

Dairy NSW THE MILK FLOW

November 2014

With extracts from the 2013-14 Annual Report



Your Levy at Work

From the Chair

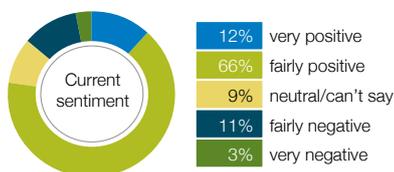
Over the past 12 months there have been many changes in Dairy NSW. We concluded our first full year as a skills-based board with new directors commencing in April 2013. We introduced a new full time executive officer and opened our new office in Camden with The University of Sydney.

With the delivery of thirteen extension programs, two education programs, introduction of focus farms and regeneration of dairy discussion groups, we believe Dairy NSW and Dairy Australia are making a positive impact on dairy farming in our region.

Farmer sentiment is the highest in years. This year has seen a positive lift with:

- direct farm supply
- export opportunities being driven out of Norco
- entry of Murray Goulburn in the region
- some stable signals coming from some processors.

Farmer sentiment in the Dairy NSW region



To help understand these and other factors, the Department of Primary Industries recently published, **Growing the NSW Industry**, which gives a relative snapshot of the NSW industry.

Margins on farm are the real driver to profitability; and together with Dairy Australia, we hope to help farmers understand this with the delivery of farm business management extension. Your levy dollar is contributing to more research every year; and with the change of DPI from extension to development, Dairy Australia through Dairy NSW has been

delivering extension and coordinating accredited education to NSW farmers.

This year two directors retired at the October AGM: Ken Baxter and Michelle Blakeney. Michelle decided not to re-nominate for a further term; she has been a valued contributor to the board over the past three years. Elected as the new farmer director is Jane Sherborne from the Southern Highlands area. Ken Baxter renominated and was appointed to continue as a skills-based director.

Dairy Australia is currently reviewing the structure of its eight Regional Development Programs (RDPs), of which Dairy NSW is one. We expect some operational changes with the aim of generating further efficiencies. Dairy NSW will continue to maintain a regional presence and support farmers locally. The new structure will give the RDPs improved capability to have influence in Dairy Australia's plans.

Directors also reviewed the meeting structures within the Dairy NSW region. The last few years we have held a Members' Council in conjunction with the Dairy Research Foundation's Symposium in the middle of the year. We believe these have been successful and will continue this arrangement. Last year in December we invited the chairs of the Regional Dairy Groups (RDGs) to meet in Camden. Reflecting on the benefits gained from this meeting, Dairy NSW will do the same this year and are making this a second Members' Council. This way our Members' Councils are more evenly spread throughout the year.

The timing of Dairy NSW's Annual General Meeting (AGM) is regulated by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, so we will hold the AGM in October as a teleconference/webinar event with members. Directors plan to conduct one of its Board meetings in a region every year.

Dairy NSW schedule of meetings since the formation of the new Skills Based Board

2013

Board meeting: 7 May - Camden

Board meeting: 14 June - Camden

Board meeting: 3 July - Kiama

Members' Council: 3 July - Kiama

Board Meeting: 3 Sept - Camden

AGM and Members' Council:
23 October - Forbes

Board Meeting: 24 October - Forbes

Board Meeting: 2-3 December - Camden

2014

Board Meeting: 11-12 February - Camden

Board Meeting: 31 March - 1 April - Camden

Board Meeting: 17 June - Pokolbin

Members' Council: 18 June - Pokolbin

Board Meetings: 5 August - Camden

12 August & 30 September -
Teleconference

Board Meeting: 7 October - Port Macquarie

AGM and Members' Council:
8 October - Port Macquarie

Board Meeting: 1-2 December - Camden

Members' Council: 2 December - Camden

Directors invest a significant amount of time preparing, attending and discussing a range of business at the Board Meetings and Members' Councils because we are committed to the dairy industry.

As farmers in our region, we believe you, too, invest much of your time into supporting the wider industry. With the discussion groups and local RDGs, many volunteer their time off farm. Without this, we would not be where we are today. I can't thank you enough for that.

MICHAEL PERICH
CHAIR, DAIRY NSW

Mark your February 2015 calendar

Feeding Pastures for Profit delivered by Phil Shannon	10 & 17 Bega Bega Training Centre	11 & 18 Nowra Nowra Golf Club function Centre	12 & 19 Forbes Forbes Memorial Services Club	13 & 20 Wagga Wagga National Wine and Grape Industry Centre
Churn your Milk into Money delivered by John Mulvany	23-24 Taree Club Taree		25-26 Tocal College Glendarra Function Centre	

Also coming to Dairy Discussion Groups (DDG) in the first half of next year is a workshop to *Unpack the Award using the ESKi*. This will be led by Neil Moss of SBS*Scibus* who will unpack recent changes to the *Pastoral Award 2010* and its regulations for managing farm staff using the Dairy Australia's Employment Starter Kit (ESKi). This will be an opportunity for farmers who are interested in improving their understanding of the Award and the ESKi to attend a local DDG.

After Easter, Dairy NSW will offer a course: *Be InCharge of your finances*. This course is a series of five workshops on farm business management – a great follow up to *Churn Milk into Money*. Dairy NSW will work with DPI's Development Officer, Kerry Kempton, to deliver this course.

The Dairy NSW Project and Event Calendar web pages describe the details of extension projects being delivered to farmers. Keep up-to-date by regularly [visiting the website](#): See Projects and News and Events.

Director profile – Sue McGinn OAM



As a dairy farmer and professional company director, Sue seeks to contribute to the dairy industry by bringing her corporate governance and business experience to Dairy NSW for the benefit of the region's dairy farmers.

Sue joined the Dairy NSW skills based board in April 2013, bringing with her a wealth of board and business skills. Formally a director of the Dairy Farmers

Group, Sue currently serves on a regionally based credit union board and is an elected local government councillor. She is a Nuffield Scholar and includes diplomas in agriculture, corporate governance and a Masters of Business Administration in her CV. In 2005 Sue was awarded an OAM for her contribution to the dairy industry and as a role model for rural women.

Farming with her husband Brett on the flood plains of the Mid North Coast's Macleay Valley, Ms McGinn is well versed with the challenges of exceptional circumstances (flood and drought) and its effect on dairy farming risk management and profitability.

Ms McGinn OAM is a member of the Dairy NSW Risk and Audit committee. She is also a member of the following external committees:

- Secretary, Holstein Australia, Dorrigo Kempsey sub branch
- Member, Nuffield Australia

Inland Dairy Week – Servicing the Central West and Riverina (Inland) areas

The Dairy NSW team will spend six weeks/year delivering and engaging with farmers in the Central West and Riverina areas – from Dubbo to Wagga Wagga and all points in-between.

1. Josh Hack – delivering feedbase extension
2. Josh Hack – coordinating the Unpacking the Award using the ESKi workshop

3. Greg Duncan – delivering animal health extension
4. Greg Duncan – coordinating the farm business management course: Be InCharge of your finances
5. Sheena Carter – coordinating the delivery of animal welfare education
6. Roxanne Cooley – supporting the regional priority setting/program review processes

Snapshot of the Dairy NSW region



According to this year's *Situation and Outlook*, farmers in the Dairy NSW region report an above average sentiment rating of 78% compared with the national average 75%. Herd size is up 2.4% and the net change of production is up 4.1%. Approximately 85% of farms have a year-round calving system and the average age of the registered Dairy NSW region farmer is 56 years.

Recent farm gate milk price rises and export opportunities have seen confidence increase significantly – achieving the highest level recorded since 2004. This is despite profitability levels still remaining arguably low in comparison with other regions.

Price and input costs are still considered

to be the greatest challenges likely to be faced in future.

There is widespread expectation that Asian markets will continue to offer opportunities for Australian dairy products and Dairy NSW respondents are the most likely to see potential in domestic markets.

The following table of information is taken from the levy data provided by manufacturers for the year 2013/14; unfortunately, Dairy NSW never receives 100% of the data from manufacturers.

The data is based on enterprises rather than individual farms. The Dairy Services Levy Register combines this information based on ABN so enterprises with multiple farms are grouped together.

Dairy NSW levy data for 2013-14

Total number of dairy enterprises producing milk	476
Average herd production (kgs milk solids)	110,000
Average herd production (litres)	1,590,000

Herd sizes (cows) for 2013-14

Small (<150)	Medium (151-300)	Large (301-500)	X-Large (501-700)	XX-Large (>700)
190	124	95	34	34

For more information visit the [Dairy Australia website](#).

Note: These figures have not been verified via the Dairy Australia industry data team.

Regional Dairy Group project funding



Dairy NSW committed over \$140,000 from the funds it received from Dairy Australia to projects that specifically address regional priorities and build capability within the industry. Funding is allocated to Regional Dairy Groups (RDGs), projects run by the Dairy NSW extension team and research organisations, such as universities and private companies servicing the dairy industry.

Five Regional Dairy Groups (RDGs) operate within the Dairy NSW region conducting relevant activities for the dairy industry in their subregions.

Whilst RDGs are separate legal entities and operate as such, Dairy NSW provides support and assistance to the RDGs via

resources and supplementary funding. In return, RDGs provide a link to dairy farmers in their subregions and information on regional priorities, needs and issues.

Dairy NSW provides some resources to RDGs to assist them to coordinate their groups.

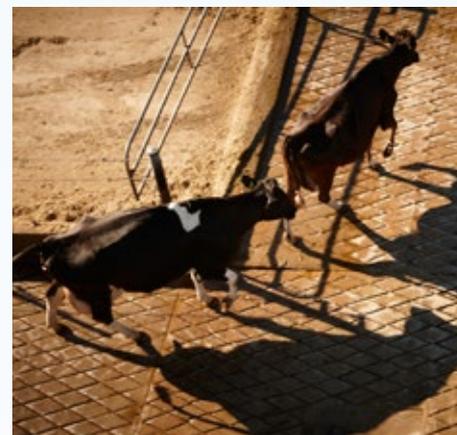
In addition, groups can apply for funds to undertake additional projects and initiatives which are of particular relevance or significance to the dairy farmers in their areas.

RDG Regional Coordinators reported a number of activities throughout the year. These have been summarised in the Annual Report found on the [Dairy NSW website](#).

Dairy NSW Research, Development, Education and Extension Program

In the 2013-14 financial year, Dairy NSW supported:

- four research and development programs
- two NCDEA accredited programs and the formation of a future Regional Education and Extension Committee with the DPI and NCDEA partners
- thirteen extension programs and a young dairy network focused on the development of leadership skills and capability.



Dairy NSW Research and development programs

Dairy NSW invested funds into the following research and development programs.

Heat detection

The University of Sydney – Livestock Veterinary Teaching and Research Unit, in combination with Dairy NSW and others, funded the evaluation of the cost benefit for using a cow side progesterone assay to facilitate breeding decisions on farm and the development of guidelines for the most cost effective way to apply this heat detection technology on farm.

To date, the research collected 908 milk samples from 14 dairy farms across the region. The research started in July 2013 and will deliver its outcomes and an article for Dairy's NSW's *The Milk Flow* newsletter.

Professorship

In 2011 Dairy NSW approved a three year funding commitment to sponsor a Professorship in Dairy Science at The University of Sydney. This academic appointment is also assigned the position of Director of the Dairy Research Foundation (DRF). Since 2011 and including this financial year, this sponsorship has provided a productive

Dairy NSW Research, Development, Education and Extension Program

period for the DRF and dairy industry research program for NSW. This resulted in a successful negotiation of the “Future Dairy” project, as well as projects in the Dairy CRC and the “Dairy Moving Forward” programs from the Dairy Research and Development strategy. Through the DRF and this sponsorship, the University has strengthened and consolidated its position as a prominent and productive research provider to the National and State dairy industries. For more information, see [The University of Sydney website](#).

Sexed semen

The University of Sydney – Livestock Veterinary Teaching and Research Unit in combination with Dairy NSW and Moxey Farms embarked on a project to improve conception rates to sexed semen late this year. Sexed semen provides a means of manipulating the sex ratio of offspring providing more heifer replacements. Current limitations to the application of sexed semen are lower and more variable conception rates. The objectives of this project are to identify strategies that can be applied on farm to improve and reduce the variability of conception rates with sexed semen.

Specifically the project will:

1. Evaluate the use of ovarian ultrasound to determine the optimum time and site for semen deposition.
2. Develop a method to determine how likely a heifer is to conceive to sexed semen to facilitate decision-making on whether to use sexed or conventional semen and to help increase the conception rate achieved.

Ruminal acidosis

As part of ongoing studies into ruminal acidosis, Dairy NSW and SBS*cibus* are funding a project aimed at improving understanding and control of ruminal acidosis through investigations into the relationships between rumen bacteria, rumen fermentation characteristics, and host animal genetics. This project, which started in January, will examine these relationships in 40 Holstein heifers and how these change when these cattle are adapted to a total mixed ration, feed additives and sugar, and during an intensive sampling period where cattle are fed a large dose of grain and sugar. These relationships will also be examined in a heifer with clinical acidosis before, during and after the event of acidosis.

Dairy NSW Education programs

Dairy NSW is supporting the delivery of education programs accredited by the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA). This year saw the commencement of a 1-day accredited course in Humane Euthanasia of Livestock – a course delivered by trained veterinarians. To date, courses have been delivered in Kempsey, Tocal, Denman and Tamworth. New courses are planned for Bega, and the North and South coasts.



Also being conducted is the *Cups On, Cups Off* 2-day accredited course at the Mid-Coast, Illawarra and Riverina TAFE Institutes.

Dairy NSW also launched its inaugural meeting of a Regional Education and Extension Committee on the 8th of October in Port Macquarie with Delia Dray, Dairy NSW Director, chairing the meeting. Participating as members are DPI's officer, Kerry Kempton; NCDEA partner, Greg Stuart; and two farmers, Andrew Smith and Natasha Yarrington who successfully applied for the committee positions; and Dairy NSW's Executive Officer, Roxanne Cooley. The first task delivered a summary of the extension programs delivered or funded by Dairy NSW since 2010. Next is to deploy a survey to farmers to help inform future extension and education priorities.

Dairy NSW Extension programs

In the past twelve months, Dairy NSW and in many cases Dairy Australia supported the Regional Dairy Groups by delivering a number of extension activities across farm, business and people systems.

Dairy NSW Research, Development, Education and Extension Program

Farm Systems	Business Systems	People Systems
Countdown 2020	Taking Stock	Cows Create Careers
InCalf	Focus Farm	Barefoot and Balance
Dairy Discussion Groups	Churn Milk into Money	Bursary program
Feeding Pastures for Profit	On-Farm Energy Assessments	DairySage Mentoring
Weathering the drought		

Countdown 2020

Dairy Australia rolled out five *Countdown 2020* programs in the Dairy NSW region to 111 farmers and 24 service providers with the support of Dairy NSW and RDGs who nominated suitable venues and communicated the event to farmer members. Positive messages included the lowering of BMCC, better understanding of the role of PCR testing and provision of a new Countdown App.



Webinars

02-Dec-14

Mycoplasma and farm biosecurity
12:30 - 1:30pm AEST

24-Feb-15

Control of Bulk Milk Cell Counts
12:30 - 1:30pm AEST

Farmers can attend these webinars online as scheduled or watch them later as an on-demand recording. Keep tuned-in to training opportunities: [visit the Dairy Australia website](#).

InCalf

Dairy Australia delivered six InCalf programs across the entire region with the support of Dairy NSW and RDGs who nominated suitable venues and communicated the event to farmer members. 103 farmers and 31 service providers attended the workshop resulting in positive evaluations from participants.

Topics covered included:

- Guide to oestrus synchrony programs
- Heat detection
- Body Condition Scoring Smartphone app
- Getting the best from bulls
- DIY AI getting it right.

On 30 October, over 150 farmers took part in a webinar on automatic heat detection from their home computers, tablets and smart phones.

Webinars

29-Jan-15

Bull management
7:00 - 8:00pm AEST

17-Mar-15

DIY artificial insemination
12:30 - 1:30pm AEST

27-May-15

Sexed semen
12:30 - 1:30pm AEST

Dairy Discussion Groups

In 2013-14, Dairy NSW with funding support from Dairy Australia began a 3-year program with the provision of seed funding to farmers who wanted to lead Dairy Discussion Groups (DDGs). With a focus on group based extension local farmers and industry providers help one another with the adoption of new technologies and support during more difficult times. The funding supports farmer driven groups and the Dairy NSW team supports the logistics and promotion of the group applications for funds and activities.

This year, funding supported the following four DDGs: Kempsey, Tamworth, Bodalla and Macarthur. Another six groups have applied or registered an intent to utilise the seed funds: Forbes, Wagga Wagga, Next Gen (Shoalhaven), Upper Hunter, Dubbo and Mid Coast. Interested in joining or starting a DDG? Speak with any member of the Dairy NSW team – [see our website for details](#).

Dairy NSW Research, Development, Education and Extension Program

Feeding Pastures for Profit

Dairy NSW, with funding support and strong involvement from Dairy Australia and the Hunter and North West Local Land Services, began a 2-year feed base program.



The 5-part series began this year in the Hunter and Mid Coast subregions with locations in Kempsey, Taree, Muswellbrook and Tamworth with 53 participants. The first two workshop days were focused on pasture, supplement feeding and a rotation tool.

Commencing in February 2015, Dairy NSW will deliver the same program to the Far South Coast, the South Coast, the Riverina and Central West areas. Details can be found on the Dairy NSW website: www.dairynsw.com.au (See Projects)

Taking Stock

Dairy NSW, with funding support from Dairy Australia, delivered 29 facilitated individual farm assessments across all the subregions. Dairy Australia developed **Taking Stock** as a planning and budgeting tool for dairy farmers to use in conjunction with their advisors to assist with financial management and planning.

The **Taking Stock** approach is a key part of the 'Tactics for Tight Times' initiative to support farmers through the current challenges across the dairy industry. A significant number of dairy farmers in NSW were experiencing financial challenges and this initiative was aimed at supporting farmers who requested some farm business management support. The **Taking Stock tool** is available for farmer's use on the [Dairy Australia website](#).

Focus Farm

Dairy NSW with funding support from Dairy Australia commenced a focus farm program this year. The principal aim of the NSW Focus Farm project is to develop the management capacity of farmers in our region by demonstrating on a local, commercial farm the effect of progressive decisions, clarification of the decision making process and involvement

of a farming community to support the commercial farm.

We have now introduced our first focus farm in Nowra with the Cochrane's Wogamia dairy, and I believe that this can help the wider industry disseminate information about new technology and implementation of new practices on farm – driven by research from our levy funds.

The goal of the NSW Focus Farm project is to establish two focus farms, each of which will demonstrate to farmers within the broader community their strategies to improve their farm productivity and profitability and motivate other farmers to adopt their strategies.

In each case, the focus farms are intended to run for a two-year period. This gives sufficient time to see achievement of the goals that have been set and the outcomes of the decisions that have been made over the course of the program.

This year, the steering committee interviewed and inducted Dan and Bec Cochrane located on the South coast of NSW. They identified a support group and commenced a Focus Farm program in the second half of this year. Their first Open Day was held 14 November with over 70 people participating. This month the committee inducts a prospective second farm in the Mid Coast. Keep up to date with the progress this program is making via the [Dairy NSW website](#).

Churn Milk into Money

Dairy NSW, with project funding support from the Young Dairy Network – NSW, held a two-day workshop led by John Mulvany with the purpose of supporting dairy farmers to understand ways to accumulate wealth and achieve the lifestyles they seek. Participants focused on the principles of profitable farming and the balancing of risk and return.



Dairy NSW Research, Development, Education and Extension Program

Day 1 focused on:

- Making money in dairying by keeping it simple
- Managing money: cash, tax, GST, business structure
- Balancing financial and physical risk
- Increasing operational profit and growing assets

Day 2 focused on:

- Planning to make sure you end up where you want to
- Deciding between share farming, leasing and farm ownership
- Succession planning in a family business
- Business performance, business position, cost of production and profit issues.

The program was delivered flexibly as it considered the age range and stages of dairy knowledge and skills among the participants. This financial year, the program was delivered in Nowra and Young with 42 participants who want more training in future on farm business management.

Commencing the week of February 23rd, John will deliver at Tocal College and Club Taree. See the [Dairy NSW website](#) for details.

On-Farm Energy Assessment and Action Plans



Australian Government Department of Industry

Dairy Australia received funding from the Department of Industry, through the Energy Efficiency Information Grants program, to conduct energy assessments across NSW for dairy farmers as part of the *Smarter energy on Australian dairy farms* project. Dairy NSW delivered the promotions and administration for the New South Wales component of this project.

All dairy farmers in NSW were given an opportunity to express interest. Upon receipt of their application, **109 farms received an independent and trained service provider assessment of their farm's electricity usage** for the purposes of benchmarking their energy use. They were also provided with an action plan on strategies to reduce electricity usage and costs.

The on-farm assessment covered energy saving options in milk cooling, milk harvesting and hot water systems. The assessment involved a phone interview, followed by a 2-hour on-farm visit with a service provider.

Cows Create Careers

For the past five years, Dairy NSW has financially supported opportunities for industry development and growth through the *Cows Create Careers* (CCC) program. The CCC program creates awareness of career opportunities in the dairy and/or veterinarian industries. The program involves students:

- rearing calves
- learning to produce dairy products, eg camembert cheese
- researching the dairy industry
- considering potential career pathways in the dairy industry
- linking this program to further vocational and university educational opportunities.



The two areas of student interest are:

1. dairy farming and veterinary career pathways
2. manufacturing pathways.

These course linkages and connections to industry professionals assist students to develop the skills and qualifications for their chosen career pathways. Importantly, the project continues to raise the image of the dairy industry and increases the capacity of local dairy farmers and industry mentors through their involvement.

In conjunction with Dairy Australia and other industry partners, funding from Dairy NSW enabled **2,151 students from 48 schools in NSW** to participate in the Cows Create Careers in 2013-14.

This represents an increase of 450 students and 4 schools from one year ago. Schools covered a vast area across the state from Eden in the Far South Coast to Condobolin in the Central West and Kempsey on the Mid Coast.

Senior Section Winners

- Mount View High School – Hunter Valley region
- St Paul's College, Kempsey – Mid Coast region

Dairy NSW Research, Development, Education and Extension Program

- Illawarra Christian School & Canowindra High School (DRAW) – South Coast, Far South Coast, Tablelands and Inland NSW regions

Junior Section Winners

- Newcastle High School – Hunter Valley region
- Port Macquarie High School – Mid Coast region
- Elizabeth Macarthur High School – South Coast, Far South Coast, Tablelands and Inland NSW regions

Due to the continued success of the Cows Create Careers program and the long-term benefits this program delivers, Dairy NSW continues to provide substantial financial support for its delivery.

Barefoot and Balance

Dairy NSW prioritises health and well-being among dairy farmers and funded the delivery of a psychologist facilitated workshop across all regions. This workshop combined an interactive social workshop with a focused discussion on healthy life choices and game of barefoot bowls.



Utilising funds from the Young Dairy Network (YDN), the five workshops were conducted in June for the young in age and young at heart. This program explained the physiology of stress and ways to achieve optimal performance and balance. Participants considered the power of and barriers to relationships. The workshop component concluded with a focus on functioning in life from your values. Participants reported great value from the information and insights gained in the area of relationships.

Young Dairy Network's bursary program

This year, Dairy NSW launched a Young Dairy Network with the appointment of a part-time coordinator, Jess Jennings, and the support of two candidates to attend the 2014 Australian Dairy Conference and the 2014 Dairy Research Foundation's Symposium – a practice which Dairy NSW has supported since 2008. This bursary program was awarded to applicants, Alison

Germon and Carissa Wolfe, who then gave a presentation to the Dairy NSW Members' Council at Port Macquarie in October.

Dairy NSW prioritises the development of future leaders among young dairy farmers. So, using the same process, it then supported travel, accommodation and registration fees for a further five young people, one from each RDG, to the 2014 Dairy Research Foundation's Symposium.

Into the future, there is an ongoing commitment to develop young dairy leadership skills and capability through the delivery of bursaries focused on supporting young dairy farmers and young entrants into dairy farming. In 2015, Dairy NSW is pleased to offer two bursaries to the ADC and five to the DRF. As well, a new bursary will be awarded to a young person to complete the Rabobank Farm Manager's Course in June.

Watch for these opportunities which will use an Expression of Interest process to select candidates. The promotion will use the YDN Facebook page, the Dairy NSW Snapshot newsletter, the **Dairy NSW website** and the Regional Dairy Group networks.

DairySage Mentoring program

Dairy Australia funded a six-month DairySage Mentoring program in Camden with logistical and promotional support from Dairy NSW. DairySage Mentoring is an initiative for anyone involved in the dairy industry: farmers, employers, employees, factory staff and service providers. Eleven experienced industry mentors were matched with eleven young farmer mentees in an initial two-day workshop which focused on learning essential interpersonal, communication and mentoring skills. This exciting journey officially concludes with a workshop and dinner in Camden with the Dairy NSW Board and the RDG Chairs in December 2014. The Dairy Australia Chair, Geoff Akers, and Managing Director, Ian Halliday, will be attending the dinner.

Weathering the drought together

Responding to drought conditions in the Mid Coast, Dairy NSW coordinated the delivery of two workshops – one in Gloucester and one in Wingham. This workshop brought together a rural financial counsellor specialising in managing tight finances, an agronomist experienced in making rations and a psychologist who spoke about 'Looking after your mates'. These workshops were timely and participants were most appreciative for the support in a challenging time of drought.

Dairy NSW Research, Development, Education and Extension Program

Being flood ready

The NSW North Coast was reminded just recently how quickly the seasons can turn around. In late August while preparing for drought feeding, the dairy industry in parts of the Mid Coast were hit with a couple of heavy rain events resulting in some flash flooding. Flooding is a common event during the spring/summer season in this region and has the potential to hit dairy businesses hard.

As we head towards the start of the flood season in several dairy regions, it's time to get prepared. To support this preparation, DPI released a Flood Ready Dairying Strategic Plan as planning for these events and being 'flood ready' can help minimise flood impacts.

A project was initiated in 2013 to consider strategies that can assist farmers, communities and government to be flood ready. A steering group, comprising of farmers, industry representatives and

agencies including Dairy NSW and Dairy Australia, was formed to drive the project.

The North Coast NSW Flood Ready Dairying project is based on the experiences and learnings from previous flood events in the Northern Dairying region. It aims to give dairy farmers and industry, practical strategies on flood preparedness for their businesses and also build awareness of dairy flood issues at the local, state and national level. Through risk management strategies and planning, the dairy industry is building on its strength and resilience to better meet the challenges of floods and major weather events.

The Flood Ready Dairying Project will now move into Stage 2, with flood planning tools and checklists being trialled on dairy farms before being recommended to the wider dairying community for use.

You can access a copy of the [Flood Ready Dairying Strategic Plan on their website.](#)

Archibull Prize awards – Congratulations Hurlstone Agriculture High School



The Honourable Katrina Hodgkinson, MP Minister for Primary Industries awarded the

winners of the 4th annual Archibull Prize in Sydney on 14 November at the national awards ceremony for the national agriculture themed art and multimedia competition.

Hundreds of school students, teachers and representatives from government, industry and the corporate sector gathered at the Sydney Showgrounds to view the extraordinary and inspired original Archibull artworks (life-size, fiberglass cows) showcasing the grain, cattle and sheep, wool, cotton and dairy industries.

In a feast of colour and creativity, the event celebrated the outstanding work of the winners, runners up and all forty participating schools from QLD, NSW & VIC.

Awarded first place with the 2014 Grand Champion Archibull Prize is Hurlstone Agriculture High School's 'The Ni Cow', a project sponsored by Parmalat Australia.

Winning the online People's Choice award which received 50,000 web hits and over 3500 Facebook shares, 'The Ni Cow' is on a milk road journey!

Hurlstone is an agricultural and selective co-educational public high school located in Glenfield, NSW. It earned 96 points out of 100 across all components (blog and artwork), with their dairy industry inspired artwork.

A visually balanced, unique and complex work of art, 'The Ni Cow' is conceptually timely and relevant, symbolising the NSW dairy industry's recent development of ground breaking technology to supply fresh milk to China. The sculpture examines the rich culture of China and the valuable partnerships being forged between Australian dairy farmers and the Chinese people.

This year is Hurlstone Agricultural High School's third year in the competition and their second Grand Champion win. Teacher Jo Ross says after studying the Australian dairy industry and sustainability, the student team explored economic sustainability and the expansion of the dairy export market.

Lynne Strong, National Program Director, Art4Agriculture (www.art4agriculturechat.wordpress.com), worked with the Royal Agriculture Society of NSW and Matisse to develop a prize system that they hope will create an ongoing agricultural experience for the students who have participated in the program. Lynne extends her gratitude to this year's major supporting partner, Parmalat Australia.

Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson, believes the Archibull Prize education initiative has a unique role to play in providing a hands on learning opportunity for school communities interested in primary industries. "This initiative is a fantastic way to encourage school students, particularly in metropolitan areas, to gain a better understanding of agriculture and where their food and fibre products actually come from," said Minister Hodgkinson.

NRM feature story: NSW Innovation Group



*Thinking beyond the dairy and agricultural sectors....
lead and learn through all innovations!*

In NSW a group of farmer innovators has been brought together to challenge the status quo and catapult us into some unexplored territory. This group aims to explore the “what’s possible” through emerging technology and precision agriculture opportunities as a means to tackling priority farm issues and driving greater profitability for dairy in NSW.

The NSW Dairy Innovation Group is a joint initiative of Dairy Australia’s Natural Resource Management (NRM) Program **“Profitable Farming in a Carbon Constrained Future”** and Sydney University’s Dairy Science Group. Brought together by Dr Cameron Clark, Senior Research Fellow within the Faculty of Veterinary Science, and Marguerite White, Dairy Australia’s NRM Technical Specialist for NSW, the aim of the group is to feed ideas into new research opportunities, provide input and feedback into existing and ongoing research, and assist in the identification, trial and demonstration of internationally available technology or precision agriculture tools which have the potential to be adapted and adopted by the local dairy industry. A priority of the group is to look beyond usual shores into other industry sectors for some of the “what’s possible”.

The six key farmer members come from all corners of the State and were identified by both their peers and industry service providers as being innovative thinkers and farmers who are respected for their “know how” and “give it a go” attitudes. “This was important to ensure that any group outcomes would have relevance to local regions and also so that the members could provide a regional representative in identifying and communicating the needs of their peers to researchers and technology developers, especially for ensuring that the work of the Innovation Group adds value to the financial, social and environmental credentials of dairy farming businesses in NSW,” said Marguerite.

The members of the Group are Andrew D’Arcy (Bega), Daniel Redgrove (Singleton), Jason Bake (Coffs Harbour), Wayne Clarke (Casino), Ruth Kydd (Finley) and Rob Cooper

(Manilla). Due to the geographical location of the members, which reflects the spread of the industry as a whole in NSW, the use of technology, has become important to effectively share ideas and communicate. The group undertakes teleconferences, has a LinkedIn Group for day-to-day interaction and utilises a cloud-based programme for sharing files and documents.

The group met in September and will meet again in December at The University of Sydney’s Camden campus, home to Future Dairy and Dairy NSW’s office. It was certainly down to work with presentations from various guest speakers and time to look at the recent advances in technology associated with dairying. Dr Cameron Clark presented the research conducted by the Dairy Science Group whilst Associate Professor Kendra Kerrisk of Future Dairy provided a tour of the new Robotic Milking Rotary developed at the Corstophine Dairy, only four weeks in operation at the time, and discussed the challenges and opportunities of the Future Dairy project.

The group also attended presentations by Professor Kathy Belov, Associate Dean of Research from the Faculty of Veterinary Science, who explained the types of genomic research underway in the sheep, dairy and native animal arenas. Likewise, Associate Professor in Precision Agriculture, Brett Whelan, demonstrated spatial innovation work which has been undertaken in the cropping and grains sector using variable mapping techniques. The aim is to make more correct decisions per paddock and monitor yield through reflectance information to substantiate the gross margin potential more precisely. The group identified the strong linkages with dairy from these areas of research and discussed the advantages in utilising research from other sectors to reduce duplication - even the potential to learn from the medical industry as to how they use large data sets for decision making. This will be explored further through a guest speaker from The University of Sydney’s School of Physics at a future meeting.

The possibilities for the NSW Dairy Innovation Group seem endless at this point in time, with future connections to be made with similar groups in the USA and UK. For further information on the Dairy Australia NRM program and newsletter:

www.dairyingfortomorrow.com

The Group still welcomes your input to two key questions: **Question One** and **Question Two**.

Meet young researcher Rachel Rodney



Rachel Rodney was recently supported by a Dairy NSW bursary to present some of her research at the joint International Symposium on the Nutrition of Herbivores/ International Symposium on Ruminant Physiology (ISNH/ISRP) that was held in Canberra from the 8 - 12 September. Rachel was able to showcase the importance of her dairy research while meeting and discussing her work with a wide range of researchers and industry representatives from all over the world. People expressed a real interest in the poster she presented, which emphasised the importance of better cow nutrition for production, reproduction and health both

on farm and as an area of future research.

Rachael's PhD research is focused on transition nutrition and fertility in the dairy cow. She is completing her work through The University of Sydney and SBScibus. Rachel was awarded the Australian Society of Animal Production Young Scientist Award for her presentation, which was supported by CSIRO publishing. She expressed her gratitude to her supervisors Professor Ian Lean and Dr Pietro Celi for their help with this work.

Rachel presented part of a meta-analysis where she has been exploring the effects of feeding fats around the time of calving on fertility in dairy cows. Feeding fats have been shown to improve energy balance, reduce the incidence of metabolic diseases and allow energy density to be maintained in diets without increased use of rapidly fermentable carbohydrates; although there has been inconsistency in the studies exploring the impact on fertility. By extracting, modelling and then meta-analysing the diets from 16 papers (including 27 comparisons), she was able to identify a 16% increase in the conception rate of cattle as well as a trend for a reduction in calving to conception interval.

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