

Thank you Luke.

I'm going to start off with a couple of quotes.

The first is a stanza from the poem the *End of Summer, Port Willunga* by Mike Ladd.

It should have been enough –
This one bale of hay,
Rolled into a lozenge
Of late afternoon light –
Its rightness
In the field
On the sea's verge.

The next is a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson's book *Nature*, published in 1836, the year that nine ships left Britain for the newly created province of South Australia.

'The charming landscape which I saw this morning, is indubitably made up of some twenty or thirty farms. Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Manning the woodland beyond. But none of them own the landscape. There is a property in the horizon which no man has, but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet. This is the best part of these men's farms, yet to this their land deeds them no title.'

In case you hadn't noticed, it's Australian Year of the Farmer. The fact that 2012 is also National Year of Reading confirms the suspicions of this former book publisher turned urban and rural planner, that the allocation of national years of focus must relate directly to the endangered status of the subject at hand. That we are celebrating two years in the same year adds a sense of urgency to the said agendas, as they evidently couldn't wait their respective turns.

Focusing today on the farmer, there seem to be numerous conversations around town that are encouraging us city dwellers to pause for a moment to consider the contributions of our country cousins. A recent debate staged at RiAus contemplated whether 'Australian Cities need Australian farmers' – a question which is

suddenly under the spotlight in an intense, often xenophobic national debate surrounding foreign investment in Australian farms – a debate which seems to conveniently ignore the history of Australian agriculture, which has always relied heavily on migration and overseas investment of one sort or another.

The preamble to the RiAus event pointed out that 89 per cent of Australia's 23 million-strong population now live in urban areas. Australian farms produce around 93 per cent of our domestic food supply, and yet apparently many city people do not know (or care) where their food comes from. At the same time Australian farmers are under pressure as never before – externally from economic and environmental factors, and internally from the exodus of their children, the next generation, to the cities.

Arguing for the affirmative side of that debate, landscape futurist Professor Wayne Meyer of the University of Adelaide dismissed the assertion that city dwellers don't care about provenance.

"Knowing where our food and water is coming from is becoming increasingly important," he argued.

Meyer also pointed out that as the real costs of energy and transport escalate, the closer the better, as locally derived, quality assured, ethically and sustainably produced food is increasingly in demand.

These themes were taken up at a subsequent assembly of soil scientists at the National Wine Centre, which highlighted the value of soils to the agricultural landscapes around Adelaide, and reinforced the notion that fertile land is a precious and finite resource that should be protected from urban development. Dr Annie O'Neill, senior lecturer in soil science at the University of Adelaide, reminded the symposium that soils underpin the economic value of those landscapes. The wine industry, broadacre cropping, horticulture – these are the things South Australia is famous for, not just from an industry point of view but from a tourism point of view, too. At the same event independent soil consultant James Hall stressed the need to increase land and soil literacy, and to understand and support our agricultural industries to a greater extent. He identified the state's top five areas with terroir worth protecting as the Barossa, McLaren Vale, Adelaide Hills around Lenswood, the Northern Adelaide Plains, and the

lower North around Freeling, Roseworthy and Kapunda.

Unsurprisingly, Hall's selection mirrors much of the geographic region being put forward by agricultural economist Professor Randy Stringer, as a possible site for World Heritage listing. Randy and I have been exploring the idea of pursuing a UNESCO bid for the agrarian landscapes of the Mount Lofty Ranges for a couple of years now, along with a group of four councils who funded a feasibility study into the idea over the past twelve months. For those of you who might be interested, those councils are currently deliberating the findings of the study, and those of us involved in the world heritage project are hopeful that a decision about whether to proceed or not with pursuing a bid will be made by the end of the year. And for those in the room who enjoy political access, various state government agencies are also currently looking at the proposal seriously at the moment.

The key message of the World Heritage feasibility study is that the that the Character Preservation legislation being developed for the Barossa and McLaren Vale will not necessarily make farms profitable, or sustain our agricultural landscapes into the future. Evidence from around the world demonstrates land use policy can only mitigate negative pressures: What it fails to do is provide a context that can inspire and energise agri-food businesses to keep them economically viable.

The study also shows that UNESCO listing has evolved over time into a globally recognized brand that could stimulate the food, wine and tourism economy of this region in ways that land use regulations could never do. A related economic study conducted by Julian Morison of Econsearch cites potential economic impacts of up to \$300 million on the state's GRP, and a potential 3000 new jobs in the agriculture, wine and tourism industries. And half that money and half those jobs would go into the region itself.

The UNESCO project is all about sustenance rather than constraint, and celebration rather than regulation. It may well be that pursuing a world heritage bid based on agricultural and historical values over the next decade may actually bring into question some of the current regulatory constraints on farming, and help remove or improve the layers of bureaucracy, rather than add new ones. It should also provide farmers with the ammunition

to challenge other claims on precious terroir, such as mining and suburban encroachment.

Much of the current discourse around the role of farmers and agriculture points to the intangible contributions that farmers make to city folk, as long-term custodians of distinctive and beautiful regional landscapes, and as managers of the associated natural resources. These conversations reflect a resurgent interest in regional-scale governance, necessitated by the effects of climate change, water security, food security and peak oil projections.

Through the provenance discussion, and aided by the farmers' market boom, there is growing urban population support for a nearby agriculture, viticulture, horticulture, tourism and recreation driven economy. At stake are valued landscape attributes that define a region and contribute to its economic viability, quality of life, and ecological sustainability.

Appreciation of how agricultural landscapes can be integral to a community's sense of identity and wellbeing is coinciding with recognition that the economic building blocks of the global economy are indeed regions, rather than nations, states or cities.

It is my view, that as we contemplate the future of agriculture and the role of farmers into that future, ongoing dialogue between community, industry and regional policy makers must keep posing the question 'Do we have adequate planning paradigms and conceptual frameworks to safeguard the landscape values that are at risk?'

South Australia exports a wide range of premium food and wine from a relatively limited resource base. Growing global populations with rapidly rising incomes present ever-expanding market opportunities.

Another question we should be asking is are South Australian food businesses well placed to take advantage of the estimated 75% increase in global food demand by 2050? Or, do public policy biases towards the mining industry and subsidies for the car industry disadvantage the South Australian wine and food sector?

I have to confess to experiencing a somewhat guilty frisson of schadenfreude regarding the timing of today's event in the wake of the Olympic Dam news – given the average length of most mines is only 10 years, is it time to focus on developing a more diverse economy that gives the long term role of agriculture its due attention?

With agriculture booming around the world, shouldn't we be asking why South Australia has lost 15% of some of its most productive farmland over the past decade? How do we address soil loss more effectively? Do our water polices promote innovation and efficient practices?

Do our local, state and national regulatory regimes converge in ways that encourage competitive premium wine and food value chains or are they working as a hindrance? And why are we spending significant resources seeking what will likely become a somewhat generic state level brand, when our major competitors around the world are promoting the distinctiveness of the food, wine and tourism attributes inherent in their local agricultural landscapes?

In the second half of today's speech, I have decided to pretty much quote verbatim Randy's foreword to the feasibility study that we worked on together, so Randy, wherever you are catching up with your wild family in the wilds of North America, I am channeling your words from here-onwards...

“After two years of work on the UNESCO initiative, after all the reading and thinking, the debates and conversations, the presentations and interviews, for us, it has come down to answering one question: ‘If we *can* get it, why wouldn’t we want it?’

Why wouldn’t we want our region to be recognised as part of an exceptional group of agricultural landscapes? The Lake District in England is mobilising a campaign to gain recognition. Current World Heritage landscapes include the Alto Douro in Portugal, the Val d’Orcia in southern Tuscany, Cinque Terre on Italy’s Ligurian Coast, Jalisco’s tequila-producing region in Mexico, and the villages and surrounding landscape of Hungary’s Tokaj wine region.

All these areas are World Heritage listed because the significance of their agricultural landscapes is considered so exceptional that they are of global importance for present and future generations. Why wouldn’t we want to be part of this group?

Many of us are just plain incredulous of the whole notion. A common reaction is to ask how can we possibly be part of such an elite group? For most of us, the agricultural landscape bordering our city is merely our backyard. It is easy for us to see the simple, tangible value of its produce – its wine, figs, apples, cherries, eggs and cheeses.

It is often difficult, however, for us to see and recognise the diverse, less tangible values that make up the wealth of the landscape itself. Perhaps it’s even more difficult for us to see the many ways those less tangible values contribute to our sense of place and the ‘liveability’ of Adelaide – that difficult-to-define blend of economic prosperity, community cohesiveness and environmental health.

As a contributor to that liveability factor, our agricultural backyard’s virtues are many, making our city neighbourhoods more attractive places to live and work.

We take weekend drives through it, we trek through it, and we ride our bikes through it. We put our visiting relatives in the car to show off our vistas, vineyards, orchards and charming villages. We brag about it.

This agricultural landscape also provides watershed benefits, biodiversity benefits and wildlife habitat. And, yes, our backyard provides us with a sense of place. It is a cultural landscape reflecting how we live, work and play. The nearby countryside helps define who we are as a city and as a community, and how we differ from other cities around the world.

Viewed on our maps, the city boundaries and agricultural landscape are two separate geographies. In our daily lives, no such boundary exists. In Adelaide, we use and depend on our agricultural landscape, the same way we use and depend on our parks and beaches. No matter where we live in the city, it doesn't take much more than fifteen minutes to head east into an agrarian world.

Adelaide, the city is inextricably connected to the surrounding farmland. Food and wine markets, regulations and policies, and roads and walking trails link city to countryside. What we buy in the city influences what is produced in the country – shaping and reshaping how the landscape appears. Similarly, the policies, regulations and growth strategies made in the city shape producer incentives, influencing their ability to invest, compete and prosper. Ignoring any of these connections between the city landscape and the agricultural landscape presents an incomplete picture of their shared world.

The UNESCO initiative evolved from initial research exploring how best to protect the farmland bordering Adelaide. Australia is one of the only countries in the world that doesn't take a coordinated, strategic approach to protecting farmland. We learned quickly from our work that even the best farmland protection practices do not guarantee profitable farmers.

Our study explains how Adelaide has inherited something unique to human history. I think we present a compelling case for pursuing World Heritage status, explaining how our historical inheritance provides an inimitable opportunity to promote the individual interests of agricultural producers. If we can provide our region with World Heritage status, it would represent a singular, strategic determinant of regional competitiveness unrivalled in Australia.

Do we embrace our unique inheritance, promote it, and celebrate it for our parents, for our children and for the world? Or do we allow our agrarian landscape to predictably and monotonously evolve to look like every other place in the world?

There are eleven UNESCO World Heritage 'agricultural sites' on the planet. Only eleven. Not one is in the Southern Hemisphere. No other agricultural landscape in Australia stands a chance of gaining recognition.

Finally, as Randy always likes to point out, no matter how much Melbourne may want it, they can't beguile it away from us. Not ever. It's time to celebrate our history, our identity, and our landscape.