

in this issue...

- Challenges in telecommunication
- Introducing our new President
- National AGM highlights
- Charities Bill piles on the cost

Rural Women NEW ZEALAND



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Getting rural online



Photo by Jeanette Hicks

As more and more public information is supplied solely by internet, rural areas with substandard phone-lines are often left out of the loop.

State Services Minister Trevor Mallard applauded a recent move by Local Government New Zealand and the State Services Commission to supply public information on-line. "This is a significant joint achievement which will benefit all New Zealanders," he boldly declared. Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) believes that comments like this illustrate the extent to which Government has lost sight of the rural sector.

Given that many rural households make-do with a phone service that would have urban customers up in arms, the current focus on internet delivery seems to have overlooked the basics. A recent push, initiated largely by Fonterra, is seeing the introduction of broadband technology into rural areas. While this will improve the ability of rural people to access the internet, it comes at a significant cost to farming businesses and does nothing to improve actual phone-lines.

Broadband is a mode of communication that transmits large volumes of digital information. The standard delivery of broadband is sold by Telecom as "Jetstream" and operates along normal phonelines. The drawback for rural customers is that Jetstream does not work if you are more than 7 km from the nearest telephone exchange.

A Government initiative known as "Project PROBE" has helped to ease this situation. The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Economic Development undertook to ensure that all schools would be supplied with broadband internet access. This injection of public money has helped to nudge the telecommunications industry into upgrading services in areas that have been neglected for years. Project PROBE will also make Jetstream available to communities within 7km of a rural school.

For the many households who cannot get Jetstream, wireless options are available through various suppliers, including Telecom, Whoosh Wireless and e-Sat. These options are primarily being utilised by dairy farmers, who are obliged by Fonterra to get online. For most other rural households, the cost of wireless broadband is difficult to justify. At around \$110.00/month it comes in at over twice the cost of Jetstream.

Without broadband, it is very difficult for most rural customers to use the internet. What with interference from electric fences, poorly maintained phone-lines and outdated exchange equipment, just sending and receiving emails can be an exercise in endurance through normal dial-up connections.

RWNZ is concerned that basic telephone services have not been maintained to an acceptable standard in rural areas. Internet aside, many rural customers experience unreliable phone connections and do not have access to the range of options that urban households take for granted, at a generally lower cost.

RWNZ has also identified a number of "blackspot" areas throughout the country that do not have any cellphone coverage. Given that Telecom is under obligation to meet certain standards in all areas of the country, not just the densely populated ones, RWNZ is working to bring these telecommunications issues to the attention of the relevant authorities.

It is widely recognised that cellphones and broadband services are still too expensive in New Zealand, and slow to arrive in many areas. This situation can only be alleviated through better technology and stronger competition. In the meantime, RWNZ would remind the Government - not everyone is on-line.

by Sherrill Dackers, National President

“National President of Rural Women New Zealand.” I can hardly believe it!

This was the very last position that I expected to hold when I went to my first W.D.F.F. meeting back in 1972 at Kiripaka, near Whangarei.



I was a very reluctant visitor – desperately lonely with two children under three - and probably ripe for the plucking. A self-styled ‘sophisticated’ city girl who thought she was far too superior to have anything in common with mere country folk. Such was the depth of the women I found myself among that I was compelled to become secretary of my branch. Within three years I was presenting a remit at the Golden Jubilee, and my involvement grew from there.

I wonder how many other young women in rural situations have felt the same. Many of you have probably been there as well, and this is perhaps the light that guides me in our incredible organisation. There is so much we can do to help one another.

Now that I am your National President, it is timely to pay tribute to my predecessor, Ellen Ramsay. She has provided us with a wonderful example of leadership, and is a hard act to follow. It has been Ellen’s untiring and dedicated work over the last three years which has set RWNZ on such a good foundation for the future. I believe that without her hand guiding the ‘boat’ our organisation would have entered dire straits by now.

Thank you Ellen, for all you have been and done.

My theme for the year – “Celebrating Excellence in Rural Communities” – reflects my strong belief that we have much to feel good about. We should shout it from the hills, tell everybody what we do. Rural communities throughout New Zealand are struggling under a burden of neglect and abandonment. We must start speaking out, be loud and vociferous about our needs and concerns.

Let’s begin by making everyone aware of the depth and vitality within Rural Women New Zealand. Start revising those old images of tea and scones, and make other women hear the truth about who we are, what we do and how much we can offer.

RWNZ lobby at national level to ensure that rural communities and families are not swept under the carpet. This involves changing perceptions locally, to increase public understanding of an intelligent friendly and fun-loving organisation that works at local and national level to maintain an essential sector of New Zealand culture.

If we don’t blow our own trumpets, nobody else will!

Confessions of a Rural Woman

Telephones can be wonderful things when they connect you with someone you really want to talk to. Under normal circumstances, however, I can’t say that I’m especially fond of them. Phones have a nasty habit of ringing when you don’t want them to and *not* ringing when you *do* want them to.

Cellphones are particularly annoying in this regard. They provide the added frustration of reducing sentences to tatters by dispatching random phrases into the ether, never to be heard again. No matter how incoherent your conversation becomes, and no matter how loud you shout to compensate (regardless of who else might be listening), it still costs an arm and a leg for the “convenience”.

When I became a rural woman, my love/hate relationship with telecommunications intensified. As a general rule of thumb, I discovered that whenever the water main springs a leak, your spade will always find the phone-line before it locates the offending pipe. Then you’ve got two problems to contend with.

Even on the occasions when the phone-line was intact, it would crackle incessantly to the rhythm of electric fences. And every time it rained heavily, my phone would die completely. Telecom never did get to the bottom of this fault, although they did mutter something about an outdated local exchange in the area that was due for imminent upgrade.

A decade later, we’re still waiting.

Meanwhile, my fax machine seemed to have a remarkable affinity with every electric fence along the road. I would get a map of the prevailing voltage activity traced across my incoming faxes, like the pulses on a heart-rate monitor. If anyone tried to send me more than two pages at a time, the fax would have a cardiac arrest.

Speaking of cardiovascular wellbeing, the greatest threat to mine was the internet. Over the years, I noticed a close link between blood-pressure and modem speed. There is nothing quite like the frustration of taking an hour to download an email attachment only to discover it is one of those cyber-joke things. Animated reindeer that sing Christmas carols may be fun when you’re living in town, but when you’ve just taken all morning and three failed attempts to download them, they are no laughing matter.

As for cellphones - they weren’t really an issue for me because I lived outside the coverage area. The trouble is, I didn’t actually discover this until *after* I purchased my first Nokia. In order to use it, I had to hike up the big hill in the back paddock and balance on a gatepost. The only times I ever bothered to do this were immediately after I put the spade through the land-line.

My frequent phone frustrations were always balanced by the joy of a good natter. There were times when the odd friendly phonecall represented my only social contact for the day. As a rural woman, there was no popping out to the local café for a chat. Love it or hate it, my telephone line was my umbilical cord to the world.

Margaret Richardson

national office activities

Rural Women New Zealand is pursuing the following issues:

Education

- RWNZ is following up on school reviews as they conclude in remaining areas of the country.

Health

- Drinking water may need to be tested at source and monitored once it is contained. Will this add unacceptable costs to farmers?
- Plunket - are women getting the maternity care they need?

Social

- Charities bill - what are the implications for RWNZ? (See explanation on page 4.)

Land

- RWNZ is looking to have closer involvement in rural fire research.

submissions

Rural Women New Zealand has recently made the following submissions (See www.ruralwomen.org for details):

- Charities Commission.
- Law Commission Legal Paternity.
- GM wheat into New Zealand.
- Drinking water.
- Public Finance (State Sector Management Bill).

publicity

National Media releases - see www.ruralwomen.org

- "Rural Women fund training for home care workers", 29 May.
- "Rural Women to gather in Taranaki", 27 May.
- "Rural Women rail against cost of charity", 6 May.
- "Rural Women dispute Government commitment to rural communities", 6 April.

the correspondence school (tcs)

National Councillors met with TCS Chief Executive, Debbie Francis for input into the TCS strategy review. RWNZ members are concerned that many of the services valued by rural families may not be considered high priority now that distance learners now contribute up only a small proportion of TCS income.

RWNZ will continue to be involved in discussions with TCS, so if you have an interest in its future, contact Jo-Anne Stokes at National Office.

Concerned members can also contact TCS Parents and Supervisors Association, an advocacy body that needs support and membership (\$20/year/family). Contact Debbie Searle, PO Box 5314, Christchurch. Phone (03) 349 3689 or email debbie.searle@xtra.co.nz

Dear Editor

I am a rural woman, living in Hororata in mid-Canterbury. I was initially appointed and then elected to the Canterbury District Health Board, and am now Deputy-Chair of the CDHB.

Many of us fought hard to not lose the rural wards in the next elections. We were concerned that if all of the elections occurred "at large" (i.e. there being only one electorate for each region) that the rural sector ran the risk of not having on the Boards people who understood rural issues and could represent them around the table.

In spite of this, the elections for the District Health Boards will be "at large", although candidates will be allowed to indicate on the ballot papers if they come from the rural sector.

In addition to this, elections to the District Health Boards, like some of the local authorities, will be by STV (Single Transferable Vote).

All this highlights three issues that I believe are particularly important for rural women:

1. It is critical that people who are elected to the District Health Boards are people who are competent and have an understanding of the health business and the decisions that always have to be made in the management of huge resources to ensuring the best possible health for all citizens.
2. If people in the rural sector are to be represented, then they **must** vote. Historically, elections to local bodies, and especially per postal ballots, are made by low percentages of the total voting capacity of a region. In some areas as few as 30% of voters make the effort to vote. People in the rural sector must vote if they are to have District Health Board members who understand the rural issues.
3. Many potential voters simply do not understand STV. I believe that organizations such as Rural Women will make a huge contribution to the outcome of the upcoming elections simply by becoming involved in the education of the electorate so that voters understand that their votes will count, and how they will count.

Health has always been an important issue in this country, and as we all adjust to the tensions that exist between increasing demands and tightening of resources (especially in the South Island where Population Based Funding Formula is constraining the resources that we will have in the future) it is imperative that we all understand the issues so that we can apply our individual energy and collective influence to the decision-making process.

Rural Women are well situated to be involved at all levels.

Thank you for addressing the issue in your magazine.

Olive J Webb
Deputy Chair
Canterbury District Health Board

women across the ditch

“We have a small population in comparison to our size. Our farmers receive very little in the way of Government support, but we are expected to compete on the world market.”

These words could have been spoken by any New Zealand farmer, but they came instead from the mouth of Jan FitzGerald, President of Australian Women in Agriculture (AWiA) at the National AGM.

Although Australia provides some of the harshest farming environments in the world, and New Zealand some of the best, farming people on both sides of the Tasman share many issues in common.

“Since the 1980’s both of our countries have been endeavouring to break out of a downward economic spiral. Our governments have attacked the problems differently, but in both cases the strategy could be broadly termed ‘economic rationalisation’. Becoming part of the global economy was the single goal.”

Jan says the change in direction has been beneficial to the Australian economy, but in the process, people had been forgotten. “The legacy of pitting one sector of the community against another is not easily healed,” she says.

Rural women in Australia became tired of not having a voice in agricultural decisions affecting their farms and their families, so in 1993 the new movement of AWiA began.

“Australian Women in Agriculture is one of four non-government national women’s organisations in Australia. Together we represent approximately forty thousand rural women,” Jan explains.

Collectively, this movement has become a powerful lobbying force at Federal Government level. “Our core values are our bible, and they are very similar to the values for which Rural Women New Zealand stand,” Jan says. These include: caring for rural families, communities and the environment; communication to enable women to share their experiences; and, leadership to facilitate change in the community.

Jan joined AWiA eight years ago after spending her adult life working in the man’s world of the wool industry. Recently Jan’s farm in Queensland produced the finest bale of wool in the world at 11.9 microns, from a shedded merino operation run by her son. As well as the hands-on experience of day-to-day life on their sheep property, Jan has also represented the industry on a number of boards and committees.

“I was comfortable with the discipline of formal meetings and creating policy, but frustrated with the length of time it took to instigate change, and the difficulty of remaining relevant to the membership in a changing world.” Jan says that AWiA had a totally different culture from what she had been used to. “Here was a group of women working together to create change for their families and their communities. They were determined to build relationships wherever they could - to work with government and industry to find solutions and to implement them.”



Ellen Ramsay (at left) with keynote speaker Jan FitzGerald, President, Australian Women in Agriculture.

Named in 2002 as one of the most inspirational agricultural women in Australia, Jan says the energy created when women work together for change still amazes her. “I see this visit as a great chance to explore the possibility of forming closer understanding and links that will enable us all to further the realisation of our goals and visions, by learning from - and working with - other rural women around the world.”

the cost of kindness

A new Charities Bill was a topic of considerable interest at the National AGM. The Bill is looking to create a registration, reporting and monitoring system for charitable societies. The Bill could result in the establishment of a Charities Commission to provide central administration for the registration system.

The intention behind the Bill is that the registration system would:

- Foster public trust and confidence in the charitable sector.
- Increase the sector’s accountability, transparency and degree of public disclosure.
- Enable the Commission to aid the Government with social policy development.

What will this mean for Rural Women New Zealand?

As it stands, the Charities Bill could impose significant new costs on charitable organisations. Although registration would be voluntary, it would be necessary for RWNZ to register with the Commission to continue to be exempt from tax.

The cost of increased auditing throughout the organisation will represent an additional expense that many believe is not justified. Systems of accountability are already enforced by the IRD and Treasury’s financial reporting standards. The Commission is widely viewed as an unnecessary level of bureaucracy in a sector that is entrusted to spend charitable funds for social good, rather than additional paperwork.

RWNZ has presented a submission to oppose the new Charities Bill.

national AGM

Rural Women from all over the country gathered in New Plymouth on 29-31 May for the National AGM. North Taranaki Provincial President, Shirley Read welcomed the large group of delegates, representing members from North Cape to Bluff.

Shirley says it is always great getting together with women from all over New Zealand. "Women learn so much from each other," she said. And they did.

Aside from all the fun and fellowship, guest speakers covered a range of topics, including District Health Board representation, broadband telecommunications and intergenerational transfer of assets. After two days of workshops and business sessions, the final keynote speech was given by New Plymouth businesswoman, Denise McBeth.

As Director of Pete's Post and New Zealand Businesswoman of the Year, Denise spoke of the satisfaction and personal empowerment that comes from being self-employed.

Since many RWNZ members are partners in a farming business, or entrepreneurs in their own right, delegates could readily relate to the personal and professional challenges that Denise talked so dynamically about.

The meeting closed with new President Sherrill Dackers officially taking over the helm. As tributes were paid to Ellen Ramsay for her gracious and capable leadership over the past 3 years, there were few dry eyes left in the room.



The Taranaki organising committee perform a light-hearted closing song. After many months of preparation, the smooth running of the AGM was a tribute to these hard-working members.



Hayden Wano, Chair - Taranaki District Health Board (at left) and Dr Bruce Anderson - Ministry of Health, field a barrage of questions about rural representation in the upcoming local-body elections.

new president



National President, Sherrill Dackers with husband, Gordon Dackers.

Like many rural women, Sherrill Dackers started out in town. After growing up in Te Kuiti and New Plymouth, she went to Auckland University to study anthropology. Soon she met and married Gordon, who was working as a shearer in Northland. This introduced Sherrill to a rural life that she was completely unprepared for.

"To begin with, I found it very difficult to adjust to the lack of services and the loneliness of the country." Sherrill recalls that she would live for the arrival of the newspaper everyday. One day the delivery wasn't made, and she stood in the rain and cried. "Eventually I realised that I needed to create a better life for myself by becoming more involved in the community around me."

After joining Rural Women New Zealand (then WDFP), Sherrill gained many new friends who gave her the support and companionship she desperately needed as a young mother. Since then, her involvement in rural issues has grown steadily. She is now a trustee on the Institute of Rural Health and also serves on consumer reference groups for the Cervical Screening Unit and Breast Scanning Aotearoa.

Now living in Whangarei, Sherrill is committed to serving as National leader of what she describes as "a truly amazing organisation" - Rural Women New Zealand.



Outgoing President, Ellen Ramsay hands the reins to Sherrill upon reaching the end of her 3-year term.

welcome to new friends

Mapua-Mahana: Andrea Worts.

Tirau: Sylvia Fitzgerald.

Tokaora-Inaha: Patricia Hickman, Ava Baker, Jill Bernhardt, Nova James, Myra Hughes.

Toko: Caroline Gilbert.

Tumahu: Lorraine Whittle, Mary Whittle, Debbie Pauson, Linda Dougherty, Shiela Forbes.

farewell to old friends

Cheviot: Anne White.

Ettrick: Lorna Pringle.

Individual: Nelsona Kendrick.

Kakahu: Ginny Talbot.

Mapua-Mahana: Ruth Fraser.

Nelson: Esme Bensemman.

Poolburn-Moa Creek: Betty Jackson.

Stoke: Norma Miles.

Tokaora-Inaha: Eileen Gould.

May They Rest in Peace

honours board

Branch Life Membership

Tirau: Gladys Wallace, Thora Younger.

Waikaka: Mary Cumming.

Branch Bar of Honour

Tirau: Doris Clothier, Betty Langlands.



Mary Cumming receives Branch life membership from Jeanette McIntyre - President, Mid East Provincial (Southland)

thanks rural women!

Flood zone

Fordell-Mangamahu Branch of Rural Women New Zealand would like to thank the wider community for all the help and wonderful donation of items for the storm-affected area.

Niue Island

A \$10 000 donation by Rural Women New Zealand to Niue has been well used by this warm-hearted island community. Coordinated by VSA, the funds have been used to buy musical instruments, computers and other educational equipment. The Department of Education and Niue High School extend their thanks for our contribution.

rural women take a bow

The following competition winners were announced at the National AGM in New Plymouth.



Central Taranaki Provincial members receive the Lady Blundell trophy for their work in creating a memorial garden. From left: Margaret Buckthought, Vivian Grigg, Joan Nolly, Margaret Vickers, Joyce Orr, Trish Jones and Elwyn Ford.

Lady Blundell competition

for the most innovative Provincial project

Winner: Central Taranaki Provincial

Members of Central Taranaki Rural Women are no strangers to beautification projects in and around the Stratford District. Over the last decade, they have planned and maintained the gardens around the Church at Pioneer Village, and landscaped two gardens in downtown Stratford, consistent with the town's Shakespearian theme.

A Millennium initiative by these members to upgrade and beautify the area along the road frontage at Stratford's Kopuatama Cemetary became their biggest project to date. After many months of paperwork, applying for funds and drawing up plans, they rolled up their sleeves and constructed a special Memorial Garden for the public to enjoy.

From what was once a shabby corner of the cemetary, Rural Women have created a peaceful spot where people can sit and contemplate, scatter ashes or pick a flower for a loved one's grave.

Congratulations to Margaret Vickers and her team for their tremendous work.

yearbook cover competition

Winner: Irma van der Linden - Kenepuru Branch, Marlborough Provincial

Irma supplied the concept for the 2003 RWNZ Yearbook cover, soon to be released. Irma's photographic design captured many of the qualities we value most in our organisation. The year book is due to be printed in July.

Honora O'Neil competition

for the best Provincial report

Winner: Judith Pellow - Franklin Provincial (Region 7)

The Franklin Provincial has made significant changes to their organisation over the past year. Due to a recent decline in membership, they have combined their remaining branches and are now known as "Franklin District Rural Women." These organisational changes have been undertaken in a highly professional manner, with a positive eye to the future.

The winning report shows an outstanding level of strategic vision along with an ongoing commitment to providing value to members, service to the community, and a contribution to national issues. Judith Pellow is a long-time member of RWNZ who lives on a farm at Onewhero, south of Auckland, now managed by her son. As a trained nurse, Judith remains heavily involved in health issues.

Olive Craig Trophy

member of excellence

Combined Winners: Margaret Chapman - Hazelburn Branch, South Canterbury and **Glenys Dugmore** - Kiripaka Branch, Marsden (Northland).

Both Margaret Chapman and Glenys Dugmore have a long history of involvement with RWNZ. Margaret has been on the Provincial and Regional liaison groups for Access Homehealth since it was first formed. She was also Provincial treasurer for 10 years and has been Hazelburn Branch President a number of times.

Glenys's contribution to the organisation is very similar to Margaret's. She joined the Kiripaka Branch at a Whangarei farmer in 1965 and has been with it ever since. Over the years, Glenys has held every branch office and has also served at Provincial level. Like Margaret, Glenys has also been closely involved with Access Homehealth.

Talbot Trophy

for the best international report

Winner: Stella Clouston - Temuka Branch, South Canterbury.

Cora Wilding competition

for the best first aid kit

Winner: Gwen Nichol - Skinner Road Branch, Central Taranaki

Marlborough Short Story competition

Winner: Frances Grant - Glenore Manuka Branch, Region 1.

For a copy of Frances' story "Te Moana Nui", see www.ruralwomen.org or contact Margaret Richardson at National Office (04) 473 5524. A bound copy of all the 2004 entries can be obtained at a cost of \$15 from Marjorie Pattie, 34 Alabama Road, Blenheim.

new national councillor

Marie Appleton of the Franklin District branch will serve as Region 7 Councillor (in place of Sherrill Dackers) until the next election of National Council in 2005.

Originally from the farming village of Lanchester, near Durham in Northeast England, Maree and her husband came to New Zealand 39 years ago. Upon joining WDFW soon after their arrival, she became actively involved in a range of community activities. Now living in Pukekohe, Maree is a JP and holds the MNZM (Order of Merit) for her involvement in the community.

2005 short story competition

The subject for next year's short story competition is "Poor me!" Entries must be posted to Marjorie Pattie, 34 Alabama Road, Blenheim by 21 March, 2005.

ACWW aid for Tonga

Jeanette Tarbotton will be visiting Tonga during September this year, in her role as Area President for ACWW. It is her intention to take medical aids. Among the items requested are: cotton wool; adhesive tape; band aids; insect repellent (with deet); antiseptics (like Savlon or Dettol); Vicks Vapour Rub or inhalants; scabies treatment; burn cream, antifungal cream, Gentian Violet; Paracetamol; and, Antacids.

Jeanette would be pleased to receive any donation in cash or kind by August 31. Please send NO LARGE PARCELS since her luggage is limited. Send donations to Jeanette Tarbotton, 383 Racecourse Road, RD6, Ashburton.

women in farming workshops

Women in Farming groups will be tackling animal health issues at eight workshops to be held around the country over the next three months. For contacts in your area, see www.ruralwomen.org or call Annette Litherland at 06 351 8204.



meeting the board of access homehealth

Margaret Millard represents a major driving force behind every cause she dedicates her energy to. Access Homehealth and RWNZ are two of the many organisations that have received her considerable attention over the years.

Back in the 1980's Margaret served as the first woman Provincial President of Federated Farmers. In 1999, she became the National President of RWNZ at the same time as she was Chair of the Open Polytech of New Zealand. Meanwhile, Margaret has juggled numerous roles on other bodies, ranging from the Nursing Council to environmental organisations. She also has a strong business background, and has been involved in a number of restructuring strategies.

Margaret says that the perspectives she has gained from these diverse roles gives her a good feel for the "big picture". She developed a broad outlook early in her career when she joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The diplomatic and international focus of this work taught her that it is not enough to concentrate on details, you must also keep an eye on how different parts affect each other.



Margaret's high-level governance experience, her commitment and questioning mind ensure that Access Homehealth board decisions are well scrutinised. "The more I get involved in issues, the more I see what can be achieved. This is what keeps me motivated – the opportunity to make change for the better."

pulling together the threads

One hundred years ago, the flax industry was more important than meat or wool. Thousands of acres of flax plantations supplied mills from Northland to Southland, processing the fibre for ropes, woolsacks and carpets. Wairarapa farmer, Liz McGruddy is assessing opportunities for the revival of a flax industry in rural New Zealand.

Liz (formerly Mende) served as Executive Officer for Rural Women New Zealand from 2000 to 2002. Upon leaving the office, she returned to the land and followed her passion for native plants.

"I began to notice a growing interest in flax by researchers and I wondered if I was looking at the bones of a new industry." Liz could see that different research initiatives were being undertaken by scientists from a range of organisations, like AgResearch and Forest Research, but there was no central source of information for flax growers.

"In recent years the economics of flax farming has been restricted to niche markets for decorative leaves, handmade paper, and weaving. Today we are seeing a worldwide trend towards natural fibres and products, so researchers are looking at the characteristics and potentials of flax." Liz says that scientists are now exploring the utilisation of flax extractives and fibre in new biotechnology and biomaterial applications. "If there is potential for a new industry to develop, supply is critical. It is important in the early stages to link researchers with landowners, so I could see value in pulling all the threads together."

To this end, Liz kicked off a project to determine the practicalities of establishing NZ Flax as an integrated or special-purpose species. By the end of this 3-year project, a report will be available on market opportunities with advice for landowners for on-farm plantings, for larger-scale environmental management, for iwi



AgResearch scientist, Annette Litherland at left with Liz McGruddy. These women collaborated previously to form Women in Farming, and now they are working together on flax.

land development, and for the establishment of regional enterprises based on flax extractives. "If flax is to grow as a commercial crop, we need to know more about what varieties are most suitable for different applications. We also need to look at management options and learn about secondary values, like effluent stripping. The potential for using native plants for commercial crops in New Zealand is very exciting."

As a member of the NZ Flax Farmers Group, Liz is liaising with Crown Research Institutes and industry to assess the potential of new industrial applications. At the same time, AgResearch is undertaking specific work to assess the effluent stripping performance, and nutritional/anthelmintic values of NZ Flax.

The project is being funded by the MAF Sustainable Farming Fund, together with support from four Regional Councils.

As project manager, Liz is keen to hear from landowners with experience growing or grazing flax. She can be contacted on 06 3777 111 or at nzflax@wise.net.nz