17 August 2016

**Grand Champion property planner announced**

The Minister for Primary Industries, Lands and Water, The Hon. Niall Blair, MLC presented awards to the winners of the 19th annual Local Land Services Schools Property Planning Competition at AgQuip today.

The competition gives high school agriculture students first-hand experience in investigating the real life challenges faced by local farmers, as the students prepare a property management plan to achieve sustainability from both an economic and environmental perspective.

This competition is one way North West and Northern Tablelands Local Land Services have engaged with the community through the schools to provide high quality education in biosecurity, profitability, soils, pastures, water quality and native vegetation management.

The winners of the competition were selected from more than 250 students representing schools across the Northern Tablelands and North West regions and a Grand Champion Award was also presented.

The Grand Champion Wallaroi Perpetual Shield was awarded to year 10 team Megan Galbraith and Sophie Sutherland from New England Girls School in Armidale. This farm plan incorporated well-considered biodiversity recommendations linking patches of remnant vegetation, good analysis of alternative enterprises and use of benchmarks for pasture management and biodiversity.

Nine awards in all were presented to students for their high quality entries.

Liz Blair, Land Services Manager from Northern Tablelands Local Land Services, certainly sees the value in educating tomorrow’s land managers on core issues like agriculture production, biosecurity, emergency and natural resource management.

“Now in its 19th year, the Property Planning Competition has trained students from the Upper Hunter to Southern Queensland. Since 1997, over 6,000 students have been trained in strategic farm planning. Some of those first students, now in their 30s, are making significant on-farm decisions and involved in all levels of primary industries across Australia,” said Liz.

“This valuable competition provides an excellent opportunity for students to gain practical skills and experience the challenges faced by landowners and managers in all circumstances.

“It gets students out of the classroom and offers them a unique opportunity to build on their understanding of land management issues, translating scientific theory into on-farm decisions,” said Liz.

The Schools Property Planning Competition is supported by Catchment Action NSW and the National Landcare Programme.

**Winners are…**

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| **Place** | **School** | **Students** | **Teacher** |
| Grand Champion – North West & Northern Tablelands region | New England Girls School, Armidale | Megan Galbraith & Sophie Sutherland | Mr Mark Fisher |
| Winner – North West region | Calrossy Anglican College, Tamworth | Naomi Cant, Georgia Carrigan, Sam Dernee, Caity Palmer | Ms Bronwyn Nielsen |
| Highly Commended – North West region | Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School, Tamworth | Peter Urquart, Mitchell Roworth, Luke Johnstone | Ms Laura Tolley |
| Runner-up – North West Region | McCarthy Catholic College | Samantha Thrift | Ms Jo-Anne McHugh |
| Winner – Northern Tablelands Senior Category | Macintyre High School, Inverell | Emily Battle & Amanda Page | Ms Jaclyn O’Brien |
| Runner-up – Northern Tablelands Senior Category | Macintyre High School, Inverell | Taylor Withers & Tracy Byrnes | Ms Jaclyn O’Brien |
| Winner – Northern Tablelands Junior Category | New England Girls School, Armidale | Megan Galbraith & Sophie Sutherland | Mr Mark Fisher |
| Runner-up – Northern Tablelands Junior Category | O’Connor Catholic College, Armidale | Skye Danieli | Ms Janet Price |
| Winner – Northern Tablelands region overall | New England Girls School, Armidale | Megan Galbraith & Sophie Sutherland | Mr Mark Fisher |

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Editors Note: The Award Ceremony provides excellent visual and audio opportunities of students receiving their awards.

**When: 10.30am, Wednesday, August 17th.**

**Where: Ag-Quip, Site No E/F-16/17**