

Submission by Hamish McLaren (woolgrower and stud merino breeder)

I have been in the wool industry in one way or another all my life starting as a wool exporter back in 1988 and now back on the family farm near Walcha, NSW.

I am sorry this submission is so short but I have just realised the deadline was today so I thought I better put something down. Many people are busy and this request for submissions seems to be aimed at the “squeaky wheels” of our industry that are continually looking to bring down the board and our chairman, who I know for a fact does so much extra work behind the scenes for the greater good of our industry. His vision and compassion for our Australian clip is second to none.

It will be interesting to see how many submissions you receive but I would be surprised if you dig up 100, especially positive ones. As I said before we are all busy and when our wool industry is in as good a position as it is currently in at present, there is not going to be many people write in. “Why try and fix what is not broke?”

I am probably one of AWI’s biggest fans. Generally, the directions they have taken over the last 10 years have not always been just right but I think in terms of stability and profitability in our industry, most woolgrowers should be pretty pleased.

I have been involved with many AWI field days, workshops, forums, and meetings and I have always thought that AWI staff members were performing for their shareholders, and/or using our levies most efficiently. They are proud of what they have achieved for THEIR woolgrowers and I think that the company is in a really healthy place.

1. Obligations under the Statutory Funding Arrangement

Do you have concerns that Australian Wool Innovation is not meeting its obligations under the Statutory Funding Agreement 2016-2020 with the Commonwealth and the Wool Services Privatisation Act 2000? None at all

2. Governance arrangements

Do you think the current governance arrangements are effective in running the Australian Wool Innovation and delivering benefits? Yes.

In my opinion I still think that WoolPoll should be a five year term. It costs woolgrowers over 1 million dollars to run it and I don't think it would make one bit of difference if the current three years rolled out to five.

3. Planned outcomes

To what degree do you consider Australia Wool Innovation is meeting industry expectations? Would you consider Australian Wool Innovation to be on track to meet its planned outcomes and targets outlined in their strategic plan 2016/19?

Hello.... \$18.47c a kilogram!!!

The current and recent wool prices would have to be the best and most obvious answer to this question.

4. Benefits

What benefits does Australian Wool Innovation deliver to you? Are there any specific barriers to you receiving these benefits?

- Price
- Information and implementation on research (specifically for us: early breach wrinkle and pre-operative pain relief for mulesing)

No I don't think there are too many barriers to receiving any benefits. It is in AWI's best interest to get their good stories out there and I think they are doing that via Beyond the Bale, The Yarn, and the website.

5. Engagement approach

Does Australian Wool Innovation engage, consult and communicate effectively? Have your views been heard by Australian Wool Innovation?

I think AWI engages, consults, and communicates very effectively through many forums, workshops, Beyond the Bale and website.

Our views are always heard by AWI staff and directors. We see these people at industry events all the time and anyone can go and talk to them.

6. Implementing recommendations

How effectively has Australian Wool Innovation addressed and implemented the recommendations of the 2012-2015 performance review?

The Deloitte review "AWI Independent Review of Performance 2015 Summary of Findings" read well.

It is all on the AWI website.

7. Collaboration with Research Development Corporation's

Does Australian Wool Innovation collaborate well with other relevant Research and Development Corporations? Are you aware of joint activities between Research Development Corporations?

Yes and no.

The main cross RDC collaboration is with MLA and maybe it is Richard Norton that you should be reviewing after some of the statements he has come out with of late.

MLA and AWI definitely need to cooperate with each other more, especially in Sheep Genetics.

Where applicable, the research and development outcomes from AWI and MLA's investment in genetic technologies will be delivered as products of Sheep Genetics

8. Corporations Act 2001

Should the replaceable rules in the Corporation Act 2001 apply under the AWI Constitution?

Not sure about this one

9. Australia Wool Innovation employment practices

Are Australian Wool Innovation's employment practices appropriate, including whether the engagement of former staff as contractors is undertaken appropriately?

Yes I think AWI's employment practices are quite appropriate.

I did watch the senate estimates online last year while they were investigating Dr. Paul Swan who was a former staff member turned contractor.

I was a member of the pilot group that Paul was contracted for (Realising Profit Potential). In my opinion the benefits those commercial woolgrowers (and especially the younger woolgrowers) received or are going to receive from the workshop mentioned, would far outweigh what Paul Swan was charging AWI. Apparently his daily fee was comparable to other industry experts of his standing. I would argue that there would not be many people that relay the message to woolgrowers better than Pau Swan so keep paying him what he wants, as we will be the major winners long term.