

Flexibility key to PinG

Newly appointed SA Coordinator of Partners in Grain (PinG), Kim Blenkiron, believes the program is unique as it really cares about people and is not just about program delivery.

The objective of PinG is to support the personal and professional development of women and young people in the grains industry. Partners in Grain is a GRDC funded project which facilitates professional development activities for farming businesses. Recent activities have included workshops on Financial Investments and Shares at Warooka and Bute, Myers Briggs at Strathalbyn and Kangaroo Island and Biological Farming at Hilltown.

“While other programs are about delivering a set program PinG is about supporting rural people to develop programs that meet their specific needs. With PinG there is no such thing as ‘one size fits all’.

The Grains Research and Development supports a coordinator in each grain growing State, but other funding sources are secured to run training courses proposed by anyone of the six PinG hubs located around the State.

Despite the focus on the grains industry Kim recognises that many of PinG’s activities are relevant to all types of rural businesses and she encourages members of all agricultural sectors to consider PinG activities as an opportunity.

“While the grains industry is the foundation for PinG and women involved in grain businesses make up the SA reference group activities such as workshops on building personal and community resilience are valuable for those involved in all areas of rural business and community organisations,” explains Kim.

Reference group members who are each associated with a regional PinG hub are Sharon Honner (Chair), Maitland; Judy Wilkinson, Snowtown; Jeanette Long, Ardrossan; Robyn Muster, Freeling; Leanne Isaacson, Strathalbyn and Geranium; Tiffany Williams, Streaky Bay, Heather Baldock, Kimba and Liz Moyle, Pinaroo.

“Judy Wilkinson is the immediate past coordinator of SA PinG, she has enthused and supported so many people to take on new challenges in their businesses and communities, so I know I have very big shoes to fill,” says Kim.

One of Kim’s first tasks is to work with women in the Karoonda area who want to set up a new PinG hub in their region. Kim will work with the women to help them identify the types of training they want, provide contacts and introductions to people and methods that can deliver the training and identify funding sources and provide support to secure funding.

A key objective of PinG is to be flexible and to help people in the grains industry access training with as few barriers as possible; that includes bringing training to the region, running it at times that suit and keeping the cost down.

“There are no membership fees to be involved with PinG, the hubs provide a regional contact point but these all combine into a state-wide and national network.

“Improved access to broadband and training in the use of web-rooms, video conferencing and skype is allowing individuals and PinG hubs to network across the state, country and the world.”

Currently SA PinG is working with Queensland PinG on the delivery of workshops on building personal and community resilience and on setting up a rural office. SA PinG are also planning to run workshops across South Australia in setting up and running a rural office later in the year.

Other plans for 2009 are workshops in Pest Management in the Pinaroo Area, Financial Management and Shares on Kangaroo Island, a webinar on Back to Basics Grain Selling Awareness Sessions and Leadership Training.

While Kim was involved at the very first planning workshop for the PinG project she brings a fresh perspective to the project which has been running for over 10 years.

Growing up on a farm in the Mallee and now living at Strathalbyn, Kim has been involved in agricultural and community development for most of her life.

"I am excited about being more involved with such a vibrant project which has achieved so much for the personal development of people, particularly women in rural communities; this is great for the individuals, their businesses and their communities."

Details Kim Blenkiron, 08 8536 8258, woodlana@internode.on.net

ENDS