

# WRITERSWHO

## Press release: 116 cancellations but scarecrow symbolises that shows will go on

**Photo: Tim Capp with scarecrow in Gresford**

After widespread ag show cancellations in 2020, the network of country shows in New South Wales were predicting a big comeback this year that hasn't eventuated for more than 60 per cent of them.

The shows that were able to operate in Autumn - the likes of Royal Bathurst, Hawkesbury, Orange, Warren and Stroud - reported record crowds, and benefitted from the accelerated digitisation of ticket sales. For the majority who haven't run a show this year, cash flow and community spirits have been diminished by the cancellations.

Of the 192 ag shows in New South Wales, 116 have already announced a cancellation in this year, impacting community, local economy, agricultural competition and the volunteers who run in the hundreds of thousands.

"Agricultural shows are an institution in country Australia, bringing little communities together for a special day or two every year to celebrate all that's good in their town and surrounds," President of AgShows NSW Tim Capp said.

"The best wool, wheat, horses and cattle are on display, with the creative skills of handcrafters, cooks, photographers, gardeners, entertainers and school children coming together."

"Families and friends enjoy ringside picnics, kids load up on showbags and spinning rides and the most talented locals get to showcase their skills. It's a time honoured tradition that has been part of some towns for well over 150 years."

"These shows contribute nearly \$1 billion to the Australian economy every year, and 1 in 4 people go to at least one show each year."

"There are more volunteer hours injected into these events than any other initiative in Australia, and to be honest, locals who love their show are just feeling a bit flat after a year, and in many cases two, without their local show."

The impact on mental health is one of the crucial but hard-to-quantify benefits of an annual agricultural show; getting farmers off farms and isolated individuals together.

To keep spirits high and to remind policy makers of the importance of these events, AgShows NSW is asking every show in NSW to get involved with their October campaign the "No Show Scarecrow".

Shows from Hay to Hawkesbury, Wagga to Warren, Macksville to Moss Vale will be designing and displaying a scarecrow for display in their communities throughout next month.

"Scarecrows are a symbol of farming, and stuffing a scarecrow is a popular school competition at many shows. It allows creativity, and is an eye-catching reminder that the shows will go on."

Shows ran this campaign in October last year, with 'No Show Scarecrows' popping up in grocery stores, at roundabouts and on the gate entrances to showgrounds.

"It was a colourful way to come together when cancellations have the potential to bring us down."

# WRITERSWHO

Mr Capp said it's also an important reminder to the state government around how central shows are to country communities.

Agricultural Shows have benefitted from support from Crown Lands for well overdue infrastructure improvements and expanding green spaces at showgrounds.

"Showgrounds are crucial multi-use community hubs for sporting activities, emergency evacuations, refuges, COVID testing and vaccine sites, entertainment and events."

Last year, the federal government launched the Supporting Agricultural Shows and Field Days program to relieve cash flow pressures for agricultural shows who had to cancel because of COVID-19 in 2020.

Mr Capp said similar support from the federal and state governments would be welcomed by shows who have had to cancel in 2021.

"It would be money well spent for the state government to get behind our show societies who pour their blood, sweat and tears into these brilliant events, to ensure they can operate in 2022 and beyond."

[END]

Media contact: TIM CAPP 0427389477