

Entry type: Organisation

Entry ID: PR00727

Women on Farms Gatherings

(1990 -)

Born	19900101
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Occupation	Social support organisation
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Summary

The first Women on Farms Gathering was held in Warragul, Victoria, in 1990. The Gatherings have been held annually in different rural locations across the state since that time, with organisation handed over to an autonomous committee of local women each year. Women from Queensland, Tasmania and New South Wales attended the fifth gathering in Tallangatta in 1993, and the movement spread to Queensland and New South Wales in 1993, and Tasmania in 1994. Held over a weekend, the Gatherings bring together rural women to learn new skills, share stories and, especially in the beginning, to reaffirm their identity as farmers. They were a vital thread in the women in agriculture movement, providing a public collective space for women to build an alternative knowledge about their disadvantaged position in farming, and fostering a political voice.

Details

In 1989, a Women on Farms Discussion group grew out of participation in the Women On Farms skills courses at Warragul. The group began planning for the first Women on Farms Gathering, which was held in Warragul the next year. The Rural Women's Network and Women in Agriculture Project Officers in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs supported both the discussion group, and the planning of the gathering, as did representatives of the McMillan Rural Studies Centre in Warragul and PROCEED Continuing Education Centre. Storytelling is central to the Gatherings, raising the consciousness in women of their relative disadvantage and marginalisation, and affirming their identities as farmers, rather than farmers' wives. Research by early participating academics such as Ruth Liepins and Margaret Alston gave additional depth to their knowledge.

Workshops at the Gatherings developed women's practical on-farm skills, and also developed the confidence and skills needed for political roles.

Each Gathering chooses an object to symbolise the stories and experiences of rural women. In 2003 a partnership was established with Museum Victoria to preserve these artefacts – the speeches, poems, icons, songs and themes – in the Women on Farm Gatherings Heritage Collection. This collection of living history is monitored by a Heritage Group made up of past participants, and representatives from Museum Victoria, Monash University and Department for Victorian Communities.

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Report

The invisible farmer : a report on Australian farm women, Williams, Julie, 1992

Journal Article

'The Victorian Women on Farms Gatherings: A Case Study of the Australian "Women in Agriculture" Movement', Pini, Barbara, Panelli, Ruth and Dale-Hallett, Liza, 2007,
<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/loi/ajph>

'Motherboards and Desert Sands - Stories of Australian Rural Women', Dale-Hallett, Liza and Diffey, Rhonda, 2006,
<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/frontiers/>

'Creating Collaborative Living History: The Case of the Women on Farms Gathering Heritage Collection', Liza Dale-Hallett et al, 2006,
<http://publications.epress.monash.edu/loi/ha/>

Thesis

Women in Agriculture: A Geography of Australian Agricultural Activism, Liepins, Ruth, 1996,
<http://repository.unimelb.edu.au/10187/1453>

Site Exhibition

Brilliant Ideas and Huge Visions: ABC Radio Australian Rural Women of the Year - 1994-1997, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2011,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/rwya/rwya-home.html>

Archival resources

Private Hands (these records may not be readily available)

[Making Rural Women Visible: A "Living" History of the Victorian Women on Farms Gathering \(WOFG\) Community](#)

Melbourne Museum

[Women on Farms Gathering Heritage Collection](#)

[Catherine McLennan with Lyn Johnson \(Interview\)](#)

[Central Victorian Women in Agriculture Papers](#)

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

[Papers of Audrey Drechsler, 1979-2009 \[manuscript\]](#)

Author Details

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