

Strive

For Excellence in Agricultural Workplaces



November 2023

Workplace Culture

Strategies to engage and retain workers

Tractor Tragedy

Should old tractors be banned?

Dry Weather Alert

Are you ready for the bushfire season?



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Primary Employers Tasmania's Strive newsletter is published three times a year to inform, inspire and encourage innovation and best practice in Tasmania's agricultural workplaces.

If you have family members or employees who would like to receive an electronic copy of Strive or other Primary Employers Tasmania communications, please email their details to pet@primaryemployers.com.au

Front cover: Red Hot Tips Northern Facilitator Sam Tracey with landowner David Munz

Partners


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Primary Employers Tasmania recently held its AGM. Today, we introduce the new office bearers, who are united in their passion to achieve best practice across Tasmanian agricultural workplaces...



President — Stephanie Terry

Stephanie and her husband Andrew are the owners of Tasmanian Berries. The business produces hydroponically grown strawberries, raspberries and blackberries, under polytunnels or in hothouses, as well as in ground blueberries and operates over three sites at Exton, Christmas Hills and in the Bundaberg region in Queensland. The business employs approximately 70 local FTEs

and is an Approved Employer of the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme. The business both directly employs and labour hires over 500 seasonal workers in Tasmania, Queensland and South Australia. Stephanie graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Tasmania, and has practised as a Barrister and Solicitor in Tasmania. She has been a member of the Primary Employers Tasmania Committee since 2018.



Vice President — Ben Grubb

Ben manages Strathroy Pastoral, a mixed farming operation across two properties at Breadalbane and Nile. The current enterprise mix is superfine Merinos, commercial Angus, primeline composites, Australian stock horses and irrigated cropping of potatoes, cereals and fodder. Ben has a Commerce Degree from Melbourne University where he majored in

Agricultural Business Management and Marketing. He spent 13 years working in senior management roles for Elders in North-East Victoria, Southern Riverina NSW and Tasmania. Ben is also Chairperson of the Irrigators Representative Committee for the Lower South Esk Irrigation Scheme and is Vice President of the Tas Angus Breeders Group.



Treasurer — Kate Gofton

Kate and her husband Rodney own and manage Riverdale Dairies near Scottsdale. Their two properties span an area of 600ha, with a herd of 600 milking cows. They currently contract their milk supply to Lactalis Australia, who transport their milk to the Tamar Valley Yogurt factory in Launceston. Kate is a qualified accountant and is a current member of CPA Australia.

Kate's motivation to join the Primary Employers Tasmania Executive Committee is to learn more about the Tasmania's agricultural industries and share her enthusiasm for promoting safe farm practices and agricultural career pathways in the education sector.



Jo Palmer
Minister for Primary Industries
and Water

The shortage of skilled agriculture workers is being felt across Australia, which is why we are working with industry to help ensure Tasmania has the agricultural workforce we need.

As the Tasmanian Minister for Primary Industries, I have been talking to farmers across Tasmania about the different challenges they are facing to retain suitably skilled workers, and hearing about some of the ways they are addressing these issues in their businesses and regions.

As many of you would know, the Rockliff Liberal Government is working for you, and with you, to do what it can to support the primary industry sector to work through these challenges.

One way we are doing this is through advocacy with the Australian Government via the Agriculture and Skills Ministers' Forums.

In recent months I have been part of robust discussions around Federal Government changes to visa requirements and the Pacific Island Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme, which many producers have told me are expected to impact on their ability to use workers under the scheme.

I have raised these directly with Federal Agriculture Minister Murray Watt, and while the Australian Government remains committed to its policy on these matters,

Minister Watt has asked that we provide specific examples of how this policy detrimentally affects Tasmanian producers to him for consideration.

I encourage those working in the agriculture sector and employing international workers to forward any examples to my office, so we can raise this with Minister Watt.

We know what a significant contribution the PALM scheme makes to our agricultural workforce and we want the PALM scheme to work well, for the workers and their families, the employers and our regional communities.

At a State level, AgriGrowth Tasmania, Skills Tasmania and Jobs Tasmania are all available to the Tasmanian industry to raise labour and skills issues and to access services and support.

In August this year, Skills Tasmania and Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania joined forces to host an agricultural workforce development forum, bringing together key stakeholders to understand and plan for current and emerging workforce needs.

This work will feed into a new industry skills compact and associated action plans for agriculture that will support workforce development.

Ministerial Matters Continued...

The Tasmanian Government's priority remains getting Tasmanian residents to fill the available harvest and production jobs in our agricultural sector, where possible.

With my Disability Services Minister hat on I would encourage you to consider opportunities to employ Tasmanians living with a disability to meet some of your workforce needs.

From personal experience, I can vouch for the skills, enthusiasm and reliability these Tasmanians bring to a workplace.

Please reach out to your local disability services employment agency or the Community and Disability Services branch via phone 6166-3657 or email disabilitypp@dpac.tas.gov.au.



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elders.com.au

It was exciting to note the recent opening of TasTAFE's \$6.5 million Agricultural Training Centre of Excellence at Freer Farm in Burnie.

This state-of-the-art training facility will support our future skills development needs.

This year there are also fee-free TAFE training places in wine industry operations, agriculture, horticulture and dairy production so please make the most of these opportunities.

As a Government, we are also supporting sector specific programs such as the "Grow more, milk more, and make more" initiative to train 40 local artificial insemination technicians to support the dairy sector and Dairy Tasmania's 2IC and manager training funded under the Strategic Industry Partnerships Grant Program.

It is programs like these that will upskill our workforce and offer opportunities for people to join the agricultural sector or for those already employed to progress their careers.

"Our agriculture industry offers a wide range of career opportunities and, with the sector thriving, there is no better time for Tasmanians to skill up and take on a job in primary production."





Stephanie Terry

Primary Employers Tasmania
President

Stephanie Terry was appointed President of Primary Employers Tasmania in August 2023 and brings extensive experience across the areas of law, agriculture, business management, employment and industrial relations. Stephanie was recently accepted into the National Farmers Federation's five-month Diversity in Agriculture Leadership Program. In her first Strive column, Stephanie shares an insight into the NFF program, her key learnings and how she will apply these to her new role with Primary Employers Tasmania...

Juggling being a Mum, wife, lawyer, business owner, home builder, volunteer board member and all day-to-day tasks is no easy feat.

While many people say that you can do it all, I found myself at a career crossroads in 2022.

I had recently returned to work from maternity leave as a part-time family law duty lawyer with Legal Aid, but I found myself time poor.

Between my job, being a Mum to three young children, working with my husband Andrew to employ 570 workers on our berry business across three properties and my role with Primary Employers Tasmania, something had to give.

I always believed that my skills as a lawyer were helpful to the "behind the scenes" work of running our business.

However, it took a restructure of our management team, the creation of a "family

board", recent changes to the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme and the expansion of our business into investments of worker accommodation, transport, labour hire and our third berry site in Queensland to prompt my move.

I decided to formally become a Director of Tasmanian Berries and commence as an in-house lawyer for our business, undertaking the legal work rather than outsourcing to a firm.

It's always a big decision to step away from employment off-farm.

I very much appreciated advice from like-minded women who had left their professional careers to utilise their skills in their own family agribusinesses.

They recommended that I should always try to do something for myself to remain motivated, interested and connected to my profession.

When I saw the National Farmers' Federation's Diversity in Agriculture Leadership Program advertised, I thought it would be a great opportunity to fuel the cause to elevate more women in management and leadership roles in ag in Australia.

I was also inspired to apply by recognising that the program's skill set were relevant to my new role as President of Primary Employers Tasmania, as well as my Directorship of Tasmanian Berries.

The mentoring and networking with the 2023 participants and program alumni were also major incentives to complete the application.

President's Perspective Continued...

This program has been instrumental in refocusing my career, priorities and work / life balance.

My key learnings were:

1. Goal setting and making the time to prioritise your workload and life, whatever that encompasses, will ultimately allow you to balance your commitments and achieve better outcomes;
2. To have the confidence to take up opportunities that present themselves to you as they generally are offered because someone else has confidence that you can do the role; and
3. That it is ok to say no to opportunities if the timing or position is not right for you at that point in time.

Applying these learnings to both our business and to Primary Employers Tasmania is the next step. Thoughtfully setting meeting agendas and ensuring PET Committee members are well informed prior to meetings so we can actively discuss agenda items and make timely and relevant decisions is key.

I am also excited about working proactively with Andrew Cameron to ensure good governance and compliance, as well as serving our members well with advice, education and training opportunities through industry participation and advocacy.

In our own business, I hope to achieve greater balance between the day-to-day workload and my role as a Director, which involves regular strategy meetings, reviewing the performance of the business

at a macro level and planning, setting budgets and goals and determining future direction based on past performance and likely impacting factors.

My immediate priorities for Primary Employers Tasmania focus on new and consolidation of existing services, including workshops, conferences, ongoing access to AgCard, and other educational and training opportunities.

As an organisation, we want our members to take up opportunities and services that we offer to enhance their workplace and experience as an employer. We are a Committee with wide skill sets and experiences, and we are always open to members approaching us with ideas and requests for how we can better improve members services.

If there is a policy issue that affects you or your particular industry / award, then please bring it to us so that we can discuss how Primary Employers Tasmania can help advocate for you.

As I step into this role, I sincerely thank Ben Grubb for his tireless work as President and very much thank him for staying on in the Vice President's role. To all the Committee members who voluntarily pledge their time and expertise, I thank you and look forward to working cooperatively with you to help our members achieve excellence across their workplaces.

To our members, thank you. We very much appreciate your commitment and support.

Together we can make a difference.

Cheers,

steph



Workplace Relations...

Andrew Cameron

Primary Employers Tasmania
Workplace Relations Director

Andrew has more than 37 years' experience advising people and business in law, industrial relations and human resource management. He has a Bachelor of Commerce (Industrial Relations), Bachelor of Laws, Graduate Diploma in Business Administration, Certificate IV Assessment and Workplace Training, Diploma in Human Resource Management and is a Qualified Small Groups Trainer.

One of the mandatory benefits for employees set out in the National Employment Standards is long service leave.

The National Employment Standards do not set out the details of entitlements, but refer to entitlements that are set out in agreements or awards. If an award does not refer to long service leave, then the relevant State legislation applies.

In Tasmania this is the *Long Service Leave Act 1976*. Generally speaking, employees in agriculture in Tasmania are covered by this legislation.

The Act states that an employee with 10 years of continuous service is entitled to eight and two thirds' weeks of leave at a time mutually agreed with the employer, and should be taken as soon as is practicable after the completion of the 10 years of service.

It should be noted that part-time employees and casual employees can also accrue long service leave benefits.

However, these employees must work at least 32 hours in any four-week period for that four-week period to count towards the equivalent of 10 years.

It doesn't break continuity, but just doesn't count as part of the required 10 years. If that happens a number of times, then it may well be that the employee has actually been with the employer for longer than 10 calendar years before they become entitled to long service leave.

“It is therefore important to keep appropriate time and wages records longer than the five years the Australian Tax Office requires.”

Some absences away from employment still count towards the 10 years, including annual leave, personal leave and absences on workers compensation. Whereas other breaks, such as parental leave, study leave or leaves of absence, do not count towards the equivalent of 10 years continuous service.

The calculation of leave is also very precise with decisions of the Tasmanian Industrial Commission going to four decimal points in terms of leave entitlements. It is thus very important to know the exact starting date of employees to properly calculate entitlements. When an employee wants to actually take leave, the calculation of what they are paid is the same wage or salary they would have received if they had continued at work for the same period, but without overtime or the payment of disability allowances.

There are certain provisions for an employee to receive a long service leave payout if they leave after seven years, but only in exceptional circumstances.

Workplace Relations Continued...

There are a lot of variables in looking at an employee's entitlement to long service leave so it is always best to check.

Primary Employers Tasmania can assist you in ensuring that your employees are provided with the correct leave entitlements.

**Please contact Andrew Cameron on
0407 200 909 or
andrew@primaryemployers.com.au if you
require any assistance with your
workplace matters.**

Importance of Record Keeping for Long Service Liability

We recently had an enquiry from a member who had sold his farm some time ago. One of the employees that transferred to the new business now had 10 years of service between the old and new employer. In such a circumstance, the old employer would have to contribute their share of the long service leave entitlement but only if the employee had at least seven years service with the old employer.

In a number of decisions, of the Tasmanian Industrial Commission the Commission has found that upon serving seven years with an employer, the entitlement to pro-rata long service leave "crystallised", that is, the old employer became liable for their share if the employee subsequently became entitled to long service leave.

Thankfully, the old employer had kept detailed records and was able to show that the employee transferred to the new owner prior to having seven years of service with the old employer. As such, the old employer had no liability. This is a great example of why keeping records is important. Often when there is a transfer of business/farm the contract for sale makes provision for an adjustment for long service leave.

If you are looking to sell or buy a farm and there is a transfer of employees, you should make sure that there is an appropriate clause dealing with long service leave accruals.

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Meet the Member

Heidi Broun Donohue —
J.G. Broun

Four generations of the Broun family have diversified, intensified and expanded their Spreyton-based agricultural business.

From growing apples to cool storage and grading and cutting potatoes for seed, their focus has successfully evolved with market and seasonal opportunities.

But the constant across all the years and all family members is their commitment to people.

J.G. Broun now employs 25 staff members, including 10 permanent staff.

With staff achieving up to 50-year milestones over the decades, and casual employees returning to assist during peak periods for more than 12 consecutive years, the Broun family's dedication to continuous improvement and staff engagement is paying off.

Heidi Broun Donohue describes the team at J.G. Broun as “actual champions”.

“One of our key focuses is to develop relationships, workplace culture, safety and incentives that ensure our team want to stay with us.

“Our employees are not numbers, they are part of our team,” Heidi shared.

“We take the time to talk to people, including our customers, to understand their thoughts and ideas. We consult with our staff before we set goals and we include the team in our actions.

“This is an evolving process, but one our family is very committed to.”

Heidi recently engaged with Primary Employers Tasmania to oversee a review of all policies, procedures, staff pay rates, awards, employment contracts, induction, training and the businesses' approach to safety.



Peter Broun and daughter Heidi Broun Donohue

Meet the Member Continued...

The first step was a meeting with all staff so their feedback could be taken on board. The next stage involved Andrew Cameron reviewing all documentation and meeting with employees to answer questions about the award of their employment.

“We were under the Horticultural Award, but we needed to see if that was still the best fit. We then analysed every level of our business, run numerous scenarios regarding what we pay, looked at weekend rates, start times, break durations, when breaks were taken, comparisons to minimum wages and an alternate award. We summarised all this into a one pager and then presented it to our staff.

“We wanted to make sure we were compliant and doing the right thing by our people. This is their livelihoods and we want our people to stay.”

The next step is updating all employment contracts, providing additional security to all employees.

“I have communicated this over a number of weeks and we are now at the point where they are humming along as an amazing team,” Heidi said.

“They really appreciated all the feedback and figures. It’s been a huge process, but well worth the time. We are hugely appreciative of the assistance from Andrew Cameron at Primary Employers Tasmania.”

J.G Broun now grades up to 15,000 tonnes of potatoes each year, then cool stores seed potatoes before transferring them to dry storage ready for cutting.

The Broun family has increased its output of premium, fully-traceable, Natural Resources and Environment Department-certified

potato seed by 30 per cent in the past decade.

As part of their ongoing drive to achieve best practice, they have also restructured their approach to management. Heidi and her three sisters have joined their semi-retired parents on a family Board to oversee the strategic direction of the business.

With careers in law, architecture, medicine, management and teaching, they bring a range of skills and thought processes to business decision making. This is complemented by two independent advisors — one their accountant and one a long-term business associate.

Safety is another key focus, with regular toolbox meetings including a safety spotlight. J.G. Broun is currently establishing a Safety Working Committee, comprising a representative from each level of the business. They have also engaged WorkSafe Tasmania to assist in updating their traffic management system.

And staff training is high on the agenda, with six team members recently completing their chemical handling accreditation. Another priority is branding and business development.

“We have let our staff know that this is about continuous improvement. It won’t happen overnight,” Heidi said.

“It’s like the old saying: ‘How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time’.

Heidi said her 20 years of experience as a teacher has enabled her to bring a fresh approach to her role in overseeing the business.

“It’s all about relationships and ensuring our terrific staff remain with us on this exciting journey.”



Coroner's Findings Tasmanian Tractor Death

A Tasmanian Coroner recently recommended the banning of tractors made before 1982 following the death of a Chudleigh farmer on 9 June 2020.

John Barwick was killed after being overrun by a David Brown 780 tractor that was at least 50 years old.

The same tractor had rolled onto Mr Barwick's father, causing his death in 1977.

The Coroner's Report found that it was likely that Mr Barwick had driven the tractor down a steep slope and started unrolling a bale from the tractor to feed cows.

It is believed Mr Barwick alighted from the tractor to manually unroll the last 10 per cent of the bale. Due to the tractor being on a 5.8 per cent gradient, the tractor continued to move.

After noticing the tractor moving, Mr Barwick tried to jump back on, but slipped or tripped and was caught under the back wheel.

As part of the farm fatality investigations, a Transport Safety and Investigations Officer found the tractor was not safe for operational use.

The main safety issues identified were:

- The hand brake lever did not hold upwards when applied and instantly self-released by dropping downwards;
- The left and right brake pedals could no longer be locked together to operate as a one pedal assembly due to a bent locking lever;
- The left and right foot brake pedals applied the brakes at different heights with a 40mm difference in pedal height;
- The clutch safety start switch had been previously damaged, had been bypassed and was no longer operational;
- There was excessive circular free play in the steering wheel measuring 135 degrees, due to worn steering components;

Do you manage a large property in Tasmania? Do you want to reduce your bushfire risk?

Red Hot Tips offers **FREE** practical advice and support:

- Farm visits to discuss your fuel reduction options.
- Developing burn plans.
- Identifying equipment needs.
- Planned burn training and on-ground mentoring.
- Advice on alternative fuel reduction treatments.
- Practical materials and resources.



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Tasmanian
Government

Tractor Safety Continued...

- Engine oil seeped onto the engine exhaust manifold and caused fumes in the vicinity of the driver's seat whilst the engine was running;
- The front wheel bearings were loose and had a considerable amount of excess play, requiring attention and adjustment;
- Diesel fuel was constantly dripping from the right side of the engine at the diesel lift pump; and
- The tractor had no grab handles and therefore the driver would have had to use the steering wheel to mount the tractor.

A report from the National Coronial Information System on tractor incident deaths in Australia between 2012 and 2022 found there were 131 deaths within the decade, being an average of 12.3 deaths per year.

The vast majority of the deceased were male and 63.4 per cent of deaths were persons aged over 61 years.

The main causes of death were:

- Rollovers (29 per cent);

- Unexpected tractor movement (15.3 per cent); and
- Defective braking systems (13 per cent).

The death of Mr Barwick was the fifth tractor death in Tasmania since 2017.

Four of the deaths involved very old tractors (three with defects) operated by males aged between 63 years and 87 years.

One of the deaths occurred in circumstances almost identical to this case.

The Coroner's Report's recommendations were as follows:

1. Tractors manufactured before 1982 be legislatively prohibited from use in commercial farming operations; or
2. As an alternate to recommendation one, that Safe Tractor Access Platforms be required by legislation to be retrofitted to tractors manufactured before 1982 and which are used in commercial farming operations.

This has prompted much debate...

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Tractor Safety Continued...

Primary Employers Tasmania contacted several industry leaders to share their thoughts about these recommendations....



Felicity Richards
Farmsafe Australia Chair

Farmsafe calls for extensive consultation with the agricultural sector about the implications of such a ban and what impact it would have on the operations of farmers.

It is absolutely critical that farmers maintain their machinery in good working order, no matter how infrequently it's used.

We understand some older tractors are used intermittently for jobs such as pulling out a travelling irrigator, which may tempt farmers to avoid or delay routine servicing and maintenance.

Remember, factors like age and fatigue play an important part in staying safe. As we get older, we're not as nimble as we once were, and that has implications for our safety.

Most importantly, never get complacent! No matter how many years or decades of experience the operator has, tractors can be dangerous machines and need to be treated with caution each and every time.



Corey Spencer
Safe Farming Tasmania Reference Group Chairman

It is essential that all farmers keep up to date maintenance records for all farm equipment, as well as implement a reporting system for all employees to document machinery risks.

This assists to ensure that if any machinery is broken or not working as it should be, it is immediately identified and fixed.

All farmers should be committed to immediately acting on any safety hazards, especially with older equipment.

A risk assessment of all tractors regarding safe tractor access platforms should be carried out. If a farmer is unable to get on or off a tractor safely, then they should contact the manufacturer or dealer to ensure this issue is fixed.

However, we recommend that no one should chase after a moving vehicle and try to get back on or in.

Primary Employers Tasmania extends its deepest condolences to the family and loved ones of Mr Barwick



Partner Profile

Red Hot Tips — Engage, Educate and Collaborate

What is the Red Hot Tips program, and what have we been doing to help Tasmanian landowners prepare for the upcoming bushfire season?

Red Hot Tips (RHT) is a free one-stop service for farmers and rural landowners.

The program educates, engages and supports farmers and landholders in rural Tasmania to actively manage their bushfire risk; encouraging collaborative vegetation fire management and ecological sustainability across the landscape.

Program Facilitators have been working with several landowners and stakeholders from across the State over the past few months to ensure burns could be achieved when the conditions were suitable.

RHT has been working with Tasmanian Women in Agriculture empowering their members, and other interested participants, to manage their bushfire risk.

Burn plan workshops were held in Rowella and Kettering and aimed to provide landowners with a basic understanding of planning and writing a basic burn plan.

Attendees then take this new knowledge back to their property. Facilitators follow up with site visits, phone calls and emails to complete the burn plan and assist in navigating any approval processes.

Do you have a Conservation Covenant?

If you do, it does not mean you cannot have fire introduced into the landscape.

RHT works closely with staff from the Private Land Conservation Program to achieve ecological land management and fuel reduction outcomes on private properties.

A recent burn was carried out on David Munz's property (pictured on the cover) on the East Coast involving a covenant.

RHT worked with Mr Munz to produce a tailored supportive burn plan for Mr Munz and get the required approvals to conduct the burn.

During spring, RHT has been working with landowners on implementing the final step of their plan, and completing their burn.

This is the chance for facilitators to mentor a landowner to complete their burn in a way which is safe and archives their burn objective.

The Red Hot Tips team can assist you in all aspects of the planned burning process.

Please contact one of our facilitators if you would like advice or assistance from us:

- Sam Tacey (northern / north west)
Mobile: 0417 153 620
- Frank Bishop (southern)
Mobile: 0459 908 539

or email redhottips@fire.tas.gov.au

As Tasmania heads towards the bushfire season, community members are encouraged to keep up to date with Fire Permit Periods for municipalities when they are declared.



Partner Profile

Enable Ag



How does someone who grew up on a farm in India and worked in the medical and IT sectors end up dramatically changing Tasmanian farmers' lives?

Meet Ram Savana. Ram has developed a Time-Freedom Program focused on achieving a balance between time spent on the farm, on the business and with families.

Most farmers would admit they invest far too much time working on the farm, not enough hours focused on the business and even fewer hours on “me” or “family” time.

Ram's goal is to fix farmers' work life unbalance through tailored programs that also lead to improved business efficiencies, enhanced family communication and much-needed knowledge succession planning platforms.

So far, Ram and his business Enable Ag have worked with more than 30 Australian farmers since the Company was launched six years ago.

“Powerful”; “enlightening”; “made me realise I was less efficient that I could be”; “he is a tech freak and one taskmaster whom you would want on your team”; and “20 hours to five minutes for data processing — that's the magic that Enable Ag brought to us” - these are the comments from Tasmanian farmers who have already collaborated with Ram.

So, why did Ram decide to spend 5,000 hours working on Tasmanian farms before launching his business?

Ram grew up on an 80-acre farm in India.

Testimonial — By Rob O'Connor Benham Tasmania Manager

“I feel more in control. Ram's systems have allowed me time to step back and work on the business rather than in it.

“Previously, we did imply diligent and systematic approaches to allocate tasks and ran disciplined meetings to discuss work allotment, but at the end we still found our staff highly dependent on the managerial advice, ending up investing more energy than required.

“It was cumbersome to see the whole picture and act on all things at once. It's made me feel helpless at times.

“When I appointed Enable Ag, I've moved out of micro-management and empowered my staff. They make the decisions and I just have to oversee and approve when required.

“The work satisfaction has significantly increased. Tasks are managed better, and everyone knows their part well.

“Ram's fresh perspective has benefited me largely, my farmland is now divided into manageable sectors and helps me see the bigger picture.

“Enable Ag didn't just fix my problems but also took my livestock enterprise to the next level.”



Enable Ag Profile Continued...

Unfortunately his father passed away suddenly in 2019, leaving his mother with little knowledge or information regarding how to continue the business' operations. Ram returned home to farewell his father and commenced researching how to run the farm.

He found reading his father's diaries, noting processes and passing these on were immediate game changers. These linear set of steps yielded consistent results, enabling the family farm to again prosper.

As a result, Ram's mother was awarded the Progressive Farmer Award on International Women's Day in 2022. This success prompted Ram to combine his scientific-focused Australian university studies with his passion for agriculture and his new-found on-farm skills to found Enable Ag with his wife Em.

"Sometimes all it takes is a zoomed-out holistic review of the day-to-day operations by someone who is not already deeply embedded," Ram said.

"I quickly become aware of how much time was spent on labour-intensive tasks, which could easily be delegated, and on manual activities impacting farmers' health.

"Sometimes people wait until they become too unwell to work before they consider making changes or succession planning. This is tragic and it's unnecessary."

"I want farmers to step back and assess their processes here and now while they're younger and fitter and can still enjoy time with their family and friends.

"Enable Ag provides a transformative journey for you, your family, your farm, your goals and your abilities. Our team works closely with you to implement habits, discipline and strategic systems that pave the way to more time-freedom."

Ram says one of his measures of success is when a farmer calls him three months after implementing the personalised systems to say they have booked a holiday.

If you want to reclaim your time, a great place to start is the Farmers Ultimate Freedom Checklist, Enable Ag's guide to help you start your time-freedom journey.

Simply scan the QR Code below or call Ram for a confidential chat on (03) 6778-6756 or support@enableag.com.au.



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Enable Ag



Safety Spotlight

By Sarah Hirst —

Illawarra Rise, Longford

I have written about Safe Farming Tasmania endlessly over the past six years, spending time with Phill John and Stu Beams to learn about their invaluable on-farm safety services for the State's farmers.

After recently purchasing a farm near Longford, one of our first priorities was to call Stu and invite him to visit our property to ensure we comply with the myriad of workplace health and safety legislation.

What an incredible experience to gain a first-hand, in-depth view of the vast array of systems, policies, procedures, documents and checklists prepared by the Safe Farming Tasmania team.

My immediate thought – why isn't every Tasmanian farmer inviting Stu to visit their property to work through this crucial process? It's free. It's professional. It's helpful. It can save lives. It can save your business.

Putting it bluntly, you'd have to be bloody mad to not invest this small amount of time to underpin a safe workplace for you, your family, employees, contractors and visitors.

So, what is involved?

The first step is ensuring you have morning tea ready.

Phill and Stu often joke that they will do all this work for farmers for no payment – except a cup of tea and a Tim Tam!

This sets the mood for the meeting. Stu is there to help. He is a safety consultant who truly aspires to provide accurate guidance and advice to the agriculture sector. It is important to note that the Safe Farming team members are safety not WorkSafe Inspectors.

Stu is all about preventing incidents, accidents, injuries and fatalities on farms, as well as ensuring you have the documentation to prove your commitment to workplace safety best practice. This is essential if there is an incident on your property. It could save lives and / or a fine of potentially millions of dollars.

The first step is learning about your farm, your employees, your enterprises and potential on-farm risks. Stu will ask you about the machinery you have on site, any dams or rivers, workshops and other key features of your business.

He will then walk you through the written material that has been painstakingly prepared by Safe Farming Tasmania, including a tailored Farm Safety Management



Working with Tasmanian farmers to reduce farm-work related death, injury and disease

Stuart Beams 0400 140 146
stuart.beams@safefarming.tas.gov.au



Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

Department of Justice



Safety Spotlight Continued...

System, induction processes, COVID safe plans, incident reporting templates and more than 60 policies and procedures covering everything from chemical storage and chainsaw operation to stock handling and seed drill operation.

Stu will also work with you to identify other policies and procedures that may be required for persons visiting your farm. This could include people wanting access to your property to cut wood or fish from a n on-farm creek or waterway.

“Basically, I am here to provide guidance, information and advice to assist you to keep your workers, contractors, visitors and family safe on farm, while meeting your duty of care and legislative obligations under Work Health and Safety law,” Stu tells Mark and I.

“Participating in the program and implementing a system to identify hazards and potential risks across the farm will likely give you peace of mind, knowing that you have undertaken due diligence to minimise hazards and risks on farm in so far as reasonably practicable.

“We provide you with documentation that supports the fact that you have a safety management system in place and that you have undertaken due diligence to identify and manage risks on farm.

“Today, we all need to back up what we do with documentation so you can prove that you have taken all the necessary steps to embed these systems into your farm business culture.”

There were so many learnings throughout our session with Stu, including:

- If you are a sole trader and don't employ people, but if you are taking a salary out of the business, then you are considered an employee;

- All family members should be inducted into the safety systems;
- All steps must be documented, such as the fact that you have tried to provide a manual to someone purchasing a piece of second hand machinery from you and that you have provided a full briefing on the safe operation of the plant (and asked them to sign a statement confirming this);
- All farms are considered a workplace. However, there are exceptions in and immediately around the family home. Therefore, all accidents outside the home area are considered workplace incidents; and
- Workplace Tasmania must be notified within 24 hours of any workplace incident.

It was also reassuring to hear that not all the burden lays with the farmer. An employee or visitor to the workplace also has an obligation to comply with any instruction given in the workplace so that they behave appropriately and comply. However, it is still up to the farm owner to clearly establish the safety expectations.

Stu also talks at length about children on farms and their friends visiting. Between 10 to 20 children across Australia are killed every year on farms. Some fall from heights, such as in barns, others roll quad bikes while not wearing a helmet. Approximately one third of these deaths are visitors to a farm. Sadly, the highest cause of child deaths on farm are as a result of drowning.

We asked many questions about the risks associated with visiting children, from riding motorbikes and side by sides, to swimming in dams to fishing in creeks.

The reality is that many of us are too trusting and not taking all the necessary steps to protect our children and their friends – as well as ourselves.

Safety Spotlight Continued...

Do we ask if children aged under 16 have driven a side-by-side before? Do we provide operating instructions? Do we show them our policies and procedures and ask them to sign a document that confirms they have read and understood our safety expectations? Do we always insist that they wear a helmet – even on a side-by-side? Do we check that seatbelts are fastened? Do we always check if they have a phone or radio with them?

I admit that I don't follow all these steps – but I will now.

“No children under 16 should be on adult quad bikes,” Stu said. “If you do permit kids over 16 to operate a quad bike on your property, then you need to ask if they have experience to operate it and even call their parents to verify their answer. Is the machine safe to operate and in good working order? Have you shown them the specifics of how to safely operate that specific bike as it may be different to the bike they are used to?”

“If you have doubts, I wouldn't let them operate it. It's not worth the risk.”

“Never be frightened to pull out the safe work procedure and get them to read it. We have to ensure the safety of all people on our farms. We don't want to put ourselves in a situation where if it all goes pear shape, the question could be asked ‘what did we do to manage the health and wellbeing of other persons in our workplace’.”

While some farmers may say that this is all obvious and they are covered, many would not have these systems documented.

Is your workshop open? Can children turn on a machine by accident? Are the keys in the tractors? Are chemicals locked away? Is all necessary signage erected and visible? Are heavy items stored on high shelves where they could fall on someone?

Are the forks lowered on the tractor?

Are all PTOs operating correctly? Do all employees have the right licences, certificates and training to operate all plant and implements? Is all the correct PPE available for all people? Have all contractors read and signed the induction procedures?

Stu took the time to tour our property and point out areas where we can improve. This was invaluable. And he returned within two weeks to provide our personalised Farm Safety Management System and all other documents that will help us take a very important step forward to ensuring we are compliant.

As Stu said, farm safety starts with cultivating positive safe farming conversations that influence positive outcomes, shedding light on issues, sharing ideas, and identifying and mitigating risks to prevent incidents.

It's all about keeping it simple, practical and ensuring systems are in place to keep everyone safe on farms.

There is no greater inspiration than one Tasmanian farmer who was left devastated after a long-term employee was killed in a tractor roll over on their farm.

“In court, it helped us immensely that we had engaged with Safe Farming Tasmania and had all our systems and documentation in place that proved we had provided a detailed induction and training,” she said.

I have no doubt that I will sleep more soundly knowing that we are doing all we can to provide a safe workplace for all.

And we can only encourage all Tasmanian farmers to reach out to Stu at Safe Farming Tasmania. It costs nothing but your time, common sense and commitment to best practice.

But it can save the lives of those you love and ensure you are covered if the unthinkable does happen.



Committee Conversation

Sophie Greenacre

When did you join the PET Committee? November 2020.

What three words would you use to describe Tasmania's agricultural industries? Diverse, strong and sustainable.

What are the Tasmanian rural sector's greatest strengths? Tasmania's cool climate, available water resources, its progressive farmers and the strong community support for the industry.

And challenges? Attracting and retaining young and enthusiastic people to work and invest in Tasmanian agriculture and its local communities.

How do we inspire the next generation of agricultural leaders? Ensure as an industry we are telling the positive stories of Tasmanian agriculture, providing rewarding workplaces as employers and continue to encourage government to support education, research and development programs.

What advice would you give farmers to improve workplace culture to recruit and retain workers? Encourage open communication with your employees and be willing to listen to their ideas. Attend industry workshops on people management and seek advice from external consultants who specialise in this area. For those who find it difficult to find time to leave the farm, there are some fantastic podcasts delivered by organisational psychologists out there. I recommend starting with Dr Nollaig Heffernan and her presentations on becoming an employer of choice and retaining employees.

What measures have you implemented on your farm / business to improve workplace safety? We have converted our induction and safe work procedures on to an app-based system, with QR codes placed on machinery to ensure operation procedures are user friendly and easily accessible. We also try to have regular toolbox meetings with as many employees as possible present to discuss any current safety concerns and refresh employees on what is expected.

How do you engage your employees to identify and manage risks? We stress to our team that safety and looking after each other is the number one priority in any task. We hope this encourages a good workplace culture of reporting any safety concerns immediately to management.

We have a farm WhatsApp stream that the team use to communicate with each other during their shifts. This ensures the team know where each other are on farm and allows them to raise any safety risks, often using the visual aid of a photo.

Why is it important that all Tasmanian farmers are members of Primary Employers Tasmania? Many Tasmanian farmers feel overwhelmed by the regulatory requirements placed on them as employers.

The paperwork and compliance can seem endless.

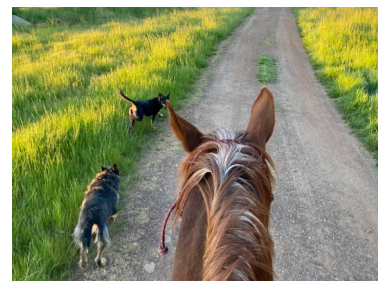
By becoming a member, farmers can contact Primary Employers Tasmania to assist in the preparation of employment documents, stay up to date with regulatory changes and ask for assistance in dealing with a difficult employee situation.

If you could ask the Tasmanian Premier to make one change for the betterment of Tasmania's agricultural industries, what would it be?

I think one of the biggest challenges facing the Tasmanian agricultural industry is the ability for farmers to recruit and retain the right employees for their businesses, particularly in skilled management roles.

We need greater investment in agriculture training programs for farmers and their employees.

We also need the Tasmanian Government to advocate for a dedicated agriculture visa for overseas workers, which includes the ability for farmers to sponsor these employees to stay on a more permanent basis.



Primary Employers Tasmania Successes

Primary Employers Tasmania continues to assist its members on all workplace relations matters, tailoring advice and assistance to each inquiry. Activity from 1 January to 1 November 2023 includes:

103	Number of contracts prepared
14	Number of Individual Flexibility Agreements prepared for members
23	Licence to occupy agreements
16	Assisted terminations
2	Unfair dismissal matters in Fair Work Commission
528	Incoming phone calls from members
5,706	Total number of AgCard farm safety course enrolments

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- ✓ Online member-only access to Workplace Health and Safety manual valued at \$500
- ✓ Industry specific advocacy provided on behalf of members at Local, State and Federal Government levels
- ✓ Access to online members-only portal with the latest award information, contract templates and policy and procedures
- ✓ Invitations to industry specific on-farm events focused on global best practice
- ✓ Opportunity to apply for two \$5,000 scholarships each year to access training or attend industry conferences / events
- ✓ Regular News Bulletins ensuring all members have access to the latest relevant workplace information
- ✓ Exceptional value for money

**Primary Employers
Tasmania sincerely thanks
all members, partners and
supporters for their
ongoing commitment to
workplace best practice
across Tasmania's
agricultural industries**



Pic: Primary Employers Tasmania Member Jo Bradley



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