

WAPPA MEDIA RELEASE – February 18, 2002

WAPPA HAS LONG HARD LOOK

Members crowded Pastoral House last Friday as the WA Pork Producers' Association (WAPPA) went to the drawing board to define its role in a dramatically changed industry.

President, Ken Boughton, noted the attendance reflected broad interest in the future of the producer body.

“We had a frank discussion about what WAPPA is doing, what it should be doing, how Executive will act on the input generated and what WAPPA will change.”

The first step in the change management process was a session facilitated by Dr Kim Nairn, of Portec Australia, on keeping WAPPA relevant.

Small and large producers, who had previously been polarised in their views, agreed the Association had changed irreversibly because of the evolving marketing system which saw more producers selling direct to processors.

“Since the industry shake-down of 1998, things have not been the same and producers attending WAPPA meetings have increasingly enjoyed a larger presence from other industry stakeholders,” Mr Boughton explained.

“With the changing face of its membership, WAPPA's role also adjusted and Friday's meeting recognised that we now represent the bigger picture -- not only pork producers, but every link in the pork supply chain, from shelter to shelf.”

During the discussion, however, some were apprehensive that WAPPA's move from being purely a grower representative body could jeopardise the smaller grower's voice within the industry.

However, many suggested WAPPA could continue as a champion for smaller growers by facilitating the formation of grower alliances.

Mr Boughton said alliances allowed growers to pool their resources and production potential to gain marketing clout and drive economies of scale.

There have been some very successful alliances in the pork industry in the eastern states, such as the Victorian Pork Alliance and Grenfell Marketing Group.

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“WAPPA could help bring together similar groups in the WA pork industry.”

Agricultural Produce Commission (APC) Chairman, Harry Morgan, suggested WAPPA should not rush into any changes.

Rather, it should wait until the APC Pork Producers' Committee had been established.

The Committee is expected to change the industry landscape, but Mr Boughton felt WAPPA should act now to make use of the feedback the meeting had produced.

“We acknowledge that the APC Committee will change things again, but I don't think we can afford to stand idle for a year.

“We need to begin playing the role industry has identified for us now, albeit with a view towards how the industry will be in another 12 months. WAPPA does not have time for dress rehearsals and therefore must act now,” Mr Boughton said.

The meeting also welcomed John Bodycoat, who will co-ordinate the Australian Pork Industry Quality (APIQ) program in WA and Emalyn Loudon, the newly appointed Industry Training Officer.

Mr Bodycoat was involved with the Great Grain program and has experience administering quality assurance programs in the strawberry industry.

He will approach WA's 350 producers to encourage their participation in APIQ.

Ms Loudon also worked in the grains industry, with the Department of Agriculture.

Initially, she will serve as Training Officer full time, but will eventually also assist WAPPA Executive Officer, Lea Newing.

After the general meeting, WAPPA held its annual industry dinner at Burswood On Swan. It was attended by 140 industry stakeholders and their partners.

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