

TAPG Annual Report 2023

Minister Palmer, Distinguished Guests, Members and Associates, it is my pleasure to present our Annual Report to you. Because of the low profile that we deliberately maintain, we are often asked two questions: “Who are you?” and “What do you do?” Obviously, I am limited by time today, but will attempt to summarise enough of our activities to provide answers to these questions. TAPG consists of around forty different companies who either work in the post-farmgate space or provide third party services to the industry. We are governed by a volunteer Board of Directors who each represent a specific sector of activity across the whole supply chain. When formed in 1989 the main focus was as a “lobby group” to push back on proposed Aerial and Ground Spraying regulations being promulgated by the government of the day. While the lobbying function remains as an option if required, the Group now operates across the state with a sophisticated agenda designed to represent the interests of our members alongside the policy imperatives of the government of the day.

Our activities can be grouped under three main headings: The first of these is our long-term project work, which has been instrumental in advancing the agricultural sector in Tasmania. Throughout the past decade our Group has been engaged in several key projects that have helped to drive innovation through technology, sustainability, and growth in the agricultural industry. The success of this list of projects have been made possible through utilizing strategic partnerships, government support, and the dedication of our members and collaborators.

1. Major Projects:

Our first major Research and Field Trials Project, supported by Federal Funding under the "Caring for Country Program," focused on

improving soil health and productivity through innovative sub-soil manuring techniques and addressing soil compaction issues.

This was followed by State-Funded Research into the available Technology and related “Best Practice in Precision Agriculture.” Our involvement in agricultural research this time was centered on leveraging technology and advanced practices to enhance soil health and overall agricultural productivity in Tasmania.

Subsets from each of these two major projects have continued to emerge. In Partnership with RMCG and Biosecurity Tasmania we have actively contributed to the development of a comprehensive Tasmanian "Pathogen Database" model which could play a crucial role in safeguarding the Tasmanian agricultural industry against potential threats while also serving as a marketing tool for a range of fresh producers who market off-island.

Over two years, we partnered with Hagley Farm School, Serve-Ag, RMCG, and Agri-Services to deliver an impactful "Cover Crops" demonstration field display, showcasing the benefits and best practice of cover cropping to enhance soil fertility and sustainability.

Our collaboration with TIA, UTAS, and Agri-Services culminated in the successful completion of a significant research project focusing on the efficiency and effectiveness of the "Y-Span Irrigator" concept in optimizing irrigation practices for Tasmanian agricultural landscapes.

In partnership with Hagley Farm School, we have developed an immersive educational program aimed at providing students in years 9-12 with practical insights into the application of cutting-edge agricultural technology, aimed at fostering a skilled and knowledgeable workforce for the future.

We are currently involved in collaboration with Ag Logic and Agri-Services, in the development of a comprehensive model for promoting “grower-led adoption” of agricultural technology, with the

aim of enhancing the wide-spread adoption of innovative practices among Tasmanian growers who are currently apprehensive of new technology.

Over the past “nine” consecutive years, we have successfully organized and delivered an annual Ag Innovation EXPO, highlighting the latest advancements in spatial and machinery technology within the Tasmanian agricultural industry, fostering knowledge sharing and industry-wide innovation.

We have taken the initiative to design, maintain, and refine a comprehensive "Framework for Award Recognition of Excellence" within the Tasmanian Agricultural Community, aimed at acknowledging and celebrating outstanding contributions and achievements within the sector. We look forward to the Minister announcing this year’s winners later in this morning’s program.

We are immensely grateful for the support of our members, partners, and the wider community in these endeavors. The success of these projects is a testament to the collaborative spirit and dedication to excellence within the Tasmanian agricultural community.

2. Collaboration:

Alongside our Project work we continually “Collaborate” with the wider industry to lend our support to other entities whose goals and programs align with our capacity to add value to their work:

TAPG maintains its membership of the Drought Hub, collaborating with various stakeholders to develop strategies and support systems to address drought-related challenges in the Tasmanian agricultural sector. The more recent evolution of the group to the Tas Farm Innovation Hub sees us even more closely aligned and able to assist.

Our active participation as a member on the Tasmanian Freight Logistics Committee allows us to contribute to discussions regarding

transportation and logistics, ensuring that the agricultural industry's needs are considered in transport policy decisions.

In partnership with Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers, Fruit Growers Tasmania, and Wine Tasmania, the Group is working to create policy recommendations to all political parties that would enhance the agricultural sector's resilience and competitiveness, covering a broad range of topics from sustainability to market access.

Our presence in the Forum of Rural Stakeholders allows us to collaborate with diverse agricultural stakeholders and government agencies, fostering open dialogue and advocating for the interests of both our members and the wider Ag community.

We host the Tasmanian Fruit and Vegetable Export Facilitation group as a standing committee of TAPG and actively participate inside the committee to promote and facilitate the export of Tasmanian fruit and vegetables, helping local growers gain access to international markets and expand their reach. Again, our collaboration with Fruit Growers Tasmania is a critical element in achieving these goals.

As a foundation member of the Industry Reference Group since 2018 we supported the development of the TasTAFE Freer Farm Centre of Excellence Training Centre, ensuring that it meets the evolving educational and training needs of our industry. The new Centre was formally opened in September, and we continue to be involved in approving the curriculum being designed and delivered to the emerging industry workforce. Strong liaison with TFGA throughout this process has ensured that the outcomes being achieved will meet industry expectations.

Our involvement in the Digital Literacy Reference group allows us to stay at the forefront of digital technologies and advocate for their

adoption in the agricultural sector, benefiting our members and the industry.

We actively participated in the Stakeholder meetings of the Tasmanian Agriculture Education & Training Partnership as it attempts to meet future workforce demand through the creation and deployment of a High Impact Awareness Campaign for the Tasmanian Agricultural Sector. The current goals of this group are to create a much higher public awareness of the desirable employment opportunities available to young people interested in a career in Agriculture. Creating greater visibility and demand for these high-quality roles is critical to our future productivity. Our Guest Speaker today is Dr. Lisa Denny who will provide insight into the Tasmanian demographics that impact this priority.

Further support for this “Future Workforce Theme” has seen TAPG’s strong involvement in the Advanced Manufacturing Workforce Development Plan. The Group played a role in ensuring that the agricultural industry’s workforce needs were represented in discussions that led to the final plan. TAPG are proud to have signed off on the Industry Skills Compact alongside Government and other Peak bodies as this document now reflects the level of commitment across the State for delivering the Plan.

TAPG remain actively involved alongside UTAS in Regional Research Collaboration efforts, fostering partnerships and knowledge exchange that benefit our members and drive innovation in downstream opportunities for the agricultural sector.

Tasmania now has a Contemporary Biosecurity Legislative Framework that was passed into law by our Parliament. Our input, in collaboration with other Peak representative bodies over a period of fourteen months, ensured that the final draft of this legislative framework protects Tasmania's agricultural productivity while also facilitating trade and growth in the sector.

3. The third aspect of our work is to support our members on an individual basis. We are often called on to provide support in the form of information, relevant contact details, suggested strategic approaches or even “representative advocacy” across a wide range of “commercial in confidence” settings. The trust that individual companies place with us when sharing often highly sensitive details is something that we don’t take lightly and respond to with whatever efforts and resources we have at our disposal. Critical to our success when acting as an “honest broker” in these negotiations is the trust and integrity of our relationship with the Minister and her Adviser Ms. Amanda Lovell. With the Minister’s active encouragement Amanda attends all our Board Meetings and provides our Directors with insight into the government’s rationale surrounding particular policy matters and takes on board our views and practical suggestions. This liaison and two-way exchange has been tremendously helpful in resolving “spot fires” before they get out of control.

I trust that these details have provided you with some insight into my original questions of “who we are and what we do?”

I have already mentioned the volunteer Board that directs the activities of our Group. I wish to take this opportunity to publicly thank them for their advice, expertise, and commitment to the group. My own recent experience in re-developing a farm in NSW has caused me to reflect on how well serviced growers are in Tasmania. Every conceivable kind of “service company” is readily available to us; usually at a moments notice, to solve issues as they arise. It is the leadership group from these companies across the supply-chain that are represented as Directors on our Board and they collectively bring that same “can-do” approach to our discussions.

Sadly, we must say farewell to two Directors who are standing down after today. Rob Salmon, representing the “Other Crops” sector has served his two-year term with distinction but has left his leadership

role with Bejo and under our Articles of Association cannot continue in that portfolio. We wish Rob every success as he takes his career in a new direction. Would you please join me in thanking Rob for his work on the Board. (Applause)

Jim Wilson began his service with the Board in 2010. He served as Chairperson for six years and continued with the Board as a Director representing Plantation Forestry for a further five years after standing down as Chair in 2018. He oversaw significant change and growth under his leadership and was recognised with a “Service to the Agricultural Community” Award in 2018. It is hard to imagine our Board without Jim’s reassuring presence and we again use today’s formalities to thank him for his massive contribution. Please join me in thanking Jim. (Applause)

Alongside the sadness of farewells, we have the excitement of welcoming new people, and, replacing Jim in the Forestry sector is James Lord. James is the Primary Enterprise Development Manager at Forico. This is a new diversification for Forico, and I am sure James will be happy to explain the direction being taken by the company through his leadership at our lunch networking session. Welcome James, we look forward to your contribution. (Applause)

Rob’s replacement on the Board is still subject to discussion and will be notified when settled following an “expression of interest”.

The activities and initiatives outlined in this report demonstrate our commitment to promoting the welfare and growth of the Tasmanian agricultural sector. We are a small group with a big agenda, and we would like to express our appreciation to the Government, our members, partners, and the dedicated individuals who have contributed to these efforts. Critical to the current high morale and optimism in our Industry is the successful transition of our Minister in her new role. Jo’s open-door policy of availability combined with her fierce advocacy for our sector are widely recognised and appreciated.

Looking ahead, we see the Future Workforce issue that is bound up in the Education & Training priority and the Logistic issues created by Bass Strait as our continuing priority areas of focus as we remain dedicated to advocating for your interests and striving to make the Tasmanian agricultural sector more prosperous, resilient, and sustainable.

I now have pleasure in moving that my Report be accepted.

Mark Kable Chairperson

Friday 10 November 2023