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Government intervention would damage wool industry revival

The Australian Wool Growers Association (AWGA) supports the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Tony Burke, in his reluctance for Government intervention with Australian Wool Innovation (AWI). AWGA says any intervention beyond the scope of the current Productivity Commission would permanently damage the research and marketing of Australian wool and may end the current revival in confidence of Australian wool growers.

Chairman of AWGA, Martin Oppenheimer, says “There is a clever media campaign against the current democratic election system at AWI.”

AWGA notes that despite criticisms of the wool industry being too politicised, recent attacks on AWI have come from Politicians & Government Departments, including two Senators. One launched an attack on the wool industry during the recent WoolPoll vote. A Department of Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry (DAFF) teleconference, which included criticisms of AWI, was released publicly and comments were subsequently reported in the media.

Oppenheimer asks, “Who is really generating political activity in the wool industry?”

“If there is Government intervention with AWI then we would lose the 2% levy contributed by growers. That would effectively end collective research and marketing of Australian wool and end the current wool revival.”

“The majority of growers do not support more structural change at AWI. They want to be able to hire and fire their Board representatives in an established democratic way. They want AWI to get on with helping find production opportunities, especially increasing demand & increasing the price of Australian wool.”

“Despite the attacks on AWI, growers have voted overwhelmingly for the current Directors at elections in 2008 and 2009. They also voted overwhelmingly for the 2% levy under the current AWI structure in late 2009. Listen to the growers, keep AWI and let them get on with it.”

“If the AWI Director election system is a major issue for growers then why wasn't it nominated by the independent WoolPoll Committee for inclusion as a supplementary question in voting papers which were sent out to all 50,000 wool levy payers in late 2009?”

“AWI's Director election system is a shining example of democracy in action. It is what the majority of grower shareholders want.”

Since 1991, Australia has had significant structural changes with 13 wool organisations averaging 1.4 years per organisation. AWGA supports the current AWI Board structure, democratic election system and growers' right to determine the level of wool levy they pay.

Martin Oppenheimer



AWGA - News Update

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