



## A Council Finding Voice

The past year has been particularly busy for the UDV. The year started with significant seasonal and economic challenges combining to place great stress through the industry. The year ended with the extraordinary three way bidding war for control of an important industry asset.

After a period of absence the UDV voice was heard in key industry debates and members were actively represented. Policy Council has shown it is prepared to tackle the bigger issues in the industry.

The UDV Presidents report to Conference identified the significant issues addressed. This additional activity is the result of the financial and resource consolidation that has been occurring in recent years. It is also a result of the sustained commitment over recent years by members to fund a representative voice. This is an important fact that should not be lost on anyone.

It is true that not everyone liked what we said or did. It is true that we might have done some things a bit differently here or there or maybe used different words in hindsight, but members wanted a voice in key areas impacting the industry and that is what they got.

### A Big Agenda for 2014

When I look at the agenda the Policy Council has set for 2014 I am confident that the organisational growth will continue. It is a big agenda. It is an important agenda.

It ensures the focus for the industry will be locked onto farm profitability. Each industry spend should be benchmarked against that investment's capacity to improve farm profitability. It identifies that with new tools, technologies and skills we can improve profitability, and milk growth will follow. That, in turn, will increase the importance and profile of the industry and will lead to further investment.



Former ADFF Chief Executive John McQueen; Dairy Australia Group Manager Farm Productivity and Delivery Chris Murphy; President of Australian Dairy Farmers Noel Campbell; DEPI Executive Director Farm Services Tim Ada and Dairy Australia Program Manager, Genetics and Data Management Matt Shaffer made up a panel of industry leaders responding to questions from Conference. UDV President Tyran Jones led the discussion.

Governments will find it easier to provide cost-effective improvements in infrastructure and logistics. More people will be looking to dairy for a career. Improved profitability will make attracting and retaining new entrants to the industry easier.

Optimistic? Of course. We are talking about farming!

### Key Issues

The issues facing the industry are substantial. We have complex milk price structures. This raises two questions: Is the current system a hindrance to the sustainability of the industry? How is farm profitability enhanced through the current price arrangements?

We have industry contributions to the future funding model for dairy extension services and we have questions on what future funding of Research & Development might look like. Farmers are paying more already through DA levies and milk processors field staff support. What is the future for government funding?

What of the future for the herd improvement sector? Does it need to have Australian genetics? Does it matter that an increasing number of farmers are voting with their cows and buying overseas genetics? So what does this all mean for the industry investment in this sector?

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### Inside this issue

The UDV Policy Council for 2014/15

Baton Passes at UDV Conference

VFF Policy Issues in 2013

Farmer Vehicle Registrations

UDV Annual Meeting and Conference Sponsors



The Hon. Peter Walsh caught up with UDV Member Basil Ryan before opening the UDV Presidents' Dinner

The UDV has been involved in the recent debate about the ownership of industry processing assets. Some believe this discussion is over. Maybe it has just begun.

The efficiency of the processing sector is vital to the profitability of farmers. This becomes even more critical as our overseas competitors continue to improve their pre and post farm gate performance and thereby reduce our competitive advantage. On farm, our low cost production system advantage is being replicated across key international markets.

To help discussions within the industry, the UDV Policy Council has developed a draft Vision for Australian dairy.

This compliments the work we are doing in preparation for the Victorian state election. We intend to visit our representatives from the key dairy areas so they understand how they can support this great industry.

An industry needs a plan with meaningful, explainable and measurable targets to build towards the future.

This can be achieved. It has been before. The lessons from our fathers are important here.

## Lessons from the Past

Up until 1979 Victorian dairy farmers had been represented by a number of different organisations. They merged to form the UDV and the UDV joined with other farming commodities at the state level to form the Victorian Farmers & Graziers Association (VFGA). Victoria's farmers were of one voice.

Nationally the same thing was happening and the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) was formed. Australia's farmers had one voice.

People with a vision for the industry worked together. They formed a plan. It was meaningful, explainable and measurable. Farmers needed one voice. And they achieved what they set out to do. For a time farmers had one voice.

That voice was used to drive economic, industrial relations and environmental change at a national level.

But times have changed. That representative model created in 1979 is now under stress. Financially, intellectually and emotionally. The capability of farmer representation is being compromised and its future is in doubt.

## Advocacy Future

Recently there has been discussion about the effectiveness of farmer representation with the release of the Australian Farm Institute report on Opportunities to Improve Australian Farmers' Advocacy Groups.

The report includes all manner of statistics, most of them reflective. Describing the problems is the easy bit. Identifying solutions is the real challenge.

Those of us living in the representative space understand we have challenges. We live with the limitations and frustrations. And we are all doing something we think could improve the situation. Time will tell if what we are doing is enough, or if we are doing the right thing.

Some may ask why bother? Why not pack up the tent and move on? Because it is important to continue. Because, according to the AFI report, 88% of farmers believe that farmer advocacy groups will play an increasingly important role in the future.

But more realistically we bother because a significant number of Victorian dairy farmers continue to financially support their representative model. This is despite the financial hardship dairy farming businesses have experienced in recent times. They want representation. They want a voice.

Moving the representative structures from the stressed position to the future requires commitment and sustained energy. This is no easy road we are on but the support of members provides UDV with the necessary

financial capability. Our challenge is to get more of that 88% interested in what happens outside the farm gate.

In recent Managers reports I have talked about the assets of the UDV. Particularly the quality of many within the Policy Council. But we are not blinded by the state of our representative structure. Locally we have too few still being called on to do too much. That certainly makes providing a representative voice difficult.

Why aren't people with millions of dollars personally invested in farms more interested in their industry? Why don't they get involved in the industry structures and interactions?

This is not just about the UDV. Maybe the industry structures are too complex and relics of another time?

## A Year of Change?

Policy Council has deliberately applied focus to the bigger issues affecting the industry. Like our fathers before us once did.

Much of the work done by UDV is necessarily operational. But an industry needs a plan. An industry needs some focus on the bigger picture outcomes. An industry needs meaningful, explainable and measurable targets.

I believe the past year has been a good one for the UDV. We have put our focus to solutions. We have understood sometimes that requires long term commitment and that sometimes it is hard for others to see what we see.

We know our members want a voice. These are members that know their commitment to the future of the dairy industry has a cost and they are prepared to pay. We thank them for their continued support.

*By Vin Delahunty, UDV Manager.*

# VFF Policy Issues In 2013

## The new Fire Services Property Levy – a \$25 million saving to farmers

The VFF managed to convince the Victorian Government to cut its proposed FSPL rate from 52 cents per \$1000 of a farm's Capital Improved Value down to 31c/\$1000 of CIV. That equated to a \$21m saving for Victorian farmers. We also gained a Single Farm Enterprise exemption on the FSPL's \$200 fixed charge, which delivered another \$4m in savings to farmers.

## Rates & Local Government Act changes

The VFF called for an inquiry into the equity and fairness of rural rating.

We are also calling for changes to the Local Government Act to remove the 20 per cent cap on the share of council revenue that can be collected via the Municipal Charge. In other states the cap is 50 per cent or more. The VFF is also seeking a definition of fair and equitable rating and a cap on the maximum rating increase annually.

## Coal Seam Gas/Mining

The VFF has maintained a strong stance that farmers' rights must be protected during coal seam gas and other mining developments. To strengthen farmers' rights the VFF has called on the Victorian Government to:

- Farmers should hold the right of veto over mining and petroleum activities on their land.
- Landowners must receive appropriate compensation & payments for all mining and petroleum activities on their land.
- There must be no long-term adverse off-site impacts from mining and petroleum developments. For example on water supply or quality.
- Farmland must be rehabilitated to its previous productive use at the end of the life of a mining or petroleum development.
- Information on mining and petroleum issues must be made available to VFF members.
- The rights of landholders must be protected in minerals and petroleum legislation.
- Baseline information must be collected prior to the development of mineral or petroleum resources and independent monitoring must be undertaken during the development.

- In the case of land, air, or water contamination the onus should be on the mining or gas company to prove their activities are not causing the impacts.

The VFF has run forums on CSG and mining as well as established a Gippsland Taskforce to advise our Land Management Committee on the issue.

## Quad Bike Protection

The VFF supports the voluntary use of Crush Protection Devices (CPD's) on quad bikes and also support further research being done to determine the appropriateness of CPDs. Any mandatory fitting of the crush protection devices to a quad bike should be at the manufacturer's cost and fitted by the manufacturer.

## Common Pricing for water

The issue of common pricing has been raised by water corporations. The VFF argues such pricing should only be used when there are natural consistencies between irrigation districts in the cost of providing the service. Capital expenditure within a district is dependent on the condition of the water delivery infrastructure. Should there be costly works required in one district, another district should not be liable for contribution to the costs of these upgrades

## Changes to the EPBC Act

The VFF has opposed Commonwealth regulation of native plants and animals. The administration of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 by the Commonwealth government has resulted in a lack of knowledge from farmers, and a lack of information in rural communities.

If Commonwealth regulation is to continue it should be integrated with State based regulation and should be reformed to reflect a more balanced approach to regulation.

## Pest and Weed Management on Public land

The VFF has called upon the Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) to establish a publicly available dataset based on information from both private landholders and field staff for problem areas for pests and weeds on public land, introduce DEPI approved management plans for pests and weeds on public land and undertake a pilot to establish the management requirements for a given public park

## Protections from Animal Activists

The VFF will continue to collect examples of activist damage and vexatious complaints and work with the police squad to better collate/analyse the information and substantially increase the penalties. For vexatious complaints, complainants must be made to include their names, as currently it is an anonymous registration process. Also, the costs associated with complaints that are proven to be vexatious should be fully recovered from the complainant.

## Stock in Waterways

The exclusion of stock from drinking water catchments must be voluntary.

Any efforts to exclude stock from drinking water supplies should be restricted to simple catchments/supply systems, with predictable inputs and outputs. A simple water supply catchment can be defined as a catchment with only one main tributary, with a small network of ephemeral streams on agricultural land.

## Foot and Mouth Disease

In light of the DIVA test, the VFF supports FMD vaccination becoming the preferred option for the control of an FMD outbreak. The DIVA test allows veterinary authorities to differentiate between infected and vaccinated animals during an FMD outbreak.

The VFF also delivered submissions on a number of State and Federal inquiries, including:

- Pre-budget submission
- VEET Scheme
- Foreign Investment registrar
- Vic Rail Access
- NTC Price determination
- Rates Differentials
- Succession law
- Native vegetation
- Vic Waterway Strategy
- MDBA Constraints Management
- Regulation of Water brokers
- Ag and Vet Chemical regulations
- Environmental Recovery Strategy

# The UDV Policy Council for 2014/15

In accordance with the Victorian Farmers Federation constitution, nominations for the elected office bearer position of UDV President closed at 5pm on Friday February 14th 2014.

There was a single nomination for the presidency. Tyran Jones was elected unopposed. He assumed office for the two-year term at the close of the UDV Annual Meeting and Conference on March 27th 2014.

Tyran's elevation to President created a Casual Vacancy for the UDV Vice President. The current two year term has one year remaining. In twelve months time this position will fall vacant and be advertised to all members through an official nomination process.

Roma Britnell was elected as UDV Vice President at the UDV Policy Council meeting on March 27th.

The following is the current composition of the UDV Policy Council for 2014/15.

**President** Tyran Jones

**Vice President** Roma Britnell

## Policy Council

DC1	John Keely (Cohuna)
DC2	Tim Leahy (Gigarre)
DC3	Daryl Hoey (Katunga)
DC4	Gordon Nicholas (Biggara)
DC5	Paul Mumford (Won Wron)
DC6	Damian Murphy (Leongatha South)
DC7	Ron Paynter (Ellinbank)
DC8	Vacant
DC9	Adam Jenkins (South Purrumbete)
DC10	Vacant

Policy Council is seeking interested persons to fill the vacancies in regions 8 & 10.

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## Baton Passes at UDV Conference

Kerry Callow stood down as UDV President at the recent UDV Annual Meeting & Conference after not renominating for another two-year period.

She has been replaced by Yarra Valley dairy farmer, Tyran Jones.

"It was with mixed feelings that I chose to step down but ultimately I formed the view that with the quality, energy and experience on the current UDV Policy Council, stepping down would assist the continuous regeneration Council requires," Ms Callow said.

"The UDV has been very active through my time as President and is now tackling an important and very interesting agenda of issues. The best results will be achieved with new thinking of others having the opportunity to provide fresh ideas and energy.

"I certainly enjoyed my time as President. It is a privilege to have the opportunity to influence the direction of the industry. I encourage all members to get involved in the discussions around issues UDV is pursuing."

Kerry Callow became the UDV President when Willow Grove dairy farmer, Chris Griffin, moved from the UDV to become President of the Australian Dairy Farmers.



Former UDV President Kerry Callow encourages all UDV members to be involved in the industry.

# Farmer Vehicle Registrations

The Victorian Farmers Federation is calling on VicRoads to permanently take back control of heavy vehicle registration and the issuing of over-size permits.

In February last year the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator took control of issuing these licences and permits.

"But it's been an unmitigated disaster for farmers," VFF President Peter Tuohey said.

"The Queensland-based National Heavy Vehicle Regulator was taking up to a month to issue permits to farmers.

"It meant a harvest contractor or grower trying to move onto the next job was either stuck or risked being fined if they hit the road. It was just intolerable.

"With VicRoads it used to take 24-48 hrs to get a permit to move your header or any other oversize vehicle on to the next job."

Victorian Roads Minister Terry Mulder finally stepped in last month and put heavy

vehicle registration and the issuing of over-size permits back in VicRoads hands. But only as a temporary measure.

"Mr Mulder did the right thing, but now he needs to make it a permanent arrangement," Mr Tuohey said.

"The push to establish a national heavy vehicle regulator is a failed experiment.

"The VFF has always opposed the move to national harmonisation of vehicle regulation, given the risk of delays and loss of local knowledge.

"Harmonisation was established to assist the interstate freight movements, which only represents 15 per cent of freight movements.

"The fact is 85 per cent of freight movements are within Victoria and need to be dealt with by our local regulator – VicRoads.

"If the NHVR is to continue operating it should stick to interstate freight regulation

and it must be fully funded by interstate freight operators.

"If the interstate operators want this reform, they can pay for it."

"Leave the regulation of within state freight to VicRoads, whose staff have the local knowledge, experience and resources to quickly meet farmers' needs.

"The vast majority of agricultural commodity movement in Victoria is within the state. Yet we're contributing to the NHVR's \$135 million budget and gaining essentially nothing from its operation.

"All intra-state licensing and permits should be handled by the states where there is already capacity and capability to do it and NHVR should be reduced to a skeleton staff to manage ongoing issues resulting from harmonisation," Mr Tuohey said.



A large turn-out for Day 1 of the 2014 Annual Conference



Tyran Jones stepped into the role of UDV President at the close of Conference.



Ann Jarvis gave a rousing speech to Conference.



Karen Lubitz, Bernard Lubitz, Roma Britnell, Glen Britnell and Martin Van Der Wouw



Noel Campbell, Chris Griffin, Jan Griffin, Naomi Pye and Paul Weller MP



Adam White and John Harms entertained at the Presidents' Dinner



# Annual Meeting and Conference

26th - 27th March 2014 Jim Stynes Room, Melbourne Cricket Ground

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