

Final report

Chair – Western Australian Livestock Research Council (WALRC)

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Executive summary

Background (as per MLA contract)

The Western Australia Livestock Research Council (WALRC), North Australia Beef Research Council (NABRC) and Southern Australia Livestock Research Council (SALRC) are key industry agency forums charged with the responsibility of advising on strategic requirements and operational priorities for research, development and adoption, (RD&A) including education and training, activities in Australia's beef and sheepmeat industries.

The WALRC Chair is an influential leadership role working with a wide cross section of producer groups, research, development and adoption (RD&A) agencies and industry representatives from Western Australia's sheepmeat and southern (temperate) beef industries. The WALRC Chair takes on the governance responsibilities of the committee and advocacy and leadership function for WALRC. A key function of the WALRC Chair is to work with the Executive Officer to develop a plan to move to a more sustainable funding model.

In representing and advocating the operational priorities and strategic direction for RD&A investment in Western Australia's sheepmeat and southern beef industries, the Chair appointed will have skills and experience in beef and/or sheepmeat production and trading systems, strategic planning, and strong leadership qualities in working with industry peers and/or RD&A policy and service providers. An understanding of, and confidence in, meeting protocols, corporate governance, MLA media policy and liaison and public speaking is required.

Objectives (as stated in MLA contract)

By 30 June 2021, in collaboration with MLA and WALRC co-investors:

1. Regional Investment Priorities and research, development and adoption (RD&A) planning and delivery:
 - a. Deliver regional investment priorities for sheepmeat and grassfed beef research, development and adoption (RD&A) to MLA at a time agreed with the Program Manager – Consultation,
 - b. Provide representation on the Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) Red Meat Panel (refer to the Red Meat Panel Charter of Operations) to assist in the process of determining investment priorities and maintaining a balanced portfolio,
 - c. Chair at least eight producer consultation forums per year with organisational support from the EO, co-investors and producer members in the region,
 - d. Provide a forum for beef and sheepmeat industry and research, development and adoption (RD&A) agencies to review, debate and consolidate RD&A priorities that emerge from the regional committees,
 - e. Lead WALRC development of new initiatives to improve RD&A planning and delivery.

2. WALRC Strategy and Governance:

In conjunction with Executive Officer to develop and implement strategy to move to a more sustainable funding model. Including but not limited to

 - a. facilitating the WALRC council and Executive Officer in the expansion and maintenance of the producer membership to eight active members,

- b. Lead and Chair at least two WALRC council meetings per year including providing guidance to the Executive Officer in developing meeting agendas, facilitating discussions, and maintaining momentum in WALRC's out-of-session activities,
- c. Support WALRC to grow industry capability through professional and personal development opportunities for the Council's immediate producer members and succession needs,
- d. Work with the Executive Officer and Secretariat to execute the 3-year strategy plan, annual work plan and communications plan in consultation with WALRC, co-investors and MLA to enable effective implementation and reporting,
- e. With the Executive Officer develop an annual operating budget for approval by WALRC executive and MLA. Ensure that WALRC operates within approved budgets.

Provide (apolitical) advocacy and leadership in relation to RD&A requirements, direction and value for Australia's sheepmeat and southern grassfed beef sectors by:

- a. Participating in relevant discussions/industry workshops or events in Western Australia relating to RD&A program and project development, delivery and implementation in the sheepmeat and southern grassfed beef sectors,
- b. Develop and maintain effective relationships between key sheepmeat and southern beef RD&A stakeholders (agencies and industry groups) in WA including reporting to and/or liaising with the Peak Industry Councils (if requested by MLA as required),
- c. Encourage and assist producer members to become leaders in their local grower group (GG) with support to establish at least one GG based extension project,
- d. Become recognised as a key red meat and livestock representative and contact point for WA levy payers wanting to know how their levy is spent and provide knowledge and information on key MLA initiatives as required.

Manage WALRC Chair time effectively within the 50 allocated days.

Methodology

The chair role is one of primary leadership of Western Australian Livestock Research Council (WALRC). WALRC undertakes producer consultation on behalf of MLA for the western Australian southern zone. R,D&A priorities are captured via a series of producer forums held throughout the year in carefully selected locations to cover current industry regional and national issues as well as ensuring geographic coverage over time to maximise exposure to industry with the limited resource available.

WALRC producer members provide representation on MLA industry working groups and feedback on levy based preliminary R,D & A proposals.

The Chair and Producer chair provide WALRC representation to Red Meat Panel.

Results/key findings

WALRC have provided a comprehensive list of WA producer R,D&A priorities in each of the 4 years of this Chairmanship. We have developed a rationale development process which explains the context of each priority.

The regional forums deliver a very effective mechanism of awareness raising as well as producer consultation

Benefits to industry

WALRC provide an effective mechanism for the acquisition of producer issues which are relevant to the red meat industries. In doing so we also provide producers with an opportunity to become aware of the outcomes of existing and new research effort and facilitate direct access of key research groups to producers. The outcome is earlier adoption of research output.

Future research and recommendations

In the past 2 years we have had significant budgetary cuts, and further cuts are forecast. If MLA wish to continue having an effective producer consultation program with the unfunded additional benefit of producer awareness, then the funding must improve to continue this program which is increasingly valued by producers.

Outcomes Against Contract Objectives

	Contract Objective – Milestone	Outcome	Commentary
1a.	Deliver regional investment priorities for sheepmeat and grassfed beef research, development and adoption (RD&A) to MLA at a time agreed with the Program Manager – Consultation,	<p>At June Priority setting Workshop draft priorities were discussed and debated. These drafts will be finalised at the WALRC meeting on 19th August and forwarded to MLA.</p> <p>Priority setting has occurred in each of the 5 years of WALRC involvement. The priority template for workshopping and provision to MLA has developed over the last 4 years. WALRC essentially developed the priority reporting content now in use by MLA albeit in their own format. We are really happy with the content and degree of consideration provided to ensure clarity and conciseness.</p> <p>Particularly pleasing to have MLA program manager involvement in the priority setting debate and to provide feedback on the previous years' priorities. This has become somewhat instructive about the content and wording of priorities in future.</p>	<p>This occurs with all council present – producers and co-investors. Draft priorities were sent out the week prior for review and reflection. There is provision for members to propose additional draft priorities, none forthcoming in this year. The format of the workshop is for draft priorities to be discussed in group format. Extensive notes were taken for editing into a final form for voting on 19th August. On 19th August: Consideration of Animal Health based priorities following input from MLA program manager by council. Each member allocates a vote to 5 priorities. Priorities are then ranked, highest number of votes is rank 1 and so on. Submitted to MLA as scored, save only final editing to finalise wording.</p>
b.	Provide representation on the Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) Red Meat Panel (refer to the Red Meat Panel Charter of Operations) to assist in the process of determining investment priorities and maintaining a balanced portfolio,	Yes. I've attended all RMP meetings in the last year.	<p>Found the mixed IT meetings difficult to follow and are a poor alternative to face to face meetings.</p> <p>In addition there have been a number of meetings representing WALRC – eg: consultation review workshop, selection panel for expert panel chair, sheep reproduction strategic partnership.</p>

	Contract Objective – Milestone	Outcome	Commentary
c.	Chair at least eight producer consultation forums per year with organisational support from the EO, co-investors and producer members in the region	Completed Forums chaired and/or contributed to: Winter forum: Pagoda Perth 85 researchers and farmers Asheep field day:, Esperance 80+ farmers Wandering GG field day 45 farmers Rangelands forum: Mt Magnet 100+ pastoralists GLIDO Fremantle (Cancelled at last minute, COVID lockdown) 120 registered Stirlings to Coast Seminar, Albany Convention centre Western Beef Forum, Busselton: 160 registrations Livestock Matters forum: Many Peaks 90 farmers Livestock Matters forum: Binnu/Northampton 100+ farmers	Several other minor events attended and either presented or contributed to content on behalf of WALRC and used to capture producer issues for priority development.
d.	Provide a forum for beef and sheepmeat industry and research, development and adoption (RD&A) agencies to review, debate and consolidate RD&A priorities that emerge from the regional committees(WALRC does not have regional committees, so interpreted this as “the WALRC producer members”).	See 1 above.	
e.	Lead WALRC development of new initiatives to improve RD&A planning and delivery.	All forum format and delivery innovation are a combination of the creativity of Chair and EO with support and further enhancement by Executive of WALRC.	We have tested and refined many delivery methodologies for the consultative process in capturing producer issues. In past years it has included live online Q&A (clickers and then Mentimeter), Simple presentation of a topic followed by group discussion, Researcher-farmer conversation with group Q&A, Traditional panel discussion and Virtual field days with interviews to provide base content.

	Contract Objective – Milestone	Outcome	Commentary
			<p>All have been effective and in the past year it has been notable that and captured well by us to recognise that in COVID times people wanted simple opportunity to converse, look and see. PowerPoint, and other IT was minimised except for recording the farm tours for YouTube. This takes time and experience to recognise and respond to what the market wants. The numbers of producers attending our events is a strong indication of our success.</p>
2a.	<p>In conjunction with Executive Officer to develop and implement strategy to move to a more sustainable funding model. Including but not limited to facilitating the WALRC council and Executive Officer in the expansion and maintenance of the producer membership to eight active members.</p>	<p>This was beyond the scope of a one-year contract.</p> <p>We expanded to and have maintained 8 active producer members 3 years ago at the chair's initiative. This membership is embedded in the constitution of WALRC. The first round of producer member renewal by our appointments subcommittee is underway for completion at August 19th AGM.</p>	<p>There has been little discussion with MLA around long term consultation commitment and what a more sustainable funding model looks like. We exist because MLA is mandated (Senate statutory funding agreement review 2103-4) to have an effective consultation process. WALRC delivers this very effectively.</p> <p>It is implied that the funding model includes other sources of income (funding) when our primary function is consultation on behalf of MLA that few other organisations would consider being a useful deployment of their funds.</p> <p>We all will need to accept and embrace WALRC engaging in other activities to grow its income base beyond MLA consultation and the 4 research providers of significance.</p> <p>Discussions continue with Grower Group Alliance (GGA) to become a paying member, but fundamentally they are at the margins of R,D & A activity themselves, most activity actually occurs within the GG member organisations over which GGA have no oversight.</p>

	Contract Objective – Milestone	Outcome	Commentary
b.	Lead and Chair at least two WALRC council meetings per year including providing guidance to the Executive Officer in developing meeting agendas, facilitating discussions, and maintaining momentum in WALRC's out-of-session activities.	Following meetings of WALRC have been chaired: AGM Aug 2020 Exec Committee Sep 2020 Producer Preliminary proposal review Nov 2020 Exec Committee Dec 2020 Exec Committee April 2020 Exec Committee June 2020 Priority setting workshop full council June 2020	All operational activity and momentum of the WALRC organisation due to the effective executive function lead by the Chair and EO.
c.	Support WALRC to grow industry capability through professional and personal development opportunities for the Council's immediate producer members and succession needs,	We always have a producer focussed professional development component in our meetings. Often this comprises R&D updates from the WALRC member institutions.	Our producer member attendance rates and participation are extremely high. They are very engaged in WALRC activities. Their enthusiasm for what we do gives me a lot of personal satisfaction that the value proposition for our producer members is high.
d.	Work with the Executive Officer and Secretariat to execute the 3-year strategy plan, annual work plan and communications plan in consultation with WALRC, co-investors and MLA to enable effective implementation and reporting	Completed.	First 3 year strategic plan concluded on 30 June 2021. Report on key outcomes pending. New strategic plan development to commence August 2021 meeting.
e.	With the Executive Officer develop an annual operating budget for approval by WALRC executive and MLA. Ensure that WALRC operates within approved budgets	Completed	Executive have proposed and I fully support that an annual independent audit of our financials be completed. This will become even more appropriate as we move to a self-managed funding model.
3a.	Participating in relevant discussions/industry workshops or events in Western Australia relating to RD&A program and project development, delivery and implementation in	Active participation in all events to which we are invited.	

	Contract Objective – Milestone	Outcome	Commentary
	the sheepmeat and southern grassfed beef sectors,		
b.	Develop and maintain effective relationships between key sheepmeat and southern beef RD&A stakeholders (agencies and industry groups) in WA including reporting to and/or liaising with the Peak Industry Councils (if requested by MLA as required),	We maintain good working relationships with key RD&A stakeholders within our zone as well as many outside of it (in other states).	It is unfortunate that we have no capacity to engage PICs, it has not been requested by MLA (let alone funded) and remains a deficiency in our effective delivery to the producers in the WALRC zone.
c.	Encourage and assist producer members to become leaders in their local grower group (GG) with support to establish at least one GG based extension project.	Some are already actively engaged with their grower group. In some areas there is no GG, but an Natural Resource Management (NRM) or other such catchment based grower organisation. Perhaps the highlight of the year was the establishment of the Southern Rangelands Pastoral Alliance, in which Ken Shaw was instrumental in its formation. Well done Ken.	Producer members know that we support the establishment of an extension project within their GG. Some have been involved in the application for a Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) which has been unsuccessful. Of the successes the PDS for the rangelands around P deficiency has finally come together with a lot of negotiation to get an appropriate funding model with the MLA adoption team..
d.	Become recognised as a key red meat and livestock representative and contact point for WA levy payers wanting to know how their levy is spent and provide knowledge and information on key MLA initiatives as required.	Ongoing and completed this task	
4.	Manage WALRC Chair time effectively within the 50 allocated days	Actual contracted time invoiced – 45.75 days Time not invoiced - 12 days Time to be invoiced – 4 days	The additional time not invoiced is an estimate (captured each quarter) of the additional organisational activities undertaken spontaneously and without reference to ensure smooth running of WALRC. This additional 4 days has accumulated in the month of July 2021.