

National honours for Qld's Rising Champion

BY MELISSA MARTIN Queensland Country Life 16 November 2011

A PLAN to get beef producers in peri-urban areas connected to each other and contributing to the beef industry has seen Queensland's Ian McConnel win the national title of Cattle Council's 2012 NAB Agribusiness Rising Beef Industry Champion.

Mr McConnel, 29, was announced the winner on Tuesday night at a dinner in Longreach, where runner-up was awarded to Tasmania's Lauchie Cole, Woodbourn Murray Grey and Angus Stud, Cressy.

Mr McConnel will now go on to represent young Australian beef producers at the International Livestock Congress and the Western Stock Show and will tour cattle facilities in Denver, Colorado, US in January 2012.

A sustainable grazing extension officer based at the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation's (DEEDI's) Maroochy Research Station on the Sunshine Coast's hinterland, Mr McConnel has been involved in the beef industry his whole life.

He grew up on his family's property, Mt Brisbane Station in the Brisbane Valley near Esk, which runs 2000 head of predominantly Droughtmaster cattle as well as the Mt Brisbane Droughtmaster Stud, and from a young age started showing cattle before going on to judge beef cattle.

With more than 10,200 beef producers currently operating just in the southern South East Qld council areas of Somerset, Lockyer and Scenic Rim, Mr McConnel said establishing a beef industry network in SEQ would benefit not only the industry and producers, but city consumers as well.



Outgoing Cattle Council president Greg Brown with 2012 NAB Agribusiness Rising Beef Industry Champion, Ian McConnel, Queensland; runner-up Lauchie Cole, Tasmania; and NAB Agribusiness regional agribusiness manager Nth Qld and NT, Geoff Howard.

"We have a very large number of peri-urban lifestyle hobby farmers as well as larger commercial producers in South East Queensland but there doesn't seem to be that degree of cohesion and ownership and feeling of belonging to the industry," Mr McConnel said.

"We're trying to get them all talking to each other and from an extension point of view, trying to get messages of grazing best management and animal best management practices to all producers so we can make sure everyone is undertaking beef production in the best possible way we know how.

"Through this initiative, we're trying to give those people an outlet to influence industry policy and provide more information from producers into groups like AgForce and Cattle Council who influence policy change."

He said getting consumers in Brisbane and the heavily populated South East corner to connect their

surrounds to food production would be another benefit.

“Everyone in Brisbane relates to the hills just behind them so if they could also relate to a food source coming from there, whether it be a branded beef product, or simply that they knew a beef product is there, we’d have a great opportunity to find industry advocates they could also relate to.”

Mr McConnell has a Bachelor of Applied Science in Animal Studies from UQ Gatton and in 2001, he was awarded the Murray Grey Youth Ambassadorship and moved to the United States to study Meat Science and Genetics at Colorado State University.

Though now based in SEQ, Mr McConnell spent six years as an extension officer with the then DPI in Longreach upon his return from the US.

The other state finalists in this year’s Rising Champion award included Trent Anderson from Victoria, Clinton Gartrell from Western Australia, Marc Greening from NSW, and Jake Phillips from South Australia.



2012 NAB Agribusiness Rising Beef Industry Champion, Ian McConnell, Queensland and runner-up Lauchie Cole, Tasmania.

It was the second year the award has been presented as part of the Cattle Council Rising Beef Industry Champions Initiative, a program established to inspire, empower and support rising leaders in the Australian beef industry.