

Dr NEIL BARR

Neil was born into a horticultural family in the Yarra Valley in 1955. Being a scholarship boy to the local Anglican BOYS School, he knew that while he was picking peaches over summer, his mates were at the beach doing remedial lessons in inter-sex relations. In a reaction to this plight, Neil spurned admonitions from science teachers to choose medicine and humanities teachers to choose law. Instead, he opted for social psychology based on the twin misguided assumptions that this would ensure he never set foot on a farm again in a professional capacity and that studies in non-verbal communication might compensate for the wasted summers in the orchard.



Expectations were dashed. Neil found himself lured towards psychometrics during university, and after university, found the only available job for a novice social researcher was with the Victorian Department of Agriculture. So in 1977 he commenced his first research project studying the social impact of low commodity prices on the Gippsland dairy industry. Over the following 30 years Neil has studied and observed the social and economic transformation of Victorian agricultural communities, interspersed with short sojourns in policy work in other government departments. He has published one book on the history of natural resource management in Australian agriculture and is currently editing the draft of a second book that explores the forces transforming rural communities.

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