



*The Grassland Society of NSW Inc.*

# **MAKING PASTURES PAY**

Proceedings of the 29th Annual Conference  
of The Grassland Society of NSW Inc.

Edited by Helen Burns and Ashley Senn

GOULBURN SOLDIERS CLUB, GOULBURN 14-16 JULY 2015



# The Grassland Society of NSW

**A unique blend of people with a common interest in developing  
our most important resource – our Grasslands**

The Grassland Society of NSW was formed in March 1985. The Society now has about 350 members and associates, 75% of whom are farmers and graziers. The balance are agricultural scientists, farm advisers, consultants and executives or representatives of organisations concerned with fertilisers, seeds, chemicals and machinery.

The aims of the Society are to advance the investigation of problems affecting grasslands husbandry and to encourage the adoption into practice of results of research and practical experience. The Society holds an annual conference, publishes a quarterly newsletter, holds field days, and has established regional branches throughout the State.

Membership is open to any person or company interested in grassland management and the aims of the Society.

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## Preface

On behalf of the Grassland Society of NSW Inc. it gives me great pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to all members and non-members attending this, the 29th Annual Conference, of our society. This is the first time Goulburn has hosted our conference and we look forward to meeting many locals and enjoying their hospitality. Our society deems the sharing of our conference locations as a very strong attribute of the society, trying to disseminate the current research and extension work as widely as we can. In recent years, the Grassland Society of NSW Inc. has been chartered with convening the 'Pasture Updates', an MLA funded extension activity providing similar content in a one day workshop. These have also proven to be a great success, allowing many more participants to be reached on an annual basis. The most recent of these were held 'locally' in May at Nimmitabel and Bomaderry, and collectively attracted more than 120 participants.

With NSW having such a diverse range of pasture production systems and regions, it seems inevitable that not everyone is 'getting a season' at the same time. That is particularly true of this year. Conditions are quite good in the south of the state this year, and through the centre and north-eastern parts of the state, the April break was very welcome, and conditions have improved significantly. Unfortunately, many of our friends and family in the north-western and western regions of the state are still doing it remarkably tough. Our thoughts are with those who aren't being so fortunate, and we encourage them all to think of the good times ahead, and seek help if it is becoming too much. Your turn will come, hopefully, very soon.

We are all aware that change happens. Whether it be the seasons, climate or market conditions, it is critical that we make the effort to expose ourselves to what researchers, consultants, agronomists and other producers have to offer. Implementing new ideas may not be instantly possible, but just hearing and seeing new things often challenges us. "Would that work at home", or "I wonder if ..." are often questions people ask themselves after seeing or hearing of the successes of others.

The conference this year, with its theme 'Making pastures pay' will challenge us all. The

presentations cover attributes of the plant/animal production systems, and are complemented by the bus tours. I encourage everyone to ask questions and so learn from the experiences of others.

Our sponsors are an integral part of our society. They continue to provide great assistance, either financial or in-kind, and it is their involvement that makes many of the society's activities possible. I am fully aware that the commercial world is getting tougher. To those sponsors of our society for the 2015/2016 year, I would sincerely like to thank each and every one of you for your contribution. We continue to pray for good seasons, and hope that you too can benefit from these. I encourage all conference delegates to visit the commercial displays and take the time to talk with the representatives. Their product knowledge and the resources they have available may be just the key to improvements you can achieve in your own business.

To the conference organising committee and the Tableland Farming Systems organisation, thank you. While an individual convenor may not have been appointed, a few people have gone well and truly above and beyond this year. Many hours of voluntary work have come together for all our benefit, and for that we are grateful. To Helen Burns in particular, you are to be congratulated on a great conference program and proceedings. To the members of the Tableland Farming Systems, in particular Tom McGuinness, Chris Houghton and Jen Medway, again thank you for the enthusiasm and organisational skills you brought to this year's event, and especially the bus tour program.

In encouraging any non-member delegates to consider joining our society and reap the year round rewards on offer, I wish all delegates in attendance the best for the conference; it is provided for your learning and enjoyment. Should you have any ideas, comments or concerns, I would encourage you to share them with any of the organising committee. Your feedback is always welcome and our society can only improve on the back of people's collective input.

Enjoy your time here,

David Harbison  
President

## Conference Program

Time	Topic and Speaker
<b>TUESDAY 14 JULY – GOULBURN SOLDIERS CLUB</b>	
3.30 pm	Pre Conference Registrations
5.30 pm	Grassland Society of NSW Annual General Meeting
6.30 pm	Happy Hour and Canapes
<b>DAY ONE – WEDNESDAY 15 JULY – GOULBURN SOLDIERS CLUB</b>	
8.00 am	<b>Registrations</b>
9.00 am	<b>Welcome and Welcome to Country</b> David Harbison, President, Grassland Society of NSW Representative of Pejar Local Aboriginal Land Council
<b>SESSION 1</b> 9.25 am	<b>Theme: Business profit drivers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Opportunities to maximise livestock profitability.</i> John Webb Ware, Mackinnon Project, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Melbourne</li> </ul>
10.15 am	<b>Trade Displays and Morning Tea</b>
10.45 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Managing the production potential of the soils of the Southern Highlands and Central Tablelands – key messages from the Landscan™ program.</i> Luke Pope, Senior Land Services Officer – Pastures, Local Land Services – South East, Cooma</li> <li>• <i>New insights into phosphorus cycling in pastures: implications for fertiliser management and for closing the phosphorus efficiency gap.</i> Richard Simpson, Senior Principal Research Scientist, CSIRO, Canberra</li> </ul>
12.00 pm	<b>Trade Displays and Lunch</b>
1.00 pm	<b>Bus Tours Depart Goulburn Soldiers Club to visit farms in the following localities:</b>
<b>Tour A – Crookwell district</b>	Visit “Rosedale” a mixed farming enterprise close to Crookwell, which highlights award winning landscape rehabilitation work, established over 15 years. A feature of “Rosedale” is the successful integration of sustainable farming practices in highly productive livestock and horticulture enterprises of the region.
<b>Tour B – Lake Bathurst district</b>	Visit successful mixed farming operations in the Lake Bathurst district that include innovative broadacre cropping enterprises. These properties demonstrate successful adaptation of broadacre cropping to the Tableland environment to complement and benefit livestock production systems.
<b>Tour C – Tarago/Collector district</b>	Visit the Woodlawn Bioreactor site located near Tarago. This was previously an open-cut mine, but is now one of the largest bioreactor landfill projects in the world. It features bio-energy production using energy recovered from waste material to produce electricity; aquaculture utilising generated energy for tropical fish farming; a 50 MW windfarm harnessing natural wind energy; and a 6,000 ha grazing operation producing wool and meat.
5.30 pm	<b>Buses return to Goulburn Soldiers Club</b>



6.30 pm	<b>Conference Dinner and Entertainment (Robert Gorman – Bush poet)</b>
<b>DAY TWO – THURSDAY 16 JULY – GOULBURN SOLDIERS CLUB</b>	
8.00 am	<b>Registrations and Trade Displays</b>
<b>SESSION 2</b> 8.30 am	<b>Theme: Matching product to future markets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Which breeding direction for sheep on the Southern Tablelands?</i> Phil Graham – Technical Specialist, Livestock Systems, NSW DPI, Yass</li> <li>• <i>Does increasing body frame size in Merinos increase profit? A case study</i> Grant Burbidge, “Connemara”, Tarcutta NSW</li> </ul>
<b>SESSION 3</b> 9.40 am	<b>Theme: Maximising the returns from on-farm fertiliser investment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Managing fertiliser in a grazing system – putting principles into practice</i> Jim Virgona – Graminus Consulting</li> </ul>
10.20 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A farmer’s perspective on strategic fertiliser management</i> Oliver Cay, “Pineleigh”, Bungarby NSW</li> </ul>
10.50 am	<b>Trade Displays and Morning Tea</b>
<b>SESSION 4</b> 11.30 am	<b>Theme: Persistence of pasture species, sustainable pastures for the Tablelands</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Persistent perennials? An advisor’s perspective</i> David Harbison, DR Agriculture Pty Ltd, Molong</li> <li>• <i>Grazing management options to boost productivity and secure healthy landscapes.</i> Warwick Badgery, Research Scientist, NSW DPI, Orange</li> <li>• Panel session: Pasture persistence on the Tablelands</li> </ul>
1.00 pm	<b>Trade Displays and Lunch</b>
<b>SESSION 5</b> 1.45 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Capitalising on the opportunities for agriculture in the Tablelands of southern NSW – a farmer’s perspective.</i> Garry Kadwell, “Rosedale”, Crookwell NSW</li> </ul>
2.15pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angus Taylor MP (Member of Federal Parliament, electorate of Hume)</li> </ul>
3.15 pm	<b>Conference Close and Afternoon Tea</b>

# Tablelands Farming Systems

## **About TFS**

Tablelands Farming Systems Inc. (TFS) is a progressive and innovative farmer association, primarily focused on the delivery of cutting edge research, development and extension activities to assist farmers and their businesses to be more profitable and resilient.

TFS membership is invited from all areas within the Southern Tablelands. TFS aims to recruit progressive farmers who are committed to improving their farm business performance. The membership base extends across many enterprises including wool, beef, meat sheep, cropping and livestock. Small, medium and large area farmers are invited to become members.

## **Objectives:**

- Improve livestock production and profitability through a focus on genetics, breeding efficiency, stock health, nutrition, growth rates and marketing
- Increase stocking rates and performance through pasture improvement
- Support the development of high rainfall zone(HRZ) cropping
- Support farmers involved in niche agricultural industries throughout the region
- Encourage a coordinated approach to natural resource management
- Encourage the adoption of strategies that reduce business risks
- Encourage business skill development and succession planning
- Provide pathways and support for young people in agriculture

## **Membership**

Annual membership fee is \$500. Some of the many benefits to members include:

- Regular opportunities to exchange information with like-minded people
- Networking opportunities with industry leaders and government bodies
- Influence in TFS strategic direction and operational planning
- Discounts on soil testing and other farm management tools and technologies
- Discounts or free access to TFS activities
- Keeping up to date with cutting edge on-farm research and demonstrations
- Participation in skills based training
- Opportunities to develop valuable skills in leadership, governance, communication, negotiation and marketing.

## **Further information**

Contact the Project Officer to receive a TFS prospectus or to register to become a member.

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## **Invited papers**