



**Media Release: Monday 21 August 2017**

## **West Midlands Group named GIWA 2017 Grower Group of the Year**

West Midlands Group have been named GIWA 2017 Grower Group of the Year at the Grower Group Alliance (GGA) Growing Expectations national grower group summit held in Perth last Thursday.

West Midlands Group, which was established in 2003 after the amalgamation from a number of land conservation district committees, was recognised for its leadership and efforts in delivering research, development and extension and adoption.

The group employs 11 staff with strong background in cropping research, livestock health, natural resource management, finance, communication, marketing and extensive agricultural industry experience.

In presenting the award, Grain Industry Association of WA (GIWA) treasurer Neil Hooper said West Midlands Group has played an integral role in the development of new opportunities in the Central Midlands region.

“This includes partnering with industry to link pastoral beef to high value markets through new backgrounding systems, adding significant value to pastoral cattle as well as providing new employment opportunities on farm and in meat processing,” he said.

“West Midlands Group also partner strongly with research and development corporations and the wider industry, which is being demonstrated on the ground in increased productivity and profitability gains for the group, its members and the region.”

West Midlands Group executive officer Anne Wilkins said she was very honoured and appreciative to receive the award.

“I would like to acknowledge and thank the staff and board of the West Midlands Group – we are fortunate to have an experienced and motivated team who are innovative thinkers and want to push the boundaries in research, development and extension,” she said.

“We are also seeing a lot of changes and opportunities as the intensive horticulture industry expands in our region and as a group we are ensuring that our strategic direction reflects that.”

GGA executive officer Annabelle Bushell said the award acknowledged the important role grower groups played in their local communities.

“West Midlands Group play a leading role in their community – as well as continuing to deliver targeted research, development and extension in their local area, they are also exploring opportunities to increase the sustainability and productivity of the group and their region,” she said.

“Grower groups across WA and Australia play a pivotal role in regional communities and are a valuable collaborative partner for government, levy funded entities and private companies in the extension and adoption of new technologies.

“This award recognises both the social importance of grower groups as well as the critical link their play in the agricultural landscape.”

The Grower Group of the Year award is sponsored by the Grain Industry Association of WA (GIWA) in

recognition of the economic and social contribution of grower groups to the competitiveness of WA's agrifood sector. The winning group receives a cash prize to go towards improving group capacity, operations and systems.

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## **CONTACT**

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## **Photo Captions**

Image 1 (5448): GIWA treasurer Neil Hooper (left) with West Midlands Group executive officer Anne Wilkins at the presentation of the GIWA 2017 Grower Group of the Year award.

Image 2 (5456): GIWA business development manager Ian Longson (left), Leadership WA chief executive officer Robin McClellan, GGA chairperson Kelly Manton-Pearce, GIWA treasurer Neil Hooper, West Midlands Group executive officer Anne Wilkins, GGA executive officer Annabelle Bushell and GIWA chief executive officer Larissa Taylor at the presentation of the GIWA 2017 Grower Group of the Year award.

Image 3 (5470): GGA chairperson Kelly Manton-Pearce (left), GIWA business development manager Ian Longson, West Midlands Group project officer Courtney Martino, Leadership WA chief executive officer Robin McClellan, West Midlands Group executive officer Anne Wilkins, GIWA treasurer Neil Hooper, West Midlands Group agribusiness development manager Carolina Brander, GGA executive officer Annabelle Bushell, GIWA chief executive officer Larissa Taylor and West Midlands Group board member Tracey Cook at the presentation of the GIWA 2017 Grower Group of the Year award.