



Newsletter

February 2004

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One man's meat ...

The guest speaker for our next luncheon meeting on February 27, David Crombie, should not be short of subject matter.

Mr Crombie is chairman of Meat and Livestock Australia, and the recent Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Australia and the USA and the debate over the controversial National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) alone should provide a lot of material.

His broad topic will be productivity, sustainability and demand in the Australian red meat and livestock industry.

Under that pretty embracing banner David intends to provide an overview of the MLA's role and the services it provides. This will include a range of initiatives to encourage productivity, such as the Prime Time campaign held throughout Australia last year.

David will also discuss work MLA is doing to increase demand for red meat in Australia and internationally, including the FTA with the USA, ongoing market access work and the MLA's domestic marketing campaigns.

He will cover the major industry programs the MLA administers, including the NLIS and the recently launched Livestock Production Assurance program (LPA).

Mr Crombie has impressive credentials for holding the top meat industry job.

He was raised on a beef cattle property in Queensland, completed an economics degree at the University of Queensland and joined Gunn Rural Management (GRM) managing cattle properties in northern Australia.

In the mid-1970s he was appointed Director of GRM and was one of three executives who completed a management buyout. During his time, the GRM group expanded its beef cattle empire across northern Australia and developed an integrated supply chain for beef exports to Asia.



MLA Chairman, David Crombie

From 1989 to 1998 he managed the Queensland Northern Territory Pastoral Company (formerly King Ranch) which ran 150,000 head of cattle across nine properties until its dispersal by its owners, Bankers Trust of Australia.

He retired as MD of GRM in 2000 but is still a director.

As well as being chairman of MLA, he also chairs the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation and is on the board of FKP Ltd.

The so-called 'game played in heaven' is one of his passions, and he is chairman of Queensland Rugby Union and on the board of the Australian Rugby Union.

He continues to run family properties in south-east Queensland which breed and fatten cattle and grow crops.

Register early and on-line for Friday 27 February's luncheon seminar with MLA's David Crombie

Corporate 'Member of the Month': TBA

Venue: The **ALL SEASONS PREMIER MENZIES HOTEL** 14 Carrington Street, Sydney.

When: 12:00 noon for 12:30pm: Friday, 27 February

Cost: \$55 per head, or voucher (Note: we have had to increase the price of luncheon attendances from \$50 to \$55. The price of voucher books has increased to \$600.

Register: On-line before 5:00pm, Tuesday 24 February at www.nswfarmwriters.org. Or through *Australian Honey Bee Industry Council's* Laurel Pickering: ahbic@honeybee.org.au Phone: 02 9221 0911 or Fax: 02 9221 0922

Late cancellations: Phone Amy Lawrence (02 8204 3857) or Jamie Graham (0418 479 434)

Our Christmas function at Parliament House on December 11 was a great success, attracting about 130 people and featuring a lot of conviviality, socialising, networking plus a host of door prizes donated by corporate members.

Our patron and host, NSW Agriculture Minister, Ian Macdonald, welcomed the guests but was in a serious frame of mind. Having just come from a meeting with parties affected by the Federal Government's threat to withhold from NSW about \$50 million in National Competition Policy related funding if legislation deemed anti-competitive was not changed, that issue was at the front of his mind.

Involved is legislation that allows poultry meat producers to collectively negotiate contract prices for growing chickens with the major processors, plus the Farm Debt Mediation Act which requires banks to seek mediation before foreclosing on farmers in financial trouble.



Telstra Countrywide Manager, Roger Bamber, proposing the vote of thanks to Ian Macdonald

The Federal Government has also signalled it is looking closely at the NSW rice industry's vesting powers.

Mr Macdonald used the occasion to vent his frustration at the Commonwealth's actions.

He said the Commonwealth was even targeting the vesting powers over some NSW grains of the former NSW Grains Board, now held by GrainCorp, even though that arrangement would expire in 2005.

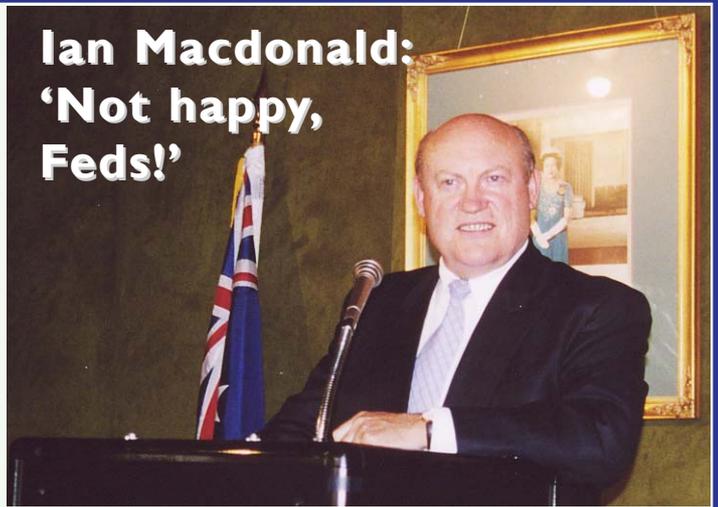


Enjoying the fun and festivities and taking in the messages from Farm Writers' Patron, NSW Agriculture Minister, Ian Macdonald

"Over the last 24 hours I have virtually lived with rice growers," he said.

NSW had subjected the rice arrangements to a net public benefit test in 1998 which had found there was a benefit of \$35 to \$42 million, and an independent report in 2000-01 had put the benefit at \$60 million.

Ian Macdonald: 'Not happy, Feds!'



On the other hand, the Commonwealth itself had reviewed only 33 per cent of the priority legislation targeted under National Competition Policy, compared with NSW's 69 per cent, he said.

The National Competition Council (on whose recommendations the Commonwealth policy is based) had chastised the Commonwealth for setting a bad example for the states.



The Hammond & Thackeray table lightened up a lot later in the afternoon.

This issue is continuing into 2004, with the NSW Government in January throwing down the gauntlet activating legislation to extend the NSW Rice Marketing Board's vesting powers out to 2009.

It is also fighting to protect the Farm Debt Mediation Act but might have to give ground and find some alternative to the poultry meat industry legislation.

Off to South Africa

Two of our members, President, Stuart Hutton and Senior Vice President, Colin Munro, will be attending the 2004 Annual Congress of the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists in South Africa in March as official delegates.

As is traditional, both will receive support from Farm Writers to help defray some of the costs associated with registration, accommodation and airfares.

Helen Murray and Jamie Graham were also offered support to attend but found they were unable to take up the opportunity on this occasion.

Trevor Flugge AO on 19 March 2004

Former AWB chair and now, Chairman of Australian Wool Services Limited, Trevor Flugge AO, will be our guest speaker on FRIDAY 19 MARCH. Unfortunately, we cannot have our usual gig at the All Seasons Menzies Premier Hotel on the last Friday in March so we have brought the date forward. Please adjust your diaries accordingly.