

Mark Wootton

Response regarding review AWI governance and performance from a wool grower's perspective. My name is Mark Wootton. I have been the principal and Manager of Jigsaw Farms since 1997. I have formal AICD training as a director. I have chaired both government and not-for-profit organisations for over 20 years. Hence, I feel well qualified to comment on AWI governance and performance. In short, I have reached the conclusion that AWI has very poor governance. It has a board that does not represent its levy payers. It has an elitist and arrogant board and leadership team. AWI's decision making processes is not transparent and leaves levy payers wondering if the Board and Chair do not have a range of conflicts of interest that are not apparently dealt with. Its performance in terms of both research and marketing also lacks transparency and yet again leaves levy payers with questions of the way conflicts of interest are dealt with by both the Board and leadership of the organisation. This view will be illustrated by the following points from our experience at Jigsaw Farms. Jigsaw Farms is a grazing enterprise north of Hamilton in South West Victoria, with 7 properties covering 8,500 acres. We produce wool, lamb, beef and saw log timber in a carbon neutral, biodiversity rich environment. Since 1997 we have produced a wool clip that has ranged from 700 to 1100 bales of wool. Over 90% of the clip is Merino wool. We have paid wool levies that have averaged \$31,130.88 per annum. This is not to mention the grants that have also been given to AWI via the Australian Government paid for by our taxes. Our simple analysis is that monies that have been gone to AWI have been mostly wasted. To offer a comparative approach as to how the funds could have been better utilised, I will highlight our own investment in research and marketing. We have invested our own funds independently or cooperatively with other farmers in a number of research programs. In terms of research, we have worked with Dr John Steinfort in a dry ice breaching treatment as an alternative to mulesing. We are a ceased mulesing farm enterprise. At a cost of \$3 per sheep we have measured a \$9 live weight gain in lambs and are now getting significant wool premium for our wool. All this with no thanks to AWI, whose board has pursued a policy of what is a thinly disguised pro-mulesing agenda. We have also funded, in cooperation with other high rainfall sheep producers, a University of Melbourne project that has resulted in a commercialisation of a vaccine to prevent weaner colitis/scouring. All it took was 10 producers contributing \$3,000 each. This of course, as per usual, was after AWI rejected a funding request for such a project. In terms of our marketing project, after an approach from The Australian Wool Network, we have also formed our own marketing tag using the Jigsaw Farms story. This was done by using a QR reader that allows our wool and story to be sold directly to high end apparel buyers. This is giving us a 5 to 10 percent premium to the market. This was done with no assistance of AWI. All our own funded projects have differed from AWI projects as they are low cost, geographically relevant, producer led and with easy to measure commercial returns. Unlike some of the smoke and mirrors nonsense peddled by AWI. The quicker the Australian government and wool producers stop funding an corrupt, inept and unaccountable organisation the better. The model is so broken that it is beyond repair.