



ANNUAL REPORT

2021 - 2022

OCTOBER 2022

CHAIR'S REPORT

Tracy Dart

The past year has proven to be a productive year for Partners In AG. Tackling the lack of opportunity for face-to-face interaction and now moving back to in person events has allowed us to demonstrate our agility once again. In the past we have identified the benefits of both in person and online events, but now we are really seeing a wide acceptance of operating online and that has translated into routine online offerings across Agriculture. Accessible, relevant education, delivered with the adult learner in mind is the outcome we strive for at Partners In Ag.

Our board has, over the years consistently advocated for education in a number of areas; Financial Literacy, Farm Business Management and Farm Safety are a few worth mentioning. A handful of years ago it was a real challenge to access information and perhaps even a consultant to assist, this is no longer the case. It is gratifying for all involved to see the education and resources more readily accessible to assist farmers as they move through the different stages of their careers and up-skilling their business.

Partners In Ag of course continue to offer these topics which are intrinsic to our industry, whilst at the same time looking to identify new areas of focus to improve and maintain farm business sustainability. This year we have been fortunate to develop new relationships with whom we partner to develop our pipeline of work. Recently we collaborated on the Gather, Grow, Thrive event at Rupanyup. This reinforced my belief in the power of collaboration, the event was overwhelmingly acknowledged by attendees as impactful. A success for all who contributed, volunteered and sponsored and a testament to what a small community can do with its volunteer base.

Similarly, Partners In Ag has since inception relied on volunteer board members and again this year I would like to acknowledge the Board for their commitment, insights and open mindedness in achieving our vision.

The staff at Partners In Ag are exceptional at translating this vision into achievable outcomes and opportunities for our participants. Thank you, Nickie Berrisford and Katherine Colbert, for a fabulous year supporting our farmers and Agricultural communities.

I would like to express my appreciation to outgoing board members Fiona Chilvers, Lyndal Humphries and Erin Johns for their valuable contributions, we are grateful for their ongoing support of Partners In Ag. To our members and participants, we thank you for your ongoing support and on behalf of the Partners In Ag Board I look forward to welcoming you to one of our events in the year ahead and wish you a happy, healthy and profitable season on your farm.

BOARD MEMBERS

Executive

Chairperson - Tracy Dart

Vice Chair - Robyn Gulline

Treasurer - Eileen Jorgenson

Secretary - Nickie Berrisford (Non-Board Director)

General Members

Charlotte Aves

Erin Johns (October 2022)

Annabel Mactier (September 2021)

Fiona Chilvers (October 2021)

Lyndal Humphries (February 2022)

Joshua Rayson

Staff

Executive Officer - Nickie Berrisford

Business Development Officer - Katherine Colbert

A YEAR IN REVIEW

Nickie Berrisford, Executive Officer

What a challenging year this has continued to be with Covid 19 lockdowns and interruptions. My thoughts stay with those in Melbourne and regional and rural areas where businesses are really challenged in moving back to 'normal' life.

Cancelling face-to-face workshops has been really challenging for Partners in Ag, as we understand the value of in-person workshops bring for participants. Heading into online learning has had its challenges, but I am sure that we have all learned some new skills. Home schooling has been very challenging for many and certainly highlighted the need for quality internet access for businesses and home schooling. It was with great anticipation that 2022 brought some welcomed changes with schools open and the potential to deliver in-person workshops.

The Board was very supportive of the organisation's approach to online delivery. Social Media proved very positive as a way to promote to and stay connected with participants. We continued to deliver WorkSafe Victoria workshops for employees. Feedback from participants saw the inclusion of a Farm Safety For Managers workshop with great success. Thank you to WorkSafe Victoria for their support for this project.

Whilst the initial postponement of the rural women's event from April 2022 was disappointing, the overall project had an incredibly positive end. Grow Gather and Thrive was held in Rupanyup on 25 August. It was an overwhelming event to have 100 women attend, hopefully the first of many annual events of this nature to come.

Katherine has continued to provide a dynamic role within the organisation. Her wide-ranging skills and passion for Partners in Ag has made her an invaluable member of the team. Her IT, grant writing skills, workshop facilitation, planning and project management skills are highly valued.

I would like to commend all Board Members for their contribution and input into Partners in Ag. Without their support PinAg would not be the impressive organisation that it is. Partners in Ag faces many challenges but, as a small Not-For-Profit organisation, it is making a significant difference to the delivery of quality, appropriate professional development for the grains sector as well as agriculture.

A significant part of Partners in Ag is its grass roots contacts and ability to respond to wide ranging learning needs of farmers.

The 2022/23 year is shaping up to be an exciting one with a range of funding options, workshop and events delivery on the agenda.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

Katherine Colbert, Business Development Officer

2021 – 2022 can be summarised as a year of uncertainty and frustration, yet it has provided us with incredible opportunities to expand our network and offerings to the rural communities of Victoria.

2022 saw the Wimmera Machinery Field Days succumb to the pressure of COVID-19 for the second year in a row. The opportunity to work with the WMFD staff and Committee to provide an educational and engaging program for schools visiting the event is a very worthwhile initiative for Partners in Ag and we look forward to this collaboration for the 2023 event.

The ongoing complexities of the pandemic created challenges in delivering workshops to the community, with the need to take our workshops online for several topics. Our year can be summed up as collaborative and community focused. Our partnership with WorkSafe Victoria to deliver Farm Safety Workshops kicked off in July 2021 with Farm Safety Staff Inductions held in Warracknabeal and Longerenong. These workshops were a great addition to our suite of workshops. This workshop was developed from the previously held Farm Safety Walks to include a classroom-style theory component including guest speakers from the CFA and National Heavy Vehicle Regulators. This workshop has been the foundations for the newly developed and highly anticipated Farm Safety for Managers Workshop, focusing on the culture and communication, policy and procedural aspects of farm safety.

Over the year a collaboration with Wimmera Catchment Management Authority rose as farmers continued to adapt to online learning. Soil Carbon and Soil Health online webinars were hosted across 3 topics and presenters with over 150 registered participants. These workshops increased awareness of Partners in Ag throughout the Wimmera region and opened up the workshop to a national audience through Zoom.

On March 8 we celebrated International Women's Day with a virtual morning tea. Guest speaker Denise McLellan discussed the role of communication in farm safety and how every member of the family can contribute to the farm safety culture of a business.

Partners in Ag will look back on 2021-2022 as the year that Gather, Grow & Thrive began. Born from an idea from passionate and proactive business owners in Rupanyup, Gather, Grow & Thrive was an event that organically grew into a collaboration of great importance for the rural women of the Wimmera Mallee region. This financial year, in the lead up to the event on Friday 26 August saw new funding and sponsorship relationships prosper.

Thank you to Nickie for her unwavering support and understanding over the past 12 months. A big thank you to the Board for their support, assistance, and guidance over the year. I look forward to working with you in the coming year on some exciting projects. We now look to the future of a 'new normal' where flexibility, adaptability and connection are vital and I am proud to be a part of Partners in Ag as we grow and thrive into the future.

A YEAR IN REVIEW

Workshop Outcomes



Farm Owners have increased confidence in their staff to perform their role safely



Farm Staff understand the risks of working on farm, in isolation and in peak seasons.



Communication between Farm owners, family and staff is proactive and effective



Farms are seen as 'employers of choice'



Soil Tests are a multi-dimensional decision-making tool



Farmers have a greater understanding of Soil Carbon



Farmers have a greater appreciation of soil health and plant nutrition



Social connection and new friendships



Awareness of resources and tools for mental and physical health and wellbeing



Increased resilience and knowledge to tackle drought and difficult times



Increased sense of community



Improved understanding of how to cook what we grow

LOOKING AHEAD

What's in store for 2022-23

WorkSafe Farm Safety Workshops (July 2022 - October 2023)

- Variation of project for more flexibility in meeting needs of farmers
- Farm Safety Staff Induction
- Farm Safety for Managers
- Kids on Farm Safety

Gather, Grow & Thrive - Nourishing Rural Communities (26 August 2022 + beyond)

- First event completed as a huge success
- Evaluation and review
- Planning for 2023 event

Wimmera Catchment Management Authority Soil Workshops (February - June 2023)

- Soil Carbon and Soil Health Face-to-Face Workshops
- Soil Pit
- Introductory workshop aimed at Women in Ag

Wimmera Machinery Field Days (March 2023)

- School Visits
- Education and engagement on farm safety

Farm Office Essentials

- Relaunch of workshop
- Face to face and online modules

Board Recruitment

- Complementing current Board Member Skills
- Succession Planning

Strategic Plan

- Develop 4 year plan for strategic direction for organisation
- Identify opportunities and challenges moving forward