

# WOOLPRODUCERS AUSTRALIA POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## Executive Summary

WoolProducers Australia Policy Advisory Committee

8.32am-10.50am (AEST) 14 November 2024 | Vibe Hotel Canberra Airport

### Presidents Report

The report was taken as read and the President made the following points:

- President will stand down from AWEX at the AGM and the Vice President of WoolProducers will be the new WPA appointed AWEX Director
- The activist groups have been taking up time
- NFF restructuring discussions continuing

### CEO's Report

The CEO expanded on her report, highlighting the following points:

- Mulesing and pain relief remain on WoolProducers' radar, due to the lack of serious discussion on these topics within industry and government. There is a low level of knowledge in the wider industry about these issues.
- WoolProducers continues to call for governments to mandate the use of pain relief when mulesing. This issue has been poorly handled for years by industry but needs to be resolved one way or another.
- WoolProducers attended a meeting with AWI and SCAA with the Kenyan Embassy to discuss a potential training programme with Kenyan workers. Regardless of the outcome the speed and efficiency of the Kenyan government was impressive.

### GM's Report

The GM provided a verbal report including the following:

- WoolProducers wrote to AWI seeking more information on Woolmark Plus to understand tangible outputs and benefit to growers. There is potential for collaboration between the various entities working in a similar space:
  - WoolProducers held a meeting with the Australian Wool Sustainability Standard Manager at AWEX in relation best practice lamb marking and the potential for collaboration with Woolmark Plus.
  - WoolProducers has engaged with Integrity Systems Company on the development of the voluntary sustainability module within the LPA program. WPA suggested ISC approach Woolmark Plus to discuss collaboration opportunities.
- WPA have reached out to AWI to seek more information on Woolmark Plus, as it seems to be more of a concept than a program that provides value to growers.
- At the conclusion of the Best Practice Lamb Marking project in 2025 WoolProducers will engage relevant RDCs to discuss aligned extension programs.

## MATTERS FOR DECISION AND DISCUSSION

### WoolPoll Progress Update

The WoolProducers WoolPoll representative provided an update to the Committee from the WoolPoll panel within the limits of what could be discussed, including key learnings.

The WoolProducers Policy Committee discussed the following:

- The benefit of holding the vote every five years instead of three due to the cost of the process.
- That WoolProducers' 2020 WoolPoll recommendations were largely ignored by DAFF.

**Action: CEO to circulate the list of WoolProducers' 2020 WoolPoll recommendations to the Committee.**

The Committee was encouraged to suggest new recommendations or provide feedback on the 2020 WoolProducers recommendations.

**MOTION CARRIED:**

The WoolProducers Policy Committee recommends the WoolProducers Board endorse the motion that in future WoolPolls there must be better information linked to the Voting Information Memorandum (VIM) to enable more informed decision making.

**AWI WICP**

The President provided a verbal update from the WICP meeting held on 30 October, noting the following:

- WoolProducers put forward a number of pre-WICP meeting questions to AWI along with a letter requested a one-on-one meeting following the AWI Chair phone call to the WPA President over concern of the 'Broken Promise' report. The one-on-one was denied, with AWI stating that the items would be discussed at the next WICP meeting.
- There were some non-written questions that were put to the AWI CEO during the WICP from WoolProducers regarding significant geopolitical issues that could impact the wool trade in the future, these had not been considered.
- Some of the questions will be re-asked to AWI at the next WICP meeting due to lack of a sufficient response and the lack of willingness for a one on one meeting.
- WoolProducers were not given the opportunity to speak about some of the issues raised, with AWI leaving the meeting unwilling to engage in a discussion about live lamb cutting/mandatory pain relief for mulesing.
- According to an AWI consultant, the Australian market has been inappropriately compared to the South African market regarding market comparisons. This is despite other industry analysts finding this to be completely reasonable.
- Some industry stakeholders were not happy with feedback from the WPA Board about the lack of information on the VIM, mentioning this was not communicated via the WPA Board member on the WoolPoll panel, or anywhere else before the WoolProducers media release. This is refuted by the WoolProducers CEO who raised this issue during an earlier WICP meeting which was acknowledged by the WoolPoll Chair at the time. The AWI Chair and CEO also gave an undertaking to provide more information to growers on the WoolPoll website, however this did not occur.
- WoolProducers were told it was inappropriate to speak about the redundancy payout of the former AWI CEO after a journalist wrote an article about information appearing in the annual report that was subsequently picked up by other media. WPA did not publicly dispute the payout amount but continued to draw attention to the fact that the ANAO identified that there were no minutes from AWI Board discussions around the establishment of the new role for the former CEO, however AWI's stance was that it impacted and / or influenced voting on WoolPoll.
- The conversation around the pain relief mandate was disappointing given WoolProducers had no support from those at the table despite support in other industry discussions, including from organisations that participate in the H&WAC
- The Committee noted that there is no peak industry body for wool that can hold AWI to account.

**Live Exports**

The Committee noted the update on the live sheep export ban and the CEO sought direction from the committee on the involvement of WoolProducers in the transition taskforce, noting the following:

- There is grower opposition to the taskforce due to the perception of being seen to agree with the ban
- WoolProducers does want to advocate for the best outcome for growers, however, would need a higher level of input into the taskforce to ensure it is done correctly
- WoolProducers is travelling to Perth on 27 November to hear firsthand about the impact of the ban on the WA wool industry.
- WoolProducers must be open to criticism that nobody is looking after wool in terms of live export, and need to do something to support the growers in this space, even though WoolProducers have engaged with both Federal and State Ministers on this issue and the impacts it will have on the wool industry
- WoolProducers have provided both the Western Australian government and the federal government details of the trade opportunities for wool and how both/either state and federal governments could be funding some trade diversification, however no interest has been shown by either government.

The Committee agreed that both participating and not participating in the taskforce bring unique risks that need to be considered.

## MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

### Update: Trade

#### AusHub Update

The Australian AusHub Vietnam Representative joined the meeting and presented the Committee on recent AusHub activities. The update included information that Vietnams wool spinning capacity will soon exceed 20000 tonnes per year.

The Committee noted that the wool industry is lucky to have Mr Le who is well suited and skilled for the position.

#### Industry Structures

The Committee noted the need for an industry restructure given the service providers, RDCs and representative structures were set up when there were approx. 180 million sheep following the collapse of the Reserve Price Scheme. There are now roughly 70 million sheep.

### AWTA

The President provided an update on AWTA activities

### AWEX

The President provided an update on AWEX activities including the following points:

- The AGM will be held on the 22 November.
- The WoolProducers President will stand down as a director, to be replaced by the Vice-President
- The CEO will stand down in June 2025, the search for a new CEO has begun.

### WIA

The President provided an update on WIA activities including the following points

- The October meeting was not held.
- The India Minister for textiles was going to travel to Australia with a delegation in late November to attend a roundtable at the fibre conference in Melbourne. The Minister is no longer attending, however WoolProducers will still engage the delegation.

### Update: NFF Committees

Committee members provided verbal updates on key issues being discussed within each NFF committee:

#### Farming Systems Standing Committee

The Committee is largely focussed on paraquat. The APVMA was also discussed, as was the Sustainable Biosecurity Funding Advisory Panel. WoolProducers have a direct seat at the table via the WPA CEO. Animal welfare is raised to a lesser degree given there are a number of non-livestock groups on the committee (animal welfare issues will be progressed by WoolProducers through the AHA industry forum instead)

#### Workforce Standing Committee

The Committee met recently and discussed the review of the IR laws by the federal government. They also discussed the agriculture visa update, noting the coalition have promised to bring it back in should they win the 2025 federal election. Farm safety update was also discussed.

#### Trade Committee

The Committee met on the 13 November and held a discussion around the UAE free trade agreement, which didn't have many applications for wool. The Anti-Dumping Commission gave another briefing, that also didn't have much application to wool.

## GENERAL BUSINESS

- Sustainable Sheep Resilience Project