



The Place To Be

Media release

From the Minister for Agriculture

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FUTURE FARMING ADVISORY PANEL ANNOUNCED

A broad cross-section of respected industry professionals will help drive Victoria's \$205 million *Future Farming Strategy*.

In Birchip, Agriculture Minister Joe Helper today announced the make-up of the *Future Farming Advisory Panel*.

Mr Helper said the seven-member panel comprised of plant nursery owner Lyn Coulston, stonefruit farmer Gaethan Cutri, wool producer Christine Forster, Birchip Cropping Group chairman Ian McClelland, Goulburn-Murray Water chairman and dairy farmer Stephen Mills, primary producer Jenny O'Sullivan and Victorian Farmers Federation president Simon Ramsay.

"Input from farmers, farming communities and their representative bodies will be vital in the delivery of the key new measures outlined in the \$205 million *Future Farming Strategy*," Mr Helper said.

"The panel will work closely with the Brumby Government to ensure agricultural industries continue to be involved in the delivery of key areas of the strategy."

Mr Helper said the *Future Farming Strategy* planned to address the challenges of the future by delivering the services farmers needed.

"The Brumby Government is taking action on behalf of farmers by re-focusing our research efforts, delivering better infrastructure and providing new style of services," he said.

"Over the next four years the Brumby Government will deliver more than \$200 million to boost farming services, drive growth and innovation in agriculture and help the sector respond to new challenges.

"A direct input from a wide range of industry representatives will be vital to achieving this aim and we want the agricultural sector to have their say on the delivery of this new investment.

"The advisory panel will provide a forum for ongoing dialogue between the Brumby Government, farmers and the broader agricultural community.

"I look forward to chairing the group that will continue to drive the policies and initiatives in the strategy so that it delivers on its aim of a more productive, competitive and sustainable Victorian farming sector."

Mr Helper said each member had been specifically chosen to represent the breadth of Victorian farm business as well as a geographic, age and gender spread.

"All of the members are well-respected experts within their field and valued members of their communities," he said.

"We are privileged to have access to the wealth of knowledge and experience held by each advisory panel member."

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Members of the new *Future Farming* Advisory Panel will meet on a quarterly basis.

The group comprises of:

Lyn Coulston - Owner and operator of a plant nursery in the Upper Murray and is a primary producer. She has been a North East Catchment Management Authority board member since 2000 and is a former Councillor and Mayor of Towong Shire. She is secretary of the Upper Murray Landcare Network, chairperson of the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce and a board member of the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program and the Albury-Wodonga Area Consultative Committee.

Gaethan Cutri - Part of the family business, Cutri Fruit, a 280-hectare stonefruit farm at Woorinen near Swan Hill. Prior to this he worked as a solicitor in Melbourne after gaining a double degree in Commerce/Law. At the 2008 Weekly Times Farm Business Awards, Gaethan was awarded the DPI Young Farmer of the Year award and Cutri Fruit won Farm Business of the Year.

Christine Forster - A member of the Victorian Catchment Management Council and the Victorian Water Trust Advisory Council and a director of VicSuper Pty Ltd. She is a wool producer in western Victoria and has extensive experience in regional development, rural adjustment issues and water resource management.

Ian McClelland - Chairman of the Birchip Cropping Group and runs an 8000-hectare farm in western Victoria, growing wheat, barley, canola, lentils, sheep and cattle. He is an honorary Senior Fellow of the Institute of Land and Food Resources – Crop Production, Melbourne University, a board member of Marcus Oldham College, a recipient of the 1998 Hugh McKay Innovators Award, a member of the selection panel for Churchill Scholarships, and recipient of the 2004 GRDC Seed of Light Award for excellence in research and extension.

Stephen Mills - Chairman of the Goulburn-Murray Water board since October 2007. He is a dairy farmer from Numurkah in northern Victoria and is also a director of Murray Goulburn Cooperative Ltd. Prior to becoming chair of GMW, he was also chair of the Goulburn-Broken Catchment Management Authority and in this role was a member of the government appointed Food Bowl Steering Committee.

Jenny O'Sullivan - A primary producer in south Gippsland who won the Hugh McKay Future Farming Award at DPI's Science Awards in 2007 for her role in the development of an Environmental Management System, Enviromeat, for beef and lamb producers. She runs a consultancy business in the area of agriculture and education and is also a director of Gippsbeef, a board member of BeefCheque and was previously on the state advisory group for Farmbis.

Simon Ramsay - President of the Victorian Farmers Federation since 2005. He runs a 12,000 hectare sheep, beef and cropping property in Birregurra, south-west Victoria. Prior to becoming VFF president, he was involved with the VFF at branch level and was Livestock group president from 2002-2005.