

TEPAP 2012

Since safely arriving back in Australia and back to work at the farm I have gained a further appreciation of the opportunities that lie in the local area where we currently farm after attending The Executive Program for Agricultural Producers (TEPAP). I was extremely fortunate to be able to attend this seminar with 70 other farming colleagues from Canada, the USA and Argentina. Each day we had intensive seminars from world leaders in personnel management, macroeconomics, business management, succession planning, financial planning and management, and managing relationships with neighbours and landlords.

We typically started our days at 630am mixing with farmers and agribusiness professionals from all over North America who manage small, medium, large, corporate and multinational businesses from a variety of viewpoints, backgrounds and commodity production enterprises. Through the morning's we had three sessions before lunch followed by four sessions in the afternoon and then a further session each evening where the presenter's would be available for a further seminar of questions and answers from the entire group.

Through the week as we gained a closer understanding of our fellow colleague's background's businesses' and interest's, the learning's from each other grew each day and I have formed friendships and future business relationships that I will nurture in the year's to come.

I have returned home with an action plan to educate my colleagues and to implement strategies to strengthen and grow our business in an economically safe manner over the coming year and year's.

Coming from a background in agronomy and crop management I identified financial and business management as a significant knowledge gap and that I could gain significantly from a course such as TEPAP.

As TEPAP runs two units concurrently (that is unit I is the first year unit and unit II is the second year unit) you get the ability to meet and network with producers who have completed unit I as well as producers who are starting on Unit I.

Going into unit I there is a large focus on "metrics" or financial ratio analysis which is relevant however can be hard to follow due to differences in definitions between Australia and the USA. I would recommend going over the pre-conference exercises with your accountant or banker before attending to get the most out of this part of the course.

There are many fantastic principles that are explained by the guest lecturers that leave a lasting impression with the presentation styles amongst the best I have experienced. Some of the key areas I found of interest were:

A focus on succession planning and how to plan and prepare for business transfer between generations with a focus on successful communication and how to see the issues from each generation's point of view.

The topic of employee selection, management and reward was covered, a key pillar of this came back to the business owners having a clear set of goals and a plan for the business before bringing in employees.

Many of the themes came back to the need to run our businesses in a more professional manner and to be open in communicating goals, aspirations and plans for the business with both on-farm and off-farm stakeholders. Once a functional

structure is in place various tools can be used more effectively to manage growth and to protect vulnerability for continued growth.

Global economic issues were also covered and scenarios regarding the EU financial situation, energy prices, market volatility and how the political climate in North America is affecting farm businesses.

While there was a focus of attendees from the USA there was one attendee who farms in Argentina and several producers from Canada who also found the week productive and informative.

I would like to thank my parents who managed a significant workload in my absence and who assisted and encouraged my attendance at TEPAP and the support of my wife. I would also like to acknowledge the generous financial support from Lorna and Bert Kelly's family, Grain Growers and the Moira Shire Council, this assistance made the experience possible.

Sincerely
Evan Ryan
Australian Nuffield Scholar



The Lecture theatre at Barton Creek