



Western Murray Land Improvement Group

Striking a Balance

M E D I A R E L E A S E

23rd October 2020

A DAY OF INNOVATION, INSPIRATION, AND LOCAL PRODUCE

Western Murray Land Improvement Group (WMLIG) held the first of its two planned Forums as part of the Wakool Agri-Innovation Program on the 15th October at the Moulamein Bowling Club. The event was facilitated by Regionality and funded by the Australian Government as part of the Murray-Darling Basin Economic Development Program.

There were over 70 attendees to the all-day event that came to hear from a line-up of innovative and thought-provoking speakers on the theme of innovative farming practices. Attendees ranged from local landholders and producers to business owners and agriculture teachers. The forum offered up a day of inspiration, sparked conversations and provided networking opportunities. It also showcased a menu featuring some of the area's best local produce.

The first keynote speaker of the day was Bruce Pascoe, farmer, and author of the award-winning book *Dark Emu*. Bruce provided insights into traditional indigenous farming methods, native plant and grass species and a practical guide on how to implement controlled change to see the benefit. He also spoke personally of the significance and importance of intergeneration farming.

Olympia Yarger from *Goterra* spoke about rising to the challenge of reducing waste in agriculture and how this can be done by producing alternative high-protein insect-based feed for stock. Ros and Daimien Vodusek from *Rich Glen Olive Estate* highlighted the power of value adding. They shared their first-hand experience of how to pivot and think outside the square in times of adversity. Vince Heffernan from *Moorlands Biodynamic Lamb* spoke about implementing a direct-to-market approach, the inevitable challenges as well as the successes of cutting out the middleman.

Craig Carter provided insights into the diversity of plant species, and the correlation between below ground biology and plant and soil health, and stocking to land capability. Rochester Farmer and *Down Under Covers* business owner Grant Sims spoke about the importance of finding the root causes of issues when it comes to diseases and pests, as well as the challenge water management in low rain fall environment. A common theme for all speakers



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was the importance of maintaining ground cover and protecting topsoil and the importance of soil biology for plant health.

Tom Smith whose company was a finalist in the Victorian Innovation and Sustainability awards said that he was “impressed by the speakers at the Wakool [Agri-] Innovation forum. The selection of speakers gave different angles to the same subject which is imperative when researching for the best options for your scenario.”

Local landholder and farmer Graeme Dick thought the day was “absolutely sensational, [with] six speakers delivering powerhouse presentations of inspiring, innovative, stimulating, refreshing, and uplifting information”.

WMLIG Executive Officer Roger Knight saw the forum as “an opportunity to think outside the square, challenge our perspectives, and open dialogues that strengthen our community's capacity to address change and remain resilient”.

The Wakool Agri-Innovation program is a project undertaken by WMLIG designed to assist local area farmers and businesses to explore opportunities to innovate, diversify or value add to their current business.

For more information about the Wakool Agri-innovation Forum and how you can get involved with the Business Development Program, please contact leigh.fletcher@wmlig.org or call 03 5453 1577.

Event Partners:



Australian Government
**Department of Agriculture,
Water and the Environment**

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MEDIA RELEASE



Bruce Pascoe addressing questions from the audience during his Q&A session



Heather Byron from Wild Horse Catering served up a Thai-inspired Beef and Mushroom Salad with local producers Hayley Pattison's Beef and Amy Lolicato's Moulamein Mushrooms.