

COMMUNIQUE

Sheep Producers Australia Policy Council – June 2024

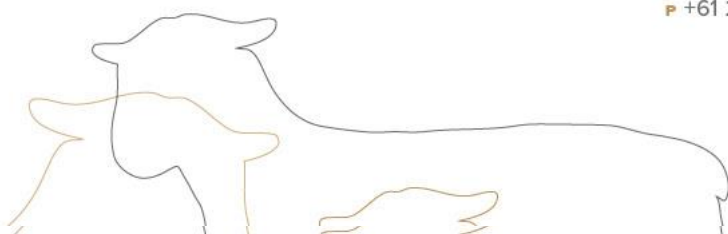
- Sheep Producers Australia Policy Council (Council) met in Melbourne on 25 and 26 June with the SPA Board. As the leading voice for sheep meat producers, the Council is responsible for policy and advocacy on national issues that impact producers.

SPA Climate Smart Workplan

1. A Working Group comprised of SPA Staff and several Council Members has been established to develop a Work Plan to foster a climate resilient, sustainable and productive sheep flock/industry. A draft Work Plan was presented for feedback at the Council meeting. The objective of this Work Plan is to enable SPA to advocate for appropriate policy settings and critical research needs and ultimately to foster a climate resilient, sustainable and productive sheep industry.
2. The Climate Smart Work Plan recommends prioritised areas for R&D to enable sheep production to effectively measure and reduce emissions, ensuring producers can meet supply chain reporting requirements at an enterprise and industry level.
3. The Council highlighted the need for further engagement with Government on future policy and regulation that incentivises producer engagement. The Council raised concerns about commercial implications if these are not developed in a timely, realistic and effective manner.
4. Council Members expressed support for the Working Group priorities, in particular, confirmation of a robust framework and guidelines for calculating on-farm carbon emissions and sequestration.

NLIS updates and decisions

5. The Council discussed ISC's proposed LPA Accreditation amendments. Council was able to reach support for most of the proposed amendments however, further clarity and explanation was requested before the Council could support all the amendments.
6. Council noted the difficulty in transitioning to full eNVD implementation and that while the system features many user-friendly components, further refinement and testing in practical operating conditions would be necessary before full transition can be achieved.



Sheep Industry Integrity System Principles & supporting Decision Matrix

7. The Council considered and discussed a draft Sheep Industry Integrity System Principles and supporting Decision Matrix which would guide informed decisions about whether to implement new technology, systems or processes into sheep industry integrity systems. The Principles and Decision Matrix provide structured and objective framework to assist SPA's Council and other industry stakeholders.
 - Council Members endorsed the Principles (see attached).

Animal welfare

8. The Council endorsed SPA's draft submission to the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy renewal discussion paper.
 - Council Members shared their concerns over the net global loss of animal welfare with Australia's ban of the live export of sheep. Australia has the highest standards of animal welfare, noting the void will be filled by exporters with lower standards.
9. Council Members shared their concern with the disconnect between government decision makers and the agriculture sector, highlighted by the lack of meaningful communication between the two groups.

Biosecurity: review of the National Sheep Industry Biosecurity Strategy and update on national initiatives

- Rob Barwell (Head of Program- Biosecurity at Animal Health Australia) attended the Council meeting to provide an update on the National Sheep Industry Biosecurity Strategy (NSIBS), which is being reviewed.
- Council Members discussed the failure of the government's Biosecurity Protection Levy and the important contributions to the national biosecurity system made by industry.

Hook Tracking

10. The Council discussed the value in data that hook tracking can provide. However, numerous issues surrounding the longevity and quality of hook tracking devices inhibits the implementation and uptake of this technology. Hook tracking provides a greater capacity to measure eating quality which is beneficial to processors and producers.
 - Key features of Victoria's success in implementing hook tracking included considerable feedback to the hook tracking implementors.

Livestock market and trade update

11. The Council discussed the national processing capacity and performance over the last year, noting that the large quantity of processing has positively helped sheepmeat pricing.

- Members noted that Queensland producers have been pushing the expansion of the rangeland goat industry in response to the declining mutton market.
- Council Members shared concerns about the potential election of new US President with 10% tariffs proposed for all imports. Trade protectionism will have significant impact on producers and processors working on tight profit margins.

Joint Board and Policy Council planning session

12. Council and Board Members spent time brainstorming the political, economic, societal, technological, legal and environmental issues in the sheep industry, to establish a context for sheep production over the coming years.

- Council Members engaged in some risk management sessions with the Board across the areas of strategic planning, governance, financial, operational, people, programs, policy and advocacy.
- Council Members selected some priority topics to explore further, looking into SPA's sphere of control; areas we have control, influence or no control over.

13. Council Members also engaged in a workshop to review the FY25 Policy Council Work Plan. Council recognised the importance of aligning industry, PICs, SFOs and other members to consolidate unified positions, which can then be reflected by RMAC. Council also shared the value in their different perspective which helps fill the gap between industry and policy.

External Presentations

14. Council and Board Members engaged in a presentation and discussion with MLA's MD, Michael Crowley. The conversations focussed on MLA's Annual Investment Plan for FY25, development of the next MLA Strategic Plan (2025 – 2030) and, creating and capturing value in livestock through genetics, production, finishing and processing.

- Council and Board Members were presented to by Andrew Gosbell from Associations Forum. Council Members engaged in interactive activities to explore where they could further add value in their roles with SPA.