

NOVEMBER 2023

**PinAg**
PARTNERS IN AG

ANNUAL REPORT

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2022 - 2023

Preparing the annual report for Partners In Ag is a fabulous opportunity to take stock of 12 months of achievements and acknowledge progress and consolidation. Although it is a requirement for our organisation, it's a great activity that can be equally useful for any businesses to reflect and formulate plans for the future. In our busy agricultural businesses, seasons can blur - so looking back on documents such as business plans can be a of great value; to notice what's going well and where we can improve. I hope you can find time to work this into your routine, hopefully after a holiday at the end of your season as you're about to hit reset for 2024.

Partners in Ag continued its support of Agriculture and community with a mixture of engagement and education events. We are reaching a broad range of demographics from youth who are curious about Ag careers right through to seasoned farmers.

It's clear that Agriculture has a huge variety of roles that need filling and as we attract industry participants, training can be used to ensure our workforce is skilled. Education can be used as a tool to engage and excite, to network and to inform on best practice. Through continual professional education we can strive to retain industry participants and offer them long and satisfying careers in Agriculture.

Partners in Ag are really demonstrating an ability to be as flexible and adaptable as many of the businesses we interact with; we've been delivering events out in the paddock, at field days, in local halls and neighbourhood centres this year. Events are always designed with the aim to provide the most appropriate and effective learning scenarios, ensuring that time invested in training delivers information that can be utilised right away. An important aspect and sometimes unintended or underestimated benefit for participants is the ability to socialise and participate in peer-to-peer learning, usually over fabulous morning tea and we will continue to facilitate this at our events.

This year marks a significant milestone as we welcome Nickie Berrisford to the board after many valuable years as our Executive Officer. Congratulations to Nickie on her huge contribution to professional development in Agriculture throughout her career. We are delighted that she can continue the advocacy role she does so well in her capacity as a board member. Thank you to all our board members, they are a significant resource for the betterment of our industry.

We can proudly announce that Katherine Colbert has accepted the role of Executive Officer and will continue to build on the highly impactful work she has been delivering since 2018 in the Marketing and Development Officer roles.

In 2024 we plan to continue with our careful planning to bring you events which add value, not just fill your calendar. Please get in touch and see how we can make relevant training accessible in your area - we look forward to supporting you.



Board Chair

The 2022-2023 Financial year for Partners in Ag was one in which the learnings delivering professional development under Covid for the agricultural sector, in particular the grains industry, could be combined with the preferred delivery of face-to-face workshops.

A significant aspect of Partners in Ag's operation is its grass roots contacts and ability to respond to the wide ranging learning needs of farmers. It reflects the continuing need that was identified over 25 years ago when a group of women were approached by the VFF to run an event for women.

Those wise women decided that, before anything was delivered women in the grains industry should have the opportunity to say what would be helpful for them to be more involved in the farm business, their community and/or industry bodies. Partners in Ag has continued that close contact with stakeholders. It is noted that what was the research identified is still what is needed today; Listen to stakeholders. The focus of PinAg is not just for women but for all members of the farming business.

The 2022-2023 year was an exciting one with a range of funding opportunities utilised, enabling Partners in Ag to undertake a wide range of training activities. In particular, the funding from WorkSafe for Farm Safety with a focus on Managers, FRRR and local organisations for Grow Gather and Thrive, the Wimmera Machinery Field Days with events for primary and secondary students and Wimmera Catchment Authority for Soils Workshops was greatly appreciated. With the change in Covid rules, it was full steam ahead.

Webinars and online learning have been valuable, however the delivery of face-to-face have demonstrated the positives in being together in a hall or the paddock to enhance learning and share experiences. Having used both webinars and online learning to deliver professional development during Covid demonstrated that this form of delivery can be very valuable, but not for everything.

Rescheduling events, with many other organisations doing the same with their workshops and events, meant there were challenges in delivering workshops. Consideration of the on-farm work schedule was also extremely important to the success of the events. The delivery of the first Grow Gather Thrive event in August saw wonderful outcomes, clearly demonstrating the value of coming together for an event that had been identified by the community as needed. Getting together, learning, and enjoying time together with a lovely meal. Such was the excitement about the event that a further event was planned for 2023.

Further events followed with the Wimmera Machinery Field days being with Partners in Ag being able to present the opportunities in agriculture to both primary and secondary students.

Workshops were also held for Managing Farm Safety, funded by WorkSafe, and delivered by Denise McClland. The very positive evaluations in dealing with this most important area confirmed we had the right person to deliver the right message. These workshops are being followed up with one-on-one time with Denise. Another example of Partners in Ag listening and responding to the requests from farmers with very positive evaluations and suggestions for further support.

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A YEAR IN REVIEW

Soils workshops delivered in partnership with Wimmera CMA were extremely well received. Again, the value of being in the paddock proved to be a winner. There is a lot of interest in composting, the key topic of David Hardwick's presentation. On farm and making compost was a great learning activity. David is continuing to come to the Wimmera and wider area with further workshops.

Dr Cassandra Scheffe was a delight delivering her healthy soils workshops, and it was positive to be able to include some secondary ag students from Kaniva in one of the workshops. Dr Scheffe is an example of another valuable presenter to add to the Partners in Ag list of key collaborators.

Partners in Ag had the opportunity to partner with the Australian Controlled Traffic Farming Association (ACTFA). After the very wet season, asking some farmers what they needed, the answer was wheel track renovation. Two workshops were delivered one near Nhill and the other south of Horsham. This event was held in the paddock where farmers came together and saw machines in action. Again, excellent evaluations seeing machines in action. It was from one of these workshops and the persistence of the Partners in Ag Chair, Tracy Dart that the concept of Spray Application Workshops was high on the delivery agenda.

The workshops delivered in the 2022-2023 clearly demonstrate the way in which Partners in Ag works. Listening to farmers, working with potential funding bodies, and ensuring that the right people with the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding are available to deliver the workshop. And follow up as needed.

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

The 2023-2024 year will be an exciting one. These include Spray Application, Succession Planning, Planning, Wimmera Machinery Field Days, Grow Gather Thrive and other items that are requested by farmers or industry stakeholders such as agronomists and equipment manufacturers and distributors.

Last, but certainly not least, Katherine has continued to provide a dynamic role within the organisation. Her many wide-ranging skills and passion for Partners in Ag has made her an invaluable member of Partners in Ag. Katherine has a wide range of skills in particular her IT, grant writing and reporting skills, Workshop facilitation, planning, budgeting, and workshop management are highly valued.

Katherine will take on the role of Executive Officer and is an excellent choice for that position.



Executive Officer

A YEAR IN REVIEW

2022 – 2023 saw life return to the new normal after the pandemic. After a two-year hiatus due to Covid-19, it was great to see the Wimmera Machinery Field Days return in March 2023, continuing as a three-day event showcasing the latest equipment, services and technology in agriculture. It was our pleasure to again host the Ag Ed Quest Schools Program at the Field Days, with 345 students from over 10 schools participating in the 2023 program. 35% of registered attendees were agriculture students or completing their Vocational Management/ Vocational Applied Learning certificates. The program included a Careers in Ag Panel that provided a great insight into the various agriculture-based career opportunities in the Wimmera region. Thank you to the Wimmera Machinery Field Days Committee and WIM Resources for their continued support of the program.

Following on from the previous year's webinar series on soil health, we thoroughly enjoyed returning to the paddock and shed for a number of soil-based workshops throughout the year. With the financial support of Wimmera Catchment Management Authority from support through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, we delivered 6 workshops across the Wimmera region that focused on increasing carbon through healthy soils, composting and bio-fertilizers. Thank you to Dr Cassandra Scheffe (AgriSci) and David Hardwick (Soil Land Food) for presenting at these workshops and allowing us to venture into paddocks once again.

Partners in Ag is continuing to collaborate with key partners to deliver practical and timely workshops to growers. After the rain events of 2022, it was evident that wheel track management had become topical. In partnership with the Australian Controlled Traffic Farming Association, the Wheel Track Renovation Workshop was hosted in Horsham and Nhill during March with guest presenter Dr Bindi Isbister (DPIRD, WA). Working alongside renovator suppliers and local growers, the workshop included discussions and demonstrations on renovators, matching machinery options and challenges, tyre pressure management and the opportunities for CTF and livestock working together in the Wimmera.

With the support of multiple funding providers and sponsors, Partners in Ag, in collaboration with Rupanyup Living, Wimmera Grain Store were able to deliver the very first Gather, Grow & Thrive on August 26 2022. Born from an idea from passionate and proactive business owners in Rupanyup, Gather, Grow & Thrive is an event that organically grew into a collaboration of great importance for the rural women of the Wimmera Mallee region. The day was highly successful with the assistance from Jo Eady of RuralScope, who MC'd and facilitated the morning session that focused on building resilience during difficult times. The catering highlighted local ingredients and chef Simon Bryant's cooking demonstration provided a new local twist on the traditional 'meat' pie. It was a day of education, engaging speakers and social connection. Thank you to FRRR, Grain Growers, Wimmera Mallee Accounting, Bendigo Community Bank (Rupanyup/Minyip) and the Rupanyup Primary School Parents Club for their support. Preparations for the 2023 event were in full swing towards the end of this financial year with the second Gather, Grow & Thrive scheduled for Friday 8 September 2023.

Thank you to Nickie for her unwavering support, guidance and friendship over the past 12 months. 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 to build on our progress and as we grow and thrive into the future to deliver meaningful workshops and events for Victorian growers.



Business Development Officer

PROJECT 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

WorkSafe Farm Safety Workshops

- 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 (September 2023)

- Build on success of first event
- Building awareness of event in the region

Spray Workshops (September 2023 and March 2024)

- Connect growers with industry experts to increase skills on optimising spray application
- Work with key stakeholders to deliver fit-for-purpose workshops that fill existing gaps in market

Soil Health Workshops

- Connecting with new and existing stakeholders on soil health

Wimmera Machinery Field Days (March 2024)

- School Program
- Education and engagement on farm safety
- Careers in Ag panel discussion

Online Business Modules

- Delivery of Farm Business Bites project with Kaniva LINK
- Expand to include additional modules

Board Recruitment

- Recruit new Board Members
- Build on Board Members skills with training and development

Strategic Plan

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

BOARD AND STAFF

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)
Joshua Rayson (December 2022)

Staff

Executive Officer - Nickie Berrisford
Business Development Officer - Katherine Colbert

Thank you to our sponsors, funding providers and collaborators for their support during the year

