

State's Oyster Champions Announced

An environmentalist from the Shoalhaven and a group of oyster farmers from the Clyde River are the winners of the 2008 NSW Oyster Industry Environmental Champion Awards.

Initiated by the NSW Farmers' Association and the NSW Government, the awards acknowledge innovative ways of coping with environmental challenges, such as improving water quality, minimising pollution and restoring estuary habitats.

Lyn Desoto-Southwell, a member of the Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority Natural Resource Reference Group, took out the 2008 NSW Oyster Industry Environmental Champion Individual Award for her leadership in improving water quality in the Crookhaven/Shoalhaven estuaries.

A local environmental warrior for water quality issues, Lyn helped initiate the Dairy Oyster Partnership Project that has resulted in a new partnership with the local dairy industry to protect water quality. She also rallied local growers and formed an incorporated association - Shoalhaven River Oysters Inc - so that they could apply for funding and receive assistance.

The Clyde River Environmental Management System (EMS) cluster group won the 2008 NSW Oyster Industry Environmental Champion Group Award for their role in the development and implementation of the Clyde River EMS.

An EMS is a tool to identify environmental impacts from production methods and other potential threats to the estuary. It outlines solutions to combat these threats and is accompanied by



NSW Farmers' Association Oyster Committee Chairman Mark Bulley, Winner of the Most Beautiful Pacific Oyster Award, Lionel Richardson and ABC's Simon Marnie at the Oyster Industry Field day.

actions, a timeline and audit of progress.

The EMS has been a vehicle for pulling the estuary together and for attracting funding and assistance to repair trouble spots.

Recipients of the Highly Commended Awards were Brett Peterkin and the NSW Farmers' Association Hastings River Branch and Port Macquarie Council. Commended Awards were presented to Brian and Barry Allen, NSW Farmers' Association Hastings River Branch, Farquhar Inlet Management

Group, and Rob Moxham.

Additional awards presented at the Oyster Industry Field Day were the 'Most Beautiful Oyster' category awards, with John Stubbs taking out the award for Most Beautiful Single Seed Sydney Rock Oyster, Stefan Paschalidis for Most Beautiful Angasi (native) Oyster and Most Beautiful Traditional Sydney Rock Oyster, and Lionel Richardson of Port Stephens for the Most Beautiful Pacific Oyster Award.

Farmers exempt from luxury car tax

Farmers have gained an exemption to the Luxury Car Tax under a last minute amendment to the legislation.

Under the new laws, primary producers and tourism operators are exempt from an increase in luxury car tax, which has risen from 25 per cent to 33 per cent on all vehicles costing more than \$57,000.

According to NSW Farmers' Association President Jock Laurie, the exemption is a lobbying win for farmers.

"Through the National Farmers Federation, we lobbied to make sure our farmer Members are not unfairly stuck with the tax, which would have unjustly hit the rural sector," Mr Laurie said.

Farmers and tourism operators will be able to claim back the additional four per cent tax after purchasing a four wheel drive.

The exemption was negotiated by Family First Senator Steve Fielding, allowing farmers to claim up to \$3,000 per year.

"Farmers are already struggling with high petrol prices and the impact of the drought, and we are pleased that Senator Fielding recognised this in negotiating changes to the legislation," Mr Laurie said.

Farmers paint drought picture for panel



By Liz Young - Southern Tablelands, Monaro and Coast

Goulburn district farmers joined more than 1000 from across the country to illustrate the impact of drought on farming communities, at one of the 25 meetings held by Federal Government's Expert Social Panel.

The panel received more than 236 public submissions, including a detailed submission from the NSW Farmers' Association.

NSW Farmers' Association President Jock Laurie says farming communities are still hurting from the drought that has plagued many parts for more than seven years and any change to drought policy must be carefully reviewed.

"The NSW Farmers' Association has put forward a range of ideas aimed at addressing the ongoing challenges facing mental and physical health, families, education and training, community development and sustainability, employment and professional development and social support services," Mr Laurie said.

NSW Farmers' Association Goulburn Branch Chair Margaret Cameron said the panel was seeking feedback on drought-specific programs and initiatives available to farm families and rural communities during periods of stress and change caused by drought.

"It was an emotional meeting with some breaking down as they spoke of their personal experience and the toll the drought is taking on their businesses and families," Mrs Cameron said.

"The 80 community members at the meeting sent a very clear message: to ensure

support services and programs are kept in these local areas and given more certainty and longer timelines.

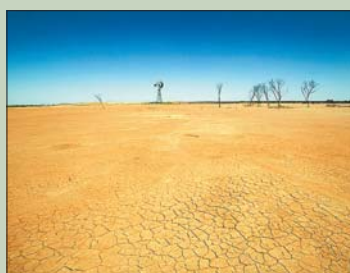
"Drought support agencies and programs are often implemented in an area, do a great job in empowering local communities and then their funding is stopped or the program is finished."

"These programs need to be based here on a more secure and permanent basis, because the effect of this drought will continue long after the rain comes."

The Expert Social Panel was chaired by AgForce President Peter Kenny and consisted of representatives from health, academic and political backgrounds as well as former NSW Farmers' Association President and primary producer Mal Peters.

The report on the social impact of drought was one of three commissioned by the Government as part of the overall review of drought policy.

The other two reports are a review of future climate projections by the CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology, released in July, and an economic assessment by the Productivity Commission, which is expected to be released in draft form later this year.



NRMA talks alternative fuels



By Ruth Redfern

Meeting future transport needs through biofuels and alternative energy was the focus of the recent NRMA Motoring & Services roundtable discussion, hosted by NRMA Director Mr Graham Blight.

NSW Farmers' Association Business, Economic and Trade Committee Member Ian McClintock said the meeting proved invaluable in bringing key industry representatives together to discuss establishing a viable biofuels industry.

"The roundtable explored ways to optimise biofuels as part of a mix of alternative fuels, issues of great importance to the farming community," Mr McClintock said.

"One of the most important considerations that came out of the discussions is the need to establish biofuels as a sustainable industry while avoiding mistakes made overseas.

"A key lesson for the industry is the competition that occurred in the US for corn, with a surging biofuels industry using a large proportion of the available corn, thus

challenging farmers' ability to meet food demands.

"In developing Australia's biofuels industry we need to balance the competing needs of both fuel and food, while hopefully also developing new methods for decreasing the country's dependence on fossil fuels."

The roundtable discussion follows on from the release of the The Jamison Group report: A Road Map for Alternative Fuels in Australia: Ending our Dependence on Oil.

"The Association is very pleased to be part of the continuing discussions regarding alternative fuel as it allows us to closely examine the opportunities and challenges for our Members.

"The NRMA intends to develop a practical alternative energy plan to present to government and is seeking the support of other interested parties to strengthen their case," Mr McClintock said.

"The importance of the Association's relationship with NRMA is illustrated by our involvement. The Association is grateful to the ongoing support of NRMA Director Graham Blight and is looking forward to strengthening the bonds between our two organisations," concluded NSW Farmers' Association CEO Shaughn Morgan.



NSW Farmers' Association Business, Economics and Trade committee member Ian McClintock with NRMA Director Graham Blight at the NRMA Roundtable.