



Travel & Training Bursary Report

FFN member: Emily Webb Ware

Event: ABARES Outlook Conference

Date: 6th-7th March, 2018

I was lucky enough to be sponsored by AustSafe and the Future Farmers Network to attend the 2018 ABARES Outlook conference in Canberra. This was something I had seen advertised, but never thought I would actually be able to attend, so I was very excited to be given the opportunity to attend.

ABARES, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, is a research section of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources within the Australian Government. Their role is to provide research, analysis and advice to inform the public and private sector on significant issues affecting agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

The Outlook 2018 conference aims to connect leading national and international speakers with delegates in the industry. Around 70 speakers addressed almost 700 people over the two days of the conference. The conference focuses on the outlook for Australia's agriculture sector, including some of the influences that will shape international markets and demand for Australian agricultural commodities and produce into the future. The 'theme' for the 2018 conference was *'creating value in an increasingly connected world'*. Over the two days I learned about the growth opportunities for Australian products, how we can create value in our supply chains, how we can follow consumer trends and demand, as well as the opportunities (and challenges) for exporters in the competitive global market.

The conference started on Tuesday morning, where the recently appointed Minister of Agriculture and Water Resources, David Littleproud, welcomed the group to Canberra and the conference. We then listened to an economic overview, which touched on Australia's position in agricultural markets globally, and discussed the opportunities for Australia within Asia and the rest of the world. The next session included a number of speakers who explored how technology and societal developments can change consumer choices and demand, which, in turn, will drive on-farm and supply chain decisions. After lunch there were a number of concurrent sessions concerning a wide range of topics; I chose to attend the *'Preparing for tomorrow's climate today'* and the *'Growing agriculture with new capital and technology'* sessions.

On the Tuesday evening I was also fortunate enough to attend the conference dinner, which included the 2018 Science and Innovation Awards. These awards were presented to early career researchers, scientists and innovators aged under 35, who have a passion for agriculture and are carrying out a research project that will contribute to improving agriculture in Australia. It was very inspiring to see what these young people were doing, and I was able to meet a number of them and learn about their projects. The Australian Biosecurity Awards were also presented, to recognise individuals and businesses that have taken significant or innovative measures to contribute to improve the biosecurity of their business and industry.



Wednesday followed a similar structure. In the morning we had an opening address by Anne Ruston, the Assistant Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, who gave a particularly interesting talk about the role and future of Agriculture in Australia, among other things. We then heard from a number of international speakers who talked about Australia's export markets, (specifically, Europe, China, and Indonesia), and our challenges in accessing these markets and appealing to their consumers. In the afternoon there were again a number of concurrent sessions- I attended the *'Meat: adding value in competitive livestock markets'* session (which, coming from a background in the meat industries, was particularly interesting and relevant for me), as well as a discussion of the *'Future of water markets in the southern Murray-Darling Basin'*.

Overall, the conference was a fantastic learning and networking opportunity, and came at a perfect time in my education and career. I came away with a greater understanding of where Australian agriculture sits in a global perspective, as well as a greater image of what the future may hold and a better idea of what challenges we face as an industry. I was also able to meet a number of industry delegates, of whom I now have contacts with and hope to use in the future.

I really cannot thank AustSafe and the Future Farmers Network enough for the support, I am so grateful to have been able to attend and make the most of my time in Canberra.