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Aussie Wool is lost at the Quay says AWGA chairman Robert McBride



FOR anyone who has read the Australian Wool Innovation annual report, one feels the board has clearly lost direction and control of the wool levy.

It's hard to fathom how they are helping wool demand or on farm profitability in any way, the Merino industry has never been in a weaker position in its long history.

With a greatly reduced flock of Merino sheep, and a wool price in \$US terms no different from ten years ago, probably less, alarm bells should have been ringing loudly some time ago at the new flash AWI headquarters in The Rocks where wool was first loaded onto ships bound for England.

Within the AWI annual report, the return to generic promotion is blindingly obvious, with scores of smaller go-nowhere projects littering the marketing page, boosted by a host of consultants now back on the payroll. So much for AWI boasting they have been reducing staff in favour of cleverly re-employing professionals on \$400,000 per year once more, returning to the bad old days of generic advertising and multiple cocktail parties hoping someone will buy the message of wool's marvellous attributes, rather than ensuring that retailers are selling more Australian wool product.

In 2010/2011, the newly-invigorated AWI board, in genuine consultation with the wool and sheep industry, promised every dollar spent on marketing had to be equally matched by a retailer dollar to ensure that wool was stocked and being sold, so we could measure the effect of levy dollar investment. AWI now lamely tells us that their advertising dollars are successful by measuring social media hits, something that means very little unless demand for wool is increasing, which it isn't; the crash of superfine wool prices pure evidence of gross failure of levy marketing efforts.

Further within the report, there is no concrete plan to defend our wool-growing reputations in the marketplace from the relentless attacks by the anti-wool brigade – the AWI emus are burying their collective heads in the coffee shops of Circular Quay despite the desperate pleas from our EU customers – which AWI refuses to do in their Clintonesque style, just lots of talk and no action.

Just wait for their long-winded reply to this letter. It's clearly time to look to the future of the wool levy, has it actually done the industry any good, anywhere? Will it ever?

<http://www.sheepcentral.com/aussie-wool-is-lost-at-the-quay-says-awga-chairman-mcbride/>