

TAPG Annual Report 2021

Friday 12 November - Hagley Farm School

May I formally welcome the Hon. Guy Barnett, MP, Minister for Primary Industries & Water, Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, Minister for Resources, Minister for Trade & Minister for Veteran's Affairs, Gavin Pearce MP Federal Member for Braddon, other Members of the Tasmanian Parliament, Tim Baker, Secretary DPIPWE, Michael Rose, Director of TIA, Grant Dreher, CEO of TasTAFE, Peter Cornish, CEO of FGT, Stephen Clarke representing Private Forests Tas, James Hipwood representing TI, Ms. Jeanagh Viney, Principal Hagley Farm School and our host today, my fellow Directors and Members of TAPG and all other associates of our Group who are present today.

While our Industry continues to thrive in terms of productivity, we are all facing both the personal and professional adjustments that the new "Covid Normal" demands. I would urge you all to think of the virus with the same attitude as we apply to bio-security precautions. While we have long recognized the devastation that pests and diseases can cause it is clear that Covid can also bring our Industry to its knees in a host of ways. The logistics supply chain in both directions is just one example of our vulnerability. With the planned opening of the State's borders next month, I would suggest that all of us need to

carry out a systematic review of our Farm & Factory hygiene protocols in the light of the Covid threat. The threat of invasive weeds, incorrect chemical usage and many other problems that have traditionally plagued us **have not gone away** and there is a real danger that, in the “feel good” rush of optimism that a return to a more normal society will engender we will let our guard down and leave ourselves open to damage.

Remember: “Biosecurity best practice is the “vaccination” brand for our Industry!”

Four other matters I want to comment on are:

- 1. Seasonal Workers** – we recognize that the state government was between a rock and a hard place during our border lockdown, and I think its fair to record our appreciation of the efforts made to support the industry on this critical issue. The Ag Roundtables that were conducted throughout last year and continuing now were an important avenue of communication and allowed us to feel confident that we were being heard on this and other critical issues. At the Federal level the Ag Visa may well provide enough additional support to sustain the industry across Australia. Whether backpackers return to flesh out the harvest requirements remains to be seen. Our colleagues at Fruit Growers Tasmania have effectively promoted the

broader industry concerns throughout this dialogue and I am pleased to note that their CEO, Peter Cornish, has joined us today. Peak bodies must continue to work together in making effective representation to Government at all levels.

2. Freight & Logistics – At the moment this is a tale of two contrasting stories. There have probably never been better service options across Bass Strait. New ships are a feature of all providers in their provision of increased capacity. TAPG working collaboratively with TFGA have held meetings with the TT line senior executives and were provided with detailed insight into the move to Geelong and the Cario berthing facility. Based on what we were shown this is going to be a major improvement to the freight service with matching improvements at the Devonport end to complete the transformation. The International picture, however, can best be described as a looming disaster. Container backlogs, price gouging, cancelled sailings and lack of ships are just a few of the issues we hear on a daily basis. Air freight is attempting to cover over some of these cracks but is only suitable for time sensitive and price premium products due to the expense. For an exporting country such as ours this is a worrying picture that will require intensive support from government at all levels if we are to maintain and extend our international markets and profitability.

3. Establishing a Northern Agri-precinct – While the move north of TIA is the topic for one of our presentations during the Industry Forum, I believe that we should

record our support for the overall “precinct’ initiative as it has the potential to provide much better “at the elbow” research and technology support for the wide array of productive companies and businesses spread along our northern coastline. I look forward to hearing Michael’s presentation as he details one major element of what should be a major benefit to the industry.

4. The Loss of Intellectual Property and Experience from Industry

While I am delighted that our Annual Awards for Excellence in Agriculture about to be announced feature practitioners of the highest standing in the Australian Industry, I am dismayed that three of them have recently retired! They join a growing list of people who collectively have been the mainstay of our industry’s increased productivity, sustainable farming practice and overall success. It is reassuring that the awards also feature our first “Young Entrepreneur Award” as it the generation represented by Caitlin and her peers that will need to step up and lead our industry to the State’s 2050 target for Agricultural Productivity. That said, it does also shine a spotlight on the urgent need to further enhance our Education and Training Initiatives to help provide the workforce of the future. Director Andrew Harris will be providing more information in his presentation during our Industry Forum. Our Companies and Farm Businesses must accept greater responsibility for working with the Education Department, TasTAFE & UTAS to ensure the

quality and effectiveness of this next generation of agricultural leaders.

I now want to complete my Report by reflecting on TAPG as an organization.

During this year the outgoing Board began the challenging process of reviewing its Strategic Plan. While the previous plan stood up well to current scrutiny in terms of aspirations our world has changed significantly because of Covid, particularly in terms of how we deliver services to our members and engage with Government.

It had been necessary last year to seek member approval to “rollover” the terms of Directors for an additional year. This provided much needed continuity and experience to our decision making as the usual face to face meetings became less desirable as a platform for discussion. On-line meetings clearly work better when the participants are known to each other and share a strong level of trust in each other. This assumption held true, and I wish to thank all Directors for providing this much needed stability and collaboration over the past eighteen months.

My earlier comments about the loss of IP apply equally to our Board with three Directors stepping down after providing exemplary service for many years:

Richard Fisher has represented the Dairy Sector since November 2014 and has managed the difficult balance of working on the mainland as well as in Tasmania. His

insights based on this broader view of the industry have been of great value to our discussions.

Rosie Mackinnon has represented Women working in Agriculture since January 2014 and she has brought an empathetic perspective to our conversations that has allowed her to greatly influence the quality of our decision making that will be sorely missed.

Keith Rice has represented the Poppy Industry since June 2010. He was already a legend of Tasmanian Agriculture when he joined TAPG and since that time has simply added to his reputation. It was our great pleasure to see Keith awarded a TAPG **“Lifetime Achievement Award”** in 2017. It is difficult to imagine a meeting of our Board without Keith’s experience and wisdom to fall back on.

Would you join me in recognizing these three wonderful contributors to the work of our Board? (applause)

As sad as these farewells are it is also terrific to be able to welcome the high caliber incoming Directors who take up their positions today:

Elizabeth Skirving, CEO of RBT will take on the Women working in Agriculture representation.

Stuart Whatling, State Manager Rabobank will take on the Rural Finance representation.

Robert Salmon, General Manager Bejo Tasmania will take on the Other Crop Processing representation.

I look forward to working with these new Directors and thank our continuing Directors for their ongoing commitment.

I will close this Report with a call to our Member Companies to continue their support of our work because we need to remain united and pro-active in tackling the emerging challenges for our great industry of which I predict there will be many!

I have much pleasure in moving my 2021 report for adoption.

Thank you.