

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: PR00820

Johnson, Lyn

(1940 -)

Born 16 October, 1940, Yarraville Victoria Australia

Occupation Cheesemaker, Dairy Farmer, Rural leader, Women in Agriculture Movement

Summary

Lyn Johnson, in partnership with her husband Rob, was a dairy farmer in Gippsland in Victoria. Together they planned and led study tours for dairy farmers to the USA, Canada, the UK and Europe, starting the Tarago River Cheese Company on their return. The successful organisation and activism of American rural women inspired Lyn's own active commitment to the movement, and to women at the grass roots level in particular. Her work to have women's role in agriculture acknowledged, and their voice heard, has included involvement in the organisation of the First International Women in Agriculture Conference, and the Women on Farms Gatherings.

Details

As a city girl who married into a dairy farming family, Lyn Johnson was active from the beginning in the industry itself. In the late 70s and early 80s she helped organise, and attended, industry discussion groups, led study tours, and in 1983 became a director in their family's expansion into cheese-making: the Tarago River Cheese Company. Her trips to America had opened her eyes to the activism of American women, who had their own organisations, knew their industries intimately, and were involved in successful and ongoing lobbying in Washington. Her activism also had its roots in the 1979 conference 'The Woman in Country Australia Looks Ahead', convened by Brian Clarke of McMillan Rural Studies Centre in Warragul, and held at La Trobe University. Lyn attended the 1980 American Agri-Women's Convention in Pennsylvania. On her return, she was a primary organiser of the Women On Farms: Expanding Their Sphere of Influence Conference at Melbourne University (1980), which had the aim of recognising the skills, influence and involvement that farming women already had.

Lyn was a founding committee member of the Australian Women in Agriculture peak body, and an organiser of the ground breaking First International Women in Agriculture Conference, playing a key role in greeting the women coming from overseas. She has been involved with the Women on Farms Gatherings from the beginning, is one of three women who have attended every Gathering since their inception, and was a committee member of the 1999 and 2009 Gatherings at Warragul. She is a member of Museum Victoria's Women on Farms Gatherings Heritage Group, representing the Warragul Gatherings. Lyn is motivated by her belief in women 'doing it for themselves', in 'flat' rather than hierarchical organisations – a shared value of the Women in Agriculture organisations – and in the grass-roots abilities that women already have.

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

'Australian Women in Agriculture Speaker Profiles: Lyn Johnson', The Regional Institute,
<http://www.regional.org.au/au/awia/speakers/p-16.htm>

Conference Paper

Partners in a Value Added Product, Cheese to Infinity...', Johnson, Lyn, 2001,
<http://www.regional.org.au/au/awia/papers/johnson.htm>

Site Exhibition

Brilliant Ideas and Huge Visions: ABC Radio Australian Rural Women of the Year - 1994-1997, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2011,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/rwya/rwya-home.html>

Archival resources

Melbourne Museum

Catherine McLennan with Lyn Johnson (Interview)

Women on Farms Gathering Heritage Collection

Private Hands (these records may not be readily available)

Making Rural Women Visible: A "Living" History of the Victorian Women on Farms Gathering (WOFG) Community

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

Papers of Mary Salce, 1976-2007 [manuscript]

Author Details

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