

Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group

Decision Making and Dealing with Contentious Issues

Policy Statement

December 2008

Rationale:

The Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group (T.A.P.G) has a wide range of members whose businesses reflect the broad spectrum of commercial agricultural activity. Membership of the Group does not detract from member's rights to operate as individual entities. If the Group is to work effectively individual members must not only be aware of the decision making process but feel able and confident to participate in it. This is particularly important when contentious issues are being dealt with as, valuing the individual's point of view and contribution to the debate, will greatly enhance the achievement of a unified position on these difficult issues.

Outcomes:

1. Collaborative decision making with regard to the substantive issues surrounding policy development, implementation, communication, resource allocation and accountability will be practiced by the Board.
2. The entire membership will be provided with opportunities to contribute to decisions on matters of significance.
3. Daily operational matters will be dealt with via delegated authority to the Executive Officer.
4. Individual non-board members and other, non-members, with particular expertise may be called on or contracted to provide expert opinion for Board consideration.
5. High order communication processes both internal and external to the Group will be practiced.
6. The Board will carry out its Executive Function and meet its legal obligations with respect to the Group's activities.
7. Where consensus cannot be achieved on a contentious issue the Board will adopt a "public" position that does not disadvantage any member. On all such occasions it reserves the right to act as an intermediary with all interested parties in continuing a constructive dialogue on the matter in question. The Board will not act for one member against the interests of another member.

Guidelines:

1. The Board will collaboratively develop preferred policies on substantive issues affecting the agricultural industry in Tasmania. Using a range of approaches it will lobby for the adoption of such policies by the appropriate legislative body whether Federal, State or Local Government.
2. Where agricultural policy is promulgated by outside agencies, the Board will either coordinate or initiate a response on behalf of its members. Individual members may also choose to respond independently or as subsets of the Group. Wherever possible every

effort will be made to speak with one voice on these matters. Where such consensus is not possible the T.A.P.G will offer itself as an honest broker in support of a fair and equitable resolution.

3. Acting for the Board, the Executive Officer will ensure that all members have an awareness of, and an invitation to participate in, the policy formation process. Providing members with advice of Board Meetings, Agenda Items, Minutes and Supplementary Papers together with opportunity to contribute/respond in a timely manner are all examples of good practice that should be followed.

Member Forums, Newsletters and Web based information are also recommended communication strategies.

Because of the diverse nature of the Membership it is also considered important that workplace visitation occur so that a greater awareness of particular industry circumstances is generated at the Board table.

4. A further function for the Executive Officer involves substantial networking and representation of the Group within the wider agricultural community generally. Such affiliations, whether formal or incidental will be strongly influenced by the Board's perception of the relevance of the connection to the core business of the Group.

Conclusion:

Effective processes for involving members in decision making on policy matters can be shown to better develop their understanding of the competing needs of the agricultural industry as a whole as well as developing a greater sense of unity within the T.A.P.G. From the Board's perspective it is essential that the decision making process, particularly in regard to handling contentious issues, must reinforce the Board's authority for their interpretation and subsequent actions from the membership who elected them. This empowerment is critical for the Board if it is to be recognized as a key participant in the ongoing development of the State's agricultural industry.