

PO Box 586 Moama 2731  
T +61 (0)3 5480 0755 F +61 (0)3 5480 0233  
E [enquiries@nuffield.com.au](mailto:enquiries@nuffield.com.au) W [www.nuffield.com.au](http://www.nuffield.com.au)  
A.B.N. 33 092 327 396

**2009 SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORTERS**

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Friday 10 October 2008

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 10AM, FRIDAY 10 OCTOBER 2008**

## Nuffield scholarship for Ranelagh orchardist

Fruit grower Thomas Frankcomb from Ranelagh, Tasmania, will tonight be awarded Australia's leading farming scholarship, a Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship.

Mr Frankcomb 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 Frankcomb will use his scholarship, sponsored by Impact Fertilisers, to investigate hop production with minimal chemical use for 'environmentally aware' sectors in the brewing industry.

Mr Frankcomb runs an apple and cherry orchard as a family business in partnership with his wife, Ruth. They grow 50 hectares of apples in the Huon Valley and operate contract storage and packing facilities for both cherries and apples, employing up to 150 people at peak times.

With hop production facilities on their property currently unused, Mr Frankcomb plans to study new dwarf hop varieties and the latest production techniques, including trellis systems that allow hops to be harvested with equipment similar to berry fruit harvesters.

"World hop stocks have been eroded over the past few years as a result of low prices, and reduced plantings, although demand has continued to grow – by as much as 12 per cent in the 'craft' brewing market," he says.

"I think a dwarf hop system has the potential to fit into the Australian industry, as it may allow the only major pest for this crop in Australia to be better controlled with an integrated pest management system, using fewer chemicals.

"This is an opportunity for Australia to rebuild hop production and to provide a 'cleaner' product, in response to concerns from brewers about chemical residues."

Nuffield Australia CEO Mr Jim Geltch says many Nuffield Scholars go on to become active leaders in agriculture and the community, and sharing the findings of their research 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 Frankcomb hopes to travel to the US, England and Germany on his individual tour.

**More information:**

Thomas Frankcomb, T 03 6264 1020, M 0413 542 052, E [thomas.taf@bigpond.com](mailto:thomas.taf@bigpond.com)  
Nuffield CEO Jim Geltch T 03 5480 0755 M 0412 696 076, E [jimgeltch@nuffield.com.au](mailto:jimgeltch@nuffield.com.au)

A high-resolution photograph of Mr Frankcomb can be downloaded from the link [www.coretext.com.au/communications\\_images.php](http://www.coretext.com.au/communications_images.php)