

AUSTRALIAN FARM INSTITUTE

MEDIA RELEASE



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2018 John Ralph Essay Competition winner

The right to farm versus the right to choose: society is having the final say

With an increasing gap between city and country and increasing scrutiny of farming, it is not a question of whether society *should* determine the right to farm: society is *already* determining the right to farm, according to the Australian Farm Institute's 2018 John Ralph Essay Competition winner **Deanna Lush**.

Deanna is a strategic communication specialist working in primary production, natural resources and agripolitics. Her Churchill Fellowship report investigating trust in agriculture was published in 2018, and this report largely informed her winning submission on the topic: **Society should determine the right to farm**.

Deanna's essay postulated that ethics and values will continue to be at the heart of the right to farm discussion as society questions whether farmers and the food system should be doing what they are doing.

"Since farmers do not have as much contact with consumers as others in the food system, an openness to the genuine questioning of practices will require a huge mind shift," she wrote.

"Farmers may believe they have a right to farm, but equally the market has a right not to buy their products. If transparency is the key to building trust, maintaining a social licence and overcoming right to farm issues, we need to consider if agriculture is prepared for transparency, which may also require changes to industry or farm practices.

"The agriculture sector must upskill producers in engagement and leading with shared values to build trust rather than providing more science and data which, while important, will not win hearts and minds of the general public. It is time to look at a new approach for agriculture and a new way of engaging."

Deanna spoke at the Australian Farm Institute Agriculture Roundtable yesterday (October 16) on trust and the right to farm, along with Farmers of the Year Frances and Peter Bender of Huon Aquaculture, AgriFutures Rural Woman of the Year Krista Watkins and National Farmers' Federation CEO Tony Mahar.

Deanna's essay can be [downloaded from the AFI website](#).

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