



28 October 2003

Ms Susan Madden
Secretary
Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc.
GPO Box 1108
Sydney NSW 1043

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www.nswfarmwriters.org

Dear Ms Madden

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc. – Annual Report 2002 – 2003

I have much pleasure in submitting my report on the activities of Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc. ("Farm Writers") for the 2002 –2003 year.

Committee

At the annual meeting held on 25 October 2002 the following members were elected to the committee and have subsequently undertaken the responsibilities assigned below.

Stuart Hutton	President	
Colin Munro	Vice President	Speakers Liaison
Bev Jordan	Vice President	Corporate Members
Cheryl Kalisch	Secretary	
David Stoate	Treasurer	
Andy Royal	Past President	Newsletter
Noreen Coulton	Committee	Venue Liaison
Jamie Graham	Committee	Front of House
Sandy Grieve	Committee	Publicity officer
Helen Murray	Committee	Website
Ron Aggs	Committee	Media Liaison
Chris Dodd	Committee	Membership Secretary

During the year Cheryl Kalisch resigned from the committee to pursue further studies at the University of New England, Armidale. Cheryl had made a significant contribution to Farm Writers during her time on the committee and as secretary and we wish her well in her PhD studies. We are grateful that Susan Madden agreed to assume the role of secretary and I thank her for an excellent job.

Since then the committee has been further enlarged with the addition of Alan Dick, who has taken on the responsibility of writing the feature articles in the monthly newsletter, and Amy Lawrence who has taken over the responsibility of media liaison from Ron Aggs who has not been able to attend recent meetings.

I wish to express my appreciation to the committee who have worked tirelessly to contact and engage an interesting array of speakers, manage the function centre and in general make sure all of the seminars ran smoothly. Their support in the management of the business of Farm Writers has been outstanding and the achievements of the year would not have been possible without that support. I am delighted that all of the committee members, with the exception of Ron who is not able to spare the time, have agreed to stand for re-election.

Financial

Farm Writers Treasurer, David Stoate will present a full financial report to the members, however I am pleased to report that the Association's financial position has improved further during the year as a result of well attended meetings and a healthy membership. Profitability declined as a result of further cost pressures particularly in relation to the website and seminar expenses.

Functions

Farm Writers held eleven functions during the year which were attended by 629 members and guests, an average of 57 per seminar. A full schedule of the seminars, including details of guest speakers, topics and corporate members is attached to this report.

The quality of the speakers and the topics discussed is reflected in the excellent support from the members and their guests. The provision of this form of information transfer from high profile speakers is competitive in Sydney with FarmWriters competing with a number of other non-agricultural organisations seeking to attract people who are time poor or have limited budgets. This presents a challenge to continue to find top line speakers.

I take this opportunity to thank all of our speakers who have performed so well during the year. The range of topics covered and the quality of the presentations was outstanding. I do not propose to single out any of our guest speakers as I think all of them gave well prepared and interesting talks and the combination of the topics made the year as successful as it was.

Corporate Members

The introduction of corporate membership some years ago reflected the changes then taking place within Farm Writers and the changing demographics of the attendees at the monthly luncheon functions. During the year the committee has been conscious of this support and have endeavoured to ensure that in selecting guest speakers they did so in the interests, not only the membership generally, but particularly the corporate members. I am pleased to report we continue to enjoy increasing support in terms of corporate membership and as a result attendance by corporate members and their guests now accounts for the major part of or support.

ACAJ and IFAJ

Farm Writers continues to provide financial and personnel support to ACAJ and its programs. During the year Farm Writers provided financial support for Vice President, Bev Jordan to attend the IFAJ annual congress in Holland. It is proposed to provide financial support to one or more delegates to the 2004 IFAJ congress which is to be held in South Africa. This is in recognition of the tremendous support that the South Africans provided to ACAJ (and Farm Writers) when the last IFAJ congress was held in Australia.

Website

Following the completion of a survey of members late last year it became apparent to your committee that it needed to improve the look and functionality of the website although it was noted that over 90% of seminar bookings were made via the website. Since then a great deal of work has been done by a sub-committee led by Helen Murray, which has led to the redesign and refurbishment of this site. I am particularly pleased to announce that the new website is now open and I recommend all members fully explore it. We are now seeking sponsorship of the site from interested corporate parties.

The coming year

If re-elected my committee propose to continue to accept the challenge to try to provide an interesting group of speakers and topics. We are considering holding some of the monthly meetings as breakfast meetings in recognition of the time commitments many of our members work under.

We also propose to further seek out ways to encourage young rural journalists to excel in their profession. To do this we will examine the possibility of the introduction of reward programs or some form of bursary possibly in conjunction with ACAJ.

Lastly, I would like to thank the members for the opportunity of being your President for the last year and assure you I will continue to apply the same effort and energy to the tasks ahead, if re-elected.

Yours sincerely

Stuart Hutton
President