

2006

"J.A. Sutherland Award"

Congratulations

Robyn O'Leary
Finley High School

i. Criteria for Award:

- ^ The award is presented to an Agriculture teacher who is judged to have made a significant contribution to the teaching of Agriculture.
- ^ The recipient is a member of the NSW Association of Agriculture Teachers

ii. Presentation:

- ^ The J.A. Sutherland Award was presented to Robyn at the conference dinner on 27th April by members present at the NSWAAAT Bi-Annual Conference at Wagga Wagga.

Citation: Robyn O'Leary

- o Attended Wagga Wagga Public School and then Wagga Wagga High School.
- o Attended Riverina Institute of Higher Education/Charles Sturt University 1983 -1986 completing Diploma of Applied Science (Agriculture) and Diploma of Education.
- o Appointed Finley High School 1987 and been there ever since.
- o Married Michael 1989, who is now Head Teacher Science. They have four children. Robyn had some time off to have and care for the children. Ended up resigning when she found out that twins were on the way. Back at work quicker than expected to fill a long term void left by a science teacher on sick leave and not enough casual staff.
- o Returned to teaching and was asked to undertake Primary Industries training by the Principal. Currently has 0.8 permanent part-time status.
- o FHS now has record numbers of students studying Agriculture/Primary Industries. The school population is 525 and there are 60 Yr 9 Ag students, 59 Year 10 Ag students and 18 Year 11/12 students. Agriculture is now seen as a draw card for FHS. All students are catered for no matter what their ability. This phenomenal increase has come about due to the huge amount of work that goes into providing the students with quality education and real life situation experiences. Students often go on to work in the industry or undertake further education at University or TAFE.
- o Individual needs of students have been catered for through the development of individual programs, such as extension courses to allow interests and skills to be developed and formally recognised. Robyn has had to spend many hours of her own time liaising for the course to run, writing the course and assessing the student.
- o Robyn has been an outstanding contributor to the School Based Traineeship program. Over the last 4 years there have been 12 trainees. 11 of these trainees have been awarded the Kids Start Farms scholarship.
- o Students are encouraged to think outside the square when it comes to workplacement positions in order to experience situations that they are really interested in.
- o The availability of resources at school has come about as a result of the very strong links and tremendous rapport that has been established with the broader local community. Robyn has worked closely with local businesses, service clubs, feed supply companies and farmers. This has allowed the development of a Poll Dorset Stud and Shorthorn stud, contribution of show poultry, transport of stock to and from shows, the availability of workplacement positions etc. To maintain this level of support and confidence Robyn attends meetings and speaks to many service clubs during the course of the year and communicates on a regular basis with the entire community through the local newspaper. An open day is also held to allow students to interact with industry members and industry members and the community to see what goes on in the Ag plot at FHS.

- As a result the school's Show Team was nominated by a community member for the Australia Day Team of the Year Awards in 2005 and where successful in winning the award.
- Robyn has been involved with the local show society and has helped to develop the classes for the show and assisted by providing equipment. She has attended meetings with Melbourne Royal Show Co-ordinator of the Beef Carcase competition in order for the competition to meet the needs of schools and industry alike.
- The FHS show team has had many successes since its inception and during the latter part of the year there is rarely a weekend that sees Robyn at home as she travels with students to regional and interstate shows.
- Robyn has on average one prac teacher from CSU or Armidale University per year. She is currently working /mentoring an accelerated trainee who will be working at FHS for 2 days/week in term 3 and as an intern in term 4. Robyn has already spent a lot of time guiding the student and helping him to select units of competency for study/assessment as he works towards gaining his Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment.
- Robyn also plays a very active role in the mentoring of beginning teachers or teachers just starting to implement Primary Industries into their schools curriculum. Teachers travel to FHS to work with Robyn and look at the facilities that are available at FHS and how to access funds and resources They leave with lots of information and resources on programming, sequencing, assessment, teaching aids and record keeping that make them feel more confident about the task ahead of them. Just recently a teacher, his ag assistant and three students spent the day working with Robyn and her students. This activity is to be followed up with the teacher and students spending three days with Robyn and her students at the National Beef show in Bendigo. Robyn is participating in a mentoring system that is available to the teacher and will provide ongoing support.
- The sharing of materials and the desire not to keep reinventing the wheel has lead to Robyn being a great sharer of the resources that she has developed. Robyn has often presented at local and regional network meetings, providing ideas about programming, resources, assessment and school based trainees.
- Robyn was a participant in the QTP VET Best Practice Pedagogy Project in 2003. This involved travelling to Sydney participating in group work sessions, sharing ideas and experiences and writing a case study on Best Practices in VET teaching.
- In 2004 Robyn worked with the South Western NSW regional Poll Dorset committee to develop and run the Young Poll Dorset Ambassador of the Year Competition. One of Robyn's students participated in the event and was successful in moving on to the final of the event, which was held at the Royal Melbourne Show.
- In 2002 Robyn received a letter from the Minister for Education and Training thanking her for her involvement in the schools agriculture programs.
- In 2004 Robyn received a letter from the School Education Director, Deniliquin Region congratulating her on the excellent results that her students achieved in the HSC.
- In 2004 Robyn received the Deniliquin School Education Award for her service to education.
- In 2005 Robyn was nominated by a community member for the Minister's Award for a VET in Schools Teacher. Robyn was interviewed at region for this award but unfortunately did not progress any further.
- In 2005 Robyn was nominated by her Principal for a Minister's Award for Service to Public Education and Training and proudly received this award in Sydney at the end of last year.
- In 2005 FHS received a Minister's Award as a Centre of Excellence for Education in Agriculture.
- Robyn is totally committed to the teaching of agriculture and promotes it whenever possible. She works tirelessly to provide the best possible experiences for her students.



**Robyn O'Leary sharing
resources at a PI day**