



Young people creating prosperous futures in rural industry



Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Report of Findings for Australian Peak Agricultural Organisations

June 2007

Future Farmers Network
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Background

The Future Farmers Network (FFN) applied for funding through the Industry Partnerships Programme – Non – Government Organisation (NGO) Partnership Grants to provide young people with opportunities to increase their involvement in the decision making processes of rural industries. This proposal was accepted by the Parliamentary Secretary and announced in August 2006.

The project was entitled Should I Stay or Should I Go? and was conducted between September 2006 and June 2007.

Objectives

The aim of this Should I Stay or Should I Go? project was to:

- Provide leadership mentoring for young FFN Directors in order to develop their skills to coordinate and lead forums,
- Increase the links between FFN and peak agricultural bodies / organisations
- Provide members of the FFN with the opportunity to come together in their state / territory to discuss pathways for participation in rural industries and
- Strengthen a national network of young people committed to involvement in the rural sector.

Activities

In order to deliver the objectives, the project included the following activities:

1. Appointment of a Facilitator and Steering Committee to:
 - organise a leadership skills three day workshop for young Directors of FFN and;
 - develop a Director's Handbook
2. Development of a Communications Strategy, which included;
 - national and state plans to enhance FFN and industry interaction and included industry partnership meetings and Should I Stay or Should I Go? forums;
 - case studies of young people for use in information kits for participants, to demonstrate pathways for young people in rural industries, and
 - upgrade of the existing FFN website www.futurefarmers.com.au
3. Organisation of a series of meetings with industry representatives in each state / territory to secure their involvement in the forums.
4. Conduct seven forums that will bring together an estimated 200 young members of the FFN and industry to:
 - identify opportunities for greater involvement in representative roles
 - promote available opportunities to young rural people; and
 - provide a directory of young people currently involved or seeking to be involved in rural industries. This will be used by FFN to respond to enquiries from industry for representatives for committees, conferences and career opportunities.

Outcomes Achieved

Key outcomes of the Should I Stay or Should I Go? project include:

1. 14+ meetings held between Future Farmers Network and industry organisations to discuss and establish ways of increasing young people's involvement and participation in rural industries.
2. 7 case studies highlighting the pathways of young people in agriculture.
3. 8 Should I Stay or Should I Go? forums held to showcase pathways for young people to and in rural industries. This included one forum per state / territory and one national Should I Go or Should I Stay? Teleconference.
4. Identification of key reasons for why young people are leaving rural industries to pursue other work based opportunities
5. Identification of key strategies to attract young people to or support them to stay in rural industries across Australia.

Reasons for Why Young People are Leaving Agriculture and What We Can do to Make them Stay?

A summary of key reasons raised throughout this project and strategies to support young people's increased participation and involvement in Australia's agricultural industries and rural sectors is as follows:

Why are young people choosing not to remain or work in Australia's rural industries?	What should be done to make regional Australia more attractive to young people to work in?
1. Poor remuneration for work done. Competing with other industries such as mining that are better remunerated for the time and competence required.	Sell the positive lifestyle at government and individual perspective. Sell the concept of a "wholistic" lifestyle for individuals as well as families.
2. The perception and reality of isolation. This includes social isolation as well as isolation from services that are available in more urban based environments.	Take a stocktake of rural services and look at increasing services for young people through flexible delivery options such as online and teleconferencing activities – especially regarding vocational development and social activities.
3. Generational issues including succession planning or lack of it and the disgruntled attitude of the former generation.	Promote the security of the agricultural and rural sectors. Promote sustainable practices as "sell" positive media stories not just those about drought and depression issues.
4. No and limited knowledge of career opportunities and pathways available to young people in agricultural industries and rural sectors	Create greater awareness of career opportunities – not just a farmer – but whole of rural services sector.

Pathways to Agriculture

Seven case studies of young people in Australia's rural and agricultural sectors were identified to highlight and promote the diversity of pathways for increasing young people's participation and involvement in these sectors. These case studies are as follows:

Name	Age	Location
Abby Ward	25	Tasmania
Andrew Broad	31	Victoria
Annabelle Coppin	23	Western Australia
Brett Hills	30	South Australia
Cat Miedecke	27	New South Wales
Catherine Marriott	25	Queensland
Michael Harper	30	Northern Territory



Seizing opportunities

ABBY WARD



Age: 25

Location: Dover, Tasmania

Occupation: Marketing & Promotions Coordinator

Industry Sector: Aquaculture

Life's Motto: Carpe Diem - seize the day

Tasmania

Career Pathway

- **Born on North West Coast of Tasmania**
- **Moved to Launceston at 18**
- **Completed 1 year Nursing at University**
- **Completed 3 year double degree in Tourism and Marketing**
- **Gap year working on cruise ship in North Queensland**
- **Returned to complete university**
- **2½ years working with Huon Aquaculture**

After completing a double degree in tourism and marketing, 25 year old Tasmanian Abby Ward attended a cocktail function where she met the director of Huon Aquaculture, a Tasmanian based salmon farming business. This changed her life.

"I think many people get caught up in planning their future and then when life throws a curve ball it makes a big impact".

Abby had a life plan but what she hadn't planned on was the lure of a great opportunity with Huon Aquaculture.

"He (the Director) turned up on my doorstep and did an interview with me in my pyjamas".

Abby obviously made a big impact. She has been Marketing and Promotions Coordinator of the company for two and a half years now.

"As Marketing and Promotions Coordinator I am responsible for public relations, advertising, communications and scheduling and running our nationwide promotional activities. The best aspect of my job is the diversity and I enjoy representing our company".

Abby often reflects upon the importance of balance in life. She loves her job and often works well into the evening. Abby regularly has to be told to 'go home'.

"It's easy when you are enjoying your job to let it take over your life. It is important to step back every now and then and evaluate your situation".

That's exactly what Abby has done. She recently purchased 110 acres one hour from Hobart and with plans to one day launch a boutique vineyard, Abby is looking to the future.

"With world class innovation and human resources in Australia, the future looks very bright. The youth of today need to be looking further forward into the future, pre-empting future challenges and be prepared to be on the defensive. In aquaculture in particular, the potential and room for growth has never been so great".

From launching a career in her pyjamas, to a dream of being an empty nester living near the sea, Abby Ward has not let one day go by without seizing it.

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Daring To Succeed

ANDREW BROAD



Victoria

Age: 31

Location: Bridgewater, Victoria

Occupation: Owner / Manager

Industry Sector: Mixed Farming

Life's Motto: Work hard, honour God and love Australia

Career Pathway

- **Born Carnarvon, WA**
- **Moved to Bridgewater as a baby**
- **Completed year 12**
- **Deferred Biological Science at University**
- **Undertook 4 year apprenticeship in Agriculture**
- **Bought first farm at 22 years of age**
- **Bought additional land at 23 years of age**
- **Married wife Rachel**
- **Running own mixed farming operation**

For 2005 Nuffield Farming Scholarship Award winner and Future Farmers board member Andrew Broad of Bridgewater in Victoria, choosing to defer university and undertake a four year apprenticeship in agriculture was undoubtedly the right choice.

Having purchased his first farm at 22 and additional land at 23, Andrew now owns and share farms 4500 acres in Victoria's western district. The farm produces 3000 acres of wheat and canola for export, prime lambs for the meat domestic market, wool for fabric into China and lucerne hay for the horse market. Andrew likes the diversity that the agricultural industry provides.

"I like being my own boss, as well as the variety and challenge of everyday life and the opportunity to diversify into many areas".

These opportunities and a willingness to try new things have supported Andrew on his career pathway. By young people in rural industries taking these opportunities today, Andrew's hope is for a future of young progressive farmers who are respected for their contribution to Australia and are providing a good lifestyle for themselves and their families.

"There are so many opportunities out in the world, and we are limited only by our lack of daring to try new things".

Among the achievements in his life, Andrew lists marrying his wife Rachel as one of the best. Having received the Australia Day Award for services to the community at 23, it is obvious that Andrew's future is for sustainable and strong rural communities.

So whether he is still farming when he's 60 years old or supporting agriculture through his political interests, Andrew has and always will be dedicated to the future of our rural industries.

"I will try and do the best for Australia, maybe farming, maybe politics".

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Firing the passion

ANNABELLE COPPIN



Western Australia

Age: 22

Location: Yarrie Station, Western Australia

Occupation: Farm Overseer

Industry Sector: Beef

Life's Motto: Keep the carton cold and full

Career Pathway

- **Born and bred Port Hedland**
- **Grew up on "Yarrie Station", East Pilbara, Western Australia**
- **School of the air until Year 8**
- **3 years boarding school, Perth Years 11 and 12, WA College of Agriculture**
- **Worked at home for 1 year**
- **8 week pilot licence course (full time)**
- **4 months working for Heytesbury**
- **Back home to run family property**

Spending six days on a live export boat travelling from Darwin to Jakarta with 16,000 head of cattle, may not be on the top of the list of things to do for most young rural people but Annabelle Coppin jumped at the chance.

"It was an excellent experience as well as a personal reinforcement of how essential, innovative, diverse and exciting the live cattle trade industry is to Australia, our industry and my family's livelihood".

After boarding school and a short stint working away, Annabelle returned to Yarrie Station in the East Pilbara region of Western Australia where she continues to oversee the everyday operations of the family beef property. It's a career that appears to have chosen Annabelle.

"It's what burns the fire inside me. The fact is the sky's the limit in agriculture. The potential is exciting and it's only up to me to keep climbing. Plus I get to work cattle, ride horses and fly".

That's right – not only has this challenge-seeking young overseer experienced life on a live export boat, she also holds her fixed wing pilot's licence and takes the Cessna up whenever she gets the chance - all this at 22 years of age.

"I have learnt that the skills I need in agriculture to be an efficient, profitable, innovative and importantly content producer are endless. It's important to never stop learning and keep taking on challenges".

Not surprisingly, Annabelle sees the future of rural industries as prosperous, sustainable and innovative and believes there are a lot of good things happening in the industry at present.

Annabelle hopes to be able to look back on her life and be proud of the land under her care and be confident and content with the product produced from it. But there are also a few things she doesn't want to be doing!

"Definitely not digging post holes, hopefully I'll be beyond that by then".

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Seeking success

BRETT HILLS



South Australia

Age: 30

Location: Mt Gambier, South Australia

Occupation: Succession Planning

Industry Sector: All Sectors

Life's Motto: You only have one life - enjoy every moment of it

Career Pathway

- **Raised on family property near Mt Gambier**
- **3 years at Monivae College, Hamilton**
- **3 years at Deakin University – Accounting**
- **3 years working Day Neilson Accountants, Geelong**
- **3 years Accounting work overseas (United Kingdom & United States of America)**
- **1 year Jackeroo**
- **1 year overseas (USA Ranch)**
- **Started own business 'Rural Succession Services'**

Accounting was the chosen career path of Brett Hills until, at the age of 30, a facilitated farm family succession meeting opened up new doors and created new opportunities – leading him on his way to his current career.

"I have one older sister and it was always just assumed that I would come back to the farm, but it was never spoken about. Our family had good communication but no plan. Working through a facilitated family meeting and succession plan opened my eyes to a whole new way of doing things and a new career for me".

In 2006, and at the age of 32, this fifth generation farmer chose a career that brought together all of his skills, passions and interests. Brett now runs 'Rural Succession Services' a South Australian based company helping farming families with succession planning. Yet in keeping with his own family's succession plan, Brett spends around 2 weeks every month on the family beef and sheep property outside of Mt Gambier, South Australia.

"I facilitate family meetings, succession planning workshops and seminars. I also set up software for bookkeeping, stock management and pasture management. I like the freedom, diversity and the ability to make a difference".

After establishing the company and creating an avenue to earn off-farm income, Brett's plan for the future is to one day return home to run the family farm.

"Farming in the future will be more of a blend of professionalism and technology. I hope to see rural industries embrace new technologies and advance yet not lose their love of the land, the animals and the people that make up our rural communities".

Looking thirty years into the future, Brett sees himself still involved in rural industries, hopefully in a stewardship role of a farming operation.

"I would like to think that in thirty years I am passing my knowledge and skills on to the younger generation and encouraging them to take on the challenges of farming for the future".

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Setting up positive futures

CAT MIEDECKE



New South Wales

Age: 27

Location: Gunnedah, New South Wales

Occupation: Consultant

Industry Sector: Rural Industries

Life's Motto: Not to have a life's motto and live everyday as it comes

Career Pathway

- **At 18 months spent 6 years on yacht sailing around world**
- **10 years schooling in Tasmania**
- **2 years Bachelor of Arts (Anthropology & International Relations)**
- **3years Bachelor of Environmental Management**
- **2 years working in Education in Tasmania**
- **1 year working at DPI in Emerald**
- **4 months Journalist in Gunnedah**

Flexibility and a willingness to learn something new every day are lessons you would expect someone like Gunnedah based consultant and mother-to-be Cat Miedecke is well experienced to teach.

"I was born in Brisbane then at the age of 18 months my family and I moved onto a yacht and spent six years sailing around the world".

Needless to say the adventure didn't stop there for Cat. She has had a varied life in not only location and career but also in education. It appears that this 27 year old is now looking to settle down, raise a family and combine all her skills and knowledge to enter into a new career that will suit her new lifestyle.

"I am heading into consultancy and facilitation as I think it will bring together my interest in agriculture with my experience in teaching. I like the idea of meeting participants and learning from them – just as I hope they will learn from me".

As you may expect of a teacher, Cat Miedecke not only likes teaching, but learning as much as she can from life.

"I have learnt many lessons, but the biggest is that life is just one big lesson. I learn something new every day and always try to take something away from a mistake".

Cat believes that young people will be using research and new technologies in the future to ensure that agriculture and related industries remain environmentally and economically sustainable.

"In the past it was almost expected that you would inherit the family farm having not experienced or been exposed to the world outside the farm gate. Now and into the future young people are being forced to be smarter as the industry gets tougher".

In an ideal future, Cat sees herself and her husband raising their family on their own property. However, she also believes that one of the biggest threats to the industry is the lack of support for aspiring young farmers in purchasing their own property.

"Where I would like to see myself and where I am are most likely to be two different places".

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Giving it a red hot go

CATHERINE MARRIOTT



Age: 25

Queensland

Location: Brisbane, Queensland

Occupation: Animal Nutritionist

Industry Sector: Livestock

Life's Motto: Don't give up too early, anything that is worth having is worth working for

Career Pathway

- **Born and bred in rural Victoria**
- **6 years Boarding school in Albury**
- **1 year in England teaching and riding horses**
- **4 years Rural Science Degree in Armidale (includes 1 year working at Washington State Uni)**
- **1 year Jillaroo in Gulf and Territory**
- **Ruminant Extension work in top end**
- **1 year BEC Feed Solutions, Brisbane**

Cath Marriott couldn't think of being in a better place than where she is right now. She is doing what she loves – helping farmers to be more sustainable and sharing her knowledge. Having done 8500kms in the first three weeks of her new job, Cath spends 60% of her working life on the road from Townsville to Manilla, Longreach, Roma, St George and everywhere in between.

Born and bred in rural Victoria, Cath spent a year of her Rural Science degree as a para-professional at Washington State University in the United States, and was awarded the most prestigious award – the Para-Professional of the year, having been chosen from a group of 140.

This 25 year old now proudly works as an Animal Nutritionist for Brisbane based company, BEC Feed Solutions. Sponsored by her employer, Cath is planning to undertake her PhD, over the next five years. This will give her the opportunity to consult and earn an off-farm income later in life.

"I chose my current job as I can mix my love of science with my passion for agriculture. I couldn't think of being in a better spot".

A turning point in Cath's life, was speaking in the Queens Chamber at Parliament House during a National Young Farmers Forum. Having learnt to give everything a red hot go, she did what everyone is afraid to do – talk about themselves.

"I will never forget it for two reasons – I knew I would only get an opportunity like this maybe once in my lifetime. And then, in front of over 200 people - I welcomed Minister Warren Truss as being from 'the home of the peanut'. I can't believe I said that".

Cath hopes that the future of rural industries will be prosperous, proactive and progressive and hopes that people living in urban areas will have a greater interest in rural industries.

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Choosing where you want to be

MICHAEL HARPER



Northern Territory

Age: 30

Location: Alexandria Station, Northern Territory

Occupation: Assistant Manager

Industry Sector: Beef Cattle

Life's Motto: *To have a go and give it your best shot*

Career Pathway

- **Born and raised in suburban Sydney**
- **High School at Oakhill College and worked on dairy farm**
- **Jackeroo**
- **Married**
- **Orange Agricultural College – Advanced Diploma in Farm Management**
- **Clyde Agriculture**
- **3 years North Australian Pastoral Co.**

Born in Sydney and growing up in the suburbs, Michael Harper was first introduced to agriculture through a small Angus stud at Oakhill College where he attended High School. But it wasn't until he joined Clyde Agriculture in 1999 that he discovered it was the beef industry where he belonged.

"I learnt a hell of a lot and it cemented my interest in the beef cattle industry. I knew this was my future career".

With their first child on the way, Michael and his wife looked at moving from New South Wales in search of a more challenging career in the beef industry.

"Starting a family makes you think more seriously about your future and where you want to be".

Now an Assistant Manager working and living on Alexandria Station in the Northern Territory with his wife and two sons Jack and Angus, Michael spends his days supervising up to 55,000 breeders, checking on cattle and waters, keeping records for accreditation and supervising and training staff.

"I enjoy working with the people I work with and seeing the younger staff learning. I also like the fact that there is always a different challenge ahead".

Michael believes that future leaders should take a proactive approach now to issues they see will arise in the future. He also hopes that it will be a very bright future for those up-coming generations seeking a genuine career in rural industries.

"You need to have a go and give it your best shot, and if you can go to bed at night knowing that you have done your best then whether you succeeded or not, you can be satisfied".

This too is where Michael wants to be, retired at 60 years of age and sitting on a beach somewhere, satisfied that he has made a contribution to the industry.

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Tips for Supporting Australia's Future Farmers

1. Visit www.futurefarmers.com.au the official website of the Future Farmers Network.
2. Sponsor a young person's membership of the Future Farmers Network
3. Introduce yourself to the Future Farmers Network Director in your state. National organisations should contact the Future Farmers Network Chairperson, Ms Joanne Rodney.

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4. Consider a joint event or partnership with the Future Farmers Network. Contact a Director to discuss.
5. Share news of the www.futurefarmers.com.au website across your membership
6. Contact the Future Farmers Network about 2007 – 2008 event sponsorship and listing on www.futurefarmers.com.au

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