

Inspiration

Check out some of the amazing people working in agriculture in the Northern Territory! Each of their stories and backgrounds are unique, however one thing they do share is their love for agriculture and working in the NT!

Olivia Borden



If you can picture a female incarnation of John Williamson's Mallee Boy crossed with Crocodile Dundee then you may have a notion of the adventurous soul that is Olivia Borden. One can just imagine her barefoot and racing through paddocks on her family's farm on the Wimmera/ Mallee Border in north-western Victoria. Her family are fifth generation farmers with an intensive piggery, crops of wheat and barley and a contracting business.

"I started working on the farm as soon as I was old enough to lift a bucket, and I went up north to Queensland with my father contract harvesting. It was there I fell in love with large northern properties." Olivia says

Olivia attended a 12-student primary school before transferring to Donald for the rest of her schooling.

"On the school bus I used to read the country newspapers and I'd flick straight to the job section, reading the station hand advertisements over and over again."

Post high school she studied at Longerenong Agricultural College.

"The day after I turned 21 I fed the pigs for the last time, packed my ute and headed north. I rang a phone number off the back of a shearing singlet I'd been given and got a job just

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south of Ivanhoe the very next day. I threw fleeces, crutched sheep, lamb marked and occasionally, when we were down a shearer, got on a stand. I loved the back country – I still think they are the best sunrises I've ever seen – but I was hungry for the real north."

So to the north she went and landed her first job on the live-cattle export cattle-yards in the Territory.

"I vomited every day chasing cattle through the hot mud, in torrential rain and intense humidity loading road train after road train. Working in 45 degree shearing sheds was nothing compared to the heat and intensity of the export yards."

From the export yards she moved onto stations,

"Where I found what I had been looking for; living out of a swag and off a fire for months at a time, aboriginal stock crews, buffalo, scrub bulls, helicopters, motorbikes and horses, rocky escarpments and flood fencing and untamed country."

It wasn't until Olivia spent wet seasons working in Katherine that she was exposed to the horticultural industry and realised the opportunity to make real agricultural change through agronomy.

"I didn't think I would be capable of being an agronomist but my bosses believed in me enough to convince me to try. Then they threw me in the car and introduced me to the world of tropical pastures, watermelon and mango growers but it was the developing the northern cotton industry that won my heart over. I found every day incredibly challenging and stimulating I signed on as a trainee agronomist. I haven't looked back."



Olivia's love of the diversity of Australian food and fibre production has seen her experience many of agriculture's facets, an experience she sees as both a blessing and a curse.

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"I am looking to cultivate skills and attributes that will help me go from being an average employee at the risk of getting lost in the business world, to being a humbly confident, supportive agronomist and business woman, who can advocate for NT agriculture, build strong community rapport and encourage other young people to join agriculture and be part of the fast pace of its future development."

Sarah Hain

Sarah Hain is an agronomist for Cotton Grower Services (CGS) in Darwin. Prior to working at CGS, Sarah worked as the Mango Industry Development Officer for Northern Australia.



Ag Inspirations questions:

What is your current role and what does a typical/day week look like?

My current role is Agronomist for the Northern Australia branch of Cotton Growers Services (CGS). My role typically involves checking a variety of crops for pests and diseases while monitoring their nutrition and growth, advising clients on their farming systems and crop management, and supplying them with the necessary inputs to produce their crops.

How/when did you decide you wanted a career in agriculture?

Growing up on my family's farm and in a rural community, I always wanted a career in agriculture. Few other professions allow me to combine my passions of working with farmers to be more productive, applying complex science in real life situations, travelling, and working outdoors.

What was your pathway into agriculture? I.e. work experience/certificate/diploma/degree

I was privileged to grow up in the industry, working in my parents' business. After finishing high school, I completed a Bachelor of Rural Science (Hons) through the University of New England and worked on many different types of farms for practical hours required by my degree. I have recently completed a Graduate Certificate of Agribusiness through Marcus Oldham College and continue my professional development through specific accreditations required in my current role.

What have been your main challenges/rewards working in agriculture?

One of the main challenges in agriculture is that it is heavily influenced by the weather and climatic patterns. Every season is different, and you will learn new lessons each time. Extreme weather events can have devastating impacts on agricultural production, but business owners and the industry have no influence in how, when and where they happen.

The greatest reward is building relationships with those in the industry, particularly farmers and growers. They are the true experts, so I love learning from them and how they run their businesses. I also appreciate the lifestyle of working outdoors and producing the products that feed and clothe Australians and the world every day.

What would you say to someone who is thinking about a career in agriculture?

Many people don't understand the complexity of the agricultural industry. You don't need to be a farmer to be involved. We need people such as specialised legal professionals, scientists, accountants, engineers, software developers and marketers that understand farming systems and how to support the industry. The diversity of roles available is astounding and you don't need to grow up on a farm or in a small rural town to be a part of Australia's food and fibre product.

Ayla Christophers



Ag Inspirations questions:

What is your current role and what does a typical/day week look like?

I am currently studying my bachelor of Agricultural Sciences at the University of Adelaide. Each semester I take four subjects and each of my Agriculture subjects has a specific day of the week dedicated to it. This allows us students to go out on field tours and do practical lessons. Last semester my subjects were Biology, Chemistry, Soils and landscape, and Agricultural production. On a typical day I would catch the train into the city and walk to my campus, then I would watch my lectures in the library before heading to my prac. Prac lessons generally take about 3 hours then I would have some time to chill out and eat lunch with my friends. I would then finish my day with a tutorial lesson and head home. Often on Ag days we would head out to various farms including orchards, dairies, and vegetable farms. We learnt a lot here that we could relate back to our lecture content

How/when did you decide you wanted a career in agriculture?

I attended Taminmin College, which is an agricultural high school. The Ag program there really inspired me to think about Agriculture as a career as I had so much fun on the school farm. During year 12 I loved science, particularly biology however I didn't want to study a Bachelor of Science at university. I think Agriculture is a great practical application of scientific concepts. When I realised, I could have a job in science that wouldn't just be in a lab, I knew Agriculture would be perfect for me!

What was your pathway into agriculture? I.e. work experience/certificate/diploma/degree?

My pathway into Agriculture is my bachelors degree. Throughout the degree we are required to complete 450 hours of internship/work experience. This allows us to understand all of the different areas of agriculture and gain an understanding of what we are most interested in and what we want to do when we graduate. It also prepares us with skills we will need to enter the workforce. I currently work for Agribusiness Australia as their marketing assistant, this requires me to talk to professionals in the field and develop networking skill. It is also very common to get part

time harvest work, this harvest I worked in the grain silos doing grain classification. This was lots of fun and directly related to what I was learning at uni.

What have been your main challenges/rewards working in agriculture?

University has definitely been challenging, I am not from an agricultural background so almost everything is completely new to me, whereas this is not the case for a lot of my friends who have been raised on their family farm! Moving interstate to study was also a big challenge as well as adjusting to live more independently, but it has been so much fun!

I have found many rewards in Agriculture; I love learning and there is so much to learn in Ag! Discovering all the different ways agriculture is changing to save the planet has been incredibly inspiring! Also, being able to get an education at a such a great uni really is a privilege and it has been a very rewarding opportunity!

What would you say to someone who is thinking about a career in agriculture?

Agriculture is a great career choice because there are so many pathways! If you are not 100% sure on what you want to do but would like a job where you are able get outside and work with plants and animals, you will probably love it! The agriculture field is big on networking so if you like meeting new people and have good communication skill Ag could definitely be for you!

Ellie Ireson



Ag Inspirations questions:

What is your current role and what does a typical/day week look like?

I am currently studying an agriculture degree online through the University of New England with 2022 being my third year of study. So typically, I'm working through my degree online, taking part in tutorials, lectures, researching and completing assignments. I also juggle these learning commitments with some part time work during university holidays by helping out doing on farm practical work.

How/when did you decide you wanted a career in agriculture?

I grew up on a family farm in western NSW and we produced beef cattle, and prime lambs supported by irrigation from the Lachlan River. I always loved working on the farm with my sibling and parents. We were always given the opportunity to be involved and help out. I also enjoyed studying agriculture at High School and learning more about the theory side of it.

From this experience I knew I wanted to be involved in the industry and has become a large motivation behind my Ag degree.

What was your pathway into agriculture? I.e. work

experience/certificate/diploma/degree ? *Living on a farm and growing up surrounding by an Agriculture community started my pathway into the industry. From there I did Agriculture as a subject while at boarding school, as well as participating in the Show cattle team there. After school I worked at sheep stud & on my family farm, then in 2019 I went to Newry Station in the Northern Territory to work as a Station hand where I also completed my certificate II in Agriculture. In 2020 I started my Bachelor of Agriculture degree at the university of New England, with covid-19 coming about my studies went to online learning so I've continued to stick with that. After trimester 2 in 2020 I went and worked for GrainCorp during the harvest season, this including grain sampling and working the weigh bridge. Last year in 2021 I moved back to the NT and finished my second year of study up there*



with the honour of receiving the Kenneth Raynor Agriculture Scholarship which will help continue my pathway within the Ag industry.

What have been your main challenges/rewards working in agriculture?

Team environment is rewarding working together with other young people in the industry. The people within the Ag community makes this industry very special.

The variety of jobs can be great especially when working a farm or station – not always the same work every day. Working with animals is rewarding and learning each stage of production, from paddock to plate.

Being able to be part of an industry that grows food and fibre and embraces technology with new developments happening regularly.

Challenges

Sometime there might be a bit of travelling involved or you might have to move away from home. So many opportunities and pathways into different aspects of agriculture it can be hard to choose which way to go.

What would you say to someone who is thinking about a career in agriculture?

Go for it – be flexible and be open to try new things – can be practical hands on farms, or in agribusiness. The skills you learn along the way open up opportunities for you.