

OLD AGGIES

President: Frank Doughty, (02) 9481 8787, fdoughty@tpg.com.au
Secretary: Graham Linnegar, (02) 9527 1830, helgra@linnegarplumbing.com.au
Treasurer/Membership: Colin Short, (02) 9876 1018, cbshort@bigpond.com

Alstonville luncheon

15th September 2025, Cherry Street Sports Club. Contact Geoff Jacobs 0412 107 727 or gajacobs@bigpond.com

Armidale/Tamworth luncheon

May 2026, Bendemeer Hotel – contact Dr Barbara Vanselow 0434 344992 or bvanselo@gmail.com

Gosford luncheon

5th November 2025. Venue TBA. Contact Geoff Warr (02) 4342 3226 or 0411128 936 or warries509@gmail.com

Orange luncheon

8th October 2025, Best Western Ambassador Motel Orange. Contact Len Banks 0428459117 or banks@lmbanks.com.au

Wagga Wagga luncheon

May 2026, contact James Hamilton 0447 225 875 or jnch1950_1@bigpond.com

Subscriptions \$10 per annum now due

Subs can be paid by direct deposit into Commonwealth Bank BSB 062-263, Account No 00903542, Account Name Agricultural Retired Officers Association (please add your surname) or by cheque to Colin Short, 27 Chesterfield Road, Epping NSW 2121 or pay at your local luncheon.

From The Presidents Desk

At the 2025 AGM the following were reelected; Dr Frank Doughty (President), Graham Linnegar (Secretary), Col Short (Treasurer/Membership) and John Bowler (Newsletter Editor).

Unfortunately, Sydney luncheons have been cancelled due to falling numbers which have been dwindling over the last few years as reported July 2023 newsletter. Our luncheons continue to provide great friendships among our former work colleagues, many of whom are considered lifelong friends. Once again, I acknowledge the efforts of our regional coordinators.

I have just read the Breaking News in this week's Land Newspaper (31st July 2025) "Key Roles Facing Government Job Cuts" These cuts involve Dept of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and will no doubt have a vital impact on agriculture and regions. Wollongbar environmental laboratory is mentioned as well as a significant number of regional positions. 165 jobs to be slashed at DPIRD in a decision that the government says will enable it to 'work in a sustainable and responsible way' This reminded me of the voluntary redundancies of 1995/96.

Dr Frank Doughty - President

Further Government Staff Cuts

President Frank has highlighted the loss of 165 jobs from the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development but the situation is far more serious for government services in rural NSW.

In addition to the 165 Cuts to PIRD the NSW Government has also announced significant cuts to Transport, 950 jobs; TAFE, 950 jobs; and Water NSW, 350 jobs.

Although the locations of these cuts have not yet been determined the loss of these positions across the state will no doubt impact on our rural communities. All of these Departments have critical roles in the agricultural sector as well as to the viability of regional towns.

Community concerns over the lack of tradesmen in the building industry, access to public transport and rail infrastructure, management of water resources and ability to combat invasive pests and diseases are just some of the issues that generate political speak. We need to be confident that our elected representatives are aware of the implications of these proposed cuts.

Ex Department of Agriculture Staff Awarded in King's Birthday Honours

Two ex Department of Agriculture staff have been recognised in the Birthday Honours in widely different fields

David Peasley AM *For significant service to horticulture, particularly through the coffee, banana and passionfruit industries.*

David has made a great contribution to the tropical fruits industry in a number of roles based on his early work as District Horticulturalist at Murwillumbah. The citation highlights his work in the development of the coffee industry through his work as Chair of the Australian Coffee Industry R and D Advisory Committee.

His interest in Passionfruit began and developed on his own property near Murwillumbah where the constant problem of variety disease susceptibility required breeding and selection and screening of new varieties.

This led to his involvement in and contribution to the Australian Passionfruit R and D Committee and Board Member of Passionfruit Australia Inc. David's work in the banana industry covered much of the banana growing areas of NSW and Queensland and led to his roles in the NSW Banana Industry Committee, Australian Banana Biosecurity Risk Panel and Project Leader in the Horticultural R and D Corporation, National Banana Health Improvement Project.

David left the Department in 1995 and set up Peasley Horticultural Services where he continued his involvement in tropical fruits consultancies and co authored grower publications including the Australian Coffee Growers Manual, The Passionfruit Growers Guide as well as a number of submissions and reports for R and D corporations and Biosecurity Risk Assessments.

John Drinan AM *For significant service to the dairy and agriculture industries, to the environment and to the community.*

John commenced duty with the Department of Agriculture as a Livestock Research Officer at Trangie ARS in 1964 working on sheep genetics. After completing his Ph D with CSIRO he moved into education, first at Hawkesbury Agricultural College, College of Advanced Education as Head of Animal Production. He was then appointed Principal of CB Alexander Agricultural College from 1981 to 1987 before moving into various senior roles with the University of Newcastle until 2000.

John was totally committed to the rural industries of Australia and made a huge contribution to the oversight and management of a number of research and advisory committees including the Dairy Research Council, the Dairy Research and Development Corporation, the Australian Animal Health Laboratories Advisory Committee, the Australian Animal Welfare Advisory Strategy and Chair of the Committee of Chairs in the Rural Research and Development Corporations.

Moving back to his home property Wahgunyah at Glendon Brook in the Hunter Valley John became involved in the environmental issues in the Hunter through the local Catchment Management Authority, Landcare, Singleton Shire Healthy Environment Group and the Environmental Strategy and Action Plan.

This led John into the coal mining issues where he was a member of the Upper Hunter Mining Dialogue. With this background John took to writing and his book "The Sacrificial Valley – Coal's Legacy to the Hunter" is a masterful treatise on the impacts of the coal industry on the area. John's book was reviewed in the March 2023 issue of the Old Aggies Newsletter.

As well as these industry and research contributions John has been committed to the community through his work with Rotary International, various Progress Associations and the Catholic Church.

Biosecurity is for Everyone

Fire Ants pose a great threat

During a recent trip to Brisbane I was admiring a lovely native garden and the owner voiced her concerns over Fire ants, having experienced them in Brazil. I had been aware of the problem in South East Queensland for some time and arriving home saw reports that NSW had located the fourth incursion at Tweed Heads in July 2025.

For such a small insect Fire Ants are regarded as one of the worlds super pests and have huge potential to impact on our agricultural production, our social behavior and everyday lives.

Fire Ants are affecting nearly one million hectares in south east Queensland adjacent to the NSW border and movement restrictions are in place for the import and movement of high risk items in the area. The recent floods have highlighted their ability to form rafts and been carried to new areas in floodwaters

Fire Ants originated in South America and have already spread over most of the United States. In China they are spreading at the rate of about 80 Kilometers per year. They were first detected in Australia in 2001 and have been generally contained in the south east Queensland area so far.

Fire ants are dark reddish brown with a darker abdomen and vary in size from two to six mms long. Their nests are distinctive mounds of loose crumbly, or fluffy soil, up to 40 centimeters high with no obvious entry points.

Fire Ants can sting people pets and livestock and can do kill humans although thankfully no reported deaths in Australia so far. They can damage ecosystems beyond repair. Already in Queensland they have limited some sports and outdoor activities and movement restrictions have limited trade in at risk products.

As well as forming rafts in flood events they move in soil, hay and mulch, plants and machinery as well as Queen ant flights of up to several kilometers

Most of Australia is suitable habitat for fire ants and if they get out of control, estimates in excess of \$2 million of economic impact, cut agricultural production by up to 40 % and may cause over 650,000 medical visits per year.

The Invasive Species Council Regard Fire Ants as one of the worlds worst pests and in Australia could cause more damage both economically and to the environment than the combined impact of cane toads, rabbits, feral cats and foxes. They estimate that \$200m to \$300m will be requires for on going eradication. We need to lobby our politicians to ensure this pest will not take over our environment, our agricultural industries and lifestyles.

Most biosecurity breakdowns of insects like Fire ants are generally not wilful but a result of ignorance and carelessness such as borrowing farm machinery, taking garden plants

or hay or garden mulch. Please do the basic homework considering the risk to you, your family and the environment.

The NSW and Queensland Departments of Primary Industries web sites have more information. The Invasive Species Council and the ABC website also has excellent information and photographs.

Stop Press Outbreaks have been found at Morambah 1000 Kms north of the Control Zone and at Perth, demonstrating the danger from this dangerous pest insect.

John Bowler



Fire Ants forming rafts in flood waters – Invasive Species Council

Newsletter by Email

There has been significant increases in the cost of printing and postage of our Newsletter. Whilst there is no intention to stop printing and mailouts it would be of great benefit to increase the number of Newsletters sent out by email. There is an added benefit as many of the photographs are in colour in the email edition.

If you wish to change to the email edition could you please email the Editor or Treasurer

ikpbowler@bigpond.com or cbshort@bigpond.com

Thanks

Vale Emeritus Professor Francis Graham Swain AM 20th July 1933 – 23rd April 2025

Graham and his two brothers, Jim and Jerry, were born and raised on a dairy farm at Newrybar on the far North Coast of NSW. His early education was at Newrybar Primary School, a one teacher school and his secondary education was at Ballina High School. He rode his horse to the primary school each day and worked in the dairy before and after school. The ride to school on his horse had Swainie in the saddle and Jim on the back. He earned pocket money by selling poddy calves. A cricket pitch was constructed at the farm and this was the beginning of Swainie's cricket career.

On successfully completing the Leaving Certificate he then went to the Agriculture Faculty at Sydney University where he graduated with First Class Honours in 1956. His first job was as a Research Agronomist at Wollongbar Research Station. While in this position he won a Fullbright Scholarship to the University of Maryland USA and was awarded PhD in 1961. When he returned to Australia he went back to Wollongbar where he and I first met. He sponsored me into Apex. He and Del were neighbours in Lismore and have remained lifelong friends of my late wife, Beatrice and myself.

From 1966 to 1971 he held a research position at UNE Armidale. This was followed by a short period in 1971 as Dean of the Science Faculty at Riverina College Wagga Wagga.

Graham served as Principal of Hawkesbury Agricultural College from 1972 to 1988 and later as Deputy Vice Chancellor and CEO of the University of Western Sydney Hawkesbury from 1989 to 1993.

Following his retirement in July 1993, in recognition of more than two decades of service, the Hawkesbury Campus Library was renamed The Graham Swain Library. He was awarded an honorary degree of Doctors of Letters from the University of Western Sydney in 2000. In 2003 the F.G. Swain Award was established by the Hawkesbury Foundation to honour his distinguished service. This prestigious award continues to reward excellence in post graduate research at Hawkesbury Campus.

Emeritus Professor Swain's legacy is deeply woven into the University and the wider Hawkesbury community. He will not only be remembered for his vision and leadership but also for his kindness, generosity and enduring impact.

He was a life member of Hawkesbury Rotary and Hawkesbury Apex, Patron of Hawkesbury RSL, a member of Probus and a member of his beloved

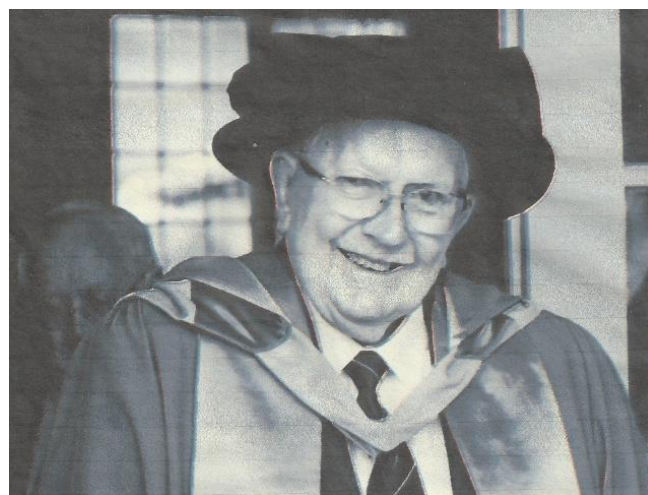
Hawkesbury Natos.

Our friendship endured to the point in later life where he began to introduce me as his 'honorary vet' to other people, including medical staff and whenever he was asked 'how are you Swainie?' his reply was 'old and buggered.'

On another occasion while on a houseboat on the Darling River, my late wife, Beatrice asked him what the title 'Emeritus' meant. Looking at her with a grin on his face, replied 'of no further bloody use.' Graham was a family man and family was certainly the centre of his life. He is survived by his wife, Delys, and four sons, Warren, Philip, Malcolm, David and their families.

With Swainie's passing I have lost a colleague, a mentor and a true friend.

Dr Frank Doughty OAM



Professor Graham Swain

Vale Bill O'Halloran PSM - 16/05/2025

Bill O'Halloran PSM sadly passed away on Friday afternoon 16 May, following a lengthy illness. Bill was a highly regarded district sheep and wool officer, serving the industry from offices in Gunnedah and Armidale. He became Sheepmeats Industry Leader and Chair of the Product Integrity Committee for Sheep Producers Australia, the national peak body representing Australia's 20,000 sheepmeat producers.

Among other activities, Bill was involved in developing the first Lamb Industry Strategic Plan and setting policy directions for the R&D activities of NSW Agriculture's sheepmeat team. He also developed a system for computerised lamb carcass ticketing and implementation of the NLIS (sheep and goats) as state project leader. Bill was an active member of NSW Farmers' Association and was a Ministerial appointment on the Board of the Northern Tablelands Local Land Service.

Col Begg

Vale George Slennett 13/08/1938 – 28/07/2025

George Slennett was one of nature's gentlemen - a kind, thoughtful, sensitive family man above all, with a deep commitment to NSW Agriculture and to the agricultural industries worldwide.

He had been a Livestock Officer (Poultry) at Seven Hills for many years, but by the mid 1980's, became the Director of Overseas Projects for the Department. In this capacity, he travelled with me for a month in 1988 to Indonesia, for the design of what became the AIDAB-funded Eastern Islands Veterinary Services Project.

We started and ended our trip in Jakarta, dealing with the senior officials in the Ministry of Agriculture's Directorate of Animal Health, and looping through Bali, Lombok, West and East Timor, and Flores. Here we met provincial officials and went out with local vets to see typical village livestock and hear about their animal health problems. George was fascinated by the livestock, especially the poultry, and the village living conditions. The hot Indonesian food was a bit of a challenge, especially at breakfast, and he was looking quite peaky by the end of the trip.

However, back in Jakarta, he came into his own with a major role in brainstorming the project framework with the senior Indonesians. His emphasis on planning cooperatively to achieve practical outcomes across the different provinces was a great contribution to the success of the project application. AIDAB approved \$1million/year for five years - a lot in 1989 when it started.

George made several further Indonesian visits during the course of the project, and was particularly focussed on the welfare of the families of the two vets who were living in Lombok and Kupang, as well as the overall administration of the project, juggling this with other overseas projects. His gentle, sensible reassurance was calming in many complex situations and helped these projects succeed.

When he retired, George continued enjoying spending time, especially yachting, with his family on the Central Coast for many years.

Helen Scott-Orr

I got to know George well when he was the Director of Overseas Projects. He was our lifeline to DPI when I was at Lechang in North Guangdong, the second project under the auspices of the NSW-Guangdong Sister State Relationship. He was exceptional in this role at solving problems with our living conditions and food supplies. He was patient in dealing with

our counterpart officials and was quite at ease at conversing through interpreters. He was a natural fit for this job.

As well as the long-term projects George facilitated technical exchanges, enabling NSW expertise in areas like pasture improvement, livestock management, and biosecurity to support overseas initiatives. This was instrumental in building NSW DPI's reputation as an international R&D provider, but also strengthened diplomatic and institutional ties. He kept us focused ensuring that the NSW-led programs abroad met both local needs and departmental standards.

He was passionate about sailing and gave me my first adventure in his boat at Gosford and would provide updates on his yachting achievements when he visited our China project.

David Michalk

George was also one of the long-standing members with the Matcham Holgate Rural Fire Service on the Central Coast. Never one to stand by, George held numerous positions in his over 40-year service, from Captain and fire front roles to administrative support and general mentoring to all members.

George was the consummate professional and the brigade and wider community benefited from George's tireless service. He was a friend and mentor to all, held in the highest regard.

Matcham Holgate RFS



George Slennett

Vale Lindsay Beer - 17/4/2025

I want to share the recent passing of Lindsay 'Jack' Beer on 17th April 2025, 86 years of age. Lindsay was one of the original Beefos so I would like to share some of his legacy.

Lindsay was survived by wife Agatha and leaves 5 children (Michael, Rowan, Nicole, Kim and Sam), 14 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. In early life he lived at Terry Hie Hie during WWII when Japan was threatening Sydney. This started his connection to the land. After attending a number of schools across Sydney and the Blue Mountains he completed his schooling at Canberra High School. Living at Land's End and Glengalla Station, Hall ACT he joined Young Farmers, competed at gymkhanas and started livestock showing and judging.

Lindsay received a bursary in 1955 from the Department of Agriculture to attend Wagga Agricultural College where he graduated in 1957 with a Diploma of Agriculture awarded for proficiency in horsemanship. His career with the Department of Agriculture was a significant part of his life appointed as a Field Assistant (beef cattle) to Leeton Experimental Farm in 1959 where he teamed up with colleagues including Phil Doyle. Promoted to Livestock Officer (Beef) in 1960, he was posted to the Northern Territory & Qld working on Scottish Australian Agricultural Company cattle stations for 2 years for practical training.

On return Lindsay was appointed to Trangie Research Station, managing the Angus cattle breeding program. He was an integral member of the original Beefos including those located at Trangie including Bob Freer. The mateship in this group was enduring and full of practical stockman. Lindsay was integral to establishing the beef performance scheme collecting data from herds around the state but always strong on phenotype to ensure the industry retained cattle that were functional.

As a commitment to family and early married life, he made the move back to Wagga Wagga into private enterprise with the Blake family-who owned Forest Hill Angus Stud

In 1968, the opportunity to return to Wagga Agricultural College (WAC), this time as a lecturer in his chosen field of beef cattle and horses was one not to be missed. This was transformative for the college in many ways. Establishing a Murray Grey Stud, expanding and commercialising the Arabian Horse Stud, initiating the first tertiary Equine study program in the country, inducting the first female students into the college and competing his Graduate Diploma in Rural Extension at Hawkesbury Ag College with Bob Gahan. He worked

with and mentored a number of Beefos at Wagga, Yanco, Tumut & Albury including Bill McKiernan, Brian Mansfield, Roy Hurst, Bob Gahan, Andrew Dunlop, Mac Elliot, Chris Callow, Brian Cumming and John Irwin. He conducted a number of in-service horse courses for Beef extension officers. Collaborations between Lindsay and Ben Andrews at Hawkesbury extended beyond teaching to supporting the development of live cattle and carcass assessment (ABCAS) initiating the terms for computer aided marketing.

Lindsay completed his term at Wagga after 15 years in 1983 to lead the Agriculture Science program at Canberra Grammar School, ACT. In 1988 it was time to chance his hand at private consultancy with key clients Gatenby Pastoral and assessing for CALM across the Riverina.

Lindsay returned to NSW Agriculture at Wagga Wagga in 1990 to lead the delivery of education and drought support programs in southern NSW. His experience and empathy for farmers was well respected and extended for over a decade until his retirement. He most enjoyed the intake of Trainees to the Beef branch around 1995 including Alastair Rayner, Jeff House, & Brett Littler as it reminded him of the traineeship he had also experienced and valued.

Lindsay relocated to the Central Coast in 2005 and settled at Broadlands, Green Point near Gosford. He returned to NSW DPI for the emergency response to Equine Influenza (horse flu) in 2007-8 positioned in the Hunter Valley connecting with his networks in the horse industry. In retirement he married Agatha and they enjoyed travel to central Australia and Europe.

Lindsay built a strong presence in the media, loved a crowd and was most at home with students in the lecture room. He mixed comfortably with political leaders, racing royalty, entrepreneurs, shearers and stock hands treating everyone the same. He taught and mentored thousands of agriculture students bringing to life a passion in rural life by sharing his knowledge and experience along the way.

For me it was following a similar career path that resulted in graduating from Wagga Ag College (1984) and joining the Beef Cattle branch at NSW Agriculture (1991) - the first father/son to do so. It opened many doors and networks, sometimes with expectations. I recall one time when I was introduced to an audience at a horse training demonstration in Sydney by the late Harry Harrison as the son of the greatest horseman he had ever seen or worked with.

Michael Beer.

Although this is a longer obituary than usual it does highlight many of the interactions with industry and the comradeships that existed in the early days of the department. I am grateful to Michael for this great history of Lindsay's role in the beef industry and Wagga Agricultural College. Ed

Vale Jim Crouch - 15/06/2025 in Wagga Wagga

Jim, was farm assistant at Wagga Agriculture Institute, working from 1989 to the mid 1990's.

Vale Maureen Maher. 17/04/2025 in Renmark.

Maureen worked at the Wagga Regional Veterinary Laboratory in the 1980's in the Brucellosis and TB program.

Vale Peter Slattery – 17/05/2025

Peter was a leading hand at Yanco Agriculture Institute.

Vale Roy Everett – 16/08/2025

Veterinary Officer, Armidale and Head Office, Orange
His daughter Clare recently gave me a copy of the eulogy she presented at the funeral. Obituary will be included in the next newsletter.

Tamworth/Armidale Luncheon

We had 11 attendees on 7 May 2025 on a beautiful New England autumn day at the Bendemeer Hotel on the Macdonald River.

Judy Kenny was a guest visiting Armidale from Newcastle. In the 1980s she had worked as a Technician at the NSW Govt Regional Vet Lab in Armidale (she was the photographer of our members).

I also received an email from Ted Wolfe who now lives in Wagga. During his career, he spent two periods employed in the NW area as an officer of the Department of Agriculture, the first in 1966-71 when he undertook PhD studies at UNE (bloat-safe pastures project) and the second in 1982-1990 when he was the Regional Director of Research, New England, Hunter and Metropolitan Region, head-quartered at Tamworth ARC.

Our venue, Bendemeer Hotel on the Macdonald River was the site of the release of baby Bell's turtles earlier this year. This is an amazing multi-agency project to protect the endangered species.

Again we would like to thank The Bendemeer Hotel for providing our venue and wonderful meals.

Barbara Vanselow



Clockwise from bottom left - John Ayres, Ian Collett, Gus Shaw, Bill Johns, John Hosking, Jan Hosking, Barbara Vanselow, Rod Browne, Bryan Johnston, and Mick Duncan

Department of Agriculture/Primary Industries Head Offices Over the Years

Bill Trimmer ex Horticulturalist and Research Station Manager sent me a photograph taken recently on what must have been a nostalgic trip to Sydney, Bill was photographed outside the lovely old sandstone building at Farrar Place. The sign above the door still reads Department of Agriculture, built in 1912 and designed by architect George McRae. The building has been sold by the NSW government and is now the Five Star Capella Hotel.

As I also started my career with an interview and induction at Farrar Place this prompted me to look at the various Head Offices of the Department over the years.

Initially the Department of Agriculture was created in 1890 as an off shoot of the Department of Mines. This was the first formal recognition of the need for the Departmental services although there had been considerable agitation over the preceding years for the establishment of "Model Farms" around the state. I believe that the first Office for the newly appointed Director of Agriculture, Dr H C L Anderson, was with the Department of Mines and located in the Chief Secretaries Building in Macquarie Street, but I have not been able to confirm this location.

The Department of Agriculture became a separate Department in 1907 and in 1912 and moved to the newly constructed building in Farrar Place. Head Office remained there until 1968 when it was moved to the State Office Block in Phillip Street, colloquially known as the Black Stump. I remember it as a very basic structure with the main attribute being opposite the Royal Botanic Gardens – ideally located

for a lunch time walk.

Space was becoming scarce and Plant Industries and Horticulture were moved to the Union Carbide Building in Liverpool Street in 1975

However all sections of the Department were, once again, brought together in 1978 when the Head Office was moved to the McKell Building in Rawson Place opposite Central Railway, a building shared with the Department of Health.

In 1991 as a decentralisation initiative headed by Hon Ian Armstrong and Director -General Dr Kevin Sheridan Head Office moved to a new purpose-built facility in Kite Street at Orange some 240 Kilometres west of Sydney. This building provided great facilities until about 2010 when the amalgamation of a number of Departments and Government organisations again put pressure on space and planning for a new building commenced. The Kite St building is now occupied by UGL Regional, previously Rail Track Australia and Services Australia with Centrelink, Medicare, Child Support, Ged Care and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In 2020 the larger Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development moved to another purpose built office again in Orange on the site of the old Orange Base Hospital in Prince Street. This building was officially named the Ian Armstrong Building in recognition of Ian's efforts in decentralisation and his role as Minister for Agriculture.

As well as Primary Industries and Regional Development there has been further amalgamations with staff providing administrative services for a number of other Government Departments.

Shared Services functions are now centralized within Department of Customer Service and continues to service Primary Industries and Regional Development along with several other topline agencies including Department of Communities and Justice, Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure and Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.



Bill Trimmer at the Department of Agriculture Building in Farrer Place, Sydney.

Piggery Branch

Bill Kirsop dropped in a photograph the other day of a Pig Officers Conference held back in 1983. It would be appreciated if one of these Old Aggies could write up a history of the Branch when it was operating as a production unit before corporate agriculture reduced the need for this support. I trust we have all the names correctly identified.



From left to right Paul Hassab, Phil Mort, Bruce Dirks, Ellen Howard, Dick Hollows, Doug McKie, Graeme Taylor, Carol Watson, Gordon Wright, Greg Roesse, David Paton, Bill Kirsop, David Fuller