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Former Australian Wool Innovation chair takes a swipe at the group for stalling on sheep breeding technology



Wool attack: Former Australian Wool Innovation chairman has attacked the association for stalling on sheep breeding technology.

AUSTRALIAN Wool Innovation has come under fire from a former chairman for stalling on sheep breeding technology.

Ian McLachlan, who was chairman of AWI from 2002 to 2008 and served as a Defence Minister in the Howard Government, said AWI was “supposed to be an innovation organisation” and there were “one or two people on the board that are, in my view, not sufficiently orientated towards innovation”.

Mr McLachlan said it was up to “growers to elect people that are forward thinking” to the board of the wool grower levy-funded research and development organisation.

He said he hoped younger board members “win out” to ensure AWI allocated more resources to genetic advancement “especially into genomics”.

“(Genomic research) is the most important thing done by AWI and MLA (Meat and Livestock Australia) in the last 10 years,” Mr McLachlan said.

Mr McLachlan’s comments following the Sheep Co-operative Research Centre’s conference in Adelaide last week, where Sheepmeat Council of Australia director Mark Murphy “implored AWI to change their thought patterns and get on board” to support more promotion of new breeding tools.



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He urged AWI “not to hold back” the industry and instead support the promotion of sheep breeding value programs and genomics that could help fast-track genetic gains and boost producer profits.

Mr Murphy told *The Weekly Times* a “select minority within AWI” were now “ruling the roost and worried about their own (sheep) genetics”.

But an AWI spokesman said the organisation had invested \$28 million into genetic benchmarking and genomic research in the past decade.

“Technology such as ASBVs (Australian Sheep Breeding Values) and genomic tests are now fully commercial,” the spokesman said.

“The demands for future genomic investment for wool is quite different for the needs of meat quality and so it is - entirely appropriate that AWI and (MLA) have different strategies for future investment.

“The AWI board is a democracy and anyone can nominate to join it. Wool growers decide who they choose to represent them.”

<http://www.weeklytimesnow.com.au/business/sheep/former-australian-wool-innovation-chair-takes-a-swipe-at-the-group-for-stalling-on-sheep-breeding-technology/story-fnker8up-1226989795084>