AGRICULTURAL SHOWS AUSTRALIA 2027 Conference

Stronger together

Conference program

17-19 February 2027 | The Canberra Rex Hotel, Braddon

One movement. One voice. Many communities.

Connect with show organisers and leaders from across Australia and overseas. Explore practical ideas for supporting volunteers, attracting visitors, managing risk and securing the future of your show - with time to share experiences and build connections along the way.

Wednesday 17 February

Pre-conference workshop

1:00pm-5:00pm | Workshop: Workplace and Volunteer Appreciation

Kryssie Thomson - Fair Systems That Work, Canada

Discover what makes people feel valued in this interactive workshop. Learn the five languages of appreciation and practical ways to strengthen relationships, bridge generation gaps and build a culture that encourages volunteers to stay involved.

Welcome reception

5:30pm-9:00pm | The Howling Moon, The Canberra Rex Hotel

Collect your registration pack and meet fellow delegates as we open the conference. Reconnect with familiar faces, make new contacts and start sharing ideas with people from across the agricultural show movement.

Thursday 18 February

Conference day one

Registration opens 8:15am | Sessions 8:30am-5:00pm

8:30am | Welcome and official opening

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country with emcee Patrice Douglas, followed by the official opening with Andrew Barr MLA.

8:45am | Opening keynote: The Power of One Voice

Matt Linnegar - Cotton Australia; formerly Australian Rural Leadership Foundation

An opening keynote exploring the conference's central theme: the power of a shared voice.

9:30am | Presentation: What Got Us Here Won't Get Us There

Steve Langton - governance and leadership adviser

Explore how committees and boards can protect valued traditions while adapting their leadership, culture and approach for the future.

10:45am | Panel: Beyond the Incident - Claims, Litigation and Risk Management

Bronia Henty-Smith, Eren Giriftin, Maryan Lee and Mark Saunderson

Learn what to do after an incident, what evidence to collect and how sound documentation and practical risk controls can protect your organisation.

11:30am | Panel: Lessons from Events That Thrive

Linda Tillman and Cathy Treasurer, with additional panellists to be confirmed

Hear what has worked, what hasn't and what other events have learned - with ideas you can apply at your own show.

1:15pm | Presentation: Critical Incident Management

Lynelle Smith - Sydney Royal Easter Show

Real experiences and practical lessons in preparing for unexpected incidents, communicating clearly and keeping people safe.

2:00pm | Presentation: From Empty Spaces to Epic Spaces

Jill Albanese - Wisconsin State Fair

Discover fun, creative and low-cost displays and activities that turn overlooked showground spaces into places visitors of all ages want to stop, enhancing the guest experience.

3:15pm | Presentation: Succession Planning - Securing the Future of Your Show

Ivy McGuifficke - Boyce

Identify future leaders, support volunteers into committee roles and put simple succession planning tools into practice.

4:00pm | Presentation: Attracting the Next Generation of Visitors

Tony Laffan - Royal Queensland Show, Ekka

Explore ways to engage young people, families and first-time visitors through education, entertainment and connections with schools and youth groups.

4:45pm | Trivia: Ag Knowledge Knockout and Daily Wrap-up

Finish the day with conference trivia and the opening stage of Deal or No Deal - Ag Shows Australia Edition.

The day includes a group photo, morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea.

6:00pm-10:00pm | The Royals Gala Dinner

Great Room, The Canberra Rex Hotel | MC: Emma Irene

Celebrate with fellow delegates and special guests. Enjoy dinner, dancing, raffles and Deal or No Deal - Ag Shows Australia Edition, and continue the conversations started during the day.

Friday 19 February

Conference day two

Sessions 8:30am-3:30pm | Afternoon tea 3:30pm-4:00pm

8:30am | Morning Kickoff

Patrice Douglas - conference emcee

Start the day with your fellow delegates.

8:45am | International keynote: One Voice, Many Stories - Communicating the Impact of Agricultural Shows

David Grindle - International Association of Fairs and Expos

Explore how economic evidence and community stories can help demonstrate your show's value, build support and influence public opinion.

10:15am | Debate: A Marketing Problem or a Relevance Problem?

Bruce Wright, Elliot Apel, Kath Rose, Anne Stroud, George Seppelt and Kryssie Thomson | Moderator: Alex Cottrell

Do agricultural shows and field days need to change what they offer, or how they tell their story? Hear both sides and challenge your own thinking.

11:00am | Presentation: The Art of Storytelling and What Captures Media Attention

Kath Rose - Kath Rose and Associates

Explore how to uncover the stories within your show and identify what makes them interesting to the media and wider public.

11:45am | Interactive session: Borrow My Genius

Kryssie Thomson - Fair Systems That Work, Canada

Tap into the experience in the room. Share challenges, exchange ideas and learn from show societies and field days that have tackled similar problems.

1:45pm | Presentation: Small Teams, Bigger Thinking - How AI Is Changing What Agricultural Shows Can Achieve

Tiffany Leahy - Regional AI Co.

See practical ways AI can help small teams save time and make limited resources go further, through a live case study tailored to an agricultural show society.

2:30pm | Closing international keynote: Staying Resilient Through Challenges - Stronger Together When Things Go Wrong

Shari Black - Wisconsin State Fair Park

Hear candid lessons from floods, cancellations and unexpected incidents, and explore how leadership and strong relationships help shows recover and move forward.

3:15pm | Interactive Conference Wrap-up

Patrice Douglas and Katie Stanley

Reflect on the conference and the ideas you'll take back to your own show.

Morning tea and lunch are included in the day's program, with afternoon tea following the closing session.

Friday evening at the Royal Canberra Show

Continue connecting with fellow delegates with the option to attend the Royal Canberra Show after the conference.

Further details on timing, tickets and any transport arrangements will be provided once confirmed.