

Supporting young people and rural women

Farming businesses can have four generations actively involved; veterans (born pre 1946), Boomers (1946-64) Generation X (1965-77) and Generation Y (1979-94). Understanding the different motivations, characteristics and needs of each generation is essential for a family farming business to operate productively and for constructive succession planning to occur.

At the Agribusiness Conference held in Adelaide earlier in the year members of the Partners in Grain (PinG) Reference Group presented a session on understanding generation differences.

“As society has changed so have the factors that underpin a generation’s attitude to work and leisure, to quality and to how they prefer to communicate,” explains Sharon Honner, chair of the SA PinG Reference Group.

“While the baby boomers live to work and expect to be quizzed on details, Gen X-ers work to live, like feedback and do not like long winded explanations, while Gen Y-ers live then work, have a great team spirit and like an interesting interactive learning environment.”

Further details of these differences are outlined in the first section of a new, unique publication ‘A guide to succession – sustaining families and farms’ co-authored by Judy Wilkinson who is the SA Co-coordinator for PinG and employed by Rural Solutions SA.

The book is in three sections, with the majority of the book sharing sixteen case studies of different succession planning issues faced by farming families. These case studies have been put together from the collective experiences of the authors of the book, gained from working with farming families over the past 10 years.

Judy and co-author Lyn Sykes see the book as a resource to help break the ice, to stimulate and support communication about succession planning and to help increase understanding; but definitely not as a ‘recipe’ book of succession plan solutions.

‘A guide to succession – sustaining families and farms’ was supported by GRDC in collaboration with other research and development corporations, it is available free from Ground Cover Direct on the GRDC website www.grdc.com/ or by phoning 1800 11 00 44

PinG is about helping all business partners including women and young farmers improve their business practices. In SA the focus is on the facilitation of training in a diverse range of formats and these activities are driven by the PinG Reference Group.

The SA PinG Reference Group consists of volunteers from across the state, although, Sharon Honner would love to hear from young people or rural women in the Southeast and the Riverland who would like to join the reference group. With support from GRDC the reference group meets face to face twice a year and has four teleconferences.

Recently the SA PinG Reference Group used a web room session to design a business structures and wills workshop. Web rooms allow people to participate in a fully interactive meeting on their computer, all that is required is some software a headset with a microphone and a Broadband internet connection is preferable.

While Sharon does not see web rooms superseding face to face meetings, which can be so important for people in dispersed rural areas, she does see them as a really productive tool for delivering training and holding meetings.

Knowing what your training requirements are is an important first step. PinG can help farming systems groups and similar rural groups to identify their training needs and access trainers. This activity was run recently with the YP Alkaline Soils Group; the outcome identified the need for training in making decisions about machinery investment, on farm storage, business planning and record keeping for rural businesses, from this a new PinG group was hatched for the lower YP.

For more information please contact Sharon Honner 08 8832 2251 or Judy Wilkinson 08 8866-2287