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## An Interview with Will Crozier

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The revitalizing of the Australian Wool Growers Association is set to keep the wool industry in the rural headlines particularly leading up to the Australian Wool Innovations annual general meeting being held in Perth early in November.

Young Victorian wool grower Will Crozier has taken on the role to head up the board that includes former AWI chairperson, Maree McCaskill and member, Peter Laird, Hillston, NSW. High profile stud Merino breeders Wally Merriman, Boorowa, NSW and Ross Wells, Willandra, Jerilderie, who were outspoken supporters of the McCaskill led AWI board have tossed their hats into the ring. Victorian woolgrower and AWI wool advisory group member and executive director of the Victorian stud Merino breeders, Marion Gibbins has put her hand up as well. Legal expertise comes to the board from through Sydney based lawyer Stuart Coppock.

Mr. Crozier made the point that AWGA will be playing a positive role for wool growers to ensure a profitable sustainable industry.

Last week on his family's wool growing property at Casterton Mr. Crozier gave an exclusive interview to David Everist, The Countryman, on the role and aspirations of the organization.

Q. When was the decision made to revamp AWGA?

A. The fact is AWGA was never folded up after the wool stock pile marketing issue. Some who believed a good job had been done said AWGA should be wound up. Others thought there may have been a need for a wool growers organization in the future and kept the structure ticking over.

Q. It is being said that AWGA has come to the fore due to the unexpected change of board members at the AWI annual general meeting in Hay. In fact you are poor losers?.

A. That is not the case however we are unable to stop people expressing this thought. There is a level of frustration in wool grower circles that some of the outstanding programs undertaken by AWI will be ditched. AWGA will maintain pressure to see ongoing funding is provided for worthwhile projects.

Q There are two non woolgrowers on the board of a wool growers organization. Isn't this an anomaly?.

A. No. We will seek the best expertise we can to promote the business of wool growing and processing. After all we are part of an international textile trade.

Q The present board only has representation from Victoria and New South Wales. Are steps being taken to expand this?

A We are currently speaking to others in attempts to have them join the board. We see presentation being more regional that state boundary orientated. For instance the Riverina, Victoria and south east of South Australia could be a region. We want every wool grower to be a member and we would like see the membership swelled by a further 10% of those associated with the industry.



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Q. Will members have the right to vote for board members?

A. The short answer is absolutely yes, at the AGM to be held annually. The longer answer revolves around building structures for this to happen. After all at this stage we are a fledgling organization.

Q. What will be the membership fee per year?

A. The annual membership will be \$110 including GST. However we will require generous donations to give us some financial clout in the short term. I have no doubt these will be forthcoming.

Q. Is AWGA forming an industrial arm?

A. Yes but I do not want to elaborate at this stage.

Q. Will AWGA branch out into other activities in the future?

A. Yes but this will depend on the needs of the members.

Q. Where will the registered office of AWGA be and what communication will you have with members?

A. The office is in Horsham, Victoria. For the time being our website will provide relevant information. In the future newsletters will be used. My business is wool growing so only limited time can be spent away from the farm.

Q. How will AWGA differ from WoolProducers?

A. Two totally different organizations. Woolproducers consist of representation from state farmer bodies and by default has become the pseudo peak body. AWGA will be the wool grower's voice.

Q. What is the policy of AWGA on the Australian Wool Testing Authority?

A. They are an industry monopoly. We are against monopolies and will encourage competition by other accredited testing houses.

Q. Will AWGA back candidates for positions on AWI at the next AGM?

A. Depends of the performance of the board and particularly individuals. We are more likely to target individual board members we deem are not performing in the best interests of an innovative, sustainable, transparent industry. For instance we support the statements by board member Hugh Nivison that AWI will not waste money on non consequential on-farm type research projects. In short we will target non-performance.

Q. If in the future the majority of AWI board members are under the AWGA banner would the AWGA be wound up?

A. No. We have no intention of going head to head with AWI. We see them as part of a sustainable industry mix, with AWGA giving direct presentation to wool growers. AWI does not do this. For instance 80% of wool growers voted to keep the incumbent AWI board but were beaten by large woolgrower interests and some of that was corporate and overseas controlled.

Q. Since the AWI. AGM, the chairman Mr. McLachlan and his executive have not appeared in public. How will you engage them in debate?

A. We believe that on taking over the chairmanship of AWI, Mr. McLachlan enquired as to what industry events were taking place overseas. As I said we will target non-performance



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when and if it occurs. On the other hand we will be very supportive of actions we believe are in the best interest of our membership. I am sure we will gain a response.

Q The current AWI board seems to be using the Weekly Times to discredit former AWI executive director Col Dorber?

A. That is their business. They know how to run newspapers. If they are wrong they will suffer. However if there are issues of so called bad governance they should be dealt with by the appropriate authority immediately.

Q What is the policy of AWGA on wool tax?

A Over time we would like to see the compulsory tax reduced to zero. How we come to that may take several years of wind down. Next year it may be 0.5 %. If there is no tax there will be no government funding and ultimately that is what we want. In short. No government interference.

Q What is the policy on Ovine Johnes disease?

A. We believe in deregulation across the board. On-farm management, no penalties and vaccination would fit this model.

Q What is your target membership of wool growers?

A. All of them. We aim to represent the biggest to the smallest grower. In Victoria for instance there is a large part of the industry in mixed farming operations profitably growing 40 to 50 bales a year.

Q Why has Will Crozier taken on the role of heading AWGA.

A. Passion, coupled with a belief in the future of growing wool. Our family operation makes a living from growing wool. It is my livelihood I want to protect. Also I believe there were some outstanding outcomes from projects developed by AWI. I want to see this type of activity to continue

Q What is the makeup of the Crozier family farm.

A We run 24,000 sheep that includes 10,000 ewes. Income is enhanced with cattle agistment and back-grounding. We see sheep meat becoming a major component of our future income mix.

Source: David Everist. The Countryman. WA

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