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Mobile Shearing Evaluation Report Published

The Australian Wool Growers Association believe the future of Shear Express should be revisited.

The recently terminated Shear Express Wool Harvesting Evaluation Report has been released on the Australian Wool Innovation Website and its findings make interesting reading.

The Australian Wool Growers Association, along with many woolgrowers have been waiting patiently for the release of this report in order to understand why the Shear Express project was recently axed.

Australia wide there is a critical shortage of shearers and shed staff, at a time of low flock numbers.

The shearing industry and woolgrowers are also facing the need to embrace new technology to address increasing Occupational Health and Safety concerns, along with seeking alternatives to massive capital expenditure to bring many shearing sheds up to scratch.

“For many woolgrowers, Shear Express, was hoped to provide a long term solution to the increasingly difficult task of sourcing shearers and shed hands, providing a suitable work environment and importantly provide a practical alternative to encourage more back into the business of producing wool.” says AWGA Chairman, Will Crozier.

“Indeed the pre Christmas announcement of its termination by Australian Wool Innovation was seen by many as a severe blow to the industry.” Mr Crozier said.

The report reveals that in fact Shear Express offered superior shearing quality in terms of less second cuts, creating increased fleece lines and more skin pieces were recoverable. The report also indicated that potential for back injuries were also significantly reduced.

It is unfortunate that AWI have seen fit to terminate the project when in its initial field trials the mobile wool harvesting system demonstrated the ability to shear and handle up to 800 sheep per day.

”AWGA believe this to be a realistic and acceptable target. “ Mr Crozier suggests.

To suggest that Shear Express should increase its throughput to a minimum of 1200 sheep per day could put immense pressure on many individual wool growers to actually be able to muster and move that quantity of sheep throughout a shearing.”

Equally AWGA has concerns over some of the costing methodology used in the report.

Recent indications suggest that a bidding war has already commenced for shearing Western Australian sheep with prices already around \$2.50 and rising. “Last year some growers paid up to \$4.00 per head to attract shearers, bringing the figures in the report more in line with those of Shear Express” says Mr Crozier.



AWGA - News Update

With the report recommending that much of the technology incorporated into the Shear Express prototype could be used on other future mobile shearing systems, one would question why the project has been terminated, says AWGA.

Without a clearly identified alternative, the Australian Wool Growers Association, believe the future of Shear Express should be revisited, with new and realistic targets.

”It is short sighted to can the project on the basis of this evaluation report whilst there are no other solutions to the increasing difficulties facing the task of shearing the nation’s woolclip, in the public arena.” concludes Mr Crozier.

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