

'What's driving your pasture' theme for annual conference

'WHAT'S driving your pasture business' is the theme of the 2014 Grassland Society of Southern Australia annual conference in Ballarat this week.

The conference is the society's major event for the year and will be held at the Ballarat Lodge from June 17-19.

Conference presentations start tomorrow and will cover pasture productivity and livestock management drivers.

Conference participants can also take part in bus tours to inspect major trials at PGG Wrightson's research farm at Leigh Creek and soil cleaning facility at Smeaton and a nearby dairy farm and daisy farm.

A delegate's breakfast on Thursday will include a presentation from Head of Agronomy Solutions at Incitec Pivot Fertilisers, Phil Houlton,

'How the soil test process works from paddock to paper'.

Presentations on Thursday include topics related to financial performance drivers, and enhancing on-farm efficiencies. The National Centre for Farmer Health will also present on "Looking after the farmer".

At the conference dinner on the Wednesday evening, recently elected Queensland senator Matthew Canavan, will be guest speaker. Mr Canavan previously worked for Barnaby Joyce and is an agricultural focused economist.

Grassland Society president Marney Jones said the conference would be of great interest to farmers, rural consultants, agronomists, scientists and others interested in cutting-edge information on grazing enterprises and pasture production.

The society's annual conference

was last held in Ballarat in 2005. The annual general meeting will be held during the conference.

The society is Australia's peak farmer organisation dedicated to the transfer of information and technology related to temperate grasslands. Formed in 1959, it has branches in South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and southern NSW.

Along with guest speakers and presentations and tours of local farms and research sites, the conference will also feature a comprehensive trade display area with a wide range of exhibitors to cater to producers.

It is the society's 55th annual conference.

Enquiries can be directed to the Grasslands Society of Southern Australia's email address office@grasslands.org.au

Government seeks views on pokies

THE State Government will seek western Victoria community and industry views on whether to extend the current 10 year duration of club and hotel electronic gaming machine (EGM) entitlements.

Treasurer Michael O'Brien and Minister for Liquor and Gaming Regulation Edward O'Donohue have released an issues paper, outlining possible options and seeking input from the community and the industry.

Victoria's hotels and clubs have stated that the current entitlement term of 10 years creates significant difficulties in terms of financing capital investments, including building renovations, that extend beyond the current entitlement term.

Consequently, peak bodies including Clubs Victoria, the Returned and Services League (Victoria) and the Australian Hotels Association (Victoria) have requested that the government consider

extending the duration of entitlements.

Hamilton has two pokies venues – Alexandra House Sports Club and The Grand Central Hotel.

Mr O'Brien said any consideration of entitlement terms must be consistent with existing regulatory arrangements, including the statewide 27,500 cap on EGMs in pubs and clubs, and consistent with the Coalition Government's policies relating to responsible gambling.

"The Victorian Government, as the issuer of the gaming machine

entitlements, has a responsibility to support responsible gambling while also ensuring that the hotels and clubs that hold these entitlements operate in a suitable regulatory framework," he said.

"The first phase of this process is the release of the Gaming Machine Entitlement Term Issues Paper, and we now invite public submissions to this review.

The issues paper presents a number of different options, including maintaining the current 10-year term.

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Cattle numbers rise

CATTLE numbers increased considerably in Hamilton on Friday, with a total of 407 head yarded

735, 140, \$1029. Heifers: C. & J. Frawley, Branholme, bfd 575 155 \$891 25. LW & MP Whyte, Wallacedale