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MEDIA RELEASE

FOUR NEW INDUCTEES FOR DAIRY INDUSTRY HONOUR BOARD APRIL 26

Four men who have made major contributions to the dairy industry in south-west Victoria will join the Western Victorian Dairy Industry Honour Board.

The new inductees, the late Hec Fisher, Rob Leishman, Basil Ryan and Graeme Ward, were announced tonight at the Great South West Dairy Awards at Glenormiston.

Mr Fisher joined the Soldier Settlement Commission in 1949 and spent 41 years with the commission and its successors, mostly in Western Victoria. Mr Fisher retired in 1991 and the following year received a Public Service Medal in recognition of his work. Mr Fisher, who was raised on a dairy farm near Camperdown, was involved in many major land development projects, including the establishment of dairy farms in the Heytesbury Settlement region. He later managed the Rural Finance regional office at Warrnambool from 1978 to 1991.

Heytesbury dairy farmer Rob Leishman has been a long standing and vocal supporter of the dairy industry. He was a trailblazer in establishing the Heytesbury Settlement and continues to mentor young farmers and their families while supporting the industry at every opportunity. Mr Leishman has been a particularly strong voice against timber companies taking over traditional dairying areas. He has also offered his farm's services in times of need, such as managing herds on agistment after bushfires.

Basil Ryan has been a passionate dairy farmer in the Grassmere district for many years. He has been involved at local and district level in the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria and in the Victorian Farmers Federation. He has been a champion of farmer's rights to access water and is a member of the Groundwater and Rivers Consultative Committee for Southern Rural Water, the Water Council of the VFF, a representative on the Western Region Sustainable Water Committee and a former member of the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority.

Graeme Ward has recently retired after a 30-year career in dairy research and extension. Graeme conducted numerous pasture species and fertiliser trials on farms across the region. He compiled one of the first south-west Victorian pasture species and clovers recommendations guides that continues to assist farmers. As part of the South West Dairy Services Team with the Department of Primary Industries, Graeme designed and conducted many practical and relevant research projects, including irrigation and effluent research. Graeme has been a member of the Regional Extension Committee for the past four years.

Awards project manager Barb Collins said all four recipients were 'local legends' in the dairy industry.

“They are all well known and respected for their dedication to the industry and their support of their fellow farmers,” Ms Collins said.

“They have done a lot to advance our industry.”

The four new inductees join Noorat farmer Niel Black, Murray Goulburn Field Services Manager Peter Haynes, former Warrnambool Cheese and Butter Managing Director John McLean, Bessiebelle farmer John Pye, and farmer and organiser of the Sungold Field Days Tony Rea on the honour board.

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