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Wool Battle for AWI board

ONE of Australian Wool Innovation's biggest critics could soon be on the wool industry body's board.

Principal of Petali Poll Merino and White Suffolk studs at Walcha in NSW, Martin Oppenheimer, is standing for a director position.

A vocal supporter of genetics and genomics in the Merino industry and director of the independent Australian Wool Growers Association, Mr Oppenheimer was most recently critical of AWI's decision to cut funding to the Bred Well Fed Well workshops, despite committing to it in the strategic plan, and Information Nucleus Flock.

"The reasons for the funding cut for both have followed similar themes, and it's not the way our industry needs to go," he said.

"AWI keeps making poor decisions on genetic research and extension."

He hoped if he was elected he could influence better use of the wool levy funds and help "solve" some of the issues associated with the industry, such as disease resistance and lamb survival.

Mr Oppenheimer believed there would be "quiet a few" others nominating and it would be good for wool growers to have a choice.

"If we are going to have a compulsory levy, it has to be spent effectively to provide modern tools for sheep breeders to not only survive but prosper," he said.

Mr Oppenheimer is in the process of collecting the required 100 shareholder signatures before the September 23 deadline.

An AWI spokesman said they couldn't comment on individual nominees but after being assessed by the nomination committee, shareholders would decide who would fill the three available positions.

The spokesman said the organisation had originally committed \$181,000 to the Bred Well Fed Well workshops.

Workshops already booked would still run.

But the spokesman said about \$88,000 of the original funding would now be redirected to other areas.

AWI chairman Wal Merriman said last week the reason ceasing workshops funding was a predicted shortfall of \$4-\$6 million.

http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/article/2013/09/11/582553_ wool.html

