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Meat and Livestock Australia to conduct review amid concerns about transparency



Moove over: Meat and Livestock Australia will review its operations and how it interacts with levy payers.

MEAT and Livestock Australia will review its operations in response to concerns from producers about its transparency.

The move follows a recent Senate inquiry in Canberra which accused the peak research and development company of operating under “smoke and mirrors” with its director elections likened to “the Kremlin”.

At the inquiry, Australian Beef Association director Linda Hewitt called for MLA to be replaced by “a new cattle board based on self management, democracy, accountability, transparency, governance, KPIs and reporting” which would have “no conflict of interest with the other sectors of the cattle or red meat industries”.

Liberal Senator Bill Heffernan said the organisation needed to be more transparent, adding the “there is no such thing as an election of the board. You are appointed — like the Kremlin”.

Newly-appointed MLA managing director Richard Norton this week told *The Weekly Times* “you can’t ignore what is coming out of the Senate inquiry — people want to be better engaged around how their levies are being spent”.



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He said the “effectiveness and efficiency” review requested by the board would be finalised by the end of next month. One of its key aims would be determining how to “engage levy payers in what projects we start, the milestones along the way and the outcomes of them”.

“The industry structure can be complicated if you’re not across it all the time,” Mr Norton said.

“Levy payers need to understand the process, be engaged in the process, but MLA needs to be at the forefront of delivering those extension programs and consultation on farm, not using consultants.

“We are looking at R & D, ways we can bring in world-best practice, ensure that the dollars you use in research projects is world class, understand if there’s anything on a global scale that we can use instead of going out and reinventing it ourselves.”

Mr Norton said the review would not necessarily mean less money spent on R & D and promotion going forward, adding “if anything we may even find areas to spend more”.

“But the challenge is what comes out of the Senate inquiry, does MLA lose some of its levies to other areas of industry? And if so then I look, like at any other organisation, where the spend goes and what we cut.”

<http://m.weeklytimesnow.com.au/business/cattle/meat-and-livestock-australia-to-conduct-review-amid-concerns-about-transparency/story-fnkeqfz1-1226975274640>