

Campus Columns

External Studies Postgraduate Program Residential Workshop

The College conducted its first Postgraduate residential workshop for students enrolled in Contemporary Managerial Issues in Agriculture and Agribusiness, in April this year. The workshop ran for two days over the weekend of the 16th and 17th and was attended by around twenty postgraduate and undergraduate students as well as academic staff, invited speakers and others.

The workshop was divided into four themes:

- National and International Issues in Agriculture
- Rural Communities
- Climate
- Food and Ethics

As the name of the unit implies, the topics debated were contemporary and controversial. They included, among others, animal ethics and welfare, water policy, climate change, sustainable rural communities and health, global food and trade policy and alternative food production systems.

The invited speakers included Professor Tim Reeves (former Director General of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre, Mexico and Adjunct Professor, Deakin University and Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne), Associate Professor Susan Brumby (Director, National Centre for Farmer Health), Dr Sarah Chaplin (National Centre for Dairy Education Australia), Fiona Chambers (Lecturer, Marcus Oldham College and organic pork producer), Roger Wrigley (Principal, Wrigley and Dillon water engineering consultants) and Dennis Hoilberg (RimFire Resources).

The invited speakers introduced the key issues around their topics then the floor was opened for discussion, although most of those in attendance couldn't wait till the speakers were finished before expressing their perspectives and challenging those of the speakers. The debate was robust and represented the broad spectrum of participants in the Program. It was interesting when such a diverse group comes together how well considered their views are and how prepared people are to listen to the views of others.

The objective of the workshop was to give students a chance to develop some well informed bases for their views and to test those views against the opinions of others. While the objective was not necessarily to change participants' beliefs many of those in attendance did develop sounder arguments for their views, and opinions were changed on the basis of the facts and perspectives presented.

