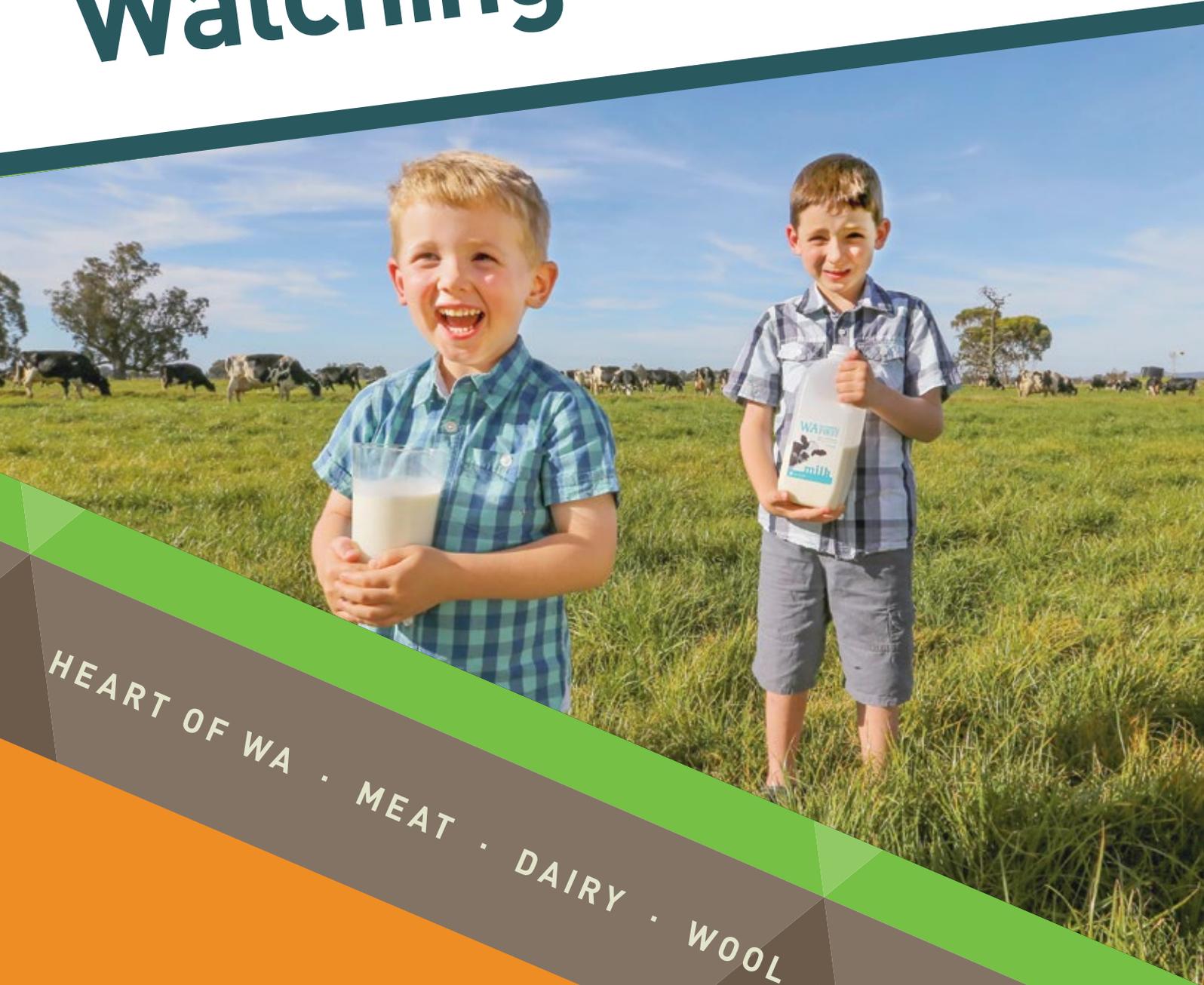


# WAFarmers Watching Your Back



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**WAFARMERS**

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## Letter from WAFarmers President

Dale Park

The first half of 2015 has proved a busy and interesting time for WAFarmers, its staff and myself.

The 2015 Annual WAFarmers Conference was held in February and enjoyed fantastic attendance. Of particular note was the high number of young people present which was complemented by speaker and Fremantle Dockers mid-fielder Nat Fyfe who entertained guests with his stories of farm life and his genuine passion for rural WA.

WAFarmers has held a number of other conferences this year, including the Dairy Conference, Beef Conference and AgConnectWA Conference. On the whole, these have been positive, informative and engaging events where we enjoy meeting farmers and agriprofessionals across commodities. Last year's Heart of WA was a resounding success and we look forward to a fantastic evening of fine dining, entertainment and networking at this year's event.

I attended an NFF Members Council meeting in Adelaide with WAFarmers CEO Stephen Brown where we continued to push ahead with the Streamline and Strengthen Program to reorganise farmer representation in Australia. Myself and several others met with Federal Agricultural Minister Joyce during his whirlwind visit to WA in July. Minister Joyce visited our office in Guildford and productive meeting was held.

In conjunction with the Wheatbelt Railway Retention Alliance (WRRRA), WAFarmers wrote and delivered an open letter to the Premier regarding the current state of grain on rail in Western Australia. Co-operative Bulk Handling (Ltd), on behalf of Western Australian Grain Growers, are negotiating with Brookfield Rail for a new contract for all grain on rail. WAFarmers is concerned that, under the current lease agreement, CBH is negotiating from a position of weakness and believes that the State Government has a responsibility to redress this imbalance. Grain on rail remains a priority for WAFarmers in the coming year.

We are in the process of creating a port user group with the aim of ensuring that the privatisation of the Fremantle Port will not be to the detriment of Western Australian exporters. The WA agricultural sector will likely face monopoly charges for port access if strong parameters are not applied to new owners of the port under the State Government's privatisation. Importers will also face higher charges for all commodities imported through the Port of Fremantle should the sale eventuate. WAFarmers is continuing to work on this issue.



## Letter from WAFarmers CEO

Stephen Brown

Welcome members to our very first edition of *Watching Your Back*. The decision to produce and distribute this magazine was made for two reasons. Firstly, we wanted to communicate with our members exactly what we have been doing since our last Annual Report, what we are working on at present and what we are hoping to achieve in the next six months. Secondly, this magazine will be given to potential members to show them who we are, what we do and what we will be doing in the future. I am sure you will find some very interesting information in this magazine and I would like to thank staff for the work they have done to complete this task in a very short period of time. I would also like to extend my thanks to our partners and sponsors who have supported this endeavour.

In this magazine you will read about the work that our policy team have completed in the last six months which includes commodity meetings (both interstate and within WA) as well as making nearly 20 State and Federal submissions on issues of importance



to our members and the wider rural community. Not to be outdone, the Events and Media staff has worked tirelessly to significantly lift our presence with all media across print, radio and television. They were also responsible for our best Annual Conference in at least five years, if not longer! If you thought that was big, wait until September 24th and the Heart of WA Ball. Ticket sales have already exceeded expectations so don't wait until September to book, visit the website ([www.heartofwa.com.au](http://www.heartofwa.com.au)) and purchase a ticket now. The Finance and Administration team have done a tremendous job managing the office and the day to day running of the organisation.

All in all it has been a fantastic six months since Conference and we are looking forward to what lays ahead.

As this is our first edition of a half year magazine we would welcome any feedback, positive or negative, as well as suggestions for improvement. You can direct these comments to [meganmacneill@wafarmers.org.au](mailto:meganmacneill@wafarmers.org.au)

I look forward to meeting all of you at our upcoming events.



## Grains

Maddison McNeil | Executive Officer

A busy 2015 began with a change in leadership of the Grains Section. Mr Kim Simpson stepped down after five years as President and has been succeeded by Mr Duncan Young.

In February, WAFarmers attended a hearing on the Australian Grains Network review in Canberra, advocating for CBH Group to maintain their exemption from the port access code of conduct. In March it was announced that CBH would maintain the port exemption, saving farmers an estimated \$1 million per year in additional charges.

A key recommendation from a recent inquiry in the R&D levy system was the development of a levy payer database. WAFarmers stated that any changes in research development corporations that would increase levy payer involvement would be welcome.

Recent announcements regarding the relocation of RDC's out of Canberra prompted the WAFarmers Grains Council to write a letter to Minister Barnaby Joyce and the GRDC Board with an alternative proposal. The proposal suggested that national administration functions remain in Canberra, while the regional specific staff and functions should be separated into three regional branches in accordance with the Northern, Southern and Western Panels. This proposal is under consideration by GRDC. If a version of this proposal goes ahead, WAFarmers will have given WA grain growers greater accessibility and involvement with GRDC.

While WAFarmers would have preferred the role to remain with a single organisation, the representative organisation of GRDC was jointly appointed to Grains Producers Australia (GPA) and Grain Growers Limited (GGL). The role of the organisation is to oversee GRDC administration, hold GRDC financially accountable and report to the Federal Agriculture Minister.

WAFarmers Grains Council representatives and members attended a GRDC Grower R&D Forum in Canberra on March 5th and 6th. The forum was the first of its kind and will likely be run every two years. It encouraged engagement between growers and the executives at GRDC.

The Grains Council have had two executive meetings in 2015, on March 13 and July 22. Both meetings were very productive and allowed policy development to occur. At the March meeting, the Council heard from CBH, GIWA, AEGIC, DAFWA and Bailiwick Legal. Minister Ken Baston was in attendance at the July Council meeting. The final meeting for the year will be a teleconference in mid-September to discuss developments in the industry.

Since February, Grains President Duncan Young and Senior Vice President Michael Fels have met with politicians in an effort to re-establish a connection with government. Issues that were discussed include regional infrastructure, the repeal of the GM Free Areas Act and the development of a long term transport plan. The politicians include Minister Ken Baston, Senator Chris Back, Hon. Nigel Hallet, Hon. Dave Grills, Hon. Jim Chown, Hon. Brian Ellis, Hon. Alannah MacTiernan, Minister Terry Redman, Minister Mia Davies, Hon. Darren West, Hon. Mark Lewis, and Mr. Rick Wilson.

In July, GPA made constitutional changes to become a National Grains Policy Group, which amalgamated the unconstituted NFF GPC (National Farmers Federation Grains Policy Council). The newly constituted GPA will become the NFF Grains Commodity Council in the NFF streamline and strengthen model.

## Bees

**President:** Leilani Leyland  
**Senior Vice-President:** Dave Leyland  
**Vice-President:** Rod Pavy  
**Immediate Past-President:** Stephen Fewster  
**Executive Members:** Kim Fewster, Stephen Davies, Michael Spurge

It has been an amazing year for beekeepers so far with production above average and the prices at a five year high. There has also been increasing interest in beekeeping, due to the media surrounding the new FlowHive®. The invention has renewed interest in honeybees which is fantastic for industry.

On May 2, the WAFarmers Beekeepers Conference was held at Baskerville Memorial Hall. It was a very successful conference and is likely to be repeated in 2016. At the conference, Leilani Leyland became Beekeeping Section President, replacing Stephen Fewster. The conference also elected a full executive for the first time in years. The executive has met on February 13, March 27, June 11 and August 28.

The industry is in the process of establishing an incorporated body which would be a platform to unite the honeybee industry in WA while promoting its beekeeping practices and honey.

The key topics of the Executive for 2015/2016 is training for incoming beekeepers, biosecurity concerns and threats of exotic pests and disease to industry as well as the implementation of the AHBIC Biosecurity Code of Practice and how it will function in WA. The executive and honeybee industry are also facing challenges with regard to government support as well as maintaining and maximising WA's current disease status and risk profile.



**RSM Bird Cameron**  
Chartered Accountants

Thinking of making a purchase for the farm? Need help accessing the immediate tax deduction for small businesses costing less than \$20,000?

There are also other tax concessions affecting primary producers that you may not be aware of. Speak to the experts at RSM Bird Cameron for advice.



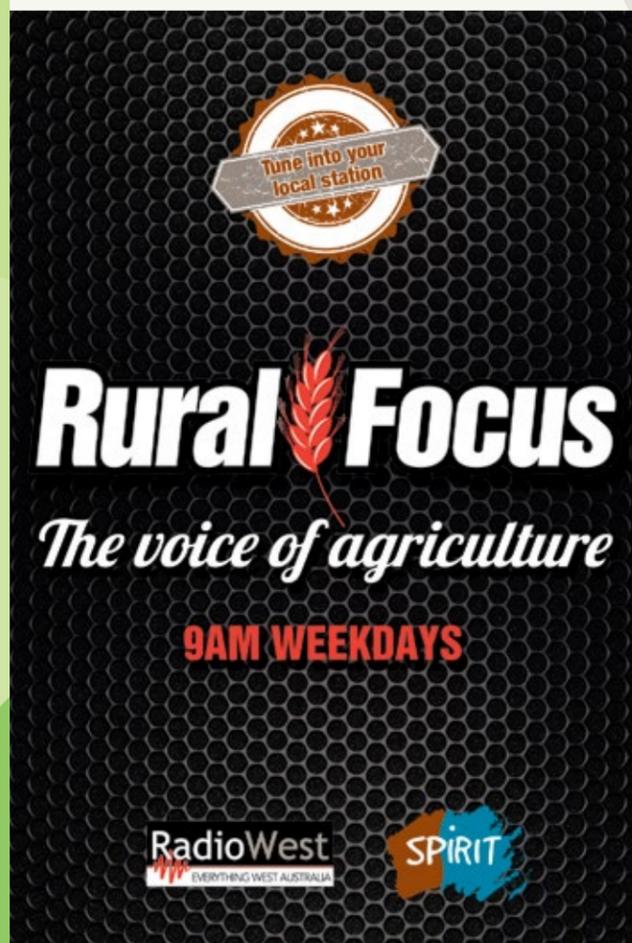
**Geoff Hall**  
T 08 9261 9383  
E [geoff.hall@rsmi.com.au](mailto:geoff.hall@rsmi.com.au)

[rsmi.com.au](http://rsmi.com.au)

## What's coming up

**2015** September 1<sup>st</sup> | **Sheep Health Workshop** - Denmark Agricultural Collage  
 September 24<sup>th</sup> | **Heart of WA** - HBF Stadium, Mt Claremont  
 October 10<sup>th</sup> | **AgTiki #3** - Swan Valley

**2016** January 30<sup>th</sup> | **AgConnectWA Cocktail Party** - Swan River  
 February 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> | **WAFarmers Annual Conference**  
 March | **AgriCultured** - Claremont Showgrounds  
 May | **WAFarmers Bee Conference**  
 July | **WAFarmers Dairy Conference**  
 August | **WAFarmers Beef Conference**



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## Livestock

Kim Haywood, Executive Officer

Good seasonal outcomes coupled with improved cattle and sheep prices have seen a lift of optimism in the industry. This is a direct result of demand outstripping supply; always a good position to be in as a sheep and cattle producer, but there are challenges we need to overcome.

We may have record prices but we also have record cattle and sheep shortages in WA and we could start to see a kick back from feedlot operators and meat processors as prices for prime cattle squeeze margins especially given the buoyant grain prices. The key question being discussed by the WAFarmers Meat Council is how we will keep everyone in the supply chain full and operational in the future.

For example, how do we balance feeding our own backyard as well as meet growing export demand for both meat and live animals to an array of existing and new overseas markets? There is a lot of excitement about the supply opportunities opening up in China, but I struggle to see how we are going to meet these challenges given current herd and flock statistics.

The 2015 year kicked off with a fair bit of controversy as many livestock producers struggled to get their hands on the newer versions of the National Vendor Declaration. WAFarmers demanded answers from SAFEMEAT and MLA who were in turn trying to deal with numerous irate producers trying to access National Vendor Declarations. We put our grievances to the Peak Industry Bodies (Cattle Council of Australia and Sheep Meat Council of Australia) requesting that any future NVD redundancy policies must be communicated in a timely manner and at the least possible cost to livestock producers. Future versions of the NVD should focus on management practices rather than country specific eligibility statements. We have also requested e-Dec s NVDs should actually be free and not incur a small administration cost.

A large number of policy areas have been discussed to date including the beef and sheep language reviews, the meat and sheep industry strategic plans, the ag vet chemical reforms including the operations of APVMA, the Animal Welfare Act review, the bovine Johnes disease plan review, regional saleyard operations, the MLA annual operating plan, new and existing market trade agreements, including a meeting with the Indonesian Ambassador to discuss live cattle and meat export permits, to name but a few.

The main target this year has been the development of the WAFarmers Policy document which sets out the organisation's policies for all commodity areas. The meat council has developed over thirty new policies, which will be included in the document.

The meat council meetings have taken on a new format with council meetings being held at major meat processing or feedlot facilities. The aim is to open up engagement and better relations with supply chain partners. A visit to V&V Walsh at Bunbury in June gave members the opportunity to tour the plant and get a real understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing the industry.

A good discussion was had on the correlation between processor and producers to sure up the gap needed to improve supply to meet domestic and overseas demand for both sheep meat and beef and the prices being paid by Walsh's to reflect this change of direction.

WAFarmers also has good representation on Peak industry Bodies. John Wallace, David Slade, Geoff Pearson, Clinton Gartrell, Hayley Goad and Kim Haywood sit on the Cattle Council of Australia consultative committees, funded by MLA. Jeff Murray is currently the President of Sheepmeat Council of Australia and John Wallace and Steve McGuire attend Council meetings.

The NAB Agribusiness Rising Champion Initiative aims to inspire, empower and support young people, who are passionate about the Australian beef industry and provide them with an opportunity to be directly involved. This year WA had the largest number of applicants to date. Interviews were held in July to select the WA representative to go forward to the national finals in August. Kim Haywood WAFarmers, Ian Randall PGA and Ben Weber NAB were really impressed with the calibre of the applicants interviewed and extend our congratulations to Emma Bryant from Kununurra who was selected as the WA representative to go forward to the finals in Canberra.

## WAFarmers First Milk

WAFarmers launched WAFarmers First Milk at the 2014 Heart of WA. The story made front page of the West Australian the next day and gained coverage on all the major television channels that night. Support for the milk has been excellent and the general public like that they are able to buy a product that gives back to industry.

We have worked hard at promoting the milk brand where possible and have worked with Coles on marketing strategies which have included point of sale material on shelves, double sided flyers for local businesses telling them how to order our milk and pushing our milk to the top of milk searches in WA. In July this year we began a regular advert in The West Australians pull out section, Fresh. It is too early to say what effect this will have on sales but we are optimistic that it will increase brand awareness.

We have also been active on social media utilising Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. We are always looking for fresh content so if you have pictures where you are using WAFarmers First please send them in to us.

As was arranged prior to the milk going on shelves a portion of the money from sales would go into a dairy fund which would be used to benefit the dairy industry. At this year's Dairy Conference John Lucey, John Giumelli and Dean Maughan were appointed to oversee how this money is spent. The Dairy Council invites individuals and organisations to submit proposals on how they would spend funds. The main objective is that projects should educate and increase awareness about the industry.

Please visit:  
[www.WAFarmersFirst.com.au](http://www.WAFarmersFirst.com.au)



*Heart of WA*



We are excited to be hosting Heart of WA again this year on Thursday 24th September at the HBF Stadium in Mount Claremont. Last year brought together a diverse and interesting range of people from right across the agricultural industry and many from outside of it.

It was an excellent opportunity for the agricultural industry to put its best foot forward and showcase what a wonderful industry we are part of. After all agriculture, unlike many other industries, is a necessity not an option. This is a message we have been working hard to get across.

Some of the highest quality food available in the world is grown here in WA and our constant message to people is that they must support their local farmer if they want this to continue.

Heart of WA is a black tie event which celebrates the fantastic food grown here whilst also raising awareness of local produce and the importance of supporting local farmers to ensure the viability, profitability and sustainability of the industry.

We have been working closely with local suppliers to ensure that we have a fresh, local menu to offer guests; we will also have excellent live entertainment and hear from Don Hancey, WA Food Ambassador and My State on a Plate presenter.

We are excited to have the opportunity to celebrate our wonderful industry not only with those closely involved but those who just enjoy eating good food.

We look forward to welcoming you all to Heart of WA and celebrating our industries biggest achievement – feeding the world!



[www.HeartofWA.com.au](http://www.HeartofWA.com.au)

## Dairy

Kim Haywood, Executive Officer

The increase in farm gate price by two of the major processors, summer incentive payments and favourable seasonal conditions have seen the State's milk production move in a positive direction. The first time we have seen an increase in the last four years, production for the year was up 16million litres to 343ML. The Dairy Council, competently chaired by Phil Depiazzi, has continued to work towards achieving a sustainable price for WA's dairy farmers.

The WAFarmers Dairy Council has continued to present its case on the \$1/litre milk campaign initiated by Coles in 2011. It took the opportunity to highlight the negative impact the decision has had on our industry through a combined national and state media campaign. The Dairy Council has an excellent working partnership with Western Dairy and Australian Dairy Farmers and this continued relationship will provide future benefits for all dairy farmers.

November 2014 saw the launch of WAFarmersFirst Milk and sales have been steadily increasing since the launch. We have now surpassed the 700,000 litre sale mark and the brand has hit the number one spot on the online sales list. The contract with Coles finishes in November and the Council is considering a number of options, which include renewing its contract with Coles and looking at alternative retail outlets to increase sale volumes.

Membership alone cannot sustain the organisation at a level that would ensure a well-resourced and effective advocacy group. Alternate means of raising income have to be explored and implemented. This is why the Council have established a Dairy Fund by retaining a portion of the income generated by the milk sales that will be allocated to projects that will benefit the WA Dairy Industry.

In May the Council held a policy forum and agreed on 36 new policies for the dairy sector to be incorporated into the WAFarmers policy document.

As many would be aware farm safety is a very real issue, something we all need to take very seriously. Worksafe has been auditing all dairy farms in the state. The Council have endeavoured to ensure everyone was aware of this and to offer assistance and advice where possible.

The Council continues to address these and other areas of concern as raised by our members, having had a win on enabling farmers to obtain exemptions from earmarking calves under the age of six weeks. The council is currently working on obtaining licensing exemptions for captive bolts which will be a great benefit for all livestock industries in regard to humanely

ethanizing stock in a safe manner when required.

Phil Depiazzi and Warrick Tyrrell have worked closely with members of the Meat Council on the national BJD plan review with the aim of maintaining WA's BJD freedom status and protecting our dairy (and beef) herds from the disease.

At the end of July, WAFarmers Dairy Council, including its new Dairy Executive Officer Kim Haywood hosted another successful dairy conference at Busselton. An array of excellent speakers and witty jokes from Phil and the comedian 'the old fella' kept the audience entertained throughout the conference and dinner. Dale Park, WAFarmers President, presented the Dairy Australia awards to 16 Western Australian businesses and we congratulate them all for this excellent achievement.

Western Australia has continued to be well represented at a national level with a number of people filling positions on Australian Dairy Farmer's (ADF) Policy Advisory Groups (PAGs), Michael Partridge on the Markets Trade and Value Chain, Peter Evans on the Farming Systems and Herd Improvement, young dairy farmer Tammy Negus on the People and Human Capacity while Phil Depiazzi is on the Animal Health and Welfare PAG. Michael Partridge also represents WA on ADF's National Council.

At the AGM held during the Dairy Conference in July, Phil Depiazzi was re-elected as President for the Dairy Council for the fourth consecutive year. Mike Partridge was elected as Senior Vice President and Paul Leraci was elected as Vice President and we sincerely thanked them and all the dairy council members for their ongoing support and assistance.

Stephanie Tarlinton left her position in June after two and half years in the Dairy EO role and we sincerely thank Steph for her dedication and efforts and wish her all the very best for the future.

Organisations like WAFarmers can't operate effectively without the unbelievable support, commitment and dedication of its volunteer office-holders like Ed Rogister, Jeff Murray, John Wallace, David and Lyn Slade, Malcolm Edwards, Steve McGuire, Michael Campbell, John Nankivell, Steve McGuire, Phil Depiazzi, Michael Partridge, Paul Leraci and all the men and women who give up their time to attend meetings on behalf of the organisation and its members. I sincerely thank them for all their ongoing efforts.

## Wool

Kim Haywood, Executive Officer

WAFarmers Wool Council representatives have continued to work with DAFWA staff and members of the Industry Management Committee for the Sheep and Goat Industry Funding Scheme and the Sheep Industry Leadership Council to develop a strategic plan for the WA sheep industry, animal disease policies, research projects and extension materials, particularly for diseases like Virulent Footrot and Ovine Johnes Disease controls. The flow of information from the processing sector to producer suppliers provides the necessary signal to initiate changes to husbandry and management practices on farm.

So what does a new framework for endemic disease policy development, control and extension look like? Most of you will be familiar with the National Sheep Health Monitoring Project (NSHMP), the 'oldest' of the new projects, which has been collecting data about endemic diseases for eight years. It has subsumed the OJD Management Plan to become an overarching project called the 'Livestock Production Conditions Project' (LPCP) – Sheep.

The sheep LPCP pilot project has been developed by Animal Health Australia together with sheep industry organisations, including WAFarmers, in order to streamline governance costs, enhance collaboration and take a more holistic approach to addressing endemic disease conditions.

Continuing on with the theme of collaboration, WAFarmers Sheep Meat and Wool Councils hosted an industry meeting on August 11th at Katanning specifically to get an across-industry agreement and action on how we grow the WA sheep flock, build confidence and profitability into the sector and most importantly encourage new people into the sector.

A long list of activities have occurred over the last six months with some good outcomes and a new set of challenges. For example, WAFarmers took the lead by initiating a social media funding campaign against the musician Jona Weinhofe for his attempt to discredit the wool and shearing industry by using a false picture of a lamb apparently cut as a result of shearing. The social media campaign was a great success and the money accrued from this exercise will be used to promote the sheep and wool industry and its practices to the general public.

In December last year, the AWI initiated a review of the wool selling systems. AWI have taken a staged approach to this process through staggered written responses and attendance at meetings. WAFarmers have actively contributed to this process offering a number of suggestions, some a little controversial, for further investigation.

The latest paper to be issued by AWI is requesting industry support for a web-based Wool Exchange Portal (WEP). The portal will include an extensive information database of selling options and an online meeting point where wool growers and buyers could detail wool on offer or sought. A ready-reckoner to help growers assess alternative selling outcomes, including auction, a 'smart router' to promote outcomes based on pre-set selling parameters, different wool testing and appraisal options and a 'find a broker' and 'find an exporter' functions have also been proposed. Responses are required by 4th September.

John Nankivell and Scott Pickering have done a wonderful job representing WA's interests on the National Wild Dog Action Plan Committees. Scott is also our representative on the newly established WA Wild Dog Action Plan Steering Group chaired by DAFWA. Scott and his family were also the winners of the Supreme Clip of the Sale award at the Elders wool clip awards in June, for the fifth time I believe, a brilliant achievement and we congratulate him on his success.

As the Wool Council Executive Officer I attend the WA Shearing Industry Association (WASIA) meetings and there a couple of issues we are working on together. These include shearing shed safety and training protocols and payroll tax increases, the latter has an impact on the whole agricultural industry.

2015 is a WoolPoll year and WAFarmers encourages all wool growers to vote. This is your money and you should have a say on how much income you are prepared to give AWI for marketing and research activities. Three positions for the AWI Board of Directors are also up for grabs so if you are keen to get involved in driving the direction and activities for the wool industry, please consider putting in a nomination.

## T H Peterson Trust

The T H Peterson Trust was established in 1995 to:

**(a) Continue the annual Peterson Award and to promote the long term prosperity and heritage of the Western Australian Farmers Federation and**

**(b) Assist the Western Australian Farmers Federation to acquire real and personal property.**

### History

T H Peterson was a farmer and long-time member of the federation who left a substantial sum of money to the then 'Farmers Union of WA' to build a permanent home for the organisation in Perth.

Please send to:

T H Peterson Trust  
PO BOX68

Guildford 6055

Yes, I'd like to know more about

(tick one)

Leaving a Bequest to the T H Peterson Trust

Information to assist with preparing a Will

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

Best time to call \_\_\_\_\_

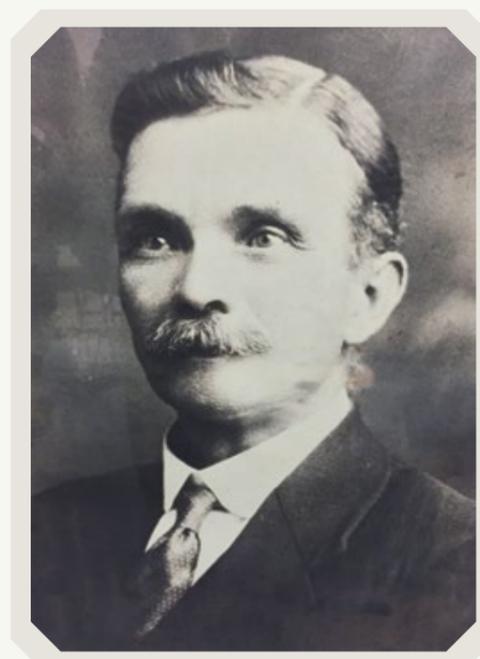
I have already included T H Peterson Trust in my Will.

This was in the 1950s and the Farmers Union of WA bought property on 239 Adelaide Terrace, East Perth. In the 1980s the organisation set about building an additional new building on the 239 Adelaide Terrace site, borrowing money and issuing 3 debenture series to fund the building project.

The financial unrest in the 1990s resulted in the federation having to sell the buildings to pay out and wind up the debenture borrowing. The T H Peterson Trust was set up with the remaining money in honour of T H Peterson who originally bequeathed funds for a permanent home for the organisation.

The trustees of the T H Peterson Trust have committed to buying a new home for WAFarmers which will be owned by the Trust.

The Western Australian Farmers Federation along with the TH Peterson Trust Trustees asks you to consider the purpose of the TH Peterson Trust and the future of The Western Australian Farmers Federation in preparing your will. If you are interested and would like more information please complete the attached form.



T.H. PETERSON ESQ  
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## General policy

### TRANSPORT

#### Compliance & Enforcement

In April 2015, the Minister for Transport introduced the Compliance and Enforcement legislation, which recognises the responsibilities that persons other than the driver have in the transportation of goods by road.

Anyone who has control in the transport chain can be held legally accountable if by action, inaction or demand, they cause or contribute to road safety breaches. All persons within the Chain of Responsibility need to demonstrate that they had taken all reasonable steps to prevent a breach and/or there were no reasonable steps they could have taken to prevent the breach; and/or there was no way they could reasonably be expected to know about the breach.

WAFarmers formed an alliance with the WA Road Transport Authority, a leading transport compliance consulting firm, Combined Rural Traders and Landmark. This will help ensure that all producers are adequately informed of their obligations regarding compliance and enforcement, load restraint and the transport of dangerous goods.

WAFarmers are working with industry to print a 'Ready Reckoner' that will be an easy reference guide to a range of transport issues.

WAFarmers has continued driving change via the Agricultural Vehicle Advisory Group that it helped form with the Department of Transport and other industry stakeholders. The group recently updated and released the Towed Agricultural Vehicle Guide. Other successes include advocating for easier Western Power permits and major changes to the Class 1 notice which now allows applicable agricultural machines to operate on the road without the need to obtain a permit. Over the years significant numbers of agricultural machines have operated on the roads without the required MRWA permits, leaving operators exposed to potential prosecution.

### FARM BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

#### Farm Debt Mediation

In June, the WA Farm Debt Mediation Scheme WA was introduced by the State Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. Ken Baston.

WAFarmers has played a major role in advocating for such a scheme to be harmonised across Australia including making it a key message when WAFarmers was a part of the high-level Rural Debt Roundtable process in Brisbane in 2012. From that forum, the then Federal Minister for Agriculture, Senator Joe Ludwig announced that a national farm debt mediation scheme would be developed.

The WA Farm Debt Mediation Scheme is a voluntary, non-legal, and Government-subsidised process that assists farm businesses settle disputes regarding their loan agreements with their financial institution.

#### Farm Management Deposits

The Farm Management Deposit (FMD) scheme is highly regarded by WAFarmers for creating a self-sufficiency mechanism that increases resilience in a farm business suffering a business downturn.

WAFarmers successfully advocated to increase thresholds and extend eligibility for the Farm Management Deposits Scheme (FMDs) by

increasing the deposit limit for FMDs from \$400,000 to \$800,000 given the increased volatility and climate change effects on required input costs, and to have the deposit recognised as an asset for banks to consider in the customers seasonal finance application.

#### Income averaging

WAFarmers recognises that income averaging mechanisms are vital to agriculture as the industry's income volatility can have potentially damaging consequences to tax inflows and outflows.

WAFarmers successfully advocated for the farmers' ability to opt back in to the income averaging provisions after a period of time to recognise changing circumstances.

#### Tax White Paper

WAFarmers made a submission to the Federal Government's Tax White Paper.

The key suggestions, some of which have since been earmarked for implementation, were:

- Increasing the Farm Management Deposits limits.
- Changing the non-commercial loss rules to reflect the fact that a \$40,000 off-farm income limit for rules exemption is inappropriate in today's climate.
- Quarantining taxable income assessments during instances where farm operations are constrained by asset management provisions of income withholding by banks. The absence of such provisions has seen farms under bank asset management, and as a result, have full responsibility for income tax, and its effects on social support provisions, and yet have no available cash, due to debt provisions.
- Amending the Zone Rebate criteria; fuel tax and payroll tax provisions.
- Tax incentives for improved drought resilience & research.

#### Competitiveness White Paper

WAFarmers also made a submission to the Federal Government's Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper.

Some of the suggestions included:

- Improving existing infrastructure and transport regulation.
- Introducing a mandatory farm debt mediation process.
- Improving tax system efficiency and equity by raising the income threshold from \$40,000 to \$100,000, increasing thresholds and extending eligibility for the Farm Management Deposits Scheme (FMDs) and reducing the complexity of depreciation.

## AgConnectWA

AgConnectWA has grown from strength to strength since it was established in 2013. They started with a small base of around 60 members in their first year and have grown to over 350 in less than three years. The group made up of young farmers, young agri-professionals and students is predominantly a networking group for those in the agricultural industry.

They hold an Annual Conference at the Ocean Beach Hotel each year which attracts excellent numbers, fantastic speakers and is an excellent opportunity for young people to socialise with likeminded individuals and



AgConnectWA is playing a vital role in ensuring that young people within our industry are supported and have the capability to create long, lasting networks of contacts that will help them in a professional and personal capacity. AgConnectWA are meeting some of the most successful people within our industry and being given the tools to formulate ideas and improvements not only in their careers but for the industry as a whole. It is safe to say that the agricultural industry is in safe hands with an exciting and prosperous future with these young people coming up through the ranks.

If you know of any young people who would benefit from being part of AgConnectWA get them to come along to one of their events or check them out on Social media. They are on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

@AgConnectWA



learn from those who have been in the industry a while. AgConnectWA also hold AgTiki annually, taking a coach in the Swan Valley to learn about one of the properties in the area in the morning and enjoying the produce from the area in the afternoon. They also hold an annual cocktail party on the Swan Valley in January and co-host AgriCultured at Claremont Showgrounds with The Royal Ag Society, Harvest Networking and the agricultural departments at each of the WA universities.



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## This farmer's strategy for sourcing his farm chemicals ensures he gets best value and a guarantee of supply...

**Carl Fuchsbichler who farms 12,000ha at Koorda is a strategist when it comes to his farm chemical supplies. It ensures he gets what his property needs – when he wants it – at the best price possible.**

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"What's more, I buy from 4Farmers - they're an important part of our strategy too. They've been around for 20 years, delivering quality, great prices and product direct to the farm.



*Carl Fuchsbichler*

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