



AWI and the direction of our wool industry

For the last few years, I have been lucky enough to gain an insight into our industry and the special men and women that make up our wool industry. However, I have also seen that the governance of our industry needs new blood, and that AWI has grown introverted and inefficient. Despite the smoke and mirrors, these are the facts:

1. Woolmark licences have almost halved in the last few years. (AGM figures)
2. Market for superfine wool is on its knees, and AWI is driving our industry blindly into a steep decline by continuing to push this suiting market with little measurable result.
3. The number of shearers and shedhands is declining, and we do not have the young generation replacing those leaving the industry.
4. Our industry is facing a barrage of scrutiny against mulesing, of which our industry offers little defence. AWI has said it won't defend growers, and leave this to "industry", even though it's in their corporate charter. If they won't help us, who will defend our reputation?

AWI must be re-invigorated to the point where it offers new directions and a future for our industry. Simply offering the same presentations with the same cocktails in different locations, will not achieve this.

As a starting point, the voices of woolgrowers must be stated with honesty and acted upon with integrity. Woolpoll results must be released by AWI so that our voices can be heard. It is our industry and we deserve to know the truth. This current board stood on a ticket of transparency and honesty, so only fair we see the results and view cast by growers within our industry.

Second, we must have an industry body which is prepared to stand up for our interests, and for the good of the industry. Mulesing is a contentious issue, and it will not simply go away if we stick our heads in the sand. The fashion industry is fickle and needs to be assured that we are doing our best. We need a focal point to base our industry's argument, and that focal point must be based on world-leading research by AWI's research and development team, which has cost us \$25 million to date. In the short term, AWI must support mulesing, and in the medium term we must come up with sustainable and humane alternatives.

We must also take action to diversify our product for the growing markets of South East Asia, and consolidate our superfine wool products which are no longer in demand as Europe continues economic decline.

We must take action to re-new and re-develop the woolmark legacy, which is an internationally recognised and acclaimed icon.

At our current course, with low production and low margins, our industry will slowly die. It's our industry and the AWGA and all woolgrowers don't want to see that happen...

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