



Agricultural Bureau of South Australia

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

2019-20 highlights

So much has changed in the world this past year, which makes the achievements of the Agricultural Bureau of SA and our members especially notable in the face of these challenging times.

The **Annual General Meeting** was held in Adelaide on October 18, 2019, followed by the **Spirit of Excellence in Agriculture Awards** presentation dinner.

The **2019 Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship** was awarded to **Paul McGorman** from Milendella in the Mid-Murray region.

Paul's vision? To investigate and develop an innovative business model which encompasses environmental, economic and social sustainability practices, to positively impact on climate change while also growing business revenue. Read more about Paul's achievements with the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) scholarship on page 8.

A love of agriculture and an eagerness to inspire her students about the sector saw Adelaide Hills teacher, **Grace Sampson**, receive the **2019 Rural Youth Bursary** sponsored by Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA). Grace set about creating a program that inspires and teaches young people of the potential opportunities to get into agriculture. Read more on page 9.

Self-employed agricultural consultant **Peter Cousins**, of Crystal Brook, was honoured with the **2019 Services to Primary Production Award** for his extensive contribution to agriculture at both a state and national level.

The **2020 Lois Harris Scholarship** went to Mundulla-raised **Edward Downing**, who is studying

a Bachelor of Agricultural Sciences at the University of Adelaide and has a keen interest in irrigation practice and sustainable irrigation operation. Now in its 21st year, the scholarship recognises high achieving students entering their first year of tertiary education.

The connections with PIRSA and Ag Ex Alliance have been ongoing and continued to strengthen this past year.



The Roberts Verran branch visit Kangaroo Island to lend helping hands.

We celebrated this year with valued ex-officio Board Member and agricultural scientist, **Dr Rhiannon Schilling**, who was recently named a **2020 South Australian Tall Poppy** in recognition of her research into improving crops to overcome soil constraints. Congratulations again Rhiannon!

As the recovery from last summer's devastating bushfires continues, the Bureau commends the Roberts-Verran branch for extending their hearts and hands to Kangaroo Island farmers. Chartering a bus from Port Lincoln, 27 Eyre Peninsula farmers travelled to KI to provide practical support for the Island's bushfire impacted farmers. The three day trip was funded through a South Australian Government Connecting Drought Communities Events grant and generous support from The Wyatt Trust, PIRSA, Bendigo Bank Tumbly Bay, CBH Grain, MGA Insurance and CPH Accounting.

The Agricultural Bureau of SA managed project funding of \$270,371 to increase the adoption of evidence based sustainable production methods. Sponsorship of \$18,636 was received towards member projects.

Ag Bureau Chair Mark Grossman (right) with Lois Harris scholarship winner Edward Downing.



About us

Helping to bridge the gap between scientists and farmers, the Agricultural Bureau of South Australia (Ag Bureau) is encouraging excellence in agriculture, business management and the sustainable management of natural resources.

Representing the interests of South Australian farmers, the Ag Bureau communicates regularly with government and other agencies on issues that affect the farming community, including research and development, farming practices and education. This includes PIRSA, DEW, the University of Adelaide and the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI).

A not-for-profit organisation with more than 1300 members across 60 branches across the State, the Ag Bureau was established in 1888 and is the only farmer network group of its kind remaining in Australia. Membership is open to primary producers and those with an interest in the State's agriculture industry.

Members are provided opportunities for professional development, collaboration on common challenges, project funding, application support, knowledge exchange and crucial local community support.

Young farmers are mentored by experienced Bureau members and the annual Spirit of Excellence in Agriculture Awards recognises, encourages and supports young farmers and rural youth who are pursuing careers that will sustain rural communities, with prestigious and generous scholarships.

Ag Bureau branches foster the development of vibrant communities and industry networks and provide resources to branch members including relevant Codes of Practice, local, state and federal grant and project funding opportunities, agricultural related articles by farmers and industry advocates.

For more information or to locate your nearest branch visit agbureau.com.au.



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Chair's report

On behalf of our dedicated board, I am pleased to share with you the achievements of the Ag Bureau of South Australia over the past 12 months.

What a year it has been. Drought, catastrophic bushfires and now a once-in-a-hundred year global pandemic have all tested our rural communities like never before.

Seasonal conditions across South Australia have ranged throughout the State and have been highly varied for 2020. Some farmers are looking at a bumper season while others face the prospect of another dry year and poor yields.

Many of you will also know that tragedy struck the Grossman family earlier this year through the loss of our home to a fire. We have sincerely appreciated all the care and support from the Ag Bureau community as we continue the recovery and rebuilding process.

Our AGM was held in October and we warmly welcomed to the Board Bevan Oster, who has been a member of the Ag Bureau since 1980 and Clem Fitzgerald who has farmed in the Buckleboo and Kimba areas since 1971.

Both David Edwards and Allan Zerna officially retired, and on behalf of the Board and members, I thank them both for their extensive contributions, service and commitment over many years, both on the Board and as members.

An annual highlight for the Ag Bureau is our Spirit of Excellence in Agriculture Awards which, once again, delivered a stellar line up of passionate and talented rural innovators. The quality of applications made judging the finalists and winners difficult, however they also demonstrated

the high calibre of talent we have in the agricultural 'pipeline'. This is especially encouraging and reassuring with COVID-19 and global politics impacting our import/export markets and Australia seeking food security through local suppliers.

The Spirit of Excellence Awards is made possible through our generous sponsors, the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) and Primary Industries and Regions SA. Their valuable scholarships are helping to support some of our state's most inspiring and motivated individuals who are truly passionate about agriculture.

You can read about the achievements of 2019 Spirit of Excellence Award winners, Paul McGorman and Grace Sampson, on page 8 and 9.

Ag Bureau members were involved in a number of activities during the year from rolling up their sleeves to help fire affected KI farmers, to supporting critical research. Please read more in the following pages.

On another personal note, after eight years as Ag Bureau's Chair and nine years as a Board member, this month wraps up my term with the Board. I would like to extend my personal thanks to our dedicated Board, branches and members for their commitment and support over the years.

It has been my absolute pleasure to lead the Ag Bureau and represent the interests of South Australia's farming families and communities and I wish each of you all the very best for the future.

Mark Grossman

Chair - Agricultural Bureau of SA



Vale Anne Madden

Hundreds of farmers across the state will remember Anne Madden as the ever present administrative support to the Advisory Board of Agriculture, the governing body of the Bureau.

Sadly Anne passed away on 29 May 2020 after a short series of illnesses.

Her funeral was held, mostly through Zoom streaming but attended by 22 of her closest. The eulogy was delivered by Professor Rob Lewis, Anne's brother-in-law who many will know from his active involvement with the Ag Bureau as head of the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI).

For those who knew Anne well from her long career in the Department of Ag/PISA/PIRSA and the Ag Bureau, they may have thought agriculture was the major feature in her life but, as the tales unfolded at her funeral, this was far from true.

There was her love of travel, her cars, cats and gym work outs. Her mighty Crows, tour guiding of the new Adelaide Oval and most of all, of her vast worldwide network of friends from decades of travel.

Nonetheless, here we celebrate her contributions to the Advisory Board and the Ag Bureau.

After various administrative roles in the Department, Anne joined the Advisory Board in the late-nineties and in the following 20 or so years she:

- organised the regular meeting agendas, venues, accommodation and catering
- took the minutes, arranged the payments to members
- supported the Executive Officer and the series of Chairs
- made sure the sites at the various field days around the state were set up

- was instrumental in making sure the annual regional dinners, run in conjunction with the AGM, ran as seamlessly as they did, and
- most importantly was the glue that bound the Ag Bureau network together by being always available, enthusiastic, and helpful to anyone who made contact for assistance or advice.



Through all that Anne developed a huge network of friends and associates around the state, many of whom sent in their condolences at this sad time. She became something of a legend for her tenacity, patience and perseverance in working with the widely disparate group of farmers who made up the Ag Bureau.

To quote Rob from his eulogy:

"When her many friends and work mates entered her circle, the result was the same, she totally endeared herself to those she interacted with."

"Annie may have been short in stature, but this did not in any way restrict her passion and enthusiasm for everything she set out to do."

"In every situation her infectious approach to life, vitality and personality attracted the enduring friendships which she very diligently maintained. Her much appreciated personal attributes are reflected in a selection of extracts from the flood of condolence messages from her wide diaspora of friends."

Of particular relevance to Anne's affection for the Advisory Board:

"Annie truly enjoyed undertaking this role - one farmer this week wrote Annie had a genuine interest in our lives and families."

It goes without saying that the Ag Bureau has been a major force for good for South Australian agriculture and in no small way, behind that, was the mercurial Anne Madden.

Written by Greg Cock, Rob Lewis, Deane Crabb and Meg Partridge.

Long-standing member awards

The Board recognises and congratulates the following long-standing members on reaching their milestones. Thank you for your continuing contributions to our work.



Lowbank & District
Dwayne Leske



Boors Plains
H.R. Phillip Fuss



Lowbank & District
Trevor Kuchel
Moonta
Philip John Woodward

Governing body

Comprising representatives from each of the Bureau's regions, the Ag Bureau Board is strengthened with members from government, research bodies and agriculture education.

Representing the interests of South Australia's farmers to government, the Board contributes to the extension of emerging agricultural research and development by managing innovative projects.

The Board also manages the annual Spirit of Excellence in Agriculture Awards which recognises and celebrates the achievements of young people. It provides winners with financial support to pursue a career of excellence in agriculture and helps promote Bureau membership to a young and vibrant audience.

As a governing body, the Board is responsible for:

- managing/administering finances, insurance, awards and projects
- preparation/distribution of submissions on industry relevant issues
- facilitating the implementation of research, extension and training programs to enhance agriculture, business and management
- promoting the Bureau's aims, objectives and achievements and the importance of sustainable resource management to the broader community
- providing a view forward to industry bodies and government departments on behalf of members.



Thank you to our sponsors

The Ag Bureau has continued to deliver educational activities and events to support its valued branches and members throughout the year.

COVID-19 restrictions proved tricky initially, however our members are well accustomed to adapting, and it was heartwarming to see branches embracing online technology to deliver events and maintain contact with isolated members.

We take this opportunity to extend our sincere gratitude to our sponsors and supporters who have helped make these possible, in particular:

Department for Environment and Water (DEW) and Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) who generously allocated funding towards the Spirit of Excellence in Agriculture Awards.

The DEW Sustainable Agriculture scholarship (\$8000) was presented to Paul McGorman at the 2019 Spirit of Excellence in Agriculture Awards.

Paul is committed to developing a suitable farming model which comprises environmental, economic and social sustainability for his family's farming business, St Ives, a 2700 acre property on Kangaroo Island. More on page 8.

PIRSA again enabled us to offer the **Rural Youth Bursary (\$5000)** to inspirational young agriculture advocate, Grace Sampson. Integrating agriculture into Murray Bridge High School's curriculum, Grace is providing students with "a more solid foundation" in ag. More on page 9.

We also acknowledge the dedicated team at **Rural Business Support** for supporting our Spirit of Excellence in Agriculture Awards dinner.



Government of South Australia
Department for Environment
and Water



Celebrating the Spirit of

A Mid-Murray man's vision for a farm business model that encompasses environmental, economic and social sustainability practices, and plans by an Adelaide Hills teacher to develop an education program to boost attitudes towards agriculture in high schools, have been recognised at the 2019 Spirit of Excellence in Agriculture Awards.

Former Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development Tim Whetstone and the Executive Director – Strategy, Science and Corporate Services, for the Department for Environment

and Water, Sandy Carruthers, presented the Agricultural Bureau of South Australia Awards at a dinner on Friday 18 October, which was attended by 80 guests.

Generously supported by the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) and Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA), the Awards offer young farmers and rural youth the opportunity to pursue personal and professional development to benefit their local communities.

Chair of the Agricultural Bureau of South Australia, Mark Grossman, said the judges were met with



Pictured with Ag Bureau Chair Mark Grossman (centre) are the 2019 Spirit of Excellence Award winners from left to right: Lois Harris Scholarship winner Nicholas Riddell, Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship for Farmers winner Paul McGorman, Rural Youth Bursary winner Grace Sampson and Services to Primary Production winner Peter Cousins.

Excellence Awards 2019

applications of an exceptionally high standard, which resulted in the narrowest of win results for both awards.

"We're confident that all of this year's finalists will continue to influence South Australia's agriculture industry and their communities for the better and be worthy recipients of any time and money invested in them," Mark said. "The Ag Bureau encourages all of this year's applicants to continue pursuing their dream projects."

A few of the standout projects and ideas from the 2019 finalists included:

- plans to visit jujube plantations, universities, research centres, and processing facilities in the north of China to study sustainable practices to increase the profitable production of jujube;
- research trips to visit farms which are using natural intelligence farming and regenerative agriculture methods to better utilise the natural microbial activity to boost crop production;
- further education in soil science and nutrition farming to align with a sustainable/regenerative farming philosophy.





“Winning the Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship in the Spirit of Excellence in Agriculture Awards has been a big motivation for me.”

Paul McGorman

Scholarship win supports Paul’s new business model development

Committed to developing a suitable farming model for his family’s farming business, Paul McGorman’s winning 2019 Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship application comprised environmental, economic and social sustainability property practices.

Together with his wife Kimberley, brother Alex and sister-in-law Fiona, Paul runs ‘St Ives’, a 2700 acre property at Parndana on Kangaroo Island. They were running ewes on the land before December’s double tragedy hit the family.

Paul and Alex lost their dad just two weeks before the bushfires destroyed 25 percent of their property.

Experiencing grief, traumatic bushfire recovery efforts and the COVID-19 pandemic, Paul could have been forgiven for sidelining his scholarship plans, which included permanent irrigation, a hazelnut orchard inoculated with French black truffle, grasses and containment yards for livestock.

Instead, he doubled down on his desk-based research efforts to progress the strategic design

of his business model for St Ives. Thanks to online webinars, he continued to build his knowledge in truffle growing, soil integrity and regenerative practices as well as expanding his valuable network of farmers and consultants.

“Winning the Sustainable Agriculture Scholarship in the Spirit of Excellence in Agriculture Awards has been a big motivation for me,” Paul said.

“Given the year we’ve had, with dad passing away and then the fire, it would have been easy to let my plans slip, but the scholarship and timeline have been great to keep things moving along.”

Paul says the awards are an opportunity to create connections and a great motivator if you have a project you are clear about.

“Applying for the Spirit of Excellence in Agriculture Awards is straight forward. It’s a smooth and simple process and if you know what you want to get out of it, the award can help you to achieve results.”

Grace is integrating agriculture into school curriculum to inspire students

For Rural Youth Bursary winner Grace Sampson, of Nairne, her love of agriculture and enthusiasm to inspire and educate South Australia's young people motivated her winning application.

Two weeks after winning the award, Grace was offered the role of Agriculture/Science teacher at not one, but two regional high schools. Thrilled to accept the position at Murray Bridge High School, Grace has been busy integrating agriculture into the school's curriculum to provide students with "a more solid foundation"

to agriculture education.

"I finally landed the job that I was looking for and needed in order to support my idea of the educational program," Grace said. "I'm completely surrounded in the educational sector and I'm gathering all the pieces to keep building on my ideas."

Grace used the \$5000 Rural Youth Bursary to attend the National Ag Teachers Conference in January, where she met many like-minded people and made connections 'in all the right places'. She learned what other teachers are

delivering and identified gaps that need filling.

There were a number of other courses Grace had lined up for 2020, however they have been cancelled or postponed due to COVID-19 and she will participate in these when the opportunities arise.

"On the whole, applying for and winning the Rural Youth Bursary has been so positive for my career and has helped me land a job I'm loving. I'm determined to keep the momentum going and carry things further to help boost positive attitudes towards agriculture."



"...applying for and winning the Rural Youth Bursary has been so positive for my career and has helped me land a job I'm loving."

Grace Sampson



Ag Bureau projects 2019-20

New projects

Eyre Peninsula Natural Resources Management Board – Buckleboo and Kimba

Ameliorating red and white sandy soils with high soil strength

April 2020 to April 2023 – \$11,000

This project will assist Buckleboo Farm Improvement Group (BFIG) to meet grower demands for development of knowledge and capability to implement the most appropriate strategic tillage practices.

The project is designed to improve soil health through improved soil carbon, soil biology, better nutrient use and management of soil structure leading to increased profitability, while reducing negative environmental impacts (soil acidity, nutrient leaching etc).

This project will allow BFIG to investigate effects of nutrition applied in deep ripping through an existing GRDC project on Buckleboo's Red Sands, and replicate the trial south of Kimba on a white salacious sand.

National Landcare Program – Streaky Bay

Increasing available root depth and overcoming pH constraints on calcareous soil through application of machinery and organic matter

January 2020 to April 2023 – \$10,000

The aim of the demonstration is to trial two different machines (Reefinator and FAE Rock Grinder) to break up profile stones and the rocky subsurface layer to increase useable root depth and increase available nutrients within such stony rises.

Treatments will also subsequently include application of organic matter, such as sowing of medic or applying pelletised Lucerne, to treat the currently highly alkaline soil, improve phosphorus availability for crops and enable the stony rises to become productive farming land.

This project will measure the increased production that can be obtained and the financial viability of undertaking this demonstration on a large and small scale.

National Landcare Project – Mid North and Yorke

Increasing farmers knowledge and skills to manage 'emerging' soil acidity to improve soil health, crop and pasture production

June 2020 to October 2022 – \$47,260

The Ag Bureau has contracted Rural Solutions to carry out the requirements of this funding agreement.

With more intensive and productive farming systems in the Lower North and on the Yorke Peninsula there are now areas with emerging issues of soil acidity where this has not occurred before.

The growth of high value crops such as lentils and chickpeas are highly sensitive to low pH (acid) soils. Due to acid soils these crops are going yellow, not nodulating well and dying in patches.

This project will work with two Ag Bureau groups to demonstrate innovative technologies such as the Veris® soil pH mapping machine to show the spatial variation of soil pH across paddocks.

The soil pH mapping work and decision support tools will be used in workshops to increase farmers' awareness, knowledge, understanding, skills and management to treat acid soils. After the workshop farmers will have the capacity and capability to make informed decisions to improve soil health, crop production and profitability.

Ag Bureau projects 2019-20

Completed projects

Primary Industries and Regions SA – Roberts Verran

Connecting Drought Communities Events

September 2020 – \$10,000

Assist fire affected farming families of Kangaroo Island with 30 drought affected agricultural producers from Eastern Eyre Peninsula.

The bus trip will build friendships, support mental health and gain an appreciation of another agriculture sector doing it tough. Volunteer fencing will be conducted through BlazeAid.

National Landcare program – Buckleboo

Grant offer for regenerative agriculture program soil carbon demonstration

February 2020 to April 2023

\$10,000

Undertake a cropping trial using biological farming techniques to address key soil constraints across our soil types that have subsoil boron and heavy greyish salt scalded low productive areas known locally as “magnesia” patches.

Due to a combination of heavy textured topsoils and low soil cover our soils are biologically inactive for long periods of time due to low and variable rainfall and high levels of evaporation.

Evaluate the use of biological fertilisers, high grade worm liquid and compost extract to increase soil health, enhance microbial activity within the soil, and increase root system growth enabling the plant to explore the soil for moisture and nutrition.

South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board – Point Pass

Gone with the wind; managing soil erosion in marginal country

September 2019 to May 2020 – \$2900

The loss of topsoil through wind erosion is devastating to witness. Last season was incredibly dry and the forecast for this season is not looking any better. This five hour workshop aims to provide landholders with advice on how to reduce wind erosion, particularly through emergency tillage in cropping country and explain the implications in grazing systems.

Mary Anne Young highlighted the erosion risk and emergency tillage in cropping systems, Northern and Yorke Natural Resources Management (NY NRM) Native Vegetation Unit staff discussed emergency tillage in unimproved grazing systems, Anne Brown from Greening Australia discussed using natural assets.

National Landcare Program – Franklin Harbour

Franklin Harbour Agriculture Bureau and Leonie Mills Elbow Hill soil carbon demonstration

February 2020 to April 2023 – \$10,000

Phosphorous availability in highly calcareous soils and production of dry matter is of concern. The demonstration will trial different treatments to improve phosphorous availability and cropping option to increase production and improve soil cover.

The demonstration will use ripping with inclusion plates, normal fertiliser applications and liquid phosphorous (P). The site will be crosshatched with a range of cereal that will be assessed for biomass production.

The project will evaluate how effective deep ripping and injecting liquid P can improve the availability of phosphorous availability to plants and which cereals will utilise the phosphorous to produce better biomass for soil protection.



Pictured left to right: Clem Fitzgerald, David Edwards (retired), Ag Bureau Chair Mark Grossman, Bevan Oster, Janette Ridgway, Darren Kennedy, Peter O'Neil and Allan Zerna (retired).

Our Board Members

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Meet our Board Members



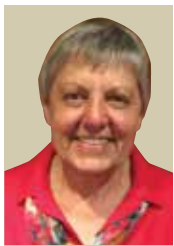
Mark Grossman, Chair

Mark represents the Barossa and Light region and has been an Angaston Ag Bureau member since 1982 where he held all office positions. He operates a family primary production partnership in the Angaston and Sedan regions with enterprise including sheep (self-replacing merinos, 1st cross ewes, prime lambs and operating Koonawarra white suffolk, border Leicester and Poll Dorest studs, cattle, cropping and viticulture. He is a board member of Australian White Suffolk Association and Vice President of Angaston AH&F Show Society.



Bevan Oster, Vice Chair

Bevan has been part of the Petersville Ag Bureau since 1980. He spent many of his early years shearing in the Petersville area and later farming. In 2003 Bevan moved to Hamilton, Victoria, where he was involved with the Southern Crop Group. In 2012 he returned to farm at Dowlingville. He has a strong interest in the history of the Ag Bureaus in his region and is confident the Petersville branch has a strong future despite current farming challenges.



Janette Ridgway, Treasurer

Janette is Treasurer and representative for the South East Ag Bureau branches. As a farmer, Janette works on a mixed farming enterprise with her husband and son. Their farm is east of Bordertown, and they grow broad acre crops, have a sheep enterprise as well as a horticulture business growing gladiolus bulbs. Janette has a passion for agriculture, community and family and brings these skills and understanding to the Board along with a desire for learning and sharing of information.



Peter O'Neil, Board Member

Peter has been farming beef cattle in the Parawa district for 30 years. Peter is a councillor on the Yankalilla Council, and has been a Rotary volunteer for more than 30 years, also serving as President during that time. Peter has an extensive history of corporate governance as a previous Director and Board member for Weber Barbecues, Real Estate Institute of SA and Blaik O'Neil P/L. Peter sees the Ag Bureau as an opportunity to advocate for a better relationship between Government and frontline producers.



Clem Fitzgerald, Board Member

Farming in the Buckleboo and Kimba areas since 1971, Clem was a founding member of Buckleboo Farm Improvement Group and has been a member of many ag groups including the Stock Owners Association and the South Australian Farmers Federation. To get the best out of their land, Clem's family changed their systems 25 years ago to no till, implemented liquid systems and variable rate seeding. Clem has served as mayor and chairman of numerous State and Federal committees and spent time with the Local Government Association (LGA) at regional and state executive level.



Darren Kennedy, Board Member

Darren became a member of the Ag Bureau in 2010 and his enthusiasm for the organisation led him to stand for President of Baramba Branch in 2013 - a position he still holds. Darren is a second generation farmer in the Glossop region, managing wine grape and dried sultana properties. He believes the Ag Bureau's history and standing make it the ideal vehicle for moving information and ideas from legislation to grassroots farmers and back, in an informal setting that "gives voice to the non-activist within the rural community."

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PATHWAY TO IMPROVEMENT



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