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AWI angers WA producers



David Thompson said he was disappointed AWI would not be funding the Bred Well, Fed Well workshops in the future.

AUSTRALIAN Wool Innovation (AWI) has decided to discontinue its funding of the Bred Well, Fed Well workshops.

The move came this week, with AWI saying the program was adequately commercial to stand alone without AWI underwriting.

The workshops are funded by AWI and MLA as part of their Making More From Sheep Initiative.

An AWI spokesman said the body was committed to investing in genetic and genomic research and development as outlined in its current Strategic Plan.

"Due to the high level of uptake and commercial interest from industry for the Bred Well, Fed Well program, the opportunity now exists to license out the provision of the service," he said.

"AWI is holding discussions with Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) for a smooth exit of AWI funding over the coming months.

"The model of delivery is to be admired and so the development of a genetics extension program with a significantly increased wool focus is now under development."



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But when asked about AWI's decision, MLA said it was unable to comment as it had not heard anything official, but a spokesperson confirmed that of the 46 workshops, which had been held throughout the country, a majority of the 1200 participants rated each workshop very highly.

In June 2013, MLA and AWI executed phase two of the management agreement where AWI was appointed the project manager.

The MLA spokesperson said when or if formal notification was to be received from AWI, that it was not its intention to continue, the MLA would have to reassess its position.

Moojepin Merino stud principal David Thompson, Katanning, said he was extremely disappointed with the decision.

He said there could be no argument that pulling funding for such a successful program had been made for the benefit of the industry.

"The Bred Well, Fed Well workshops are the only thing that AWI puts money into that has actually had a benefit for producers," Mr Thompson said.

"I was in complete bewilderment after learning that AWI has decided to cease its funding."

Mr Thompson implored AWI to improve the transparency of its decision making.

"I think it has been lacking transparency in explaining the decisions it makes and it doesn't answer criticisms at all," he said.

"AWI only just signed the agreement to run the workshops for another two years.

"Not only can you not trust its word, it now seems even its signature is worthless.

"We were told that Bred Well, Fed Well was so successful AWI thought it should be privately funded rather than with levy funds.

"Why then would it sign a contract for two years only to renege two months later?"

"These workshops focused squarely on the two things that are most likely to improve a sheep producer's profitability – optimising nutrition and making genetic gain in commercial flocks and they have made an enormous impact on the profitability of sheep enterprises throughout the country."

<http://adf.farmonline.com.au/news/state/livestock/sheep-general/awi-angers-wa-producers/2669659.aspx?storypage=0>