

Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australia
Agricultural Hall of Fame Luncheon and Induction

Address by the Honourable Kim Beazley AC
Governor of Western Australia

Tuesday, 14 May 2019

I would firstly like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Whadjuk Noongar people – and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

It is a pleasure to officiate the Agricultural Hall of Fame Luncheon and Induction, and pay tribute to the men and women who have shaped our history and influenced the development of agriculture in Western Australia.

From the colony's head of stock in 1835 which stood at just over 5,000 animals total, Western Australia's agricultural industry has grown to be our State's second major export industry with approximately 70 per cent of the state's agri-food exports in the past decade, destined for Asia, with China, Indonesia and Vietnam some of the largest markets.

As Australia's largest grain-producing region and a significant producer of Australia's meat and livestock, dairy, wool, horticulture and honey products, Western Australia is particularly cognisant of the contributions of the agricultural sector.

Our State's vibrant and prosperous agriculture, food and beverage industry is underpinned by innovators, entrepreneurs and leaders of industry like those inductees of the Agricultural Hall of Fame. Experiments of the late James Drummond, the first inductee of the Agricultural Hall of Fame, as just one example that led to the establishment of Western Australia's vineyard industry which we have grown so accustomed to.

I commend The Royal Agricultural Society of WA on their continual championing of industry, agriculture and food in Western Australia, since the Society's establishment in 1831.

I would particularly like to recognise the Society as a driver of education, research and innovation. Through its extensive list of scholarships and grants, supporting the agricultural industry in Western Australia, The Royal Agricultural Society of WA helps to drive the next generation of farmers and agricultural industry leaders. Through the educational opportunities provided, individuals are empowered to develop a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the agricultural industry.

Farmers and participants in the agricultural industry are the original innovators and drivers of scientific research. To quote Brian Keating and Kate Langford from the CSIRO, "while Australia was facing national tragedy and peril with World War I at its darkest hour, our agriculture leaders managed to focus attention on how technology could build a prosperous nation in times of war and peace."

A vision for a vibrant, profitable agricultural industry underpinned the formation of the Advisory Council of Science and Industry in 1916, an organisation which evolved to become the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation.

The Agricultural industry is home to the State and the Nation's original inventors and innovators. Actually starting thousands of years before European settlement with Aboriginal people developing and utilising their own farming and food gathering methods and technologies.

Farmers are continuously adapting their approaches to farming, enabling them to increase productivity, reduce costs and combat the challenges brought by pests, weeds and disease.

The Agricultural Hall of Fame is a brilliant initiative established by the Royal Agricultural Society WA, which pays homage to innovators and leaders in agriculture. The Agricultural Hall of Fame commemorates the achievements of individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the agricultural industry.

Today, we commemorate Hall of Fame Inductees. The 2018 Inductees, whose portraits will be revealed later today, are the late Eric Farleigh and Emeritus Professor Alan Robson AO.

Emeritus Professor Alan Robson AO was recognised by the Royal Agricultural Society in 2018 "for studying the mineral nutrition of plants and soil fertility, and for his service to WA and national agriculture overall, including chairing the Grain Legume Research and Development Corporation.

His work since starting his Phd at the university in 1966, and mentoring many post-graduates, developed tests for copper deficiency in wheat. His legume research looked at the link between plant nutrition and nitrogen fixing.

Pioneering Boyup farmer, the late Eric Farleigh was also recognised. His use of the most modern methods from 1924 established others in his district.

After he died in 1988 his farm was handed to the local council where it is now a free community activities centre, conducting shearing schools, sheep and careers camps and the Storm in a Teacup Women's Day."

Both Professor Robson and Mr Farleigh are to be celebrated for their invaluable contributions to soil science and plant nutrition.

I congratulate Ray for his innovative work and service. Mr Harrington's entry into the Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australia's Hall of Fame is another of the many accolades he has already received for his service to agriculture. These include receiving the Order of Australia Medal in 2014 and being awarded the Farming Legend of the Year in 2018.

This is a testament to the significant and innovative contributions Mr Harrington has made to Western Australia's agricultural industry. From the creation of the Harrington Crutching Cradle in the 1970s to the more recent integrated Harrington Seed Destructor in 1996, Mr Harrington's inventions are welcomed solutions to persistent problems faced by industry.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, reports that “weeds are estimated to cost Australian agriculture more than \$2.5 billion per year.” With over 95% of weed seeds known to be destroyed after passing through an integrated Harrington seed destructor, Mr Harrington’s innovative solutions have provided, and continue to provide much needed relief to Western Australian agriculture.

I acknowledge the 2018 inductees Mr Eric Farleigh and Emeritus Professor Alan Robson AO whose portraits will be revealed later today.

My deepest congratulations to the 2019 Agricultural Hall of Fame Inductee, Mr Ray Harrington. Western Australia and the nation’s agricultural industry is indebted to you.