

## **MARCH 2021 MEETING OF THE WOOL INDUSTRY CONSULTATIVE Panel (WICP)**

**Date:** 4 March 2021

**Venue:** Zoom and AWI, Level 6, 68 Harrington Street, Sydney NSW 2000,

The WICP has been established by AWI as an outcome of the recent Review of Performance undertaken by Ernst and Young. Membership comprises representatives of the Australian Association of Stud Merino Breeders, Australian Superfine Wool Growers Association, Australian Wool Growers Association, Broad wools, Commercial Merino Ewe Competition Association, Pastoralists and Graziers of WA and WoolProducers Australia. Two AWI Board members and a representative of the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture also attend. The Panel has an independent chairman.

The purpose of this forum is to ensure a clear two-way consultation between AWI and organisational representatives through to growers. The WICP replaces the previous Industry Consultation Committee (ICC).

The meeting provides an opportunity for the AWI Board to receive and provide feedback on current/important issues and relevant topics from Board meetings.

### **Feedback to AWI from Panel members**

Shearing issues dominated conversation, including: award rate misinformation, the need for increased shearer and shed handling training and retention programs, a call for increased visa pathways for international shearers, as well as improved communication between contractors and training organisations.

Panel members sought an update on measurable outcomes on the current marketing projects. AWI is currently developing a number of category indicators on sectors within the industry (e.g. suiting, sports and base layers). These updates will report on which wools go into these fabrics as well as a quarterly outlook for each sector from a greasy wool perspective.

Concerns were raised about EU markets not acknowledging the benefits of wool. AWI updated that it is working with its consultants along with AWI's European teams to gain support on this issue as it is a significant threat at the moment. AWI will continue to work with other industry bodies and is planning to collaborate with large influential brands in France and UK on the benefits of wool.

A Panel member noted the need for training programs and extension activities for producers who are non-mulesing to breed a sheep fit for purpose to improve fly management.

Growers have requested access to AWI's market intel to inform forecast contracting positions.

### **Geographic and sectoral updates**

- There has been positive feedback in the pastoral zones of Broken Hill, as growers are increasing flock sizes and lambing has increased with strong results out of ram sales in South Australia's pastoral zone.
- There is concern on the reduced size flock of merino, especially in Victoria; and concerns regarding the AI work being completed at the moment as animal liberation groups are lobbying against this.
- Broad wool Ram and Ewe sales have been very good this year, however there are concerns that composite sheep wool is seen to be sold at \$1.00 kg. It was suggested AWI's social media platforms tailor ads to market key broad woollen products to be kept on hand if required, in light of the Texan snowstorms, to boost broad wool sales.
- A flystrike problem is occurring in the eastern states. One of the main issues that surround this is the longevity of the chemical products being used to manage flystrike.
- The shearing shed design and safety work AWI have recently done has been well received in WA. There was an open day at a new shed based on AWI design that was well received. A challenge in WA currently is constraints around water supply as sheep producers have recently intended to increase sheep numbers.

## **Wool 2030 Strategic Plan implementation**

The Panel discussed the implementation of the Wool 2030 strategic plan, starting with the development of a steering committee. AWI and WPA will collaborate to compile scenarios and draft a Terms of Reference on how the Wool 2030 Steering Committee process will be undertaken and the selection process that will need to occur.

## **Department of Agriculture's Statutory Funding Agreement**

Revisions to all funding agreements for all RDCs have occurred. The new AWI 10-year statutory funding agreement focuses on stakeholder engagement, research development and extension priorities to improve profitability of the sector, contemporary Australian governance practice for better transparency and better use of funds, and monitoring and evaluation to demonstrate positive outcomes and clear benefit to levy payers and the Australian community. AWI's SFA agreement is currently in place and can be found on the AWI website.

## **AWI Board Nomination Committee**

WICP members each nominated at least one candidate for the Board Nomination Committee (BNC). A list of these nominations and a copy of their CVs were provided ahead of an anonymous polling process. The anonymous ballot was conducted via a zoom poll. After this process was completed, there was a tie in votes between John Sutherland and Simon Cameron. A second round of anonymous polling occurred between the two nominees selected in the first round. As a result Simon Cameron was selected as the 2021 BNC Industry Representative.

## **Sheep Sustainability Framework**

WoolProducers updated that the framework document is to be launched in April and thanked all organisations who were involved in this process. Over time this document will allow the industry to create and collate metric data and provide context of wool as a sustainable fibre.

## **Levy payer database collection platform**

It was outlined that WoolProducers have recently had discussions with DAWE, private treaty merchants and brokers on this matter and can report that the platform has performed relatively well, and the process is underway.

## **AWI provided business unit update**

An extensive document covering major projects from key AWI business divisions was well received by Panel members. These updates included market analytics, on farm, process innovation, education extension, traceability, WoolQ, emerging markets, fibre science, extension networks, shearing, marketing, and communications. AWI have agreed to the Panel members request for the distribution of this informative pack to levy payers via Panel members.

It was agreed that this document is for distribution to members organisations only and not for publication.