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2009 SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORTERS

Australian Wool Innovation	Impact Fertilisers
Fisheries Research and Development Corporation	Landmark
Estates of the late RC and EC Cappur Webb	Macquarie Agricultural Services
Geoffrey Gardiner Dairy Foundation	Meat & Livestock Australia
Grain Growers Association	Rabobank
Grains Research and Development Corporation	Rural Finance Corporation
Kondinin Group	Sidney Myer Fund

Friday 10 October 2008

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10AM, FRIDAY 10 OCTOBER 2008

Nuffield scholarship for Kojonup wool grower

Wool grower David Cussons from Kojonup, Western Australia, will tonight be awarded Australia's leading farming scholarship, a Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship.

Mr Cussons 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 Cussons will use his scholarship, sponsored by Australian Wool Innovation, to investigate how agricultural industries manage public perceptions of farmers and agriculture in the media.

He will study the communication strategies used during a number of international agricultural crises, including Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE, or Mad Cow Disease), foot and mouth disease, equine influenza and Australian sheep mulesing practices.

David manages his family's mixed wool and cropping property in southern WA with his wife, Kelly, and his parents. The 1000 hectare property runs 2400 Merino ewes for wool and prime lamb production, with 270 hectares of winter cereal production.

"It is apparent to me that the public perception of agriculture is currently poor, due to a string of recent high profile incidents domestically and internationally," Mr Cussons says.

"I would like to investigate the lines of communication between farmers, lobby groups, government and the public, with a particular focus on the public relations strategies agricultural industries use.

"I hope to develop some guidelines and strategies for proactive communication so that we can better promote our industry, instead of constantly trying to put out 'spotfires' when a crisis erupts."

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 Cussons hopes to travel to the US, United Kingdom, Sweden and Japan on his individual tour.

More information:

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A high-resolution photograph of Mr Cussons can be downloaded from the link www.coretext.com.au/communications_images.php