



11 November 2004

Shame AWI, Shame.

Comment from Chick Olsson
AWGA Chairman

This week saw a most amazing event. For one day in Australia's long wool history, all key wool leaders attended an urgent wool forum to tackle the issues of PETA, Mulesing and industry division amongst our fraternity. On Monday, the Agenda was to run from 10am and finish at 4pm. By 4pm, we had industry agreement that the mulesing issue would be solved by 2010. Regardless of how individuals felt, it was a unified leadership body that had agreed on this issue. Miracles do happen.

An historic first, showing that the wool industry can be united if sensible and inclusive mature debate is allowed to happen. At 4 pm, the first of us had to leave, (airplanes, other meetings etc etc). Apart from issues of national mulesing accreditation, and examination of practical pain relief, no other agenda had been raised. NONE. (Representatives from several organisations, stayed as late as possible to 4 .20pm, then rushed to their transport.) The day's business was over.

The next day, on national ABC Radio, I congratulated AWI and Robert Peitsch from Wool Producers for this historic occasion, and gave credit where it was due on pulling us all together. And I still believe that Robert Peitsch did a great job. What happened late that afternoon undid all the good work.

I received a call from the Western Australian Guardian newspaper, asking to comment on the latest press release announced by AWI. I started congratulating AWI again re the meeting. It is not often that I am lost for words, but when informed that AWI had just served legal papers on PETA, I was speechless, and have had no comment to make until now. This legal action was not on the agenda at the forum, nor was it mentioned through the day. And there we all were, the industry leaders of wool, not informed or allowed to debate this important issue.

2 weeks ago, AWGA asked AWI the questions about the chances of legal success in action against PETA. None of the questions have been responded to by AWI since then. In summary, it appears highly unlikely that an Australian Court Action will achieve any positive outcome for the wool industry. In essence this is another possible Mudginberri saga about to unfold.

Who in PETA can you sue in Australia that will make them stop their actions in The US or in Europe? Please think about it. The only people that will achieve happiness here are our Australian legal fraternity, sponsored by woolgrowers funds. So why do it???

Are we just putting more petrol on the fire? It is commonly known among industry circles that International clothing retailers and manufacturers have requested that the wool industry handle this matter quietly and professionally. I believe that our wool retailers are under increasing pressure to make a stand for or against wool. The last thing our customers need is a very public legal brawl to erupt, indeed, they have requested that the wool industry try and avoid this.



AWGA - News Update

Publicly sparring with PETA on 60 minutes, then serving Federal court papers smacks of something more than championing the wool industry. Gone are the days of domestic public chest beating in the face of international boycotts. Experienced diplomacy and clever marketing initiatives usually win here, the two things that AWI is sadly lacking.

Australian Farmers will remember with despair the Mudginberri dispute and whilst the legal principal was eventually won over a period of many years, the battle was lost with the industry at the centre of the dispute doomed.

Can we allow this to happen to the wool industry?

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