsible for an impressive 84% of off-farm income. In their work beyond the fields, they're playing vital roles as business planners, bookkeepers, mediators, educators, and succession planners. Two such women are Sandra Ireson and Cressida Cains.

Sandra and Cressida both work with livestock, have each been crowned with the NSW/ACT AgriFutures Rural Women's Award, and excel at connecting and uplifting women in agriculture.

But they followed distinct roadmaps to get to where they are today.

As a sixth generation Snowy Mountains Merino sheep farmer who married a fifth generation Hay district cattle farmer, Sandra's goal was clear from the start. "It was always going to be ag. As soon as I finished school, I studied agriculture." She now manages around 400 beef cattle in Booligal, jumping between the motor bike, the laptop, and numerous community outreach and education initiatives.

Cressida returned to her Southern Highlands roots 17 years ago to set up her family farm, Pecora Dairy in Robertson, after years working abroad and in Sydney's wine scene. "Because we didn't come from a background working with sheep, it gave us the freedom to throw things up in the air and look at them in a whole different way." She's now looking to reinvigorate the local dairy market by broadening the capabilities of small-scale producers.



Cressida Cains,
Pecora Dairy,
Robertson, Southern
Highlands, NSW

While roughly a third of on-farm employees around Australia are female, recent data from ANZ shows women are responsible for an impressive 84% of off-farm income.

But for both women, their ambitions for the industry begin with their properties and produce.

Sandra and her family have a history of donating steers to their daughters' school to be exhibited at agricultural shows, including the Sydney Royal Easter Show. Sandra has also spoken at the Show as the Red Meat Ambassador for Meat & Livestock Australia. She says it's an honour to share her knowledge of caring for livestock and rural environments.

"I would love people to be more aware of what is involved for vegetables or a piece of meat to get onto their plate, and really respect that. I think that's the fantastic thing about the Show: we bring our experience to the city, so people can understand agriculture and some of the technology we're using from the grassroots."

Pecora Dairy's uncooked raw milk cheese, Yarrowa, is the first of its kind made in Australia. It's entirely reflective

of time and place, with macro-factors like soil, pasture, and season expressing themselves in texture and flavour, alongside the seasonal micro-flora encouraged to grow within the cheese. The nature and quality of this depends entirely on the animals and land.

"Our property is heavily wooded, and the ecosystem of the farm is absolutely integral to the health of the animals and the milk. We don't plough any of our paddocks, we use organic fertilisers like chicken manure, and we do everything we can to look after the soil and the pastures holistically," Cressida says.

It's these unique attributes that have helped Yarrowa take out multiple gold placings and Trophy awards in the Sydney Royal Cheese & Dairy Produce Show, including the Champion Cheese of Show title for two years of the last three. It's no surprise other Pecora Dairy rounds have also taken home Sydney Royal titles, such as the complex yet sweet Jamberoo Mountain Blue and the



Sandra Ireson, sixth-generation farmer. Booligal, NSW.

Alongside a dedicated group of neighbours, Sandra developed the Hay Inc. Rural Education Program ten years ago in response to declining opportunities in Hay for up-and-coming jackaroos and jillaroos.

gooey, mould-ripped Bloomy.

Cressida and her family are passionate sustainability advocates, and beyond maintaining a landscape where world-class products can flourish, she says improving the environmental footprint of farms is essential for the future of the industry. “We’re happy we can produce more energy than we use through solar panels and batteries. Farmers need to be seen as the solution to climate change, rather than the problem.”

The way forward: Economic resilience and community connection. Both women are paving the way for future farmers through innovative education and networking platforms. Alongside a dedicated group

of neighbours, Sandra developed the Hay Inc. Rural Education Program ten years ago in response to declining opportunities in Hay for up-and-coming jackaroos and jillaroos.

“We got together and discussed the need to set up a hands-on training program that replicated what they used to do on the stations. So, we sent a letter out to landholders and everyone was very on board, offering us facilities, livestock, and accommodation. It grew from there.” Each year the program invites young people from all over NSW and beyond to get their boots dirty and develop skills that can be used far and wide in agriculture, while creating life-long networks.

“The satisfaction we get as a community from seeing these young

people strive and then following what they do in their ag careers is fantastic,” Sandra says. She has used Hay Inc. as the cornerstone for Engage AG – an adaptable model of the program that rural communities can roll out locally to expand careers in agriculture.

Meanwhile, Cressida is focused on transforming Australia’s dairy farming industry so smaller players can access a larger slice of the profit cheese wheel. Her platform, Dairy Cocoon, is a centralised digital space for farmers to research education options, scholarship applications, and new business models. It includes an analytics tool for farmers to model out scenarios that could help transition their business as milk suppliers into own-brand Aussie producers of various dairy products.

“One way that dairy farmers can have a profitable and resilient business that can be handed on for generations is to value-add, and that goes into all areas of agriculture. Branding is a way for small agricultural producers to take back control of the price point – be price setters rather than price takers – and transform to get that value up the chain,” Cressida says.

“It’s a long conversation, but if I can plant the seed with dairy farmers and they can start looking at the resources and how they could apply them, then I’ve done my job.”

Neither Cressida nor Sandra had their minds set on becoming industry leaders. Now they’ve earned their seats at the decision-making table, both are champions for women and small businesses.

“I think if you’re listening to your communities, and you’re willing to speak up, then the opportunities are there for you and people will listen. You just need to put your hand up,” Cressida says.

Sandra’s advice for all upstarting women in agriculture is to stand strong with your neighbours. “Getting people to the local hall, the pub, or a barbie is so important. Things have been pretty tough with this turnaround in livestock prices, and we need to bring back those supportive community events to have a yarn and share our knowledge about dealing with these issues,” she says.

“I get a kick out of seeing women connect, and the powerful things that can happen out of it. Because it worked for me!” ●



More than a Century of the best from our backyard.

Join us in the **Woolworths Fresh Food Dome** for delicious milkshakes and coffee from leading local roasters!

Explore the Riverina Fresh Milking Barn at Little Hands on the Land for an interactive dairy experience!

Experience live demonstrations of state-of-the-art dairy technology and enjoy a taste of our delicious milk at the **Riverina Fresh Working Dairy. 100% Australian owned.**



@RiverinaFresh



Riverina Fresh milk is available to purchase at **Woolworths** stores throughout NSW, ACT and VIC and other leading retailers.



Small Seeds Grow Big Trees

RAS Foundation Fundraising for rural communities at the Show

The RAS Foundation (Foundation) is the philanthropic arm of the RAS through which scholarships and community building & redevelopment grants are delivered. Its purpose is to build strong, vibrant and sustainable communities in rural and regional Australia.

Every year at the Sydney Royal Easter Show, the Foundation engages in its primary fundraising events of the year, specifically for the Community Futures Grants (CFG) program. The CFG program offers opportunities for community-minded people to be awarded up to \$25,000 in funding for projects in their local area.

CFG Funding has supported projects as simple as new refrigerators in a

community hall kitchen, to portable yard panels for showgrounds, upgrading a historic building's accessibility functionality, and re-roofing a War Memorial Hall.

The Foundation understands that small seeds grow big trees and have seen time after time how partnering with and supporting regional and rural communities in this way, injects more than funding into communities, it injects opportunity for growth.

RESTORING HOPE

Even more than economic sustainability, prior recipients of Foundation funding have said that the Foundation gives more than dollars, "they restore hope" to communities whose finances are

stretched thin and are struggling to recover from drought, fire and flooding disasters.

Foundation events at the Show provide a platform for last year's successes and next year's goals.

RAS FOUNDATION CHARITY BRUNCH, SILENT AUCTION & RAFFLE

The RAS Foundation hosts the Charity Brunch, Silent Auction & Raffle annually at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. Funds raised are directed to a grassroots, non-profit organisation in rural or regional NSW, carefully selected for maximum social and economic impact on the broader community.



Robyn Clubb, Chair,
RAS Foundation.

In 2024, the RAS Foundation Charity Brunch will support: *Making Friends with Food* by *The Root Cause*™.

Our children are the future leaders of this great country but with 44% of Australian children now having a chronic health condition, we need to support them better for a health-span free of illness and give them the ability to build an even better Australia. It is imperative that we empower them to become better friends with all kinds of food, but especially to recognise vegetables and fruit because these are the best friends for their mind and body.

"Making Friends with Food" is an innovative, award-winning food literacy partnership for Australian schools, designed to address alarming rates of childhood illness. It empowers students, parents, and teachers to make better food choices to enhance mood, behaviour and overall well-being.

Join us to raise funds and assist The Root Cause in transforming children's health across the region of Narrabri, Wee Waa and Moree. Approximately 2,000 children will benefit, gaining improved food literacy to understand the profound impact it has on their lifelong health.

The Foundation aims to raise \$25,000. Your support by attending the Charity Brunch and participating in the Raffle and Silent Auction will help shape a healthier future for these rural communities.

Tickets for Members can be purchased online: 2024 RAS Foundation Charity Brunch - Events - Universe
www.rasns.com.au/charitybrunch



Give & Gather Bag

"The Showbag that gives back" has been re-imagined for 2024 with the RAS Foundation proud to introduce the brand-new Give & Gather Bag!

Offering an immersive experience that lets you explore the Showground to gather an incredible range of exclusive giveaways and discounts, the Give & Gather Bag will elevate your day at the Show.

Proceeds from the Give & Gather Bag fund the RAS Foundation's Community Futures Grant (CFG) program—designed to help build strong, sustainable and resilient rural and regional communities.

This year, CFG awards will help to support community projects and programs in Walcha, Lithgow, White Cliffs, Ulladulla, Manilla, Adelong, Lacmalac, Collingullie and Nambucca Heads.

Be part of the RAS Foundation's mission to support regional and rural agricultural communities when you buy the **GIVE & GATHER BAG** at this year's Sydney Royal Easter Show!

Help the RAS Foundation give back, all while exploring the Showground in a new way.

To find out more about these projects, or to make a tax-deductible donation, visit the RAS Foundation stand in the Home & Lifestyle Pavilion at the Show or www.rasf.org.au



From a packet of tacks to a lady's hat...

At this year's Show, the display in the Heritage Pavilion will focus on the theme of Shopping at the Show throughout the twentieth century.

One story stands out from all the others—that of department store Anthony Hordern & Sons. At one time homes, farms and businesses far-and-wide relied on this giant retailer. Think Myer and Amazon all rolled into Bunnings, then add marble and glamour. Over the course of its long history, the great emporium and its owners had strong links to the RAS and the Show that were personal as well as commercial.

It started at around 8 am in the basement where stocks of fancy goods and toys were stored. By the time flames were noticed it was too late; the biggest building fire in Australia's history had taken hold. The westerly wind blowing that winter morning in 1901 did firefighters no favours, and by 10am with half of Sydney gathered to watch, it was clear Anthony Hordern & Sons' huge Palace Emporium was lost. Tragically four men were trapped inside, while a fifth jumped to

his death to the horror of onlookers. Writhing like demons the flames tore through the Haymarket department store, destroying half a million pounds worth of goods.

But the nation's biggest retailer was too big to fail; over 30,000 customers a day relied on the self-styled Universal Provider, which famously claimed to supply everything from a pin to an anchor. Also at stake were the jobs of 2,500 workers.

Proprietor Samuel Hordern swung

into action as soon it was obvious the buildings were doomed, and by early afternoon decisions were made and agreements reached. Incredibly, the firm opened for business again the very next day, setting up overnight in the exhibition buildings at Prince Alfred Park – home of the Royal Agricultural Society's first city Show. Samuel Hordern was the current vice-president of the Society, and his contacts and experience organising the annual event of the Show must have been invaluable as he managed the crisis.

EARLY DAYS

The business began as a humble drapery in 1823, established by Samuel's grandfather Anthony Hordern and his wife Ann. But when it was Samuel and his elder brother Anthony's turn to take over, expansion was rapid.

By the 1880s, *Anthony Hordern & Sons* dominated the retail trade, promising the lowest possible prices on a boggling range of merchandise, with delivery to all corners through their super-efficient mail order service. Country customers selected products from the General Catalogue, a monumental work of over a thousand pages that was produced at the company's own printing works. Bound in red cloth, the enormous compendium circulated all over Australia and throughout the Pacific. According to one source, it was regarded as an indispensable encyclopedia by farmers, settlers, squatters, missionaries and all sorts of men 'from Darwin to the Leeuwin'. It was also said to have been used 'out at the back of beyond, where the Queen's law scarcely ran', as a sacred object to swear on, in improvised courts of justice.

Specialist catalogues were later issued for discreet ranges of products like fishing tackle, beekeeping and poultry supplies, or were printed to coincide with an event—like the Royal Easter Show.

By the early 1890s, the store had a regular presence at the Show, displaying wares in a huge marquee. In 1899 this was replaced with a substantial brick building, situated in a prominent position to catch the eye of visitors as soon as they entered the Moore Park Showground. Inside, it was as if the catalogue had come to life. Though it was an exhibition more than a shop, showgoers could place orders which would be delivered after the Show was over. From the most fashionable to the most prosaic, everything from dining suites to roller-skates to sanitary pans could be seen, along with parts and fittings for trades. A wide range of



Portrait of Sir Anthony Hordern, RAS President 1915-1941.

Think Myer and Amazon all rolled into Bunnings, then add marble and glamour. Over the course of its long history the great emporium and its owners had strong links to the RAS and the Show that were personal as well as commercial.

agricultural equipment was also on display in an outdoor area.

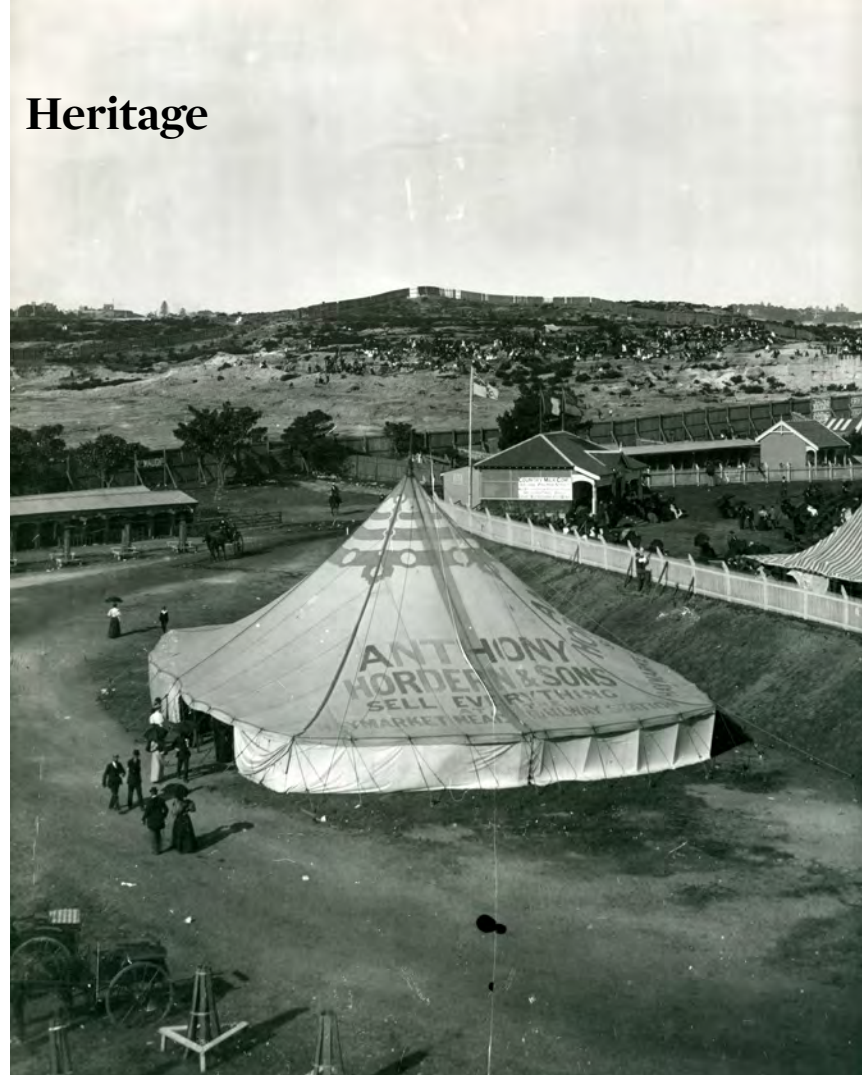
The company had its own offices overseas to directly source imported goods, but it also owned factories locally and was immensely proud of its in-house capabilities. Dotted around Sydney's inner-city suburbs were a cabinet works, a bedding factory, a sheet metal works, a brass and iron foundry, a bicycle and bedstead works, a clothing factory, shirt factory, timber yard and marble works. In part, the Anthony Hordern's display at the Show was a demonstration of progress in Australian manufacturing.

The company was involved in the Show in other ways too, sponsoring many awards and prizes over the years, mostly in horse and poultry classes. Samuel Hordern had a great personal

love of all things agricultural, building his own magnificent country estate, Retford Park, in Bowral, in 1887, not long after taking sole control of the business after the death of his brother.

REBUILDING

After the catastrophic fire of 1901, construction began on a lavish replacement store on the corner of George and Goulburn Streets in the city, where the World Square now stands. The New Palace Emporium, or Senior Store, as it became known, opened in 1905. Extravagantly appointed and full of wonders, it was once the biggest department store in the world, boasting 21 hectares of retail space. At the entrance, imposing marble staircases built by the company's masons



Specialist catalogues were later issued for discreet ranges of products like fishing tackle, beekeeping and poultry supplies, or were printed to coincide with an event—like the Royal Easter Show.

welcomed shoppers. As well as the usual departments one might expect, there was an art gallery, refreshment rooms, hairdresser, post office, tourist bureau, telephone bureau and bank. There was even an electrical workshop for customers' repairs.

At its peak, over 3000 employees served at the store's counters, offices, dispatch centres, warehouses and factories. Staff were respected and looked after; indeed, the whole of the top floor of the shop was given over to the Welfare Department where there were many amenities, including an auditorium for departmental dances and social club events. A community spirit prevailed and news of engagements, marriages, births and deaths, circulated in the staff-run magazine. The success of the great enterprise relied on everyone doing their part.

EVOLUTION

When Samuel Hordern died in 1909 his

son took over. Like his father, Samuel Jnr was a talented businessman and administrator who equally loved rural life at Retford Park. He was a noted breeder and exhibitor of cattle, horses, dogs and racing pigeons, and became the longest serving president of the RAS in its history, steering the organisation through many challenging times. He was knighted in 1919, the same year the Spanish influenza epidemic hit Australia. As president of the RAS, Sir Samuel oversaw the handover of parts of the Showground to authorities as a medical facility during the epidemic; and as governing director of Anthony Hordern & Sons, he also offered the use of the firm's Showground building.

In 1924 that building was replaced by a superb new exhibition space, not to be confused with the famous Hordern Pavilion, which also opened that year (named by the RAS as a tribute to the family). The department store's gracious



new exhibition hall was airy and light inside, featuring a central dome supported by Corinthian columns, around which stock was arranged. Crowning the building was a 35-metre-high tower, a beacon to attract Showgoers.

In 1926 the business of Anthony Hordern & Sons was sold to a public company, but the store's iconic presence at the Show continued for decades. Displays during the 1930s and '40s were particularly glamorous. One year a camping scene was prominent, with grass and trees, a tent, a beautifully adorned picnic table and a five-seater car.

In 1935, Sir Samuel's son, yet another Samuel, joined the RAS Council, chairing the Horse and Dog Committees before becoming ringmaster, then president in 1954. Handsome and easy going, Sam Hordern's natural charm and ability made him a popular president. Tragically his life was cut short when, on the way up from Bowral to attend RAS meetings, he sustained fatal injuries in a car accident. He was 51 years old. The year was 1960, the beginning of a decade that saw the decline of the family's old store. With the rise of suburban shopping centres, retail had changed. To compete, Anthony Hordern's opened satellite stores, but losses continued.

The days of the department store's displays at the Show were coming to a close. In 1968 the pavilion was sold to the RAS to become the Meat Hall. Two years later the entire company was bought out by Waltons and rebranded.

A great oak tree had been the logo of the company, along with the motto: *While We Live, We Grow*. Now the great oak was felled. The era of majestic department stores was over.

For much of the twentieth century Anthony Hordern & Sons and the Royal Easter Show were ideal partners. One organisation brought the country to the city, while the other dispatched the city's goods to the country. Together they celebrated something special – abundance. ●



Keeper of Memories

Spotlight on Karen Finch

Ask anyone at the RAS about Karen Finch, and a smile is always the first response, followed quickly by kind words about what a genuinely nice person she is and how good she is at her job.

As humble as she is shy, Karen Finch has dedicated herself to a pursuit of excellence in archival detail and accuracy of the RAS collection for over two decades. Beginning in 1999 as an employee of The History Company (the outsourced vendor who oversaw the heritage collection), until management of the collection was brought in-house in 2011 when Karen was made Manager—and the Heritage Centre was born.

The RAS Heritage Centre isn't just about the RAS, it is a unique collection of documents, books, photographs, paintings and trophies that provide insight into the history of Australia as a nation and the development of agriculture since the early days of European settlement.

Murray Wilton, General Manager Agriculture & Sydney Royal Easter Show, worked with Karen for a decade until she resigned in December 2023. When asked about the value of the Heritage Centre,

Wilton says "It is integral to the RAS because it is a true and accurate record of who we have been and guides us in who we will become."

In addition to historical Australiana records, the Heritage Centre also maintains a vast collection of Easter Show records, prizes, perpetual trophies, oral histories and the over 100-year-old calèche (horse drawn carriage) that the Royal Family have used in their several visits over the decades. All of which have been under Karen's direct responsibility.

Not only did Karen preside over the RAS collection, but she also established a program to assist regional Show Societies with preservation of their heritage collections. And it was Karen's initiative to convert the Wynne Pavilion into a heritage exhibition area during the Easter Show. This pavilion is an important vehicle for the public display of RAS history and has become beloved by Showgoers.

Of course, the RAS Bicentenary also fell within Karen's tenure. This was a mammoth undertaking, showcasing RAS history and its significant impact upon the survival of the colony in the early years and throughout Australia's history up to present day.

Karen's most recent initiative may

become the most enduring. Under her guidance, the RAS was awarded a significant grant from Ancestry.com to digitise the entire collection. Scanning was completed in September 2023, and public accessibility to the catalogues via the Ancestry platform is anticipated after May 2024.

The Heritage Centre is a memory vault of thousands and thousands of memories trapped in time, but now accessible to millions.

Summing up her more than 20 years, Wilton shared, "Karen has been the keeper of our memories. Her unrelenting dedication to detail and accuracy is testament to her nature to go above and beyond, and the result is that she has left us with a collection in far better condition, in terms of accessibility and usability, than when she received it." ●



Foodie Heaven

Sydney Royal Fine Food Events at the Show

SYDNEY ROYAL ACQUACULTURE JUDGING

SAFEGUARDING AUSTRALIA'S SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

The Sydney Royal Aquaculture Competition believes in safeguarding Australia's international reputation as a producer of safe, sustainable and high-quality seafood products.

Aquaculture is also the only Sydney Royal Fine Food competition where the public can watch judging live! This must-see judging event is where all fine foodies will want to be.

Emcee, Lyndey Milan, interacts with the public, answering questions about Sydney Rock Oysters, the judging process, and the aquaculture industry. Chefs and industry professionals are also on hand sharing their insights.

Judges assess: the uniformity of shape, presentation, texture, colour, freshness and the all-important taste, all while under the watchful eye of Show attendees, media, and key seafood industry professionals.

You will be fascinated as you learn

about the characteristics of Sydney Rock Oysters and how to pick the best ones at the seafood counter of your local market.

When: Tuesday, 26 March, 2024, 10:30am-3:00pm

Where: Woolworths Fresh Food Dome, adjacent to the District Exhibits.

TALK & TASTE

A GUIDED TASTING OF SYDNEY ROYAL WINNING PRODUCTS

You're invited to the table.

Winners of the Sydney Royal Wine, Dairy & Fine Food Shows guide you through an exclusive tasting of their delicious, mouth-watering offerings.

Every plate has a story to tell. Every product, a journey. Our producers share victories and failures, stories and secrets, you will love learning about the journey of farm gate to your plate.

Every Talk & Taste session features tastings from two Sydney Royal medal winning producers, with products like cheese and dairy products, oil and olives,

pasta, beef & chicken, charcuterie, and baked goods.

Hosted by Show favourites Lyndey Milan and Sydney Royal Judges, you will sample and taste Australian home-grown-and-made produce. This truly is a special invitation for the food lovers among us.

If you love what you taste, take some home with you! All products on offer are available for purchase after each session.

When: 22 March–25 March; 27 March–2 April. 10am, 11am, 12noon, 1pm, 3pm, 4pm, 5pm.

Where: Woolworths Fresh Food Dome, adjacent to the District Exhibits.



Each year the President of The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW recognises and rewards Australia's best producers in what is the pinnacle of the Sydney Royal Wine, Beer & Cider, Cheese & Dairy Produce, and Fine Foods competition calendar.

The President's Medal award advances the concept of *quality beyond taste*, and celebrates truly inspirational and innovative agricultural producers who focus on not only award-quality produce, but also environmental, social and economic business practices.

The winner is announced at the President's Medal Dinner Gala Event at the Show on Wednesday 27 March. This is a ticketed event.

The Finalists for the 2024 President's Medal award are:

GUMSHIRE PORK

Gumshire Pork is a pioneering family farm spanning two generations dedicated to high quality and welfare pork production. Managing 300 sows and their offspring, the farm boasts deep litter eco-shelters that blend indoor and outdoor environments. Remarkably, Gumshire

Pork retains 80% of Australia's Hampshire pigs, a heritage breed renowned for its superior meat quality. The Gumshire Pork family ethos underscores unwavering dedication to animal welfare and sustainable practices.

MEREDITH DAIRY

Meredith Dairy is a family enterprise situated in Western Victoria producing sheep and goat's milk, and manufacturing unique niche dairy products for sale direct to both national and export consumer markets. The Cameron family has a deep love of farming and care for the land, and with a vision "to produce food sustainably", every decision is made through a long-term lens prioritising natural resources and ensuring a future for the next generation of farmers.

MOUNTAIN CULTURE BEER CO

Since opening as a brewpub in Katoomba in 2019, Mountain Culture has become

one of Australia's fastest growing beer brands. With annual production rapidly expanding from 60,000L to almost 14 million litres in four years, it is a testament to their uncompromising dedication to brew the best beer in the country. Constantly pushing their limits and challenging themselves, they are now nationally ranged through the majors as well as at over 1,000 independent venues and bottleshops.

PECORA DAIRY

Established in 2011 in NSW's Southern Highlands, Pecora Dairy aims to produce benchmark Australian cheeses, including Australia's first raw milk cheese "Yarrowa". Michael and Cressida Cains believe that raw milk cheeses are the ultimate way to tell the story of their farm on a plate. They take a multi-functional approach where habitat and soil, low carbon footprint, animal ethics and social/community contribution sit alongside as equal objectives to making delicious cheese and operating a sustainable business.

STOCKYARD BEEF

Over the past 65 years, Stockyard Beef has grown into a multi-generational family business. Using a unique natural feeding program, the family breed, raise and feed premium grain-fed Wagyu and Angus cattle at Jondaryan, on the famous Darling Downs in Queensland, and at Glen Innes in northern NSW. Through strong alliances both up and down the supply chain, Stockyard branded beef can be found in award winning restaurants, leading hotels, and amongst family and friends here in Australia and over 20 international markets.

THE FOOD FARM

As first-generation farmers an hour from Sydney, Hannah and Tim are changing the face of regenerative food in Australia. Taking farming to the next level, they grow, butcher and supply Australia's best pasture-raised chicken, beef and eggs direct to consumers every week—without owning a single patch of dirt. With a strong passion for ethical pasture raised poultry farming, they have built a passionate community of consumers and farmers through transparent, heart centred storytelling. ●

For tickets and more information: www.rasnsw.com.au/presidentsmedal



Australian Women in Ag

With Pip Courtney, ABC's Landline.

Australian women have been integral to Australian agriculture from the very beginning.

Elizabeth Farm in Parramatta is Australia's oldest surviving European dwelling, built in 1794 by the colony's pioneer of the wool industry, John Macarthur, and named for his wife, Elizabeth. But Elizabeth's name on the farm gate is more than nominal nomenclature. It could just as easily, and accurately, have been "Elizabeth's Farm".

Described as a formidable character in the early settlement, it was Elizabeth who ran the vast Parramatta sheep estate during her husband's prolonged

absences, including his four-year stint and nine-year stint back in England from 1801-1805 and 1808-1817 respectively. She also continued to operate the estate long after Macarthur's death in 1834.

Despite the primary and key roles that women continued to hold in agriculture, it would be another 200 years exactly before women's legal status on farms would be recognised. It wasn't until 1994 that Australian women could legally claim to be 'farmers' instead of being classified as 'domestics', 'help' or 'wives'.

1994 is only 30 years ago this year,

which means that for the majority of women currently working in Australian agriculture, it has been only during their lifetime that women have been recognised as being more than 'help' or 'wife' and can be legally recognised as farmers in their own right.

Pip Courtney can personally attest to the reality of the dramatic change she has observed regarding women's legal status in agriculture. Pip's name is synonymous with agriculture and journalism alike. Having joined ABC's Landline in 1993 and become Host in



The Residence of John Macarthur 1825 by Joseph Lycett (c) Elizabeth Farm Collection, Museums of History NSW

2012, her career has been focused on covering stories from Australia's rural and regional heartland.

But Pip doesn't just tell ag stories, she understands ag. While her father was the well-known print journalist and editor, Michael Courtney, who inspired her journalism career trajectory, several in her family are on the land. In fact, she studied ag science at school and at one point seriously considered pursuing a career in wool classing.

In a recent conversation about women in ag, Pip was quick to share that *"Thirty years ago, when I first began with Landline and started telling these stories, women on properties could only—legally—be 'silent partners, non-productive'."*

It was a banker who worked with and visited many rural properties back in the day, who relayed to Pip that women's "silent partner, non-productive" legal status often led to an actual, physical silence, even absence, of women in business and financial discussions. Even though it was in fact the women who were managing the books and running the business end of the farm, they would serve the tea and scones then be asked to leave the room.

Most women of a certain age can relate, knowing firsthand that this is the way our mothers and grandmothers were.

The banker's report continues saying that it was his superior who urged him

Described as a formidable character in the early settlement, it was Elizabeth who ran the vast Parramatta sheep estate during her husband's prolonged absences.

to "let the women stay" because women are the ones with a deep understanding of the finances and have the valuable insights. His reasoning included the harsh reality that the men, while busy with day-to-day farming, are also often in denial or not fully realising the financial state their operation was in.

It was important to the bankers that the women be included in financial discussions and decision making in order to ensure that a complete and thorough assessment was made.

In stark contrast to the historic silent-unproductive legal prohibitions, these days it is not uncommon for women to be 50/50 farm owners with their husbands. They're not just bookkeepers in the home kitchen-based office, they are business owners, entrepreneurs and executives in their own right, many with Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees, managing not only family finances but also farm finances, and in a growing trend, are the primary voice when it comes to farm financial decision making.

Statistically, the number of women in

ag as a percentage of the over-all workforce has stayed the same for the past 30 years, at about one-third (Australian Bureau of Statistics), but there is movement at the station and the word is passing around.

For instance, at outback Queensland's Isis Downs station, whose storied history is being over-taken by its forward-facing approach to the future, employment ratios men:women who take on the responsibility of day-to-day operations have reached 50:50 for the first time. In fact, both the head stockperson and weaner supervisor are women, and each of them have an eye toward being future station managers.

Pip shared with me that today even the more traditional male station owners are becoming more pro-women for very practical reasons, for instance:

- Equipment maintenance and repair costs are down—women aren't as rough as their male counterparts with the equipment,
- The quality and quantity of data collection used to drive predictive



Above: Elizabeth Macarthur [portrait by unknown artist] State Library of NSW

to take on the job.

It is also important to point out that recognising women's significant contribution and making a place for them at both the proverbial and policy-making table is purposed to be an inclusionary progression. Including women in more key roles doesn't mean having to exclude men.

Equality can be about balance, not a pendulum swing of imbalances. It simply means making room for all important, influential, informed voices to be heard. Australian agriculture as an industry requires it.

The impact of women in ag can be seen in the practical, measurable outcomes of equipment maintenance cost reductions, data collection improvements, and overall on-farm safety and collegiality. Coupled with their rising influence in financial and business decision making, it is appropriate to acknowledge that women's presence in ag, is more than decorative farm gate nomenclature.

John Macarthur returned to Parramatta in 1817 after his long absences in England. Of the 24 years since he established Elizabeth Farm, he was in England for half of them. Yet upon his return to Australia, John Macarthur is attributed as being the wealthiest person in the Colony.

In the same way that Elizabeth Macarthur was central to the success and prosperity of the merino sheep and wool industry in the inaugural colony years, Australian women in agriculture continue to be integral to ensuring the sustainability of the industry and the nation's future prosperity. ●

The number of young women heading out to properties is on the rise and the future looks positive for those who want to take on the remote, hard-work, on-property life.

technology for stock and crop management, benefits from the attention-to-detail that women bring to the table, and

– Workplace culture is significantly safer and more enjoyable as it has had to morph to a more appropriate and inclusive atmosphere.

These statistics are highly desirous and hard to ignore. From a practical, station management point of view, they are definitive, measurable outcomes of women's growing presence and significant influence upon the industry as a whole.

Interestingly, it was the mining boom that was the catalyst for the shift in trends of women's on-property roles. Agriculture lost a lot of its traditional male workforce to mining, so station owners had to literally take a punt on hiring women—and found out they are very good.

The number of young women heading out to properties is on the rise

and the future looks positive for those who want to take on the remote, hard-work, on-property life. Be that as it may, Pip cautions that the historical lack of recognition of women in ag ought not to be swept under the rug or quickly forgotten. She emphasises this point:

“As we look around, things look good, but for the young women who are not struggling to be hired or promoted, we want them to know that these opportunities have been hard won, and only recently so.”

“They are future leaders in ag and stand on the shoulders of the women who have come before. They carry into the future the ability to influence the roles and opportunities for women in agriculture.”

Considering there aren't enough people in rural communities to fill all the roles in agriculture, it no longer behoves the industry to be resistant to those who, with significant education, experience, skill and passion, have put their hand up



THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF NSW WOULD LIKE TO THANK ITS 2024 SPONSORS FOR SUPPORTING AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RURAL COMMUNITIES IN AUSTRALIA.

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