



GPO Box 1108
Sydney, NSW 2001

29 August 2008

Ms Emily Ray
Secretary
Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc
GPO Box 1108
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Ms Ray

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc – Annual Report 2007/2008

I am pleased to submit the following report on the activities of the Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc ('Farm Writers') for 2007/2008.

Committee.

The following members were elected to the committee at the Annual General Meeting held on 28th September 2007.

Tim Powell	Vice President	Events/Publicity (including Newsletter Editor)
Mick Keogh	Vice President	Members (including Corporate Member Liaison)
Emily Ray	Secretary	
Richard Hincks	Treasurer	
Jamie Graham	Committee	Front of house
Sally Davison	Committee	Membership Secretary
Colin Munro	Committee	ACAJ Liaison
Mitch Adermann	Committee	Regional Broadcast Co-ordinator/front of house support
Nicole Tyzack	Committee	Venue Liaison
Susan Tindall	Committee	Newsletter/Member Recruitment

I would like to thank the out-going committee for their cheerful efforts over the past year. It goes without saying that without their energy and commitment Farm Writers would not continue to function – and the smooth running and high standard of the events is testament to their effort. It gets more difficult to fit a volunteer role into a busy professional and personal life and I appreciate the time, effort and support of each of them. As with any volunteer committee, some are more active and give more than others. It has been a difficult year for some members of the committee, yet they have remained committed, active when they could (sometimes when they couldn't really!) and returned to active duty with enthusiasm. To those who helped fill the gaps when they occurred– your generosity and support has been much appreciated by me and your other committee colleagues.

And in that vein I'd like to recognise the contribution of Tracey Allen and Bill Cordingley, who were co-opted to assist the committee during the year. Both will now stand for the committee and, if elected, will, I'm sure, make a great contribution.

I'd particularly like to thank Stuart Hutton, who, as Immediate Past President, is an ex officio member of the Committee. Again this year, Stuart has been active and supportive - volunteering to cover two other roles when it proved necessary. And also the other members of the Executive, Tim Powell – who has been an active and supportive Vice President, and the out-going Treasurer, Richard Hincks, and Secretary, Emily Ray, who have gone about their roles with quiet efficiency making my life easier in the process. They and some members of the committee will not stand for re-election either because of pressure of work or personal circumstance. My thanks and best wishes to each of you.

In particular, I want to mark the resignation of two stalwarts of the Association over the years, Colin Munro and Jamie Graham. Both have given many years of service to the Association and will be missed. Colin Munro has carried the flag for this organisation at a national level for several years as President of the Australian Council of Agricultural Journalists. Jamie Graham is the friendly face we all encounter at the reception desk for these events. We've enjoyed the benefits of his genial approach and dedication to that and other committee tasks for over ten years.

Financial

The Association's out-going Treasurer, Richard Hincks, will present a full financial report to members. Suffice for me to say that I am pleased that we have maintained the healthy financial position with subscriptions and sponsorship covering our administration costs and the small loss we made running our monthly meetings. This year we again used the interest from members' reserves to fund awards – this time fully funding the attendance at the IFAJ Congress in Europe by the winner of the writing award and introducing a new award for Media Release Excellence.

During my term as President I have operated with the philosophy that the reserves that we inherited from our diligent predecessors should be used to fund development opportunities for individual members and solid improvements for the benefit of the wider membership. I think we have succeeded in running a lean operation that has maintained the quality of the events and increased the development opportunities without drawing down those reserves. My one regret is that I have not fulfilled my aim of using the small operating surplus accumulated during my term to upgrade and

improve the Association's website, booking and registration systems. For various reasons that work is not complete but some of the groundwork is laid and I hope the incoming committee will forgive me for suggesting they complete the task. I also commend the general philosophy to them and hope they will continue to take seriously the responsibility of using those reserves honourably..

I would like to record my thanks to Richard, who has been an effective and supportive Treasurer during my term as President. Richard is standing down after three years in the role and I wish him and his family all the best.

Functions

We had a slighter quieter year (compared to the previous year) - with attendance marginally down – 689 members and guests (compared to 726) - despite holding an extra event in November as part of our coverage of the Federal Election – an average attendance of 57 (66) per event.

This year's program was as wide ranging as ever – we book-ended the year with carbon trading and climate change, addressed thorny issues in two panel sessions and had our usual mix of politicians, agri-business leaders and expert commentators. Details are attached to this report.

The highlights of the program were the presentation on the 'future of regional and rural media' (which we hope becomes a regular annual event), given this year by David Kirk, Chief Executive of Fairfax Media; the panel sessions, edited versions of which were both broadcast on the ABC's NSW Country Hour; and, of course, our ever-popular Christmas function.

Attracting high profile, good quality speakers continues to present one of the biggest challenges faced by your committee.

Website

We again secured sponsorship to cover the costs of the website during 2007/2008 from Telstra Country Wide but unfortunately they will not continue this sponsorship into 2008/09. Efforts are underway to secure another sponsor. The website remains important to our operations as it is the main source of bookings for our functions.

Membership

Membership in 2007/08 fell to 66 (76 in 2006/07) – with that loss shared between the rural/retired category (down 5 members) and corporate membership (down 6 members). Support from our corporate membership included the introduction of a significant number of guests to those functions whose topic is of particular relevance to the corporate member involved. The committee appreciates this support and should continue to facilitate it.

Membership renewals for 2008/09 are disappointing with numbers falling significantly in ordinary and corporate membership. Clearly one of the tasks for your new committee should be identifying the reasons for this and taking steps to recover lapsed members and recruit new ones.

ACAJ and IFAJ

Farm Writers continues to provide support to the Australian Council of Agricultural Journalists (ACAJ) and its programs. Colin Munro is the immediate past president of ACAJ and continues to serve on the ACAJ Executive. I served a term as Secretary and Public Officer, succeeding in bringing ACAJ back into compliance with its various obligations as an incorporated association. I have resigned those positions and Stuart Hutton was appointed Public Officer at the ACAJ AGM earlier this month – I'm sure he will continue to ensure that ACAJ follows good practice.

The Rural Press Club of Victoria joined ACAJ as a full financial member, making the ACAJ once again a truly national representative body. This and efforts at securing administrative sponsorship from sponsors of awards means that the ACAJ is "in the black" for the first time in a long time, although still on a shoe-string budget.

Farm Writers' also participated in the first attempt at a co-ordinated national series of functions under the ACAJ umbrella. All state affiliates except Victoria held functions focused on climate change and addressed by leading experts from CSIRO on two consecutive days in June – with Farm Writers and Queensland Rural Press Club hosting the first events. Further national initiatives are likely and, whilst remaining supportive, Farm Writers should assess its participation in each one on the merits of the individual event.

This is an election year for the IFAJ and the ACAJ has nominated Liz Harful for IFAJ Vice President.

Awards***Star Prize 2008***

The Association again presented an award for rural writing in NSW that was structured to conform to the rules of the IFAJ Star Prize for farm writing so that the winner could be entered as the NSW finalist in the ACAJ's competition to find Australia's entrant in the IFAJ contest. Only one entry is permitted from each IFAJ-member country in any year.

Armidale based journalist Matthew Cawood won the NSW award for an article on bees published in *The Land* newspaper on 10th May 2007. This year the Association has fully funded Matthew's attendance at the IFAJ Congress in Europe.

The ACAJ has also nominated Matthew as the Australian delegate at the IFAJ Presidium. Matthew will report from the Congress via his blog (a link will be available on our website) and will also report to members on his return.

Alltech Young Leaders in Agricultural Journalism award 2008

As I reported last year, Alltech Australia were easily persuaded to offer this award again in Australia in 2008. Despite our best efforts at publicising the opportunity, no entries were received from NSW or the ACT. Other states reported a similar experience that I hope will not jeopardise the offering of the award in 2009.

The 2008 award went to Catherine Miller from South Australia, who will attend the IFAJ Congress in Europe, fully funded by Alltech, and participate in the professional development program that runs concurrently with the Congress.

Media Release Excellence Award

It has been my aim to increase the breadth and scope of the awards we offer and this year we again introduced a new award – this time with a winner-takes-all cash prize of \$500 and independent of our national and international affiliations. The intention is to recognise and encourage excellence in the other area of communication of interest to our members – that of crafting a message on a significant agricultural or rural issue and successfully reaching either an urban audience (raising awareness) or a rural one (selling a product or service, mobilising an interest group) by having it picked up by the media.

The judges unanimously awarded the prize to Damon Whittock, Media Affairs Manager of Meat and Livestock Australia for his release entitled “Undies & socks ditched for Aussie Beef on Father’s Day in Japan” which was released on 2 July 2007 and widely reported in both urban and regional media.

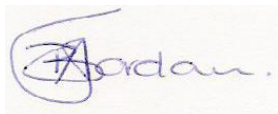
I take this opportunity to again congratulate Matthew and Damon and thank life member Don Jones, Gwyneth Howell, from the Public Relations Institute of Australia, and Andrew Marshall, editor of *The Land*, who judged the competitions.

The coming year

It was one of my aims to explore options for other events providing networking and professional development opportunities. On 18th September, the Association will launch “Agri-buzz” – an evening event providing an opportunity to expand professional and business contacts, catch up on the latest developments in our innovative sector and enjoy professional development and mentoring opportunities. This first function will be an opportunity to meet Ben Fargher, Chief Executive of NFF - one of Australian agriculture’s young leaders and learn what contributed to his rapid rise. We are partnered in this first event by one of our corporate members, Agricultural Appointments, to enable us to charge less than half the price of our seminars. If this proves popular, the Committee hopes to make it a quarterly event.

In closing, I thank members for the opportunity of serving as President and committee members for your support. I hope to continue to play a part in the Association in the future. I wish the Association and the incoming committee a successful and interesting year – I have every confidence that new leadership will bring exciting ideas and renewed energy and that the Association will be in good hands.

Yours sincerely



Beverley Jordan

President.

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Summary of seminars 2007/2008

Date	Function/ Venue	Speaker	Topic	Corporate Members of the Month	Number attending
Friday 27 July 2007	Lunch Menzies	Mick Keogh CEO Farm Institute	<i>How do you muster a paddock of carbon?</i>	DPI	62
Friday 31 August	Lunch Menzies	Deb Bain Australian RIRDC Rural Woman of the Year 2007	<i>Bridging the Great Divide Farm Day</i>	GGA; Cox Inall Communicat'n	36
Friday 28 September	Lunch & AGM Menzies	Jocellin Jansson, Country Education Foundation; Prof Les Copeland, Uni of Sydney; Rebecca Middleton, Rimfire Resources.	<i>Its 2020 – How Clever is the Country</i>	Agricultural Appointments; imc	38
Friday 26 October	Lunch Menzies	Senator Kerry O'Brien, Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Forestry	Labor's vision for Australian Agriculture	NAB Agri-b & Faculty of Agric, Food etc Uni of Sydney	53
Friday 13 November	Breakfast Menzies	Minister Peter McGauran, Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	<i>Strengthening Australian Agriculture – the Coalition's Policy Launch</i>		40
Friday 23 November	Lunch Menzies	David Kirk, CEO John Fairfax Media	<i>The Next Frontier: Fairfax Media & The Media Future for Regional & Rural Aus</i>	Westpac Agribusiness & McGrath Nicol	58
Thurs 13 December	Lunch Parliament House	Barry Buffier, Director General of Primary Industries	Patron's Christmas party and review of the year	RAS & NSW Farmers	140
2008					
Friday, 29 February	Lunch Menzies	Max Ould, Chairman Goodman Fielder	<i>Leadership & globalisation</i>	NAB Agricultural Appointments	45
Friday 28 March	Lunch Menzies	Ingrid Richardson – Rabobank Jim Cudmore – Vice Pres ALFA Rob Gordon - RFA Michael Condon	<i>Food v Fuel – where is agriculture's future?</i>	Rabobank	52
Thursday 24 April	Lunch Menzies	Richard Koch, MD Profarmer	<i>Are the days of cheap grain over?</i>	GHD Hassall	51
Friday 30 May	Lunch Menzies	Paula Fitzgerald ED Agri-Food Awareness Australia	<i>GM Crops, global food shortages and climate change</i>	Cox Inall Communic'tns Virbac	43
Thursday 26 June	Lunch Menzies	Dr Mark Howden CSIRO	<i>Climate change</i>	GGA and H&T	71