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MEDIA RELEASE

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Revved up and contracted to grow



As a 22-year-old, Glen Simpson (pictured) bought 240-hectares of land and was keen to move from the family farm and run his own property.

He knew what he wanted, but he had to work out a way to 'grow' his farming operation at Keith in the state's South East, and quickly realised the cost of land and machinery would be his biggest inhibitor.

That is, until he embarked on a farming journey of building up his enterprise by offering contracting to other local farmers, and that remains a vital part of his successful farming business today.

Glen will be the farmer guest speaker at the free Getting the Crop In seminar

on March 9 in Clare, where he will share an insight into how he runs his farm, how he has built it up, and also how he helped reinvigorate his local community by bringing jet boat racing to Keith.

Three kilometres south of Keith, Glen and his wife Tania now operate 1600-hectares of irrigated cropping country, along with 2000 Merino ewes and a crossbred lambing operation.

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They employ four full-time staff, plus casuals, and have come a long way from those early days of hard work on their own trying to build the business.

"I went contracting to allow some cash flow and generate some money so I could buy more land and that contracting side of the business is still going today," Glen said.

"I had just bought 600-acres (242ha) when I was 22 and I needed some machinery and I couldn't really make it stack up.

"I decided to buy an airseeder and haybaler and started doing contract jobs for neighbours and it grew from there.

"At Keith, where it's mainly mixed farming with cropping and livestock, a lot of farmers didn't want to own a lot of their own machinery, they just wanted the basics and get a contractor in for seeding or haymaking or harvest."

The cashflow that came with contracting enabled Glen to buy up small parcels of land, 120ha or so at a time, which eventually he was able to sell to purchase farmland neighbouring his own to build a bigger home base and upgrade his operation.

"Obviously now we have a lot bigger machinery, when we started out we weren't buying new airseeders or new tractors it was all second-hand, but now we're able to buy new," he said.



Pictured: Glen Simpson & staff; Tony Hedges, John Yates, Andrew Semler, Michael Fry, Sam Dancer and Michelle Pomery.

Part of the Simpson's success has been due to a solid staffing base, with three of the four employees having worked in the business for close to 10 years.

"We all have our set jobs, but pull together when we need to," Glen said.

"We've got a good group that helps make it work, which is important because they are the forefront and the face of your business when you're out contracting.

"I also really enjoy employing young kids as well, getting them out here to work after school or on the weekends just to get some experience with tractor driving and that sort of thing."

Lawn mower tractor pulls and Diesel and Dirt derbies were successful and helped raise the profile of the local show.

But when people scoffed at Glen's idea to take it a step further and introduce jet boat racing, it was exactly the catalyst he needed to ensure that it would happen.

"When people said 'na, we can't do that', that was when I thought 'righto, here we go' and we dug our heels in even harder, got in contact with the jet boat association, got a water licence and built a track," he said.

"Now we're hosting national rounds of jet boat racing here, with no (natural) river or lake in sight.



“We had 12,000 people there at one event and sold every pub and tavern out of beer within an 80km radius of Keith.”

The events have raised a lot of money to keep the local show going, but also supporting vital community services, including the hospital and service groups, and the reinvigoration came at the perfect time for the small South East town.

“It’s put Keith on the map for the right reasons,” Glen said.

“When we first started, Keith was going through a rough patch – a couple of seed companies had gone broke, our hospital was struggling, we’d had a few rough years on the farms and it was all a bit negative.

“But these events helped put a positive spin on things, it pushed a lot of money back into the community, not just Keith but the Tatiara, Bordertown, Mundulla and Tintinara.

“It has been an absolutely amazing event for the area financially, and just a real positive for the younger people.

“We get them involved in helping on the day and prepping the track, it’s really done a tremendous amount for the positivity for the town and the area and has really gone from strength to strength as we get ready to host our next jet boat event in Keith on March 26.”

Hear more of Glen’s story, along with four other sessions featuring the Hart trials results, grain marketing news and also tips for managing the stresses of farming and life, at the Getting the Crop In seminar hosted by the Hart Field-Site Group on March 9.

Sponsored by Precision Agriculture, the free event begins with a light breakfast from 8am, seminar from 8.30am (including morning tea) and finishes at 12.30pm at The Influencers Church, Stradbroke Road, Clare (northern end of the racecourse).

To register for Getting the Crop In and for more information see the Hart Field-Site Group website www.hartfieldsite.org.au

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