

AUSTRALIAN REGIONAL WOMENS CONVENTION
17TH - 19TH NOVEMBER 2008
REPORT FROM CRDC & WINCOTT SPONSORED POSITION
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Firstly, let me take this opportunity to thank Wincott and CRDC for awarding me this sponsorship to attend the convention down in Melbourne.

The convention organised by WTAA was held between the 17th and 19th of November at the Melbourne Town Hall. Around 380 delegates took part in the 3 day event. The convention was held to acknowledge the vital contribution of regional and rural women to all aspects of industry and business, and support and develop the flow of women into leadership roles.

There was a networking opportunity held on the 17th with opening drinks which saw a lot of ladies mingling and networking. Ladies seem to have come from all walks of life and from around the whole of Australia. All states were will represented which added diversity and a great networking challenge for me personally. It was great to meet so many positive women and I was glad that I had made the effort to encourage other women from my region to attend this convention.

It was an excellent opportunity for catching up with other women from the cotton industry as well. I feel that I have stronger ties with the women around the Northern growing regions of NSW from attending this convention.

The two-day event incorporated a range of topics, including nutrition and lifestyle, best practice models for networking, and developing and operating a successful regional business. Speakers were sourced from a range of industries, such as agriculture, local government, media, small business and politics, and came from as far afield as Mungindi, Antarctica, Sunshine Coast and Tasmania.

I particularly found interesting the Nutrition and Work/Life discussions. I have been amazed at what chemicals we have stored in food in our pantry. I enjoyed the Gala Dinner and was successful in being the winning bid on the Sam and Jenny Bailey, flight in Sam's Helicopter this cost us \$1500 which we are hoping to fundraise. When Sam receives his licence he will be the first quadriplegic to hold a pilots licence to fly a helicopter. The women from the Central Highlands delegation are going to use the flight as a community event and help raise awareness of Sam's story.

We are also going to organise schools to listen to Sam's and Jenny's story as a part of a self development projects for our local schools. It is hoped that one of the bigger outcomes from these up coming events will be that the community acknowledges the role that the Cotton growers and rural people have in this area as with a lot of other areas at the moment the mines are seen as the industry that is needed for a community to thrive.

Some areas of opportunity identified by the other Emerald delegates include ideas to improve healthy eating in local high schools, funding or scholarship grants for women taking on leadership roles, and familiarisation trips to increase the number of professional graduates willing to practice in rural areas. The need to ensure that the networks gained are not lost and that as a group of Central Highlands women we need to be committed to expanding the self development and leadership opportunity for women in our sector.

We are looking at re invigorating WINCOTT in the Central Highlands and expanding this to include other women from other industries including but not limited to Cattle, Grain farming, Mining, Health, Natural Resources sectors etc.

Below are some of the Positives and Negatives from the Convention.

Positives

- Diversity in women attending not just networking with ag industry
- Venue was excellent and central to lots of accommodation options
- Convention was well ran and had relevant information
- Convention conveners where helpful and followed up on requests
- Able to access people I wanted to talk to and learn from
- Guest speakers where both informative and entertaining as well as presenting information in ways that I could gain maximum learning out of. eg. visual, verbal and written
- Enjoyed being in the cool weather even if it was only for 3 days.

Negatives

- Cost involved in travelling, air fares are very dear from Emerald
- Stress family from me being away for 2 days its a pity that men didn't participate in it.
- Timing was really bad for me as a cotton grower