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2009 SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORTERS

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Friday 10 October 2008

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10AM, FRIDAY 10 OCTOBER 2008

Nuffield scholarship for Longford's Robert Bradley

Robert Bradley, from Longford, Tasmania, will tonight be awarded Australia's leading farming scholarship, a Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship.

Mr Bradley is one of only 16 Australians to receive a 2009 Nuffield Scholarship. He will be presented with his award tonight at the Innovation in Australian Farming awards dinner in Hobart, part of the six-day Nuffield Australia Spring Tour being held in Tasmania.

Nuffield Farming Scholarships, each worth \$26,000, give young Australian farmers the opportunity to travel internationally and explore agricultural issues and opportunities in a global context. There are about 1300 Nuffield scholars worldwide.

Mr Bradley's Nuffield Farming scholarship is sponsored by leading international food and agribusiness bank, Rabobank. A supporter of the Nuffield Scholarships for 11 years, Rabobank sees the Nuffield scholarship as a wonderful opportunity for outstanding Australian farmers to raise their horizons and pursue their research initiatives on a global scale.

Mr Bradley will use his scholarship, to investigate how pastures and livestock can be better integrated into an irrigated cropping system to improve farm profitability and sustainability. He will study the rotation of crops and pastures and the different species, cultivation and management techniques and crop options to improve soil structure and productivity.

Robert and his wife, Jo, are in partnership with Jo's brothers and farm four properties south of Launceston. They have 1000 hectares irrigated under centre pivots and more than 2000 hectares of dryland crops and improved pasture. Their diverse enterprise includes dryland wheat, barley and canola, with irrigated onions, poppies, processing peas and beans, wheat and lucerne. They also have a share milker with a 400-head dairy herd, and 2800 crossbred ewes for prime lamb production.

"I can see a gradual decline in the yields from our irrigated cropping areas and the soil is in structural decline," Mr Bradley says. "The system is still profitable but it's heading in the wrong direction.

"I want to study how the pasture and livestock phases of a farm rotation system can be used to improve the sustainability of irrigated cropping and horticultural production. As costs rise, we also need to make the system less dependent on external inputs, using pasture to control disease weeds and aid the nutrient cycles."

Nuffield Australia CEO Mr Jim Geltch says many Nuffield Scholars go on to become active leaders in agriculture and the community, and sharing their research findings is an important part of the scholarship program. "For many, the scholarship experience changes their lives by opening their eyes to the wider world and giving them the confidence to pursue their goals," Mr Geltch says.

The 16 2009 Australian Nuffield Scholars will leave Australia in either February or June 2009 for a compulsory Global Focus Program. This will involve travel to China, North America, South America and Europe investigating agricultural marketing and trade issues, environmental issues and experiencing the different social and cultural aspects of each region.

Following the initial six-week program, the scholars will go their individual ways to pursue specific study programs in the country or countries of their choice. Mr Bradley hopes to travel to New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the USA and northern Europe on his individual tour.

Rabobank looks forward to further building and strengthening its relationship with Nuffield Australia, as its scholarship program continues to contribute so meaningfully to Australian agriculture.

More information:

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A photograph of Mr Bradley can be downloaded from the link www.coretext.com.au/communications_images.php