

# **Horticulture Innovation Australia**

## **Final Report**

### **Nuffield Scholarship**

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Nuffield Australia Farming Scholars

Project Number: AH14014

## AH14014

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## Summary

Nuffield Australia provides an opportunity for scholars to travel overseas on a research scholarship relating to their business and industry. It is a 16-week program consisting of both group and individual travel. The objective is to increase primary production knowledge, management skills and techniques.

Scholars participate in a Contemporary Scholars Conference (CSC), where there is a robust exchange of ideas between all global Nuffield Scholars in the year group, and experience and join a network of people who are at the cutting edge of primary industry.

Scholars also participate in a Global Focus Program (GFP), a six-week compulsory group study tour to Asia Pacific, the Americas and Europe investigating agricultural marketing and trade issues, environmental issues and experiencing the different social and cultural aspects of each region.

Scholars also embark on their own eight/nine-week individual study tour. On return, they produce a written report and present to their peers at the annual Nuffield Australia National Conference.

Ben Haslett was awarded a 2015 Nuffield Scholarship from the horticulture industry under project AH14014. He has studied how rural communities can secure information, infrastructure and representation required to be competitive in a world market.



***Photo: Ben Haslett, 2015 Nuffield Scholar, supported by HIA***

Ben participated in the CSC in March 2015 and also the GFP in March-April 2015. He toured the UK, France, Washington DC, California, Mexico, Brazil and New Zealand over six weeks, with nine other scholars, including five Australians, one scholar from New Zealand, two scholars from Ireland and one scholar from Canada.

On his nine weeks of individual study, he travelled to the USA, specifically California, (Davis, Fresno and Tulare), Nebraska (Lincoln), France (Paris, Toulouse, Montabaun), Spain (Barcelona, Lleida, Valencia, Murcia, Cordoba, Madrid), The Netherlands (Tottenhamstraat, Ulsderweg, Zwolle, Boerderij Nieuw Slagmaat) and also markets in Hong Kong.

Ben reported verbally to his peers at the Nuffield Australia National Conference, held in Adelaide in September 2016 [Click here](#) to watch the presentation. He has also submitted a substantial report which is provided to Nuffield, HIA, made available to other interested parties and posted on the Nuffield website for wide community access. [Click here](#) for the report.

The Nuffield Farming Scholarship program is a very targeted and proven way of investing directly into the advancement of Australian agriculture. The benefits of the Nuffield Scholarship do not cease on their return to Australia. Rather, as a consequence of his or her experience, Scholars are generally committed to a life-long involvement in the international Nuffield network driven by a thirst for continued learning.

## **Keywords**

Nuffield Scholarship

Rural communities

Infrastructure

Representation

Citrus

Wine grapes

Almonds

Stonefruit

Riverland

Woolenook Fruits

Decision-makers

Government

Cooperative

## Introduction

Ben Haslett grew up on a family owned orchard. After university study in science, he returned to live and work on the farm where the family produces citrus, almonds, wine grapes and stone fruit. They pack and market citrus and stone fruit, contract mechanical harvest almonds, keep bees for pollination and have wine made from grapes which the family markets directly.

This diverse business has led to opportunities for Ben to become involved across multiple industries in a variety of roles including industry advisory committees, research and development committees, government appointed advisory groups, regional community representative groups and commercial boards.

In his words, "Over time I had noticed that no matter the industry or the regional group, the challenges seem to be the same – getting results that make real, measurable progress in terms of funding, policy and community support. How to bridge this communication divide and what affects the decisions made by key leaders was a major focus of my Nuffield studies".

Nuffield Farming Scholarships have been awarded in Australia every year since 1950 and it is regarded as Australia's foremost agricultural award. The Nuffield Australia Farming Scholars' mission is to develop potential and promote excellence in all aspects of Australian agricultural production, distribution and management through the adoption of local and international best practice, and continuous development of a unique network of industry leaders and innovators.

## Methodology

Ben was selected as a 2015 Nuffield Scholar via a formal and established selection process, which included input from HIA. This project had the following activities and timelines:

- 1st April 2014: Applications for 2015 scholarships opened.
- 30th June 2014: Applications for 2015 scholarships closed.
- Mid-July 2014: State-based selection panels short-listed applicants by face-to-face interview.
- August 2014: Final selection interviews were held in Melbourne, Victoria.
- September 2014: Scholars announced at the Nuffield National Conference, which included scholarship briefing and Awards Dinner, held in Launceston, Tasmania.
- March 2015: Participation in the CSC (one week), held in Reimes, France.
- March-April 2015: Participation in a Global Focus Program (six weeks)
- July 2015 – September 2016: Individual study undertaken (nine weeks).
- September 2016: Verbal presentation at the Nuffield Australia National Conference.
- May 2017: Final written report distributed widely to industry.

Ben departed Australia on 24 February and travelled to London for two days of briefings about global agriculture on 25-26 February. As part of this briefing, they met speakers including Minister-Counsellor (Agric) Mr Russell Phillips Australian Embassy and Mission to the EU, Stuart J Russell, Senior Trade & Investment Manager of the Government of Western Australia - European Office and the UK National Farmers Union.

Ben then travelled to France on 27 February and attended the 2015 CSC in Reims, France from 28 February to 7 March, along with all 2015 Nuffield Scholars from around the world. A report about the CSC is available here: <http://www.nuffieldinternational.org/csc-conferences/2015/2015-csc.html>

Ben then completed his GFP for six weeks in March and April, travelling to the UK, France, Washington DC, California, Mexico, Brazil and New Zealand. He travelled with five other Australian scholars, one scholar from New Zealand, two scholars from Ireland and one scholar from Canada – ten in total.

In addition, from July 2015 to September 2016, Ben participated in nine weeks of individual study, focusing on his study topic of how rural communities can secure information, infrastructure and representation required to be competitive in a world market.

On his individual study, he travelled to the USA, specifically California, (Davis, Fresno and Tulare), Nebraska (Lincoln), France (Paris, Toulouse, Montabaun), Spain (Barcelona, Lleida, Valencia, Murcia, Cordoba, Madrid), The Netherlands (Tottenhamstraat, Ulsderweg, Zwolle, Boerderij Nieuw Slagmaat) and also markets in Hong Kong.

He presented the findings of his study at the 2016 Nuffield Australia National Conference, which was held in Adelaide, from Wednesday 14 to Friday 16 September 2016. [Click here](#) to watch the presentation.



**Photo: Christophe Hillairet, President of French Chamber of Agriculture and Ben Haslett, 2016**

## Outputs

A full, introductory profile about Ben can be found here: <http://nuffield.com.au/ben-haslett-3/>

Ben has presented the findings of his study to his peers at the Nuffield Australia National Conference, presenting over two days. [Click here](#) to watch his presentation.

[Click here](#) to read his final written report.

A returning scholar profile about Ben is here: <http://nuffield.com.au/scholar-profile-ben-haslett/>

## Outcomes

Ben sees the health and wellbeing of rural Australia as integrally linked to the prosperity of Australia's agricultural industries.

How to bridge communication divides and what affects decisions made by key leaders were a major focus of Ben's study, as well as how to be heard and make people understand that the vibrancy of agriculture is affected by the resources it can garner for optimising its production and the nature of the civil and regulatory frameworks from which it operates.



***Photo: Ben Haslett visited a range of businesses in California as part of his scholarship***



Ben concludes that Australia needs a truly representative, well resourced, peak advocacy body that can present a clear, costed case to key decision makers in a manner that allows them to instigate the requested change without fear of unwarranted public backlash.

Following feedback Ben received from a range of countries from farmers, politicians and representative bodies, has given rise to a list of key points that he believes should be considered by rural regions and their representatives when they are negotiating a case for change. These include:

- Do you have a mandate to speak?
- What are the key relationships needed for progression?
- Does the rhetoric behind the case stand up to public scrutiny?
- Have you an ability to influence the ultimate decision maker?
- What role will the media play in the success or otherwise of your proposal?

## Evaluation and Discussion

Ben has completed his scholarship and has gained knowledge and a greater understanding of the international forces affecting the horticultural industry. He has also gathered knowledge of new technology and management practices that can be adopted in his business with his family to drive productivity growth. He has, and will continue to, disseminate the findings of his study to the horticultural industry to further enhance productivity. He has a final, 10,000 word written report which you can access by [clicking here](#).

Ben will continue to grow into a leader in his industry, have an ethos of lifelong learning and encourage greater participation by younger farmers in the industry.

The personal growth of Ben as he has participated in the scholarship process is significant, as he now deploys new findings to great effect in the business environment.

Moreover, the wider 'thought leadership' is also something which is harnessed through great effect. The investment in Ben will have a lasting effect.

Access to the international network of agriculturalists that has been formed through the Nuffield program is a unique and invaluable benefit of becoming a scholar and an investor of Nuffield.

Other learnings from this project include:

- The creation of more leaders in agriculture from within the horticulture industry.
- Producing a network of Nuffield Scholars internationally, to enhance knowledge transfer.
- Providing a direct and immediate understanding of changing consumer preferences and trends.
- Delivering the latest new global innovative, technological advances directly from scholars.
- Assisting to create a legacy of leaders in agriculture for future generations.

## Recommendations

Ben believes that there remains work to be done to successfully manufacture a sustainable model of federal representation that truly has a mandate to speak on behalf of the farmers of Australia. This body must be able to package and “sell” the story of rural Australia in a manner that is clear, credible and defensible such that those tasked with implementation can do so. Additionally, value for farmers and member organisations must be inherent which necessitates public and political visibility and measurable progress.

Ben’s final recommendations are fourfold for farmers, local communities and industry:

1. Tell the story.
2. Target education.
3. Take ownership.
4. Share the load.

## Scientific Refereed Publications

Final report, including references: <http://nuffieldinternational.org/live/Report/AU/2015/ben-haslett>

## Intellectual Property/Commercialisation

No commercial IP generated

## References

References can be found in Ben’s individual, written report, link above.

## Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements can be found in Ben’s individual, written report.

Investors are required to make a monetary contribution to support each scholarship annually. Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarships acknowledges the contribution that Horticulture Innovation Australia (HIA) provides to the program to assist in the development of our most important resource in agriculture – human capital – as they are key to ensuring a profitable and sustainable industry in the long-term.