

TAPG Annual Report 2022

Friday 21 October - Hagley Farm School

May I formally welcome the Speaker of the House of Assembly and Liberal Member for Lyons the Hon. Mark Shelton, MP, Gavin Pearce MP, Federal Member for Braddon other Members of the Tasmanian and National Parliaments, Michael Rose, Director of TIA, Grant Dreher, CEO of TasTAFE, Peter Cornish, CEO of FGT, Ian Sauer, President of TFGA, newly appointed CEO Hugh Christie. Congratulations on your appointment and we look forward to working with you.

Welcome also to the team from Primary Employers Tasmania, Ben Grubb & Andrew Cameron, Felicity Richards, Chairperson Farm Safe Australia, Geoff Terry from Tas. Pork Industry, our host today, Ms. Jeanagh Viney, Principal Hagley Farm School, my fellow Directors and Members of TAPG and all other valued associates of our Group who are present today.

Looking back over this year I am reminded of the loss of the Titanic! Let me explain. The Titanic was a purpose-built passenger ship that could make the fastest possible crossing of the Atlantic and that would also be known as the last word in luxury travel and be **the envy of the world**. Tasmania has built an excellent reputation for producing high caliber produce of all kinds and exporting them both nationally and internationally. With our temperate climate, irrigation schemes, natural rainfall, and excellent soils we too are now **the envy of the world**.

I want to comment on two main failings that led to the Titanic's disaster as we have now come to understand it and see how the same two failings could "sink" the Tasmanian Agricultural Industry.

There has been a lot of commentary around the captain's decision to maintain his ship's speed despite the likely presence of icebergs. While this can be argued as true it is also a fact that the iceberg was spotted at quite some distance and should have been avoided. In fact, Naval Architects now agree that it was the ship's speed "plus" the relatively small size of the "Rudder" and the ship's consequential slowness to answer the helm actually caused the collision.

Where's the "rudder" for our Industry? It is both the Policy settings and implementation strategies that determine our responsiveness. In other words, we need to be constantly critical, in a constructive sense, of all the various structures and practices that we have set up in the honest expectation that these will keep us safe. Clearly, I am thinking of our biosecurity regime at the top of this list. However, to take the nautical analogy further let's consider Bass Strait. Tasmania's productivity has grown enormously over the past decade, and we all sectors are competing for available space on the ships that service our industry. We have been promised new ships in coming years, but the reality is we need the increased capacity now! Once the fresh produce harvest begins this year, I predict that we will be experiencing severe restrictions and delays that will seriously restrict our

productivity. The cancellations of sailings out of Devonport last week because of the flood event should be regarded as a prediction of what is to come over the next few months. The move to Geelong and Corio Bay has been heralded as a major advance in service provision with the likelihood of cost savings. Again, the reality is that prices have already gone up with a surcharge being added for the travel north to Melbourne distribution centres.

The final component here in determining the “size” of our rudder is a mechanism that allows our “experience” as we go to modify and adjust the original settings. This checking process must be a shared effort between the Government and Industry practitioners if we are to miss the iceberg. This is obviously a role for TAPG working in collaboration with all other peak bodies and related Departmental groups. There is enough evidence in the few examples I have just shared to suggest that it is already time for strong scrutiny of our Bass Strait connections. If our transport logistics model fails us we will literally be like a ship without a rudder and the consequences will impact every Tasmanian.

The Titanic was supposed to be unsinkable because of its compartmentalized sections below the waterline that could be sealed off in the event of a hull fracture. The designer maintained that several of these sections could be flooded, and the ship would maintain buoyancy. The engines on the Titanic were steam powered and the boilers were fired by coal. The ship was designed with massive coal bunkers to feed the hungry engines. However, evidence has emerged

that spontaneous combustion had ignited the coal in at least one of these huge bunkers even before the ship left dock! Apparently, this was not an unusual event with coal storage but the pressure on the shipping line to get their new ship away on its record-breaking maiden voyage determined that the normal unloading and fire suppression processes were not followed as they would have taken too much time! They attempted to put the fire out as they went! A photo of the Titanic leaving harbor on its fatal maiden trip shows what looks like a stain along a significant length of the side plating. It is believed that these plates of steel were on the outside of the bunkers and had been weakened by the fires burning within! Fast forward to the iceberg sighting where the ship was only capable of partially turning aside because of the rudder and these side sheets of steel ripped open due to their weakened state and allowed an inundation of seawater and ruining the emergency flotation design so proudly lauded at the time.

Where's the "Bunker Fire" in our Ag Industry? I believe it rests in our Bio-security Barrier Protection that has been tested this year with the very scary possibility that Foot and Mouth disease, Lumpy Skin disease and Varroa mite could all enter the State. All our planning for the success of our Industry can be either wiped out or put back decades with a significant incursion. I would commend the prompt response of Minister Palmer and the members of the various reference groups who have all assisted in ensuring our reaction has been both timely and effective to date. While not as obvious but of equal importance is renewed attention to our "on-

farm” biosecurity practices. We must develop a biosecurity ethos that encompasses our entire supply chain as we are all connected, and one weak link can bring us all down!

Let me repeat again: **“Biosecurity best practice is the “vaccination” brand for our Industry!”**

Another matter I want to comment on is:

The TASMANIAN GROWN digital showcase. The showcase will promote Tasmanian fresh produce to local, interstate, and international customers and buyers. This is an outstanding initiative led by FGT and strongly supported by our Export Facilitation Group who have made a significant financial contribution that will ensure the project will be completed by the end of this year. I understand that CEO Peter Cornish will be presenting the Showcase at next year’s Ag Innovation EXPO in April. This is an outstanding example of cooperation between peak bodies while also recognizing that our marketing strategies need to be tuned into the reality of the on-line world, we now live in. I urge the Department of Trade, Brand Tasmania, and all peak industry representatives to get behind this initiative and recognise how powerful an interactive online presence can be. Peter, I look forward to your presentation in this room next April.

I welcome the presence of the TasTAFE Freer Farm Industry Reference Group who will be conducting their meeting at Hagley this afternoon. The more linkages we can facilitate

between Industry and Education & Training providers the better if quality communication is to be encouraged.

Of particular importance today is the presence of Ag teachers from UTAS, TasTAFE & the Department of Education, Children & Young People as it is now known. Let me use my report to state how importantly we value your contribution to the education and training of the new generation of young people in our industry. I trust you enjoy this morning's presentation along with your facilitated workshop this afternoon.

Finally, I am delighted to note that our entire Board will be continuing unchanged because of this year's elections. The stability that this provides will be of enormous help as we continue the agenda we are continuing to tackle. I look forward to working with these outstanding Directors and thank them for their ongoing commitment to our Board. 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. I have much pleasure in moving my 2022 report for adoption. Thank you

