

Hosting A South Australian Rural Women's Gathering

South Australia held its first Rural Women's Gathering at Murray Bridge in 1996, attracting between 150 and 180 women from across the state. At the conclusion of that first Gathering the organising committee, managed by PIRSA, was very keen to ensure the Gathering tradition continued and that seed-funding was available to local committees to get the event off the ground as deposits often need to be made well before registration money is received and grant funding is not always easy to get or timely. (PIRSA withdrew their support in 2014).

It was envisaged that the initial \$7,500 donation from the Murray Bridge committee would form the basis of the fund, and that each subsequent Gathering committee would donate some of their profits to the fund to build it to the point that if there was a loss or unforeseen circumstances the fund could ensure that no individual was out of pocket.

It was felt that the use of the seed-fund and the use of the SA Rural Women's Gathering name was a draw card to make the event a success and that subsequent committees should help preserve the sentiments of the Gathering by assisting future committees through the Gathering Fund.

While several local committees have donated generously to the fund, some committees, for their own reasons, decided to distribute all profits to their committee members and within their own communities. The sentiment to retain all funds even when a seed grant had been used was becoming the norm. Because of this the SA Rural Women's Gathering Association Inc. was established.

Gatherings are special because they are community organised, developed, driven, owned by and run. Each year a different community group organises the Gathering (not a formal/traditional group). No one organisation is responsible for the Gathering; it is an opportunity for different groups, organisations and individuals to work together.

The autonomy of each organising committee gives each Gathering its unique atmosphere and flavour. Each Gathering committee works on from the previous Gathering using information, experience and intellectual capital built up by previous organising committees. It is from this that some of the Gathering traditions stem. They are gifts from one group to the next, to be upheld, used, acknowledged, developed and/or handed on depending on the organising committee's wishes.

While each Gathering committee is autonomous, the use of the name "SA Rural Women's Gathering" brings with it a responsibility to achieve the Aims of the SA Rural Women's Gathering Association Inc., and the name can only be used under agreement with the SA Rural Women's Gathering Association Inc..

A Gathering offers opportunities for all rural women, no matter whether they want agricultural information, business information, personal development or a social and recreational opportunity. The strength of a Gathering is in its diversity. A Gathering can help build bridges between women on farms, women involved in other businesses, women in the work force or women raising a family. It can offer skills and introductory information for women who for many reasons may have been denied access to the information that they need to build strong rural communities, to be equal partners in their businesses, or to establish networks.

A Gathering also offers many experiences to those involved in the organisation of the event, which is just as important as what the Gathering offers to those attending a Gathering.

The SA Rural Women's Gatherings are a different way of getting information, including primary production and natural resource management information, to an important group of people within the rural community. Women actively involved in agriculture are often not involved in the more traditional agriculture extension programs.

Gatherings offer women in regional and rural communities the opportunity to meet and network with other women. Gatherings are supportive atmospheres in which women can question, learn and network. The diversity of women, industries, sectors, lifestyles, cultures, information and workshops promotes good business and good rural business, leading to strong rural communities.

It is important to endeavour to utilise the talents of women as facilitators, guest speakers, and MC's; in doing this we create more women role models. There will be times when the best person for the job may be a man and this is fine. Men will always be welcome at Gatherings, although the focus and marketing of Gatherings is to women. A Gathering is an avenue to mainstreaming. One day we may not need gender specific functions.

The SA Rural Women's Gathering Association Inc. was incorporated in 2007.

This organisation was made up of representatives from the local organising committees of past South Australian Gatherings. Since 2018 the structure of the SA Rural Women's Gathering Association Inc. Executive Committee became non-sustainable. At the Strathalbyn gathering in 2019 a call went out for volunteers to become members of the Executive Committee.

The SA Rural Women's Gathering name is owned by the Incorporated Association and by using the name, local committees are agreeing to several conditions.

Use of the name 'SA Rural Women's Gathering'

Conditions of use of the name SA Rural Women's Gathering, which may or may not include the region or the town/city or a derivative of it, are:

1. All members of the local committee become members of the SA Rural Women's Association Inc. for a period of two years or to cover the period they are involved in the event and its organisation. This affords the committee members protection under the Association's legislation and insurance.
2. The sentiments of the Gathering tradition are to be maintained by adherence to the aims.
3. The traditions of the Gathering are to be upheld i.e. sounding the gong and lighting and extinguishing of the lamp at the beginning and the end of each Gathering.
4. The local organising committee is open to any interested women from within the community and that Gathering committee is not an official existing incorporated organisation.
5. The Gathering offers opportunities (workshops, tours, speakers etc) with a balanced cover of all four key areas of
 - (1) Health and Fitness
 - (2) Business, technical/NRM, Primary production:
 - (3) Community, Communications:
 - (4) Craft/Art/Cooking.
6. The local organising committee may nominate a representative to be a member of the executive committee of the SA Rural Women's Association.

At the conclusion of a Gathering:

1. A final report and audited financial statement must be sent to the SA Rural Women's Gathering Assoc. Inc. within two months of the Gathering being held.
2. The \$5000 seed-money should be repaid to the SA Rural Women's Gathering Assoc. Inc.
3. When a profit is made the minimum of 10% of such profit should be paid to SA Rural Women's Gathering Assoc. Inc. to cover any to cover any potential financial losses of an organising committee.

As a local organising committee of a Gathering of the SA Rural Women's Gathering Assoc Inc (SARWG), the committee will:

1. be eligible to access \$5,000 refundable seed-money from the SA Rural Women's Gathering Association Inc.
2. have access to the data base of contact details from the previous Gathering held.
3. receive contact information for sponsors.
4. receive e-file copies of programs, brochures, correspondence, media releases, budget, etc of past gatherings (if required).
5. receive the Gathering planning time-table.
6. take temporary custody of the lamp, gong, and display material.
7. have the opportunity for key committee members to meet with previous Gathering committee members and Executive Committee members for their committee orientation.

Gathering Aims

- To develop communication networks, knowledge and skill through participation, experience and contact with other women.
- To link women from rural backgrounds with members of formal or informal networks across South Australia.
- To provide access to opportunities for self-development, self-expression and information.
- To offer opportunities to demonstrate and encourage good business, environmental and citizenship practice.

Gathering Themes

Each Gathering committee decides on a theme that has special meaning to them. Deciding on a theme can also help make other decisions further down the track such as speaker, colours, committee identifiers, entertainment, food, local tours and workshops.

These are themes from past SA Rural Women's Gatherings:

- 1996 Murray Bridge – Yunnanfest (women's Meeting Place)
- 1997 Kimba – A Window of Opportunity
- 1998 Kadina – Life is for Living
- 1999 Bordertown – Women Working @ Winning
- 2000 Kangaroo Island, Kingscote – Diversity – Together as One
- 2001 Riverland, Berri – Celebrating Challenge, Change & Choice in a new Century
- 2002 Tanunda – What Women Want
- 2003 Cummins – Women on Track
- 2004 Yorketown – Juggling the Load
- 2005 Naracoorte – Your World in Harmony
- 2006 Goolwa - River of Life
- 2007 Clare – Celebrate Life
- 2008 Hills, Mt Barker – Fruits of Life
- 2009 Mt Gambier – True Blue Women Do
- 2010 Melrose – Live, Laugh, Learn
- 2011 Not held
- 2012 Penola - Get it Together
- 2013 Port Pirie – Indulged, Informed, Inspired
- 2014 Jamestown (theme tba)
- 2015 Bordertown – Use it or lose it
- 2016 Riverland – Our River Our Environment
- 2017 Cleve – Secrets on Eyre
- 2018 Minlaton – Stepping Out on the Leg
- 2019 Strathalbyn – Connect – Inspire – Discover
- 2020 Cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2021 Postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2022 Streaky Bay – Strong Women – Strong Communities
- 2023 Clare - Super Women

Workshops, Tours, Poster Display, Memorabilia

The SA Rural Women's Gatherings are a statewide event that has built a successful name and reputation for the opportunities they offer. They endeavor to offer variety and options to cater for the range of interests among rural South Australian women. It is important that a balance of workshops is offered in each of the four key areas of:

- Health & Fitness
- Business/Technical/NRM/Primary Production
- Community/Communications
- Craft/Art/Cooking

A Gathering should offer a variety of information, topics and skill development. The committee will decide what workshops/tours they can offer and what might appeal to the broad range of women that will come to the Gathering from across South Australia. Initially a broad range of topics are offered and these the choice is narrowed down once it becomes more clear which topics are popular and those that are not through the call for expressions of interest process.

Budgets

Each committee will draft a budget aimed at making a small profit. Provided the Gathering has not run at a loss, the full amount of seed-money should be returned to the SA Rural Women's Gathering Association Inc., along with at least 10% of any profit made. This is to ensure that funds are available to assist future Gathering committees should the need arise.

Most committees apply for grants to help fund the Gathering being held, but sponsorship is also very important to assist with costs. Donations of food, services, or raffle goods can also help the budget.

Some local councils will support Gatherings by allowing the organizing committee to use council's banking or EFTPOS facilities or other council facilities.

Committee

In the past Gathering committees have ranged in size from 5 to 30 people, averaging about 16 people. If the committee is small (less than 12 people) it is important to ensure you have other volunteers to help on the weekend as there is plenty to do on Gathering weekend.

The organising committee can have representatives from beyond the host community, but they are usually still from within the region.

Location

Gatherings have been held in large and small towns in South Australia. It is important to have use of a town hall or institute along with use of rooms in which to hold workshops (most past Gatherings have utilised school classrooms).

Accommodation for attendees can be found further away from the town holding the Gathering. Previous Gatherings hosted by smaller communities have arranged billet accommodation.

Workload

The workload for committee members will vary depending on how many people are on the committee. It is common for committees to initially meet monthly, and then as the date gets closer meet fortnightly, and then weekly in the last six weeks - but this is entirely up to the discretion and needs of each individual committee. Some committees may do much of their business over the internet or by telephone.

Most Gathering committees have a chairperson, secretary and treasurer. Other roles usually include a co-ordinator for each of these categories: catering, guest speakers, workshops, facilities, sponsorship, publicity and tours.

Support

Past Gathering committee members and Members of the Executive Committee are always happy to help with information from their experiences and will answer questions and offer advice if a new committee would like assistance.

Where To From Here

If you think your community would be interested in hosting a Gathering or if you have five or six women from your community that are interested in being on a local Gathering committee, you will need to:

- contact the Chairperson or Secretary of the Executive Committee of the SA Rural Women's Gathering Association Inc.

and

- lodge either a "Registration of Interest to Host a SA Rural Women's Gathering" form (see next page) or email the Executive Committee with such information as is required on the form.

Once a registration of interest is received the Association's Chairperson will contact you to discuss the details and confirm a hosting year.

SA Rural Women's Gathering Association Inc. Executive Committee members:

Chairperson/Publicity Officer

Margaret Howie Mobile: 0438 112 570 Email: howie@nelwood.com

Deputy Chairperson

Polly Johnston Mobile: 0427 874 332 Email: polly.johnston51@gmail.com

Secretary:

Leonie Broadbridge Mobile: 0408 597 296 Email: pbroadbridge@bigpond.com

Treasurer

Liz Ballinger Mobile: 0428 845 320 Email: teatrick@bigpond.com

Public Officer:

Glyn Scott Mobile: 0438 899 787 Email: glynshope@gmail.com

Committee:

Sue Cawley Mobile: 0419 814 648 Email: skcawley@gmail.com
Donna Cook Mobile: 0408 804 434 Email: donna053232@gmail.com
Tracey Dewell Mobile: Email: tracey.dewell@bigpond.com

REGISTRATION of INTEREST to HOST an SA RURAL WOMEN'S GATHERING

Primary Contact Person

Name:

Address:

..... Postcode:

Phone Number:

Mobile:

Email:

Community interested in Hosting:

Year of Interest:

Important Considerations:

Signature:

Second Contact Person

Name:

Address:

..... Postcode:

Phone Number:

Mobile:

Email:

Signature: