



Newsletter

March 2003

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Just how should we make Australian wool innovative?

Our guest speaker for our next monthly seminar on March 28, Ian McLachlan, should have an interesting story to tell.

Ian, a woolgrower with pastoral interests in South Australia, Victoria and NSW, has had a long career in agripolitics and mainstream politics.

He represented the seat of Barker in South Australia from 1990 to 1998 in Federal Parliament and served as Minister for Defence during that period.

But his most recent claim to fame is the palace coup he led last year to overturn the incumbent board of Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) because of dissatisfaction with the direction AWI was being taken.

We'll hear his version of events and get some insight into the kind of organisation he wants AWI to be.

For instance, Ian McLachlan will tell us what he sees as the future for the commercialisation of research, development and innovation in the Australian wool industry.

Since AWI was formed in 2001, its task has been to organise and drive high-quality research programs and to do all in its power to have the results of this research 'appropriately commercialised'. But, how?

How, for instance, does AWI intend to manage the 'market failure' rules by which it should abide?

What does 'commercialising research' really mean, and how appropriate is it to all the various projects under AWI's wing?

How should AWI apportion research expenditure between the three areas of on-farm, post-farm and general wool research?

And should AWI be a driver of research, and if so, how should it encourage it?

Now that woolgrowers/shareholders have a vote every three years on the levy percentage, presently delivering \$60 - \$70 million annually, how do we ensure long-term projects are catered for, bearing in mind AWI's contractual obligations?

Although some argue there is no singular or correct answer for many of these questions, Ian is likely to tell us there are clear guidelines that must be followed and requirements that must be met. If you want to hear what these are, come along to hear what Ian McLachlan has to say on Friday 28 March. (Continued Page 2)



Hear AWI's Ian McLachlan on the wool industry's future: Friday 28 March.

Register early and on-line for Friday 28 March's lunch with AWI's Ian McLachlan

Corporate 'Members of the Month': NSW Agriculture and Hassall & Associates

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

When: 12:00 noon for 12:30pm: Friday, 28 March, 2003

Cost: \$50 per head, or voucher

Register: On-line before 25 March (PLEASE!) 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

Ian McLachlan and AWI's future

(Continued from page 1)

Ian McLachlan's agri-political and agribusiness credentials include a spell as president of the National Farmers Federation from 1984 to 1988 and he is generally regarded as having been one of that organisation's more charismatic leaders.

Before that, he was a member of the Wool Council of Australia.

From 1988 to 1990 he was on the board of the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation and in 1990 he retired as a director of the South Australian Brewing Company (now SouthCorp) and as a director of Elders IXL.

After leaving federal politics he was roped into chairing the Australian Wool Industry Future Directions task Force, appointed to chart a new direction and new structures for the industry when the wool stockpile ran down. In fact, it was not long after that appointment that Farm Writers' last heard from Ian, in 2000.

He joined AWTA Ltd and Australian Wool Handlers in 2000 to initiate an evaluation of on-farm fibre testing technologies.

Recently he was appointed as a member of the Defence Industry Advisory Board by the SA Government.

In 1989 Ian McLachlan was admitted as an Officer of the Order of Australia for his services to primary industries.

Oh, and by the way, Mr McLachlan is also currently President of the South Australian Cricket Association.

Now, remind us, if you would, please. Where DID the 'Redbacks' come in the Pura Cup and ING Cup?

Potential problem there!

Many thanks to 'star photographer' Ron Aggs, and NSW Agriculture for the photos from last month.

A Boyd in the hand is worth water off a duck's back: February 28 revisited

Clyde Agriculture's chief executive officer, David Boyd, proved a lively guest speaker at our February seminar where he jumped on a few of his favourite hobby horses before about 70 members and guests.

Direct in his firing line were those whom he said worshipped at the "dark green altar" - a phrase he attributed to historian Geoffrey Blainey.

He said he was "absolutely incensed" at those who claimed all we have done agriculture in the past 200 years is to apply "inappropriate European methods."

Such a claim was an insult to some of the best agricultural scientists in the world and ignored the "quite outstanding" sustainable productivity improvements, mostly in the much-maligned Murray-Darling Basin.

"Ecology has replaced economics as the dismal science," he said.

David also observed it was ironic that as markets became more deregulated, production was becoming more and more regulated, driven by the State's intrusion into natural resource management.



David Boyd lets it rip: Improvements to land management "ignored" by greensies



"Don't think you should pull punches, David." "Thanks, Don, I won't!"



"David, I agree with you! But I've been saying that all along; and they never flamin' listen to me either!" (Our guest speaker obviously struck a few chords over lunch with new FW member, Emeritus Prof. Graham Swain)

On his theme of "droughts and flooding rains - and not much in the middle" he said we should recognise that Australia was not so much a dry continent as one with enormous variability in rainfall.

A particular concern was to see vast volumes of flood water going down the Barwon-Darling along which many Clyde properties are situated and not being allowed to use it for irrigation.

He said the proposed annual cap in water extractions on the Barwon-Darling amounted to less than three days flow past Bourke in a moderate flood.

David also gave an interesting insight into Clyde Agriculture, whose empire he said amounted to "six cotton farms, eleven stations and a pub" (the Port of Bourke in Bourke).

In a normal year Clyde produces 60,000 bales of cotton, runs 230,000 sheep and 30,000 cattle and grows 60,000 hectares of dryland winter crop, mostly high protein wheat.

The company aimed to be as efficient in all its operations as the top 20 per cent of family farmers, he said.

Mark your diaries for a 'Double Header' in May

Because ANZAC Day is the last Friday of the month, and because it will be only a couple of weeks between then and the Federal Budget, we are going to have two seminars in May: our traditional post-budget breakfast with the Minister for Ag (Wed 14 May) and a follow-up seminar on the last Friday in May (30th). Stay tuned!