



# PERENNIAL PASTURE SYSTEMS

MAKING PASTURE GO THE DISTANCE

## PPS NEWS

**Winter Farm Tour;** This year's tour will be at "Boorook", the property of the Allen family at Woorndoo on Sunday June 20th, starting with complimentary lunch at 12.30. The tour will feature the Allen's cattle and sheep enterprises as well as Landcare work and impressive geology on "Boorook". See attached flier for more details. The Winter Farm Tour is supported by Glenelg Hopkins CMA through the National Landcare Program.

*Right; the "Grand Canyon" on Salt Creek at Boorook; part of the PPS Winter Farm Tour.*



**Annual Conference;** The PPS Annual Conference will be conducted on Wed. August 25th in Ararat. PPS has been able to put in place the same program that was proposed for last year's cancelled conference and is excited about the great line up of presenters. See the attached flier for details.

**Study Tour;** as interstate travel was deemed a risk to members, both financially and due to possible business interruption, due to sudden Govt lockdowns, the original plan for a Tasmanian study tour has been put on hold. This year, PPS will conduct the study tour in the Wimmera region focusing on leading grain and sheep operations. It will be held on Thursday 16th & Friday 17th of September with an overnight stay in Horsham. The option of attending single days is open to members; details will be sent to members in early July but the Project Manager is already accepting expressions of interest.

**PPS Privacy Policy;** The PPS Management Committee has been reviewing group governance and has adopted a privacy policy. It is on the PPS website or members can request a copy from the project manager.

**Girls & Grass;** the Girls & Grass group planned a dinner with Alexandra Gartmann from Rural Bank on June 3rd; it was postponed due to the State Government Covid lockdown; a new date for the event is being planned. Further G&G news included on page 5 including information on Xmas in July & a proposed first aid course.

**Producing More in Varying Seasons;** Tess McDougall & a group of PPS Young Farmers are presenting a workshop with Jason Trompf at Joel South on Thursday June 17th. See page six for details; places are limited so be quick to register.

**Seasonal Climate Risk Management Tools;** presentation by Dr Kate Burke at Joel Hall on June 22nd; see page six.

**Healthy Soils Project;** the final session of the Healthy Soils project will be conducted on July 14th as a review and future planning discussion with Cam Nicholson from Nicon Rural. It will be a great opportunity to refine soil management plans.

**Smart Farms, Small Grants 4;** PPS has been successful in gaining funding from the Federal Government Smart Farms program for a Regional Pasture Quantity Assessment project. A report on the project is on page two.

**Barton:** An inspection of the new seasonal stock containment area and auto cattle weighing system at member property, Barton; Moyston was attended by twenty members on June 20th. Some photos are included on page four.

**Melbourne University Session;** since 2014, PPS has been hosting study visits by Melbourne University students with Dr Bill Malcolm & Dr Alex Sinnett. Covid restrictions have affected the annual visits but last year a video was made featuring the PPS member business, Millbanks Farms. This year the film was used as the basis for an assignment & Ben & Jodie Greene from Millbanks did a Zoom presentation for over eighty students in March.



### Vale; Ken Hall

PPS Management Committee member, Ken Hall, passed away in May after a long illness. Ken was a member of the PPS Management Committee right from the start in 2007 until he took leave of absence in 2020 due to his illness. He was able to return for meetings in 2021 and his return was much welcomed by the other committee members; he will be sadly missed by all. Ken was an enthusiastic committee member & was very proud of the achievements of PPS, although he wasn't overly pleased when meetings ran overtime as it cut into his time talking about farming with other committee members.

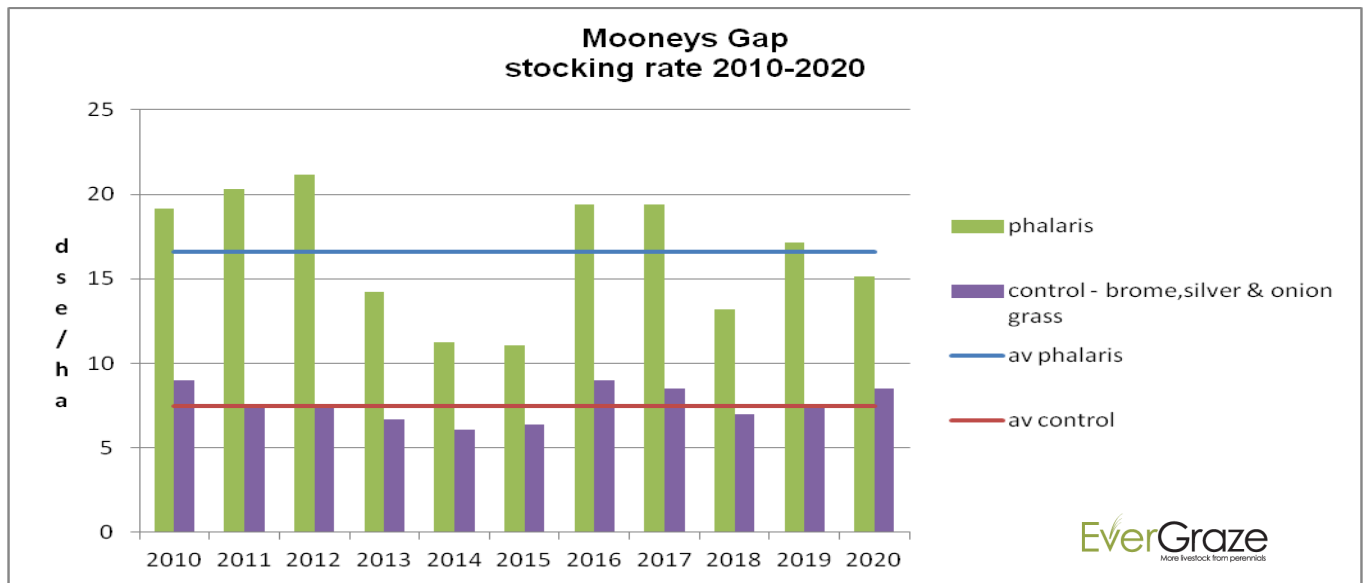
Ken farmed on "South Glengowan" at Joel Joel and the lucerne pastures, up to date machinery, prime sheep & pride in the farm appearance are a feature of the property's management. Many PPS activities were conducted on farm; Ken even mowed the drive before a Workcover field day. Ken will be remembered by members, firstly as a great bloke and then as a passionate and skilled farmer. He was also a great story teller with a cheeky sense of humour. His positivity was infectious & even the toughest season couldn't take the smile of his face when it came to agriculture. He will be sadly missed by PPS but not forgotten.



*Ken (left) with NZ lucerne guru, Dr Derrick Moot at a PPS field day at South Glengowan in 2016.*

## Mooneys Gap EverGraze site

The Mooneys Gap EverGraze phalaris site, NW of Ararat, was established in 2009 & still has a healthy stand of phalaris with good sub clover content. Barley grass has become an issue and reduction measures are being considered. The 2020 phalaris paddock stocking rate results were just below the ten year average of 16.5 dse/Ha but still well above the control paddock, which averages 7.5 dse/Ha.



## Regional Pasture Quantity Assessment Project

PPS has been successful in gaining funding from the Federal Government Smart Farms; Small Grants 4 (SF4) program for a Regional Pasture Quantity Assessment project. This will enable the collection of seasonal pasture yields with GPS & time-stamps for satellite imaging calibration of existing remote sensing pasture quantity systems to allow for improved grazing management strategies. PPS is hopeful that it will lead to accurate pasture mass imaging that will lead to better farm feed-base planning.

The new project came out of the Beanstalk Project which looked at on farm technology opportunities. The Wimmera CMA was successful in gaining in kind support through Agriculture Victoria for the program and PPS members took part in two (Zoom) sessions in 2020 identifying gaps in farm knowledge that could be assisted with current, available technology. Real time pasture growth estimates were identified as an area that would advance both pasture and animal management. PPS considered that there is insufficient regional data to accurately calibrate satellite imaging pasture biomass assessments and applied to the SF4 program for funding to collect pasture mass data over a 12 month period.

The collected data will be made available to businesses or organisations which are collecting satellite pasture growth data to improve regional calibrations and progress their systems to be applicable for PPS farms.

The project is also contributing data into a larger pasture mass collection project being conducted through South Eastern Australia which is aiming for a similar outcome. This project is being managed by SFS in collaboration with Federation University, GHCMA agribusiness & interstate farm groups through the Federal Govt; Smarter Farming program.



**Weekly Times  
Farmer of the Year Awards**  
 Left: PPS Gippsland members Rick & Jenny Robertson from Gracemere Merinos at Bengworden were in the final three of the Weekly Times Sheep Farmer of the Year awards.

PPS congratulates them on their achievement, especially considering the tough conditions experienced in East Gippsland over the past few years.

**PPS Fescue Project**  
 Right; green in February. The fescue pasture demonstration site at "Gollops"; Avoca on 25/2.

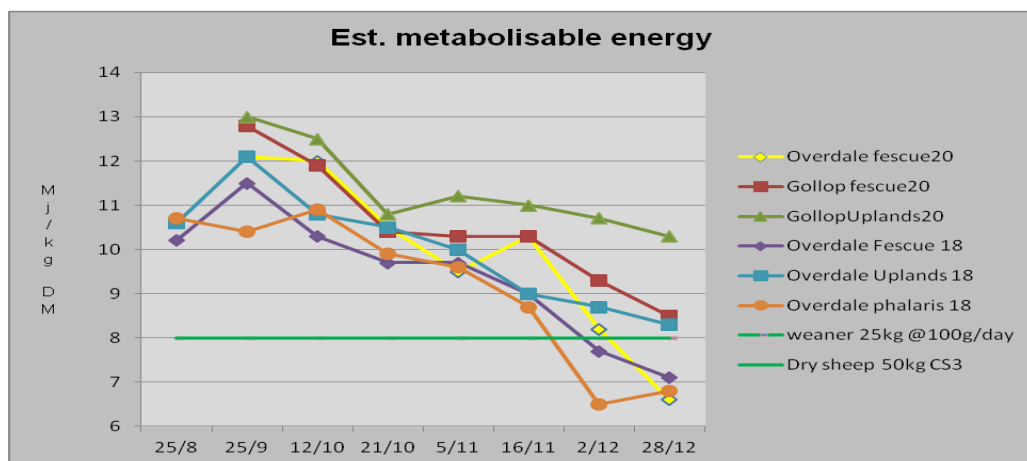
L-R; PPS members, Paul Harrington, Lloyd Gollop, Rod Vearing.





## Fescue; a low rainfall pasture tool?

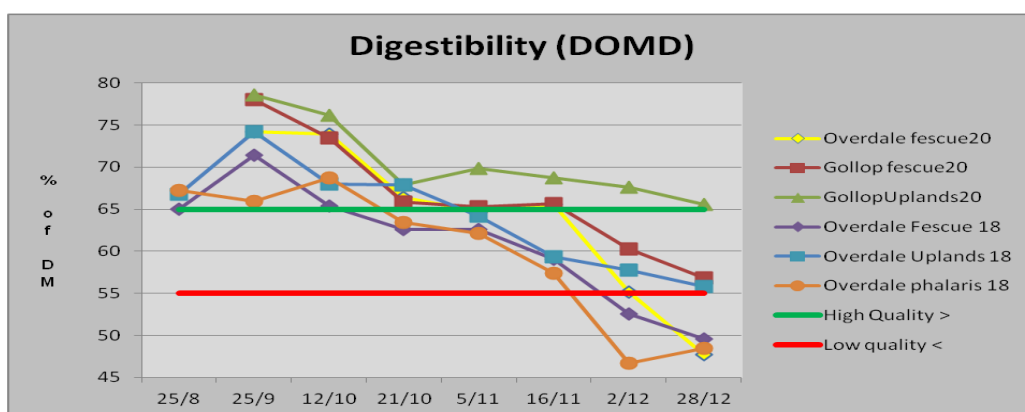
The PPS winter active fescue project is showing interesting results. Demonstration sites at Concongella, Joel South, Paradise, Winjalok & Avoca are being measured as part of the project. The DM and feed quality results initially suggest that winter active fescue has a place in the lower rainfall regions. A report of the 2020 results has been sent to members and is available on the PPS website; <https://www.perennialpasturesystems.com.au/projects>



Left; graph showing the available energy provided by winter active fescue, cocksfoot & phalaris at three sites in 2020.

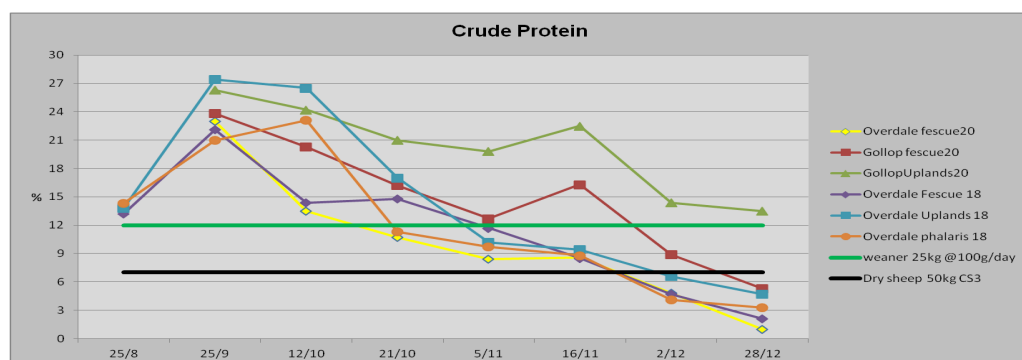
The decline of the varieties showed little difference between the fescue and the phalaris but the Uplands cocksfoot held its energy value longer.

The green line indicates the required energy level for both weaner & adult dry sheep.



Left; graph shows decline in digestibility from high to low quality of the varieties during late spring & early summer.

The drier "Overdale" site declined more rapidly than the "Gollops" site at Avoca.



Left; the crude protein results showing the decline and the requirements for young & grown sheep.

### Take home messages from year 1

- Promising results for winter active fescue in the < 550mm rainfall zone.
- Three of the 4 new sites established well. One site had patchy germination but an inspection in April suggested that there is a reasonable amount of fescue in the pasture and that it will add to the paddock's productivity.
- Winter active fescue can be successfully sown with Uplands Cocksfoot.
- Early sown fescue pastures can be grazed with caution; it is important to avoid overgrazing and affect long term persistence of the pasture.
- Fescue feed quality was comparable with phalaris during the reasonably wet spring. It will be interesting to compare results in drier seasons.
- Results from the current and previous PPS demonstrations shows that total dry matter production of the winter-active fescue cultivars compares favourably with winter-active phalaris cultivars. Previous PPS trials highlight that production is lower from Australian phalaris and Uplands cocksfoot. Previous PPS trials also show that winter active fescue can be as persistent as Holdfast GT phalaris, Australian II phalaris and Uplands cocksfoot.
- Grazing plans to utilise rapid fescue growth need to be implemented.

The "Fescue; a low rainfall pasture tool?" project is part of the MLA PDS program.



### PPS Seeder Survey

In April, PPS put out a survey seeking interest in seeder set up and operation workshops; over 40 members responded. The management committee will discuss the responses at the June meeting and set up a plan for the sessions.

**~ PPS DIARY DATES ~**

**PPS 12th Annual Conference;** Gum San Great Hall; Ararat, Wednesday August 25th; flier attached to N/L email.

**PPS 12th Annual Study Tour;** Grain & Lamb tour; Wimmera region, Thursday 16th September- Friday 17th September

**Producing More in Varying Seasons;** with Jason Trompf at Mount Glen Farms; Joel South. Thursday June 17th 9.30am. Presented by PPS Young Farmers; see page 6 for details.

**Winter Farm Tour – “Boorook” Woorndoo;** Sunday June 20th, 12 pm - 4 pm, lunch provided; flier attached to N/L email.

**Seasonal Climate Risk Management Tools Workshop;** Dr Kate Burke: Agriculture Victoria at Joel Hall,. Tuesday June 22nd 4pm. Supported by Wimmera CMA, see page 6 for details.

**PPS Healthy Soils Session 6 - “Putting it all together”** Cam Nicholson;Nicon Rural. Wednesday 14th July 1.30pm Ararat. The Healthy Soils program is supported by MLA.

**Girls & Grass group -** Open dinner with guest speaker, Rural Bank CEO Alexandra Gartmann has been postponed due to COVID 19 restrictions. A future date and venue is yet to be confirmed.

**Ladies Social Dinner ‘Xmas in July’** with guest speaker, Georgina Gubbins, farmer and board member, Thursday 1st July

**First Aid Training Course—**Sunday 18th July, 9.45am—approx 4.pm at the Ararat Racecourse Function Room.

**Coffee Morning—**Thursday 5th August 10.30am a venue in Beaufort yet to be confirmed.

**Non PPS Event**

**Grassland Society of Southern Australia Annual Conference;** July 28 - August 18 via Zoom; [www.grasslands.org.au](http://www.grasslands.org.au)

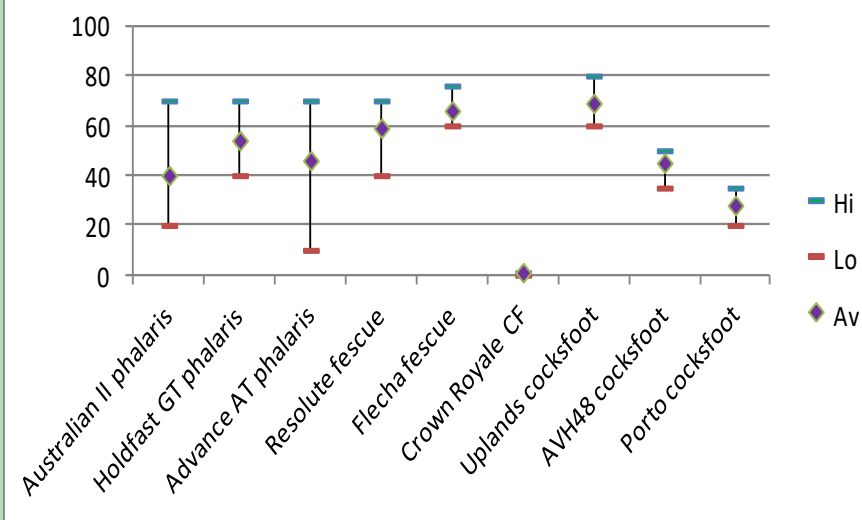
**PPS Pasture Variety Trials**

Plant survival counts at the PPS Eversley plant variety trial sites was conducted in May.. The Eversley site , 23 km NE of Ararat, was sown into a granite loam soil in 2012. There are 3 replicates of each cultivar at each site. Visual estimates of plant survival are shown in the graph.

The PPS plant variety trials sites are supported by



**Eversley Replicates Survival 2021**



**Barton Visit**

Twenty PPS members inspected the recently constructed seasonal containment area at member farm Barton at Moyston. Contented cattle on a silage/additive mix were making impressive weight gains being measured by the new auto weigher.



**PPS Inspection at “Barton” Moyston**

*Left; cattle auto weigher.*

*Right; seasonal containment area*



## Girls & Grass

The Girls & Grass Advisory Group formed in 2016. Since then it has initiated many social, health & safety awareness and other farming business activities; broadening the information and support networks to benefit of PPS members. Rural Bank continues to support G&G with an annual sponsorship enabling the committee to have a casual facilitator.

This is a timely opportunity to thank previous committee members for their efforts in getting the committee up and running.

### **Past & Present Members:-**

Leila McDougall - 2016-17, Bronwyn Bant - 2016-17, Jodie Greene - 2016-21, Janine Curtis - 2016-21, Jane Thomas - 2016-21, Kaye Price - 2017, Sue Maconachie - 2017 - current, Bianca Kilpatrick - 2017 - current.

Joining the committee in 2021 are: Rita Bikins, Tricia Sweeney and Malinda Hall. At the planning meeting early this year the committee indicated they wanted to develop more involvement with the newsletter.

**The first step being to introduce the committee members. This quarter let's meet the Sue and Bianca.**

**Chair: Sue Maconachie** - Farming is in your blood; when you first grow up on your grandfathers soldier settlement land which he & my father farmed in the Willaura district. My parents are now in their late 80's whom we're very fortunate to still have around, they lived on the farm until retiring into town. I along with them & my two brothers & sister grew up on farm, which my parents added to along the way. Growing up driving before you can see over pa's ute dashboard, riding motorbikes & bonfires are some of my fond memories of early days living on the farm. Primary school was at two small country schools. After finishing secondary school I choose a banking career, a short training in Collins St Melbourne then 8 years at various roles within the CBC/National Bank, I then retired to be a stay at home mum, which I always wanted to do. I'm married to Ian (after telling my parents I would never marry a farmer) and we have 3 wonderful children, Ash an Agronomist, Andy Glazier & Laura Primary Teacher, who all have great partners. We are so fortunate to have grandchildren, Bobby 6, William 4 & Maggie 3, who bring endless joy to us both, they all love spending time with Nanny & Poppy Farm helping with farm duties. After retiring from the bank I never thought I'd become a full time farmer, but this has suited me in being available to help in various ways off farm, while enjoying watching my children & grandchildren grow over the years. We farm Ian's family farm together, with the help of Ash when his able. Having to lease for years to progress, we now have been fortunate enough twice in the last 4 years to purchase more farm land, ending our leasing history. We have cropping and run self breeding merino & cross-bred sheep, selling prime lambs. The Challicum wind farm has given us some farm security & allowed Ian to stop shearing off farm. Over the years of our farming enterprise we have had to do numerous improvements, gully erosion, rabbit ripping, fencing & planting thousands of trees, land class fencing & improving pastures, helped out through Landcare, which we have both been office bearers of our local Landcare at different times. We have had various grazing trial plots through DPI also. Best Wool Best Lamb and PPS have been great farming links for us. We love to travel in Australia & overseas, our highlight being to the gorillas in Rwanda & safari in the Serengeti in Africa. Farming has certainly changed; bigger machinery with GPS in tractors, to endless computer data, completing BAS & so much paperwork. Our aim is to leave our farm better than we received it, for our future generations. Farming life has been challenging but so rewarding also.

**Sue**



**Bianca  
and Heidi**



### **Bianca Kilpatrick:**

I grew up on a sheep and cattle farm in near Bairnsdale in East Gippsland, my older brother, younger sister and I had the idyllic farming childhood. We loved the freedom to explore and experience everything farm life had to offer (Whilst sounding cliched - it is true!). I studied Agricultural Science at Melbourne uni and then went on to become a grain trader in NSW with Cargill. The travel bug then bit and I spent 6 months in Europe exploring and meeting my Italian family over there. My mother's parents emigrated after the war and we still have many close family members living there. I very much look forward to travelling again when we can! I am now a grain trader with Ridley Agriproducts and have been with them for 10 years, working part time between my home office, Melbourne and St Arnaud. My main role is the purchase of grain off farmers in Western Vic and Gippsland to be processed into stockfeed. I really enjoy working in the role and the different aspect of working in the grain and stockfeed industries. I am currently on maternity leave for 2021 with our third child Heidi. We also have Clancy who is four and Marnie who is two - life is somewhat busy! I am married to Lachie, we run a mixed merino sheep and cropping enterprise across two farms at Great Western and Lake Fyans. We look forward to our children having the same experiences we did growing up on a farm; our future is very bright and we are very excited to see what it brings (Whilst we might be down in the trenches with nappies and night time feeds right now!)

I look forward to becoming more involved in off farm agricultural events, committees etc in my future once the children become a bit more independent. I am very conscious of teaching my children that women can do anything that men can and vice versa and mum is not the one who stays at home and bakes cakes and looks after the baby as is what Clancy thinks at the moment!

## **Girls & Grass Events**

Rescheduled date and venue TBC: A open dinner with guest speaker Alexandra Gartmann, CEO Rural Bank.

Thursday 1st July: 'Xmas in July' This will be the 3rd annual ladies social dinner. The guest speaker is Georgina Gubbins. Details in attached flier; event supported by Glenelg Hopkins CMA through the National Landcare Program.

Sunday 18th July: Accredited First Aid Course with trainer Casey Kosch. Venue: Ararat Racecourse Function Centre. This is an all day event with a limit of fifteen participants. Full details will be emailed closer to the event but expression of interest can be given to facilitator Debbie -mobile 0418 205353, or email debbiejshea@gmail.com

Coffee Morning -Thursday 5th August, 10.30am at a venue in Beaufort; yet to be confirmed.

Details will be emailed closer to the date.

PPS *Girls & Grass* is supported by Rural Bank







This event is open to young farmers of any age

Lunch provided

Numbers limited

## Producing more in varying seasons

Capitalise on today's opportunities and bulletproof your business against varying seasons! The workshop covers both Merino and Cross Breed systems in a range of climates. You can expect a strong practical focus that you can take home and apply to make a difference.

- Learn key aspects to building flexibility into your business
- Use seasonal and commodity forecasting to make informed decisions
- Manage your pasture base and feed resources to optimise stock performance

**SPEAKER:** Jason Trompf

**DATE:** Thursday 17 June

**TIME:** 9.30 am - 3.30 pm

**VENUE:** Matt and Malinda Hall's, Stawell

Places limited, please register your interest with Tess McDougall,

0409841492 or [tess.mcdougall@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:tess.mcdougall@agriculture.vic.gov.au)

## Excellent Farming: Crops, People, Money & You



*It has been an eventful start to the season in the southern Wimmera with no clear seasonal climate indicators, crops slow to emerge and sheep feed in short supply. Yet, we are seeing record land prices on the back of good seasons. This seasonal uncertainty won't go away for a while yet and the noise gets louder. Some farmers are pessimistic about the season while others are optimistic.*

*Managing the external noise and uncertainty with less stress is a skill that can be learnt.*

*This hands-on, interactive 'masterclass' will teach those skills combined with practical risk management. There will be a strong focus on using knowledge from your own farm to help manage the challenges of 2021 and beyond.*

### TOPICS

- What drives your earning potential and profit at the whole farm level?
- Productivity potential and measures for mixed farming systems.
- The influence of climate 'moods' on your farm performance.
- How can that knowledge help?

### DETAILS

**Joel Joel Hall: Tuesday 22nd June 4 – 6 pm**

smoko provided  
Your investment: Your time and attention.  
RSVP to Rob – 0438 521357  
[yadin@netconnect.com.au](mailto:yadin@netconnect.com.au)

### What to bring

*Your mind which is full of farm production records (and other sources if it's not in your head).*



**Presenter: Dr Kate Burke**

Dr Kate Burke is rare breed who speaks the language of science, economics and humans. She uses evidence, experience and humour to shine a light on what matters for sustainable, profitable farming.

Kate is the author of 'Crops People Money and You, The Art of Excellent Farming and Better Returns', a book described as 'The Barefoot Investor' for grain growers.

With 30 years' experience in agriculture, working mostly in northwest Victoria, Kate is passionate about thriving farming communities.