



Queensland Country Life column

24 November 2009

Producer run organisations like the Cattle Council of Australia are successful in influencing the Federal Government on the issues that affect them as beef producers and the industry in which they operate.

As Australian beef producers we are lucky enough to be in the drivers seat when directing the future priorities of our industry. However, it's not without persistent effort from the volunteers

who sit on the Cattle Council and take their time to drive outcomes that we progress in this way. Last week, I was reelected as the Cattle Council President at the Council's Annual General Meeting held in Darwin. I'm honored to be the leader of such a progressive and inspirational group.

Bob Barwell from Uralla, NSW, was elected as the Council's new Vice-President. Paul Saward from Redpa, Tasmania, was re-elected as the Council's Honorary Treasurer. I look forward to working with Bob, Paul and the Council into the New Year.

Concerns we have relating to the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) are slowly getting through to the Government and they're realising that the Australian beef industry is part of the solution to managing emissions. Minister Wong's announcement that direct emissions from agriculture would not be covered under the proposed CPRS is positive news. This is a result of united lobbying from National Industry Peak Councils, such as the Cattle Council, State Farmer Organisations, such as Agforce and the National Farmers' Federation.

Looking ahead, there is still much work to be done. We must ensure that any policy recognises producers' positive actions on-farm in managing emissions and agriculture's natural carbon cycle. Justin MacDonnell, a beef producer from Queensland and Councillor of the Cattle Council is representing beef producers at the United Nations Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen next month. This is part of our lobbying effort to modify the international accounting rules. We must see them better recognise agriculture and the role of farmers in managing greenhouse gas emissions.

Another issue on Cattle Council's radar and currently on the boil is the Food Amendment (Meat Grading) Bill or commonly referred to as the 'Torbay Bill'. The outcome of this NSW Bill, which uses direct language like "low grade" or "low quality" to describe beef on the retail shelves could be very concerning.

On a different front, Cattle Council plays a very important role in overseeing how producer cattle transaction levies is spent by Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA). I seconded a resolution at MLA's Annual General Meeting last week that the \$1.50 marketing component of the cattle transaction levy be retained. 72.5% of MLA member votes were cast in favour of the resolution (grassfed producers – 70.7%; grainfed producers – 75.8%).

I am pleased to see that beef producers across the nation recognise the importance of the collective investment of their \$5 levy in maintaining and growing markets. Despite the uncontrollable challenges that we face (the exchange rate, cattle markets, weather) we've

come together to work on those factors that we do have control of, such as marketing, promotion and telling the good news story to our international consumers about our green, clean and nutritious Australian beef.

Cattle Council will continue to keep a close eye on MLA activities and question our marketing and research and development organisation so we can arise at the best spend for producers' buck.

I'd also like to note that we are excellent and capable self-regulators and this is the very message the Government needs to hear from every beef producer they meet. I invite you to take the drivers seat and influence those who are making the decisions. The more producers involved in their state farming organisations the more lobbying power we have, so what are you waiting for? Join your state farmer organisation now. See cattlecouncil.com.au/members to locate your producer run organisation.