

## MEDIA RELEASE

### AWU out of touch on shearing issues

18 January, 2021

Peak woolgrower representative body, WoolProducers Australia (WoolProducers) has called out the Australian Workers Union (AWU) on incorrect statements regarding the current shearer shortage.

The AWU has recently issued a media release stating that *“Farmers and pastoralists are normally able to get away with paying below award rates because they bring in around 500 workers each year from New Zealand.”*

WoolProducers CEO, Ms Jo Hall said *“The AWU’s claim of woolgrowers ‘normally’ paying below award rates for shearers is simply false and misleading”*.

*“NSW and Victoria are currently in the midst of a shearer shortage and we are hearing of well above award rates being paid to get sheep shorn. There are a number of reasons for this current shortage but paying below the award is not one of them”*. Ms Hall said.

The AWU’s media release also says that industry concerns about a shearer shortage *‘haven’t eventuated’* and then makes a contradictory statement about the industry having a current labour shortage.

Ms Hall said, *“The statement relating to a shearer shortage having not eventuated could not be further from the truth. It has been widely reported that as a result of delaying shearing by up to two months some woolgrowers are producing wool which is longer than ideal for downstream processors, resulting in discounted sales prices”*.

*“WoolProducers are hearing anecdotally of shearers being paid by growers double the award in order to get sheep shorn, while many NSW and Victorian shearing contractors are paying shearers \$4, which is well above the \$3.26 award rate”*.

*“The reason that these rates are being paid is supply and demand, there are simply not enough shearers to do the job at this point in time. The AWU are out of touch and making baseless statements does nothing to address the issue”*. Ms Hall said.

WoolProducers are coordinating efforts with relevant industry stakeholders to address this issue and have been working constructively with the Shearing Contractors Association of Australia.

*“There is a serious issue with attraction and retention in the shearing industry, which is due to a combination of factors. At this point in time, we as an industry need to consider all options to try and strategically address these issues however, we won’t be making kneejerk and reactive decisions”*.

*“Woolgrowers and shearers are reliant on each other to make a living and we need a unified approach to resolve the current issue as well as working together to try and mitigate the risk of future problems”*. Ms Hall said.

**ENDS**

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### **About WoolProducers' Australia**

WoolProducers plays a critical role in working closely with companies and entities funded by woolgrower funds including compulsory levies or fees for service.

Its mission is to develop constructive and profitable outcomes for woolgrowers nationally.

The agency is responsible for appointing a director to each of the Australian Wool Exchange and the Australia Wool Testing Authority, promoting good corporate governance and ensuring that the interests of growers are met.

WoolProducers maintains a working relationship with Australian Wool Innovation as the voice of woolgrower shareholders. It aims to contribute to AWI's programs for the benefit of growers, promoting responsible use of levy funds and ensuring good corporate governance.

WoolProducers is the sole wool industry member of Animal Health Australia, and as such, carries a significant responsibility for decision making on behalf of the industry in the event of an emergency animal disease outbreak.

As the only wool grower organisation with membership of the National Farmers' Federation, WoolProducers is responsible for providing key policy advice on behalf of our members, and other wool growers, to Australia's peak farm body.

WoolProducers also works closely with the Federal Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment on key issues such as animal health and welfare, biosecurity, pest management control, natural resource management, drought preparedness, emergency animal disease outbreak preparedness and industry development, including research and trade.