



Sustainable Futures in Farming: promoting careers in the agriculture sector

Between 2016-17 Landcare network Gecko CLaN ran the Sustainable Futures in Farming Program in schools. The network's facilitator Kerri Robson worked with Year 9 and 10 students from Benalla FCJ College (pictured above) and with students from small rural primary schools from Glenrowan, Swanpool and Badaginie.

The aim of the project was to engage students from a young age to think about agriculture as a career. This was done by exposing them to the different types of farming (eg. grapes, beef, sheep/wool, cropping) and learning about what is involved in running a productive and sustainable operation.

Different people came in and talked to the students and there was an emphasis on having female farmers involved to help break down some of the industry's stereotypes.

Students also heard from people from other industries that support the farming sector, such as veterinarians. Speakers included Kylie McReadie and Dr Ian Holmes from Agriculture Victoria, Tom Abbottsmith from free range beef and egg farm Tom's Paddock and James Alcaniz from Rural Finance. The speakers talked about their careers, why they chose the path they did, what was good about the job as well as some of the challenges.

Among the highlights was a visit by about 25 secondary school to sheep industry leader Dr Jason Trompf's Great valley farm. During the visit, students had the opportunity to look at pasture and work with and handle sheep. They also did an autopsy on some sheep – something some students enjoyed, and others not so much! The group also heard from Dr Trompf's farm manager, Hannah Marriott (picture above right), who is also well-regarded as leader in women in agriculture.



The primary school program involved students looking at developing school gardens - many of them now have a cooking program, with students growing their own vegetables and supporting the school community. Students also looked at Indigenous plants and how they could be used in cooking.

Encouraging young people consider the notion of "paddock to plate", and that even if they lived in town they can produce their own food, helped create a better understanding of where their food comes from as well as giving them the opportunity to consider careers that they might not ever have thought of or known about.

As most schools no longer have agricultural programs, although there may be a component as part of secondary school's environmental science subjects, this project fills an important gap in providing information and exposure to the agriculture sector (and its related industries), which still underpins the economies of many communities across the catchment.

This project is funded through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program