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## Fine wool feeling fading



Australian Wool Innovation's *Wool. No Finer Feeling* campaign has been a "complete failure", according to Australian Wool Growers' Association chairman Robert McBride.

"During the course of the campaign (which started in 2010) we have seen big drops in the price of fine wool – demonstrating that it has been unsuccessful at significant cost," he said. Conversely, coarser wools around the 21-micron mark had enjoyed good demand because of lower supply.

Mr McBride has called for a more "grassroots" approach to wool marketing, taking the focus from high-end fashion to more everyday consumers.



CLEAR BENEFITS:  
Woolgrower Rob McBride says the carbon cycle story of wool fibre has not been successfully marketed.

THE mere suggestion that regulating wool supply to the market might be discussed by the Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) board was enough to set alarm bells ringing at Robert McBride's Tolarno Station.

The chairman of Australian Wool Growers' Association (AWGA) and a fifth generation pastoralist, said recent comments about limiting supply "should have died with the collapse of the reserve price scheme".

And in a wide-ranging rejection of AWI strategies - sparked by the reported comments of its chairman Wal Merriman - Mr McBride said there should be a complete change in the mindset of the peak woolgrowing body away from the "high-end of town" to a mass audience "for the most sustainable fibre in the world".

"Our marketing programs have to appeal to everybody," he said.

"Wool has some of the most marketable qualities of any fibre that exists and yet these are largely ignored."

Mr McBride, who owns the sprawling Tolarno, Peppora and Wyoming properties in the NSW Western Division, slammed the *Wool. No Finer Feeling* campaign as a "complete failure".

"We need a new marketing model that puts a focus on creating increased consumer demand and allows grassroots producers to see the results of their levy payments," she said.

"During the course of the campaign, we have seen big drops in the price for fine wool - demonstrating that the campaign has been unsuccessful at significant cost."

While Mr Merriman was quick to dismiss reports that he had suggested a return to the reserve price scheme, his ideas - on wool price fluctuations - created a storm of protest.

An AWI spokesperson said the board was discussing a research project that looked at studying the selling systems - but it would not include supply "regulation".

"The company will discuss this with the ICC on May 28 and again at the next board meeting (May 30)," he said.

<http://adf.farmonline.com.au/news/state/sheep/wool/wool-strategies-fail-under-scrutiny/2698385.aspx>