

Chairperson's Report 2018

Distinguished Guests, Members and Associates

Your Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group is now 29 years old, it leaves a legacy of achievements for both members and directors past and is arguably more effective than ever at delivering for Tasmanian agriculture.

TAPG has evolved from an advocacy group that we call on when policy issues challenge us, to a powerful group of leaders that can advance initiatives for industry good...and grow the cake for everyone.

TAPG continues to operate most effectively behind the scenes, and optimises the saying that our greatest weakness is also our greatest strength...that is, our size in the global market can challenge us, but it also provides us with an interdependence and collaborative spirit that continues to remain the envy of all our national counterparts.

It has been six years since Les Murdoch past the chairmanship to me here in Devonport as I recall at the time (and perhaps still) the youngest director on the board. Through strong support from fellow directors, and particularly our Executive Officer, I reflect on the three consecutive two year terms with pride, a sense of achievement, but most overwhelmingly with a sense of gratitude to have been afforded the development opportunity by my peers, and to have in one way shape or form collaborated with most of you in the room on our mutual interests.

The six years has seen growth for TAPG too, but more importantly a mandate...to assist in the delivery of our 2050 target to grow Tasmanian Agriculture to \$10b. Some of you may recall John Lord's address to members at this forum some years ago; 'it's the Government's role to create an environment for growth, and it's the private sector's exclusive responsibility to deliver it'. TAPG is your champion here.

So, let's briefly examine the years achievements;

1. **TAPG continues to attract Director's whom hold significant expertise in their respective sector** whom provide critical cross sectoral representation. This achievement becomes more significant when one considers both the voluntary nature of directorship, and the significant flux of industry leaders between jobs...reflective of the caliber of TAPG's Directors;

2. **A completely revised and modernized Articles of Association** which we ratified here last year...and I acknowledge this is fairly mechanical, but I also contend that it's an investment that reflects TAPG's appetite to be a sustained entity into your future;
3. **The delivery of critical extension work in Precision Agriculture**, delivered via a co funded model which remains committed for a further three years. Those that have been to the Precision Ag EXPO will undoubtedly agree it is a great leadership position for the post farm gate sector to advance, and for those whom haven't attended....you need to go next year;
4. **The Education and Training agenda**....which I'll talk to in more detail shortly;
5. **Engagement with the Minister on whole of supply chain issues**. Whilst this is an easy throw in, it's one of TAPG's most critical tasks, and if we reflect briefly over twelve months, this task has been, and continues to be a significant challenge. Some members will recall TAPG hosting Minister Courtney on a NW Tas roadshow where over the course of one day we visited some 10 member companies and showed her first hand how sophisticated our members are in their operations, but most importantly how we are all interconnected. This role will endure as we turn this investment to Minister Barnett; and
6. **Naturally, continued strong engagement with Government Department staff and other industry groups** on matters of the day, which could include biosecurity, freight logistics, export facilitation, water regulation, legislative enquiries...just to name a few.

So, for an organisation that runs on the smell of an oily rag, that is, a part time Executive Officer and Directors whom volunteer their time....we have played a significant role and punch well above our weight in delivery.

Looking forward, it's hard not to get excited about the future of our sector. The world is waking up to Tasmanian Agriculture....and our Tasmanian community relies upon it as a critical pillar of the economy.

TAPG has matured through recent years of operations to present to you three key focus areas for 2019 and beyond;

- 1. Collaboration through relationships and network building;**
- 2. Soil Health; and**
- 3. Education and Training.**

Allow me to elaborate on these;

- 1. Collaboration through relationships and network building;**

This is a task that is never finished as people move in and out of our Board, our Companies, other related Groups and Service Providers, and our Government! Minister Barnett is our fourth Minister for Primary industries in my time as Chair over the past six years.

TAPG considers itself most effective as a 'behind the scenes' facilitator. You won't generally see TAPG in the media...nor will you see TAPG taking credit for outcomes...but be assured TAPG's successful track record will continue to see our shoulder at appropriate wheels. Indeed, the more our Industry communicates between its composite parts and learns to speak with one voice the better off we will all be. TAPG tries to set an example of this approach both within our own group and amongst our peers in the industry. Personal agendas around status and individual profitability must give way to what are the best long term and sustainable outcomes for Tasmania.

2. Soil Health

This may seem like an unusual priority for what is largely a post farm gate processing group. The rationale for this interest came from conversations around the Board table as early as 2008 where representatives of several large processing and agronomy member companies agreed that, "outside of processing efficiency itself", the best way to increase productivity for all concerned was to help growers to adopt world leading best practice in their farming enterprises. Again...we seek to grow the cake for everyone.

There is a long list of legacy projects here that include significant investments from our members during far less favorable trading conditions, suffice to say there has been significant leadership from the post farm gate sector previously

on soil health, and TAPG continues to recognise this as an area of interest to all agricultural stakeholders, perhaps optimized in the 2019 Precision Ag Expo which is planned to be themed directly around soil health.

3. Lastly, Education and Training

A key theme from all member companies whom hosted Minister Courtney at the recent roadshow was the industry's dependence on skilled people. And when we unpack this...there really is no such thing as unskilled labour in agriculture.

TAPG's context here starts in 2013 when we met with the Vice Chancellor of UTAS to discuss our concerns as to the viability of the Ag. Science courses when numbers appeared to be dangerously low. We also noted the lack of "tailoring" within the course options to better match business expectations. The third point we raised was the apparent lack of Tasmanian students undertaking these courses. To their credit UTAS responded with an invitation to three of our Directors to join discussions as a curriculum review team and ensure that industry perspectives and priorities were considered.

Following our initial engagement with UTAS our Board began what is now a longstanding engagement with the Hagley Farm School. We held one of our regular Board Meetings at the campus following the kind invitation of then Principal, Mick Davy, whom I am delighted to see has been able to join us today. Our initial purpose in visiting was to gain an insight into where Ag. Education in our Farm Schools was situated, and how it may contribute as part of the future talent supply chain towards tertiary education. The presentation by Mick and Andrew Harris, the lead teacher for Ag. Education uncovered for Directors the wonderful work that the Tasmanian Agricultural Education Network was doing across the state. This was very much a "bottom up" organization that was running on the smell of an oily rag as schools with a farm struggled to maintain viable learning opportunities for students interested in agriculture. At the same time, we were delighted to learn that the Department of Education were developing a Kinder to Year 12 Curriculum for all students entitled "Grow, Make and Protect". This document was strongly informed by the Food and Fibre elements of the National Curriculum. This unique collaboration between our existing School Farms and the DOE was instantly recognizable as an opportunity for Industry support. The recent support for School Farms in terms of extra staffing announced by the Government following its election promise is warmly welcomed and commended.

Our most recent networking engagement in this space has been with TasTAFE who joined us earlier in the year as an important part of the Education and Training Exhibition that was a highlight of our most recent EXPO. TasTAFE's new CEO, Ms. Jenny Dodd will be more formally introduced as part of our Industry Forum, so I will simply offer my welcome to Jenny at this point and acknowledge her leadership in the engagement of her team with our group.

Those of you who were present at last year's AGM will recall that we presented an Award for Excellence to TAEN in the form of "Service to the Agricultural Community". The Award was jointly accepted by Andrew Harris on behalf of the Network and Ms. Jenny Gale, then Secretary of the Education Department. Since then we have continued our engagement with the Education Department and I acknowledge the presence of Ms. Jodee Wilson the current Deputy Secretary of the Department. Thanks to Jodee we have TAPG representation on their latest curriculum development focused on agriculture, and we congratulate the Department on this initiative.

Alongside TAPG's efforts as a collective, I must also acknowledge some of our members whom have individually recognised the support required to advance this agenda with TAEN, and also specifically at Hagley where more than 5,000 students a year are exposed to career opportunities in agriculture. As a case in point I acknowledge RuralCo, both under the former leadership of TAPG Director Allan Barr, and continued through today's leadership of John Tuskin, in the provision of a maintained vehicle for the critical extension activities of TAEN. In addition, the Hagley complex has also seen support from Dairy Tas, and Terry is actively promoting further support from TAPG members including Forico, Water Dynamics, the Commonwealth Bank, and TOPCON.

Accordingly, I can advise the meeting this morning that the TAPG Board have already agreed to provide a Directorship representing the Education and Training portfolio, and are currently considering the establishment of an "Education and Training" standing committee as part of its committee structure. This group would have oversight of initiatives to co-ordinate Industry Support for the TAEN network generally, and perhaps Hagley specifically, and importantly could provide a portal for members to make a modest contribution towards TAEN in the form of an annual payment with comfort that the funds are well managed and outcome focused in their investment. Your input to the Board on how best to achieve this support would be welcome. As end "users" of the education and training "pipeline" we cannot criticize the skills and abilities of

the new people we employ if we are not prepared to help shape training experiences by speaking constructively to the providers and helping to resource the industry specific content for the learners. Indeed, it reminds me of the saying, 'it takes a village to raise a child'!

So, you can see from these three priorities areas of Collaboration, Soil Health, and Education and Training, that your TAPG is fully utilizing the power of the network you have all enabled as members. Remember this investment you have all made is for the benefit of the sector generally rather than your own specific private commercial interests. Congratulations to all of you for this continued investment, some 29 years on.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge my fellow Directors whom have volunteered their time over the past year to protect and grow the agenda I have outlined. Specifically, I wish to acknowledge two people;

1. Firstly, our Executive Officer, whom deserves acknowledgment on a number of levels, perhaps from a members perspective for his generous investment in time way beyond his employment circumstances where he continues to provide a uniquely mature and independent perspective on matters at hand, but from a personal perspective, has also offered me enormous support as a mentor in my own pursuit of leadership amongst the wider setting that TAPG provides; and
2. Lastly, our incoming chair, Mark Kable. I recall Mark's encouragement of my election as Chair in 2012, and I am delighted to entrust on your behalf TAPG's leadership to Mark. Mark will offer TAPG a fresh leadership style that will be healthy for the organisation and offers us all as members a leader who is passionate and genuine in his pursuit of growth for all.

I urge you all to reflect on this time as a golden new era for Tasmanian Agriculture. Together we have achieved significant growth and prosperity already...evident by the world's interest in our agricultural assets. Together we can further advance this agenda and TAPG is a fantastic forum for us to do just that.

Jim Wilson

Chairperson Friday 2 November 2018