

## Recognising Women Farmers Focus Groups

Lin Baddock, Focus Consulting

Various Mallee locations

### Key messages:

- Farming women attended workshops in three states (Victoria, NSW and SA) focusing on developing skills and sharing experiences.

### Aims:

The aim of the program was to build and share knowledge among farming women; develop leadership and management skills; build enduring networks; and, develop skills in corporate governance to encourage women to participate on regional and rural Boards.

- To give the women the confidence and the skills to contribute to government and industry decision making, perhaps by taking up a Board appointment.
- To recruit, enhance and build on our previous programs with women in farming and to bring them together for group interaction and learning for women in rural, regional and remote areas.

### Background:

In 2007/08 over 20 rural communities were assisted through the “Strengthening Our Communities” program funded by the Australian Government’s Department of Families, Community Service & Indigenous Affairs. All communities acknowledged that they would like further workshops, networking and training sessions in the future.

The project “Recognising Women Farmers” was an ideal continuation to support these communities. Approximately 80% of the original participants were women farmers and this would prove a valuable follow on. Contact, rapport and trust had already been established and participants were eager for more contact, networking and establishment of networking groups.

The course content included:

- ◆ building and sharing knowledge and experiences
- ◆ increased access to planning tools and resources
- ◆ developing leadership and management skills

- ◆ developing programs to increase participation in agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries
- ◆ developing skills to contribute more effectively to government and industry decision making
- ◆ building networks among rural, regional and remote Australians
- ◆ facilitation of meetings

The delivery consisted of a structured workshop, small group exercises and discussion. The trainer, Lin Baddock, covered many aspects of Certificate IV in Corporate Governance. This assisted the participants with self development as well as giving them confidence to consider obtaining placement on Boards to direct the path of their relevant industries.

#### **About the trial:**

The six days of focus groups were held over three states with two presentations in each state. The regional areas were:

Round 1	<b>Loxton SA 23<sup>rd</sup> September</b>	<b>Wentworth NSW 7<sup>th</sup> September</b>	<b>Ouyen VIC 28<sup>th</sup> August</b>
Round 2	<b>Murray Bridge SA 24<sup>th</sup> October</b>	<b>Balranald NSW 22<sup>nd</sup> October</b>	<b>Werrimull VIC 20<sup>th</sup> October</b>

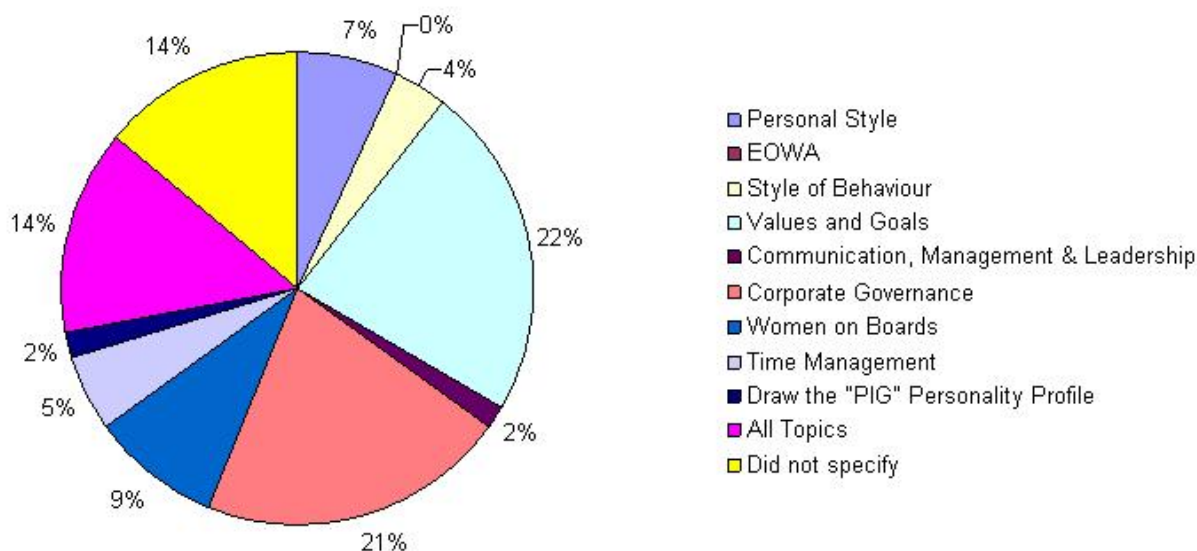
The workshops were held from 9.30am – 4.00pm on carefully selected days of the week so as not to conflict with school holidays or public holidays. Most of the women who attended the workshops were working mums who also contribute to the family farm operations. The women received a manual that can be used as a reference tool and a ‘certificate of participation.’

Each of the workshops was attended by a small group of women and feedback indicated a positive response to the topics covered, especially the corporate governance segment.

A final session was held in Mildura (central location) in February 2010 for all participants. This enabled the women to further obtain relevant information and to be addressed by the experts in various work/life skill issues. This networking day also included fun activities, renewal of networking opportunities and a makeover element.

## Assessments:

An evaluation sheet was given to all attendees with the results as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Most Beneficial Topics as Specified by Attendees of Recognising Women Farmers Seminar

## Who's Involved:

The program has been supported by:

- Mallee Sustainable Farming Inc
- Rural Solutions SA
- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

## Activities, Events and Industry Participation:

- Recognising Women Farmers banner displayed at Field Days held at Speed, Berri and Waikerie
- Color Brochure developed and distributed at Field Days, MSF office, Focus Consulting offices, Post Offices and Community Clubs
- Newspaper press release and public notices to promote workshops
- Radio coverage on ABC Rural in September 2009
- Newsletter advert in the Millewa Newsletter for the Werrimull workshop
- Notice in the Murray Valley Standard newspaper for Murray Bridge workshop
- Emails including details about the program sent to prospective participants
- Phone calls made to women to confirm attendance at the workshops

- Newsletter articles in MSF monthly newsletters Aug, Sept, Oct 2009
- January 2010; public notice placed in Sunraysia Daily, Millewa Newsletter, Murray Valley Standard, Balranald Monthly and The Murray Pioneer to advertise the Networking Fun Day in Mildura

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**For more information, please contact**

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**Australian Government**  
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