

Celebrating farms through the lens

DANIELLE GRINDLAY

PHOTOS depicting farm life in Pakistan, India, England and all states of Australia will be on display at the Hamilton Art Gallery from tomorrow, as part of the National Centre for Farmer Health competition.

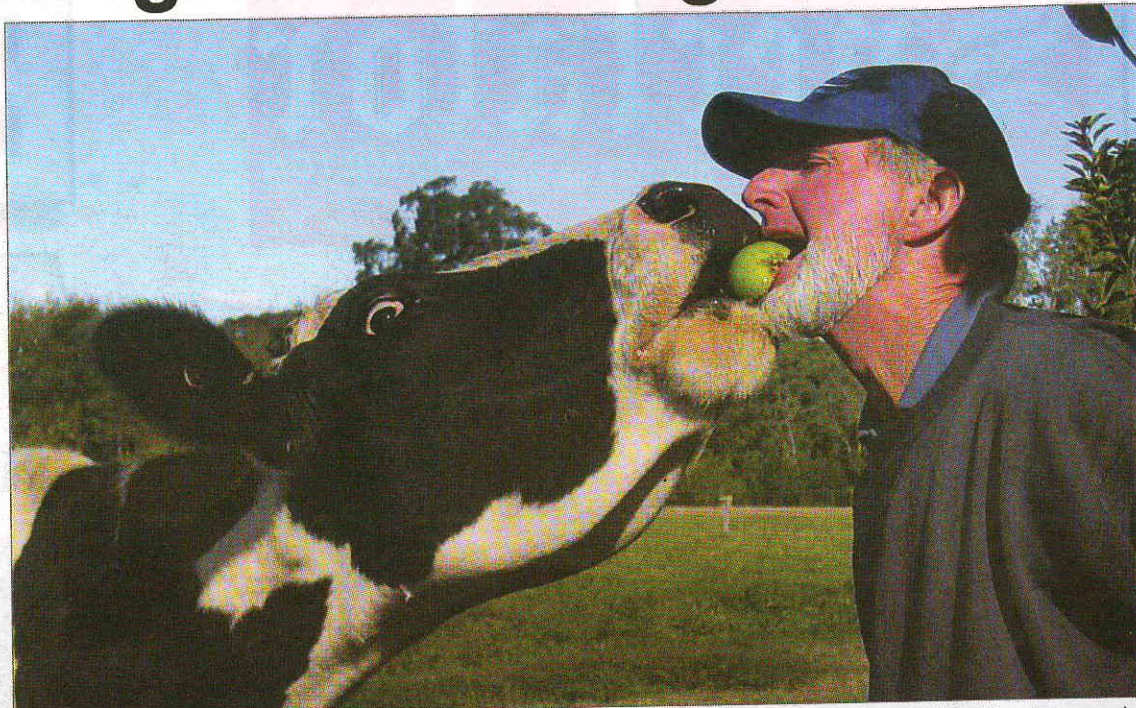
The 'In Focus - Celebrating Farm Life' competition called on photographers of all ages to capture the magic of agriculture, as part of the centre's second biennial conference.

Organisers received 250 images for the inaugural competition, in 2010; this year, there were 675.

"We had no idea it would be so huge or that people from overseas would enter," event co-ordinator, Felicity Little said.

"We're amazed by what a wonderful celebration of rurality has been submitted; it's evidence that we all have dirt in our veins."

The entries will also be printed in a photo book, with themes of safe farming practices, the



LOVING 'the dirty life'... Tracey Harper's entry in the 2010 National Centre for Farmer Health photography competition. SUPPLIED

future of farming, droughts and flooding rains, among others.

Travel photographer of the year, Ewen Bell, will join renowned photographer, David Fletcher and local talent, Jill Frawley, in selecting winners in each category, to be announced

at the conference welcome reception on September 17, at 6.30pm.

The community can vote for the 'people's choice' award at the gallery or on the first night of the conference.

Without funding, this year's conference is likely

to be the centre's last, but director Sue Brumby said it would be an opportunity to showcase all of the work staff members had done in research and breakthroughs in the health, wellbeing and safety of farming families.

"As the Year of the

Farmer comes to a close and Australia looks to feed more people, it seems more timely than ever to recognise our farmers, celebrate the diverse experience of farm life and make 2012 the start of the 'century of the farmer'," she said.

New co-ordinator to progress business

DANIELLE GRINDLAY

NEGATIVE perceptions of Hamilton business could be the only thing holding the town back, according to local traders.

The Hamilton Regional Business Association (HRBA) has appointed administration co-ordinator, Jane Barrie, to ignite Hamilton's growth, by liaising with business owners and building confidence from within.

Ms Barrie will meet with members to seek feedback on individual issues and develop partnership-based strategies to move the town forward as a united force.

"When you talk negativity all the time, it becomes self-perpetuating," President Hugh Macdonald said.

"What we want is to galvanise the local business community and work as one to make Hamilton a really good place to shop."

Mr Macdonald said the association had built its reputation up enough to take control of the towns' reins.

"Instead of the shire running campaigns, HRBA will run the campaigns and the business people

even on the agenda.

"We've built up that reputation now, which is very important."

Mr Macdonald said a solid business community would help to draw in funding from all levels of government, for events and group initiatives.

"If the government has a sense that the community is working as one, the possibility of all manner of funding is increased," he said.

Treva Bargain Emporium owner, Wendy Middleton, broke ties with the association a few years ago because there was not enough focus on retail.

But a renewed faith in its role has prompted her return.

"There are a lot of amazing female retailers in town and we do chat between ourselves, but there hasn't been anyone with enough time at HRBA to listen," Ms Middleton said.

"They do seem to be heading in the right direction now and retail does need a little bit more of that direction.

"With Jane coming on board, we will have a face to talk to."



POSITIVE outlook ... HRBA Administration co-ordinator, Jane Barrie, will meet with business owners to discuss their hopes and concerns for the future of Hamilton. 120827ah01

and people don't realise the number of tourists coming through Hamilton," she said.

Treva stores in Horsham and Narracoorte have seen a slow decline in sales of late, but the local store has continued to thrive.

"We're the only one that's doing quite well at the moment," Ms Middleton said.

"You've got to look at the

and Hamilton is doing really well, considering."

But Ms Middleton said a successful business came down to a successful town, and retailers needed to work together to provide a strip worth stopping for.

"Even though we're in direct competition with each other, we send people to other stores," she said.

"We do need to feed off each other to make it work."

With retail programs a possibility for the future, the new co-ordinator's first step will be to meet with retailers for guidance and ideas.

A Hamilton-born mother-of-two, Ms Barrie's skill-set comes from a background in event co-ordination and human resources.

"I know the area and I know the struggles businesses face in a rural community," she said.

"As a group you can get a lot more done than you can as individuals and I'll be developing a network, developing accessibility to me and building a rapport.

"We have some great shops and we just need to support them and