

SE news
HD **Young rural minds descend on Goondiwindi**
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MORE than 150 young farmers, agronomists, and curious young rural minds descended on Goondiwindi for the GEN XYForum last week.

It was hosted by NAB Agribusiness, Insight **Business** and Financial Services, Queensland Cotton and Objective Livestock Marketing.

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Guest speakers were Andrew Jurgs from Philp Brodie Grains, Tim Wilson of Blue Sky Investments and Denis Wagner of Wagners, Toowoomba.

The Gen XY forum, now in its fourth year, is intended to empower young stakeholders involved in the Australian agricultural sector with skills they can use to run a **business** or farm successfully.

"Gen XYs" are typically known as an ambitious, sometimes "entitled" generations armed with technology and diversity - a generation which is globally connected and inundated with information like never before.

The first speaker, relatively young for his experienced and well-travelled career, was Andrew Jurgs, Regional Trading Manager of Philp Brodie Grains.

He spoke about markets in general and not just crops.

His message: Markets can be very volatile and very cruel," and that both the International and domestic markets can be a "fluctuating beast"

His key points: 1) Stay in touch with the markets through a trader or adviser 2) make sure one of your buyers is a major 3) Know your counter party.

The second speaker Tim Wilson of Blue Sky Investments was present to introduce the room to "alternatives", or alternative investments and, in particular, private **equity**.

Blue Sky manages \$700m worth of assets, which Tim attributes to "hard work".

Blue Sky has offices throughout Australia and even an office in New York.

Working with brands such as Lenard's Chicken and Viking Rentals it assists with venture capital for **business** such a **Milk**, the skincare **company** founded by Lindy and Michael Klim.

" The one area that is absolutely a key component, and the most advanced trading market in the world is water," Tim said.

He pointed out alternatives and outlets to traditional investments and ways of thinking.

The crowd was keen to hear from the final speaker Denis Wagner, one of the four Wagner brothers partnered in the Wagners **business** which bases operations out of Toowoomba and is responsible for the new airport now nearing completion.

Wagners work within many industries which use cement, composite fibre technologies, transport, earth friendly concrete, aviation and reinforced steel, not only in Australia, but globally.

It has a division based in Kuala Lumpur, with staff working on projects as far afield as Russia.

The new aerodrome **site** in Toowoomba, Wellcamp Downs, was **purchased** by Wagners in 1994. From 1996 it was used as a quarry.

The airport is merely one aspect of a Wellcamp **Business Park**, a "**business** hub" for Toowoomba and regional Queensland.

But there were roadblocks, the main one was "isolation".

"We very quickly formed the view, unless we could solve the connectivity issue for Toowoomba, we were unlikely to gain any traction for our **business park**," Mr Wagner said..

In April 2012 the four brothers made the decision to build the airport which involved rezoning 300 hectares of the **site**.

"From an investment perspective there was no real view within Wagners that the airport would generate allot of income. The original investment decision was made around the fact that the airport would increase the value of the **business park**, through connectivity."

The airport is unique for many reasons.

All the heavy construction materials including 9.6million tonnes of rock have all been sourced from on-**site**. All airport foundations, and gravel for asphalt have also been sourced on **site**.

Wellcamp is the first public airport to be built in Australia with absolutely no public funding.

The Wellcamp Runway is 2.87 kilometres long and 45 metres wide.

"(It's) wide enough and long enough for a jumbo jet to leave Wellcamp fully loaded and get to northern ports in **China** which is very important from a freight perspective," Mr Wagner said.

Qantas will begin flying passengers out of Wellcamp to Sydney on November 17 , with routes to Perth and Melbourne as well as regional centres added when deemed necessary.

With Wagners expecting to have half a **million** passengers in the first 12 months, the effect on the local Toowoomba economy is expected to be significant.

"What Wellcamp will give our agriculture producers is an alternative to the two major supermarket chains Coles and Woolworths," Mr Wagner said.

He also believes that Wellcamp has the potential to change the landscape of the local agriculture sector, given that a plane can be loaded with cold stores and arrive in Singapore seven hours later.

Not all have agreed, with the airport attracting national media attention, and speculation, especially from radio 2GB "shock jock" Alan Jones.

Wagners hit back with John Wagner calling Jones a "loud-mouthed ignoramus".

There was no criticism from audience members.

"It was inspiring for the audience to hear how you can execute a new **business** idea or project head on, instead of shelving it with a fear of failure.

"Wagners have certainly seized an opportunity and the benefit to our community will be vast," said NAB Agribusiness Manager Sarah Short.

The common message that could be heard from all three speakers was success can be gained from managed risk and successful marketing within the agricultural sector.

"If you want to grow the best quality product in the world, you are only - of the way there, marketing is essential," Andrew Jurgs said.

One of the event organisers, Sarah says the team is "looking forward to hosting future Gen XY events to continually upskill the next generation.

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