

# CANDIDATE PROFILE

## Janie Forrest



I grew up on a remote sheep station in the Pilbara of Western Australia before embarking upon an adventure in hotel management lasting 15 years, comprising 4 years of training in Europe & Sydney, after which I worked for Hyatt, Sheraton Worldwide and boutique hotel groups. Throughout, there lingered a yearning desire to return to the rural lifestyle that had been the history of our family for many generations.

In 1995, I was given the opportunity to return to those roots, taking over the administration and management of Coolaroo Alpaca Stud in the High Range of the Southern Highlands, a stud which pioneered the alpaca industry in Australia in 1988. Purchasing the business in 1998, I have served on local and national industry bodies and continue to do so as Chair of the Australian Alpaca Association Youth Development Committee. In 2001, I travelled with my family to live in Peru for a year conducting field research defining the fibre and skin characteristics of the alpaca, research undertaken to underpin the viability of a future Australian alpaca fleece industry. That research was subsequently published and presented to audiences around the world in seminars and training workshops, and has been applied to identify and benchmark elite alpacas internationally.

Coolaroo has subsequently merged with Illawarra Alpaca Stud to become Coolawarra Alpacas, an extensive operation which exhibits at agricultural shows and field days, exports live animals to international markets, sells fleece locally and overseas, promotes Australian alpaca product manufacture and merchandising, and supports the emerging alpaca meat market. Coolawarra works with Sydney University, hosting veterinary undergraduates on a regular rotation, and continues to drive the industry through its development and mentoring of the Australian Alpaca Youth Group. Coolawarra hosts an annual camp for alpaca youth, drawing participants from Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. The organisation of that event, with its educational seminars and animal training, is undertaken by the older and more experienced members, who mentor their younger colleagues, and conduct competitions at agricultural shows throughout the year. Coolawarra was amongst the first in Australia to commercially apply newly developed techniques of embryo transfer to the accelerated genetic improvement of the alpaca, and was a driver of the Australian Across-herd Genetic Evaluation programme, producing estimated breeding values for fleece weight and fineness in alpacas.

Having been a regular alpaca exhibitor at 25 consecutive Sydney Royals, I am now a Councillor of six years standing in the NSW Royal Agricultural Society, where I am responsible for the RAS Rural Ambassador Program and am Chair of the Agricultural Development Committee. I share my family's passion for horses and eventing with three generations of active riders. I sponsor several tertiary scholarships for indigenous students, and am an ambassador for the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation.

I have a broad interest and experience in the Australian rural sector and an overriding enthusiasm for Australian agriculture, characteristics which I would like to apply in the service of our youth and our community. I support the current management of the Berrima Co-op, and would like to apply myself to further improve the Co-op's facility and service to local agribusiness, and the prosperity of our community.