

# Careers in Primary Industries – transcript

## Justine Baird, Cropping Lecturer, Tocal College

My name's Justine Baird, I'm the cropping lecturer and Cert IV Coordinator at Tocal College.

Note: Cert IV, short for Certificate IV in Agriculture, is the second year of study for most students at Tocal College.

### What is the purpose of your role?

My role is to work with the Cert IVs on their cropping units but on top of that I also work with Matt Notley helping him with farm budgets and precision ag and also do some animal health and AI – or artificial insemination with Cert IVs as well.

### How does it fit into the role of DPI?

Giving the students an opportunity to see what's coming through in advancements. So they've got a very good opportunity at the moment, in that we've got the Southern Multi-Breeds Project on campus so they're getting an opportunity to see what researchers are actually doing to try and bring breed plan figures together. And I think that project runs for about five years.

### What is a typical day like in your role?

I get a lot more done and prepped up for the day in those early hours but I think also having that Cert IV Coordinator role on top then that gives me a chance to work with students who may be having a few issues then before we have to worry about class time come through then it'll be all day interaction with students whether it be teaching, doing upgrades or working on programs or working with industry to bring projects in to the college.

### Q. What do you mean by upgrades?

So students get an opportunity to have a, I suppose what we would call a second go at their work, so if there is some things we don't think are quite up to standard of what we would expect of a Cert III or Cert IV student we'll sit down with them and work through those to help them understand what they may have missed or to gain a bit more information.

### What do you love about your job?

It's actually been an interesting one because I have done a full circle, I started off teaching, I spent 20 odd years in corporate and now I've come back to it so it's actually nice to close that link but to also bring students into an industry that's actually lacking – there's not a lot of schools around doing agriculture at secondary level and this is our chance to bring people into that industry.

### What could you do without?

Probably a lot of the paperwork but in saying that the systems that I have come out of in the corporate world, this is probably not too bad but yeah sometimes that continual reporting and progressing does tend to take a lot more time and takes it away from the students.

### Does creativity play a part in your role?

Students these days are learning in so many different ways, it's not just the stock standard way of teaching so I think we're in the fortunate position that there might only be 20 students in the class so we can actually tailor things to them, split them up into smaller groups and have them working on different projects or having them working on a rotation throughout.

### What personal attributes are beneficial in this role?

Sense of humour! I think a lot of patience. Just getting through and helping a lot of students that sometimes find things difficult, so having that ability to work with them and help them through that.

### What qualifications do you need for this role?

I've got a Bachelor in Ag Science that I obtained many, many moons ago, and I - probably like a lot of us - I've done a lot of industry training since then as well and some of those may have been accredited or non-accredited, and obviously we all attend workshops or conferences and things to keep ourselves up to date.

### Where did you study?

University of Western Sydney, Hawksbury, formerly known as Hawksbury Ag College, and then I did a Graduate Certificate in Marketing through CSU (Charles Sturt University) at Bathurst.

### What other roles have you had?

I started teaching straight out of Uni. I was fortunate enough to get a role in a private school in Sydney. And then I did it a little in reverse, I took my gap year three years after Uni and that was probably the turning point. So I'd gone through Uni doing genetics and nutrition, had nothing to do with soils or plants, avoided it like the plague, and have now spent the last 25 years in agronomy in the corporate fertiliser world before coming back to Tocal College as a cropping lecturer.

Q. And so what happened in that gap year that made you interested in soils?

It was a good thing to see the other side of it, so I was predominantly doing all the tractor work for them so we were sowing crops, silaging and I think my nutrition side of things went 'well hang on a minute you're not going to be able to work in nutrition with your livestock if you don't actually understand what's going in'. So it sort of closed that loop for me a little bit.

### Where did you grow up?

A little town called Bilpin, down in the Hawksbury Valley, so which is quite funny it is known for its horticulture not for its agriculture.

### What impact do you see technology having on this work in the next 20+ years?

Huge impact, and I think from a livestock point of view we are just starting to see the tip of the iceberg on that so their talking now on things like walkover weighing systems and I think the next generation in that is going to be electronic tags and how we can use that to monitor animal performance and match that in to some of the PA (precision agriculture) stuff. And I think students now, even just thinking of some of the students in the last couple of days that I've spoken to that are getting jobs now because of what they have learnt here (about emerging technologies) and the understanding that they also need to go and reskill and upskill on some of that coming through.

### What advice do you have for young people who are interested in this sort of work?

In agriculture there is a broad range of jobs, you are not just looking to go and milk cows or mark lambs or jump in a header and harvest crops, there's so much out there from finance to broking to saleyards so grab it, grab the opportunity, you know we need staff, we need the workers and now Australia's got that opportunity to push it through.