

## Leadership for the dairy industry Dairy Australia Chair, Pat Rowley



*The Australian Dairy Industry has managed many complex challenges over the last few decades and much of this has been achieved by dedicated people planning the way forward.*

*It is important to provide the opportunity for younger people to be involved in leadership training to give them the confidence to be involved in long term guidance of the Australian dairy industry, hence Dairy Australia's investment in the Advance in Dairy Leadership Program.*

*Constant change will always be with us. I would encourage younger people in our industry to take advantage of leadership courses and to meet with industry personnel at every opportunity in order to gain experience and confidence to participate in the dairy industry and its future.*



## Welcome to the Deliver for Dairy Newsletter

This newsletter has been developed for two reasons, firstly to maintain links between graduates of the *Lead on Dairy* (now *Impact on Dairy*) and *Advance in Dairy* programs conducted over the past five years, and secondly, to provide an opportunity for the broader industry to hear of the achievements of graduates and the on-going progress of their projects.

The State *Impact on Dairy* Industry Training Program equips participants with the skills, knowledge and confidence to effectively **participate** at an individual, enterprise and industry level.

It is a three month Program which includes two sessions, the first is two days and the second is one day. This program is targeted at a regional or state level and is for farmers and regionally based service providers. Participants are resourced to design and implement an industry project which may relate to a farm improvement or a regional issue. Examples include succession planning on a family farm and forming a youth discussion group. Project outcomes are presented to industry

leaders at the final session by the participants. This program is available throughout Australia.

The *Advance in Dairy* Leadership Development Program is designed to equip participants to effectively **participate and represent** their industry at a local, state and national level.

It is a six month Program which includes two residential skill sessions of three and two days, conducted in Melbourne and Canberra, respectively.

Participants are resourced to design and implement an industry project. The expectation is that this project has the potential to make a contribution at a national level. Examples include researching youth needs, profiling the industry to the broader community and developing services based on previous research e.g. housing, labour or data collection. Participants present their project outcomes to mentors and industry, business, community and political leaders at the final session in Canberra.

Participants are supported by facilitators, mentors and industry leaders throughout the Program.

The Program aims to challenge participants to take a whole of industry approach to their discussions, planning and action through; exposure to current industry leaders and their views at industry business dinners, panel sessions of national leaders and working with a mentor for the duration of the program and beyond.



*"Programs like the Advance in Dairy Leadership Development Program play such an important role in encouraging and nurturing the leaders of the future"*  
National Food Industry Strategy Ltd  
Managing Director, Dr Susan Nelle

## Bringing New Skills to the Table

Sarah Parker graduated from the 2006 *Advance in Dairy* program. With a Masters in Agriculture and Rural Development behind her and a desire to be employed in a rural area, Sarah made the move from Brisbane to Victoria to be a part of the dairy industry 18 months ago.

She now leases a dairy farm at Tatura (Northern Victoria) with her husband and has a stud registered herd of predominantly Illawarra Cattle. Sarah manages the administration and accounting for their enterprise and her husband, Raymond, takes care of the farming.

Sarah also works off-farm as the Development and Projects Coordinator at The University of Melbourne's Dookie Campus which delivers higher education courses in agriculture.

Sarah was nominated to do the program by the United Dairy Farmers of Victoria District Council 2.

The industry project Sarah undertook focused on creating a positive image of the dairy industry.

"By undertaking this project I wanted to increase my capacity within the Dairy Industry to identify and access information, respect and understand a diversity of opinions, listen to and incorporate feedback, promote the professionalism within the industry and expand my professional networks," Sarah said.

"Since completing the program I have participated in the Victorian Farmers Forum and I have successfully profiled the industry and individuals involved in many roles within the industry in a range of publications."

Sarah found the Program to be both challenging and rewarding. "The leadership program has broadened my industry recognition, enhanced my value as an employee and increased my ability to network and liaise in the agricultural industry," she said.

"In a personal sense it has developed my sense of self worth and my understanding of the dairy industry. Development of the individual, industry and enterprise are all interwoven through this program," Sarah said.



Allan Burgess, President, Australian Dairy Farmers Ltd, The Hon Sussan Ley MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Sarah Parker, Advance in Dairy graduate 2006.

"Let me congratulate the *Advance in Dairy Program* participants on the hard work they have put in over the past six months to successfully develop and complete their industry projects. It took a strong work ethic, enthusiasm and a desire to take responsibility for your industry's future to get you where you are. They are the qualities that earned you a place on this Program and they are the qualities you must never lose as you fulfil your promise and, one day, take over the reins of your industry"  
*The Hon Sussan Ley MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry*

## Labour Co-operative

Jos Van Der Geest, dairy farmer from Foster in Gippsland has researched a model to establish a labour co-operative to resource dairy farmers as his industry project during the 2006 *Advance in Dairy Program*. Jos is currently testing his idea with key industry stakeholders in order to gain the necessary support to implement this project and to date he has had an extremely positive response. A more detailed report will be provided in the next edition.

## Farm Worker to Director of GippsDairy

Warwick Baum graduated from the *Advance in Dairy Program* in 2004. Warwick started working in the dairy industry 10 years ago as a farm worker, then moved through to an assistant manager and now runs his own dairy business with his wife. The Baum's share farm at Jindivick in West Gippsland Victoria, where they are responsible for the management of the farm.

At the time of doing the program Warwick was searching for something that would help develop his career as well as seeking something off-farm. The leadership program was the ideal combination.

The *Advance in Dairy* skill sessions are designed to focus on the skills and knowledge required to make a difference in relation to industry issues and these include; public speaking, developing a vision for the industry, project planning and implementation, team work, consultation, meetings procedures and exploration of national and international industry issues with industry and political leaders.

"I learnt a lot about personal development and the importance of a professional image and how to create and maintain one. In a business sense I learnt a lot networking with the other 16 like minded industry people and took some of their information home to implement on my farm," he said.

These skill sessions equipped Warwick for various roles which he has taken on within the United Dairy Farmers of Victoria and as Director of GippsDairy.

"As well as my increased confidence in such positions I also gained the skills to take on jobs such as chairing events, hosting important guests and running meetings," he said.

Warwick has a strong focus on encouraging more young people to get involved in the dairy industry and its related organisations. Warwick says he still comes back to what he learnt during the program when he has to present himself in one of his roles.

"I would strongly encourage anybody to participate in the program, especially if you are an introvert but have a desire to be involved in the industry because it definitely helps to bring you out of your shell," he said.

## Ensuring Herd Recording Continues

2006 *Advance in Dairy* graduate James Geraghty grew up on a dairy beef operation in Far North Queensland and continued farming with his parents after leaving school on the family farm at nearby Millaa Millaa.

Mechanics and firearms are two of James' passions but farming is his career. He now runs the 460 hectare farm (and a further 500 hectares of leased land) with his wife and four children having built the herd from 120 to 300 over the past 16 years.

Having been in the dairy industry all his life James was interested in seeing how decisions are made within the industry and how the lobbying system works and believed the program would assist him to understand these processes.

"Working with farmers from other areas (fellow participants and dinner guests) is always beneficial in that you learn about the issues that affect them, both the common threads and the differences. It all helps to see the big picture," James said.

James' project was to ensure the continuation of Herd Recording in the Queensland dairy region.

"The aim of my project was to make sure existing Herd Recording Companies would continue to provide their services (with fewer farmers the viability of the Herd Recording companies is a concern) and also to encourage farmers who don't Herd Record to take it up. The path to achieve this was to approach milk processors (in this case Dairyfarmers, National Foods, Parmalat, Norco and Bega) to pay an allowance to farmers of about 0.1c/litre for milk supplied from herd recorded cows," he said.

"Companies may take the view that they already pay a quality bonus and they do. BUT cows on farms that herd record versus cows on farms that didn't herd record - at the last point of time official figures could be compared- produced more milk, .3% more butterfat, .4% more protein and had a somatic cell count (SCC) of 150 000 less. In an industry where points of a cent/litre are critical- can a processor afford to say 'no we won't help you produce milk with higher butterfat, higher protein and lower SCC' when we know that the cost of processing higher quality milk is lower per unit of output, when we know the shelf life of the product is longer if produced from lower SCC milk," James said.

James says this is a win win situation. By guaranteeing the future of Herd Recording services, farmers produce better quality milk and so have a more viable income and processors lower their cost of production, increase intake and improve shelf life.

"I believe that Herd Recording is an integral management tool for farmers, especially for control of somatic cell count. I don't think we could run the farm as efficiently without Herd Recording and so I have endeavoured to make sure it will continue to be available," James said.

"I learnt that contact with key players is a must to get a new idea accepted. The concept and underlying reasoning need to be explained clearly, concisely and confidently if a proposal is to have any chance of being accepted," James said.

Since completing the leadership program in April, James has moved to source funding to continue his project.

"Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation, Chief Executive Officer, Adrian Peake, is going to table my project with Dairy Australia and assist in seeking the funding to take it forward," James said.

"This is our industry. We need to make farms more profitable. We have a very effective management tool at our fingertips. We need to encourage all farmers to take it up- they may need some persuading to do this and this project aims to provide that encouragement," James said.



*James at his farm after Cyclone Larry 2006*

*Graduates of the 2006 Advance in Dairy Leadership Development Program, Brad Missen and Jos Van Der Geest have been appointed to the recently formed Gippsland Extension Committee Graduate, Dairy Farmer Queensland*

## Crisis Magnets

Sue Young graduated from the *Advance in Dairy* program in 2005. Sue is a dairyfarmer from Glencoe in South Australia where she and her husband milk 350 holstein cows on 500 acres of which 230 acres is irrigated.

"I decided to do the *Advance in Dairy* Leadership Development Program to develop my skills so that I could be in a position to be nominated to boards and various committees so that I could be a voice for the dairy industry. The areas I wanted to improve were communication, leadership, planning and goal setting, as well as developing my confidence, self esteem and co-operation," Sue said.

The industry project Sue implemented was in partnership with fellow dairyfarmer and participant Virginia Ewing and it resulted from a personal experience in 2004 when 17 cattle died on Sue's farm as a result of salmonella.

"During my crisis I had a lot of trouble locating the appropriate phone numbers so I saw a real need to develop a tool for other farmers and their workers to access assistance if they experienced an animal health crisis," she said.

Sue and Virginia designed a fridge magnet with a 1800 emergency hotline number on it and this was distributed to all dairyfarmers in South Australia. It also has the Animal Health Website address and a space for farmers to write their vet's contact number.

"I am seeking funding to enable the magnets to be distributed to farmers Australia wide as I know the cost of producing the magnets for farmers is small compared to the damage that can be done to the industry with an animal health issue." Sue said.

Sue intends to eventually distribute the magnet throughout the agriculture industry (beef, pigs, goats etc).

"Being so involved in the committees is quite different to milking cows but we can't thrive as an industry without these groups and organisations representing industry. I am currently a board member for South Australian Dairy Farmer's Association and on the committee for the Cattle Advisory Group, although my real passion is now working with any animal health issues and being a voice for our industry," Sue said.

"I recommend fellow farmers to do programs like *Advance in Dairy* as they provide skills and confidence to assist you both in your business and when representing industry on specific issues," Sue said.



2006 *Advance in Dairy* graduate Mr Brian Welsh and Mr David Mortimer, Executive Manager, Food and Agriculture, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

"I was impressed by the quality and the enthusiasm of the participants, as well as the diversity of perspectives they contributed. It was valuable to discuss their vision for the industry and how Government can assist, as well as how important it is to openly communicate our different views and build on the high degree of shared attitudes,"

*David Mortimer, Executive Manager, Food and Agriculture, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry*

## Housing Will Keep Skilled Labour in the Dairy Industry

Iwan Van Den Berg, from Katamatite East in northern Victoria is part owner and operator of a 700 cow, 300 hectare dairy farm

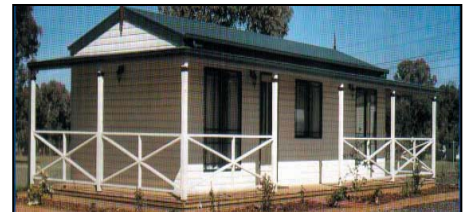
with his wife, brother and parents. Iwan and his family emigrated to Australia from the Netherlands in 1982 and during the drought started with 150 cows on 123HA.

Iwan's motivation to do the 2006 *Advance in Dairy* Leadership Development Program was to gain a better understanding of why dairy farming is out of 'vogue' as an employer.

"Employment is a real issue on dairy farms, there is an exodus of skilled and knowledgeable labour from the industry and I was really interested in finding out why and how that could be turned around," Iwan said.

Once Iwan began researching this area it became apparent that it was an extremely broad subject and he re-focused on the lack of quality housing for dairy employees. This issue had been identified in "Dairy Employment for the Future" as a reason for the departure of skilled labourers from the dairy industry.

Iwan's research found that; employers with available housing fill their positions easier and that potential employees preferred to live on farm. However, when conventional housing is not available due to lack of availability, or capital resources, rented transportable housing may be an option..Iwan believes rented transportable housing (refer to picture below) has many benefits i.e. no capital outlay, no long term commitment if employment does not continue, tax deductible, accessible when other housing options are not available, flexibility as it can be returned or purchased.



Iwan prepared a brochure outlining the costs, contacts and advantages of renting a transportable dwelling."To date,

I have taken the project to the Annual General Meeting of the United Dairyfarmers Victoria (UDV). With my mentor, Maurice Incerti (CEO of Murray Dairy and Regional Development Program Manager for Dairy Australia), we are currently working to promote this issue in the UDV section of the Victorian Farmers Federation's website, as well as circulating the brochure through Dairy Australia," Iwan said.

"I participated in the leadership program for a personal challenge to gain more self-confidence and experience, which was most rewarding. I learnt new skills for problem solving, communicating and networking. All of these will be an intricate part of my business strategy for future success," Iwan said.

"If you like a better view, you will have to climb higher," he said.

*For further information on the Impact on Dairy or Advance in Dairy Programs or for more information on any of the projects mentioned in this newsletter contact Leading Industries Training Coordinator Kelly Tape on 0408850110 or [kelly@leadingindustries.com.au](mailto:kelly@leadingindustries.com.au)*