

Hon David Basham MP

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development

Wednesday 29 September 2021

SA Rural Ambassador named at Country Shows Award dinner

Stockport cattle farmer Rebekah Rushton has been announced as the winner of the 2021 State Rural Ambassador Award, as the coveted awards program undertook a COVID-19 pivot.

With last year's event cancelled due to the impacts of the global pandemic, this year the final interviews and awards took place away from the event's traditional home at the Adelaide Showground due to the cancellation of the Royal Adelaide Show.

Importantly however, the show did go on for the Rural Ambassador program, with the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, David Basham on Saturday evening (25 September) presenting the 2021 winner with their award at a dinner in Murray Bridge.

The award program is open to people aged between 20-30 who are committed to their local show and community and highlights the importance of youth in the agricultural show movement.

Ms Rushton, representing the Mt Pleasant Show Society and Central Districts, was selected as the winner after judging was completed on Saturday. The first runner up was Brody Lock, from Mundulla, and the second runner up was Jake Rowe, from Penola.

All three received cash prizes and are expected to be invited to participate in a two-week study tour in 2022. Depending on travel restrictions, all finalists will attend interstate shows in 2022.

Minister Basham congratulated all the state finalists, emphasising that their involvement in the South Australian agricultural community had never been more important.

"These young people are examples of the future of agriculture in this state, and I wish them the best for their development and lifelong involvement in this sector," Minister Basham said.

"During the pandemic our agricultural, and wider regional communities have continued to be the lifeblood of this state.

"Our farmers and agriculture sector play a vital role in our everyday lives, putting outstanding produce on our tables, but also play a key role in our state economy.

"Our Government recognises the importance of this sector, with South Australia's primary industries and agribusiness generating \$15.2 billion in revenue in 2018-19 - that's why we are focussing on boosting our food, wine and agribusiness through our Growth State initiative, which aims to grow these sectors to \$23 billion by 2030."

Ms Rushton, who works as a farmhand, roustabout and stud hand in addition to being the owner of Lakota Livestock Limousin and Murray Greys, said she is keen to help bridge the gap between young people and those on show committees.

"I am passionate about the agricultural industry, youth in the rural communities, my local community and local country shows as well as being involved in the Royal Adelaide Show," Rushton said.

“The cancellation of the Royal Adelaide show and many Spring shows has reaffirmed in me that I would like to be a voice for the youth in our communities and would like to help encourage more like-minded youth to take the step to be involved in their local shows; from exhibiting, to helping on the day, to potentially convening.

“I am a big supporter and believer that the youth are important to our country shows continuing in our future.”

The State Government is a proud sponsor of the Rural Ambassador Award, which began in 1998 and is run by SA Country Shows.

The Rural Ambassador Award is also sponsored by the Show Society Foundation, Stock Journal, RM Williams and the Showmen's Guild of SA.

It was a double celebration for the Mt Pleasant Show and Central Association, as in July their 2021 Young Rural Ambassador representative, Jacqui Palk, also won the state final.

2021 Rural Ambassador Award state finalists

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| Jake Rowe | South East & Border – Penola Show |
| Brody Lock | South East & Border – Mundulla Show |
| Rebekah Rushton | Central – Mt Pleasant Show |
| Helane Blieschke | Northern – Melrose Show |
| Daniel Niutta | Northern – Gawler Show |
| Oscar Walters | Southern – Uraidla & Summerton Show |