

## THE ORIGINS OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The idea of helping school students learn about farming and where their food comes from is not new. There have been many initiatives by rural industries, educators and government over the years in Australia to address this matter.

There has been no national coordination of the promotion of agriculture to schools—hence the reason for the establishment of the Primary Industries Education Foundation.

In late 2004 to early 2005 a number of individuals (mainly associated with State departments of agriculture or their equivalent) met to examine ways of introducing national coordination in rural industries education. The various state initiatives were finding that they were unable to access national industry funds or interact with national bodies because they were restricted to operating at a state level.

It was felt that it would be useful to gain an idea as to what was occurring around Australia to promote agriculture to schools. The Australian Wool Education Trust funded a study by Malcolm Brown of Scarlett Consulting, Victoria to do a stock-take. The stock-take formed the basis for a national workshop in Canberra, November 2005 and attended by over 75 people. This meeting engendered great enthusiasm and interest in a national approach. The proceedings of the workshop have been published and are available in .pdf format.

In May 2007 the then Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry convened a Round Table in Sydney with representatives from industries, education sector and government to examine how a national entity could be established. As a result of the Round Table, a working party was established to write a constitution for a National entity. The working party spent the rest of 2007 drafting a Constitution which was then endorsed by the Round Table in December 2007.

Following this, the Working Party agreed that a small number of representative bodies would form the inaugural Board of what was to become the Primary Industries Education Foundation. During the deliberations which led to the establishment of the Foundation the focus changed to include fisheries and forestry—not just agriculture.

The Working Party was unanimous in its desire to ensure that the entity would be tripartite and have an equal balance in its governance from industry, education and government sectors. The Constitution provides for a process to select a skills-based Board through a selection committee with representation from industry, education and government.

During 2008 the initial Board founded the Primary Industries Education Foundation as a not-for-profit Company.

In April 2009 the Hon. Tony Burke MP, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry announced the establishment of the Primary Industries Education Foundation.

*The inaugural members of Primary Industries Education Foundation Board were:*

### **Industry**

National Farmer's Federation, represented by Mr Ben Fargher  
Meat and Livestock Australia, represented by Mr David Thomason

### **Education**

Australian Council of Dean of Agriculture, Associate Professor John Kent  
National Association of Agricultural Educators, Mr Nigel Grant  
CB Alexander Foundation, Tocal, Dr Cameron Archer

Since the Company was established, the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has also become a member.

The inaugural Board's aim was to create the Company and appoint a Selection Committee to appoint the final Board.

The process for the appointment of the Board is based on procedures used by DAFF and other government organisations for Board appointments.

The inaugural Board appointed Dr Mary Corbett as the Chairperson of the Selection Committee. The Selection committee consisted of the following: Dr Mary Corbett, Chairperson; Industry Sector, Mr David Crombie, National Farmers Federation; Mr James Kellaway, Australian Egg Corporation; Education Sector, Professor Jim Pratley, Charles Sturt University/Association of Deans of Agriculture; Mr Andrew Cosbie, National Association of Agricultural Educators; Government representative, Mr Greg Williamson, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Applications were sought for non executive Director positions through advertisements in the Weekend Australian and other newspapers. 164 applicants were received, 92 male and 72 female. The Selection Committee interviewed either in person or by telephone 16 applicants and 7 were appointed to the Board. Selection was on the basis of skills specified in the Constitution.

The Board for the Primary Industries Education Foundation is as follows:

Dr Cameron Archer, Principal, Tocal College with experience in agricultural education in particular vocational education.

Ms Beth Weldon, Manager, AgForce School to Industry Program, with experience high school education, research and development and rural policy.

Mr David Thomson, General Manager Marketing, Meat and Livestock Australia, with experience in marketing and business developments in both rural and non rural sectors.

Professor Emeritus John Lovett, Managing Director, Lovett Associates Pty Ltd, experience in higher education, research and development corporations and organisational governance.

Dr Peter Knight, Associate Dean, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Sydney, extensive experience in educational at the University level, experience in the racing industry and animal welfare and use of innovative technology in education.

Ms Joanne Grainger, Primary Producer, Chair of Cotton Australia, Vice President, Queensland Farmers Federation; formerly a secondary school teacher, experience in farming, education and rural industry.

Mr Ben Stockwin, Principal, Abbotsfield Primary School, Tasmania, extensive experience in primary education, curriculum development and the introduction of primary industries studies into schools.

The Board held its first meeting, (the 10<sup>th</sup> for the Company) on Tuesday 8 September, 2009 and Dr Cameron Archer was elected Chair.

It is now working on the full establishment of the Company and will be seeking membership once administrative arrangements are in place.

At present we do not have a membership application form as such or a full receipting system so please do not seek to apply for membership just yet.

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