

## 'Dust bowl' becomes a pastoral showpiece

By Rural Editor  
NIGEL AUSTIN

Mrs Mary Lillecrapp used to shovel the dust out of the family's Todmorden station homestead near Oodnadatta when the dust storms arrived in the mid-1960s.

Three decades later the station is a model property after yesterday winning the Ibis Award, the State's most prestigious environmental commendation for land management.

The award and \$5000 for winning the State and pastoral zone section was presented to Mr Douglas Lillecrapp and his father Mr Gordon Lillecrapp at the South Australian Farmers Federation conference in Adelaide yesterday. The station is about the 10th largest in the State, measuring about 100km from east to west and 60km from north to south.

Mr Lillecrapp senior bought the sprawling station in 1962 after it had been through 10 years of serious drought and was over-run by wild donkeys, camels and brumbies. The outlook couldn't have been much worse with the 7167sq km Todmorden, consisting of two giant paddocks and about six watering points.

But the Lillecrapp family soon got to work, gradually bringing the sprawling property under control.

"We used to have horrific dust storms when I was a child," Mrs



Douglas and Gordon Lillecrapp with the Ibis award yesterday.

Mary-Anne McMichael, a daughter of Mrs Lillecrapp, recalled yesterday. "But dad worked very hard protecting the environment because it was imperative to look after the land.

"The result is we don't have the dust storms of years ago."

The work included growing trees, fencing around water holes so they didn't end up as dust bowls and reducing the grazing pressure.

Todmorden these days includes 26 paddocks and 110 watering points in country that receives only 140mm of rain a year.

The judges said they were particularly impressed by the sensitive relationship between cattle management and the highly dynamic and fragile ecosystem on the property.

Mr Douglas Lillecrapp said the family had focused on the en-

vironment for many years. "The environment is your future because if you don't look after it you don't have a future," Mr Lillecrapp said.

An emphasis on conservation grazing sees only 3000 to 4000 poll hereford females on the property.

Mr Lillecrapp is chairman of the Marla/Oodnadatta Soil Conservation Board and a member of the SA Pastoral Board which oversees pastoral leases.

"The pastoral country has been managed very well in South Australia because people are in it for the long haul," Mr Lillecrapp said.

The regional winners were: the Holman family from Cockaleeche on Eyre Peninsula; the Jaeschke family from Hart, near Clare; Mr and Mrs Tim Thorn, Hope Forest; Mr and Mrs Rob Smyth, Cooke Plains; and Mr and Mrs Des Castine, Penola.