



**CHRRUP**

Central Highlands Regional Resources Use Planning Cooperative

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### **Women's Leadership Conference Attracts Emerald Delegates**

A group of nine women from the Central Highlands travelled to Melbourne recently to take part in the Australian Regional Women Leaders Convention.

The convention was held to acknowledge the vital contribution of regional and rural women to all aspects of industry and business, and support and develop the flow of women into leadership roles.

The two-day event, held 18-20 November, incorporated a range of topics, including nutrition and lifestyle, best practice models for networking, and developing and operating a successful regional business. Speakers were sourced from a range of industries, such as agriculture, local government, media, small business and politics, and came from as far afield as Mungindi, Antarctica, Sunshine Coast and Tasmania.

Vicki Horstman, Nogoia Field Officer from the Central Highlands Regional Resources Use Planning Cooperative (CHRRUP) found the conference to be an extremely rewarding event. "We are lucky to have organisations in our community such as Kestrel, WinCOTT, CHRRUP, the local cotton-growers association, and Ensham Resources who support the development of regional women, and assisted with funding for the trip."

Vicki said one of the highlights of the trip came at the gala dinner and auction at the Melbourne Town Hall. "The auction was held to raise money and awareness for drought relief, and we were able to meet Brian and Nerida Egan, founders of Aussie Helpers, and Sam and Jenny Bailey, who are inspirational rural people."



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The Emerald group, led by Alicia Dunbar, was so inspired by Sam Bailey's aim to become the world's first quadriplegic helicopter pilot, that they formed a consortium to bid for one of the auction items; a flight with Sam in his helicopter. "Alicia had the winning bid, and we hope to see Sam and Jenny visit the Central Highlands in May," said Vicki. "Sam still has to get his licence!"

The group plans to organise some events, at schools and local venues, to give the broader community a chance to hear Sam and Jenny's story of courage and determination.

A visit from Sam Bailey was not the only outcome for the group. According to Vicki, attending the conference has enabled the group to identify other areas where the role of rural women might be promoted on a local level. "One thing that came out of the workshops was the need to develop the capacity for leadership in women through training and effective personal growth. Through CHRRUP and other partners, we would like to instigate a series of community-based activities and events for women in new and existing networks."

Some areas of opportunity identified by the other Emerald delegates include ideas to improve healthy eating for local high school students, funding or scholarship grants for women taking on leadership roles, and familiarisation trips to increase the number of professional graduates willing to practice in rural areas.

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