



Niall Blair

Minister for Primary Industries
Minister for Lands and Water

MEDIA RELEASE

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BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE: FOUR IN THE RUNNING FOR RURAL WOMEN'S AWARD

Minister for Primary Industries Niall Blair has announced four inspiring leaders, from right across the state's regions, as finalists in the 2016 NSW-ACT Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation Rural Women's Award.

The finalists are Sophie Hansen from Orange; Fiona Mead from Narrabri; Aimee Snowden from Tocumwal; and, Hannah Wandel from Kingston ACT.

"This year's finalists are changing the way we do business in the state's primary industries sector – and are making massive contributions to our industries and communities," Mr Blair said.

"They join an esteemed group of women who have been finalists in this prestigious award over the course of the last 16 years, and continue to work tirelessly to improve our rural communities and primary industries."

The winner of the 2016 NSW-ACT RIRDC Rural Women's Award will receive a bursary of \$10,000 and participate in an Australian Institute of Company Directors' course.

The four finalists will receive a \$1000 bursary from the NSW Department of Primary Industries for skills and leadership development.

The winners of the 2016 NSW-ACT Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation Rural Women's Award will be announced in March at Parliament House in Sydney.

The NSW-ACT winner will then compete for the National RIRDC Rural Women's Award on 12 October at Parliament House, Canberra.

2016 finalists:

Sophie Hansen, Orange

Sophie's project, 'My Open Kitchen', focuses on providing an innovative, self-paced online, social media learning course for Australian farmers and farming communities. It will give them the skills they need to take advantage of free social media channels, and through these tell their stories, promote their produce and make new and valuable connections.

'My Open Kitchen' will assist anyone involved in primary industries use social media channels to build social and professional capital, which in turn will deliver transparency, engagement, trust and ultimately financial returns.

Fiona Mead, Narrabri

Fiona's 'Rural New Generation Project' will introduce younger farmers onto the land by providing ideas on innovative pathways into farming. Her project will assist emerging farmers to acquire knowledge that will ensure they have the tools and skills required to move into agricultural enterprises. This will strengthen rural communities by encouraging a new generation onto the land and provide a legacy for the older generation of farmers as they transition out of agriculture.

Aimee Snowden, Tocumwal

Aimee's award ambition is to increase agricultural literacy in Australian primary school aged children using LEGO® bricks as a key story telling tool. Her aim is to tell a positive story about agriculture in an engaging way to children.

Aimee hopes to leverage and grow the momentum she has created from a small visual 'hobby' into a far reaching project that educates and creates an impact. She wants to positively promote Australian agriculture to the next generation, ensuring we continue to have the brightest and most creative, young minds entering and staying in primary industries.

Hannah Wandel, Kingston ACT

Hannah's project, 'Project Empower', aims to develop and implement a pilot leadership program for Year 9-10 girls in rural secondary schools. This motivational program will build skills, boost self-confidence and help develop strategies for taking on leadership and decision making roles in primary industries. Project Empower will empower girls to reach their potential and overcome gender and geographical barriers to success.