

Received:.....	4 / 9 / 2014
Physical ID	PREM14004632
File No	PREM14/0049
Action Officer.....	MAFF-DIRECT
Draft Due.....	
Previous Corres.....	

Fleur de Lys Alpacas

Lee Sadler and Greg Scarlett

South Australia 5172

Department of Premier and Cabinet
 Attention: Mr Jay Weatherill MP
 GPO Box 2343
 Adelaide
 South Australia 5001

04 SEP 2014

2nd September 2014

Dear Mr Wetherill,

RE: Proposal to abolish South Australian government boards and committees

Many thanks for the opportunity to respond to your proposal to abolish all South Australian boards and committees.

While government may perceive that the electorate requires them to deliver more, with an ever diminishing budget, there comes a point when there are no further efficiencies to find, and to continue to trim and prune will undermine the very nature of a democratic government. I fear this time may be approaching.

From the perspective of livestock industries, the notion of Advisory Groups that provide liaison and two-way communication between the industry and the minister and department is unique in South Australia. The other states regard this with envy, as the ready access to an established network keen to approach an issue or proposed legislative changes, based on a goodwill and respect, is not their experience. In contrast, ad hoc groups convened to address issues as they arise, spend inordinate amounts of time establishing a rapport, mutual understanding and respect and are then less effective in addressing the task at hand.

Based on the experience of the Alpaca Advisory Group, the frequency of meetings was adjusted to accommodate the number and urgency of the matters to be addressed; allowing a judicious use of funds. Meetings were not convened if there was not the need, but when matters of importance were on the agenda, the frequency of meetings was increased to address the matters at hand.

Your suggestion to rely on other means of communication in order for government ministers and their departments to ascertain the perspective of their constituents is fraught. Social media is notoriously biased in its breadth of participants, attracting those "of an age" and with the inclination to spend the time required to respond to others, without necessarily exploring solutions to the challenges being faced. This has been shown to develop a "whinge" mentality and reduces the capacity for developing solutions and the challenge to implement innovation. It also draws opinion from a narrow set within any industry; those with the time and inclination to participate on this, their preferred means of communication. The need to engage in widespread consultation across any industry will depend on a greater reach than can be achieved with social media.

Your letter cites "efficiency" and "independence" as reasons to abolish government boards and committees. From the perspective of the Livestock Advisory Boards, it will be difficult for you to argue for a more cost effective means of undertaking the functions of the groups, when the participants from the livestock industries are not remunerated for their time!

Similarly, the notion of "independence" could not be enhanced further by dismantling the Advisory Groups, as they are each a blend of industry and ministerial appointments, together with the relevant staff from PIRSA.

Again from the perspective of the Alpaca Advisory Group, the industry is happy for the representative on the Advisory Group to continue to liaise with the minister via PIRSA, and would be unlikely to participate in the proposed citizen juries, country cabinets, or upgraded YourSay website etc. The alpaca industry is a delightful blend of full time and part time farmers, many with a diverse range of off-farm experience and expertise. This is part of the rich culture of the alpaca industry and a feature that has proved useful for PIRSA.

During the Phantom Fox exercise in 2012, there were a number of Industry Liaison officers (ILOs) present, together with nearly 150 government staff. While the exercise was a mock response to an exotic and contagious disease affecting a significant livestock industry, it was the five ILOs who provided the reality checks and added significantly to the learning and refined protocols that resulted from the 5-day exercise. I attended as the Alpaca ILO, but as my formal training is as a pharmacist and my experience includes response planning for a potential endemic bird flu outbreak, my contribution was of value to the Phantom Fox exercise.

The network of Industry Liaison Officers (ILOs) who each have training is assisting the response to the outbreak of an exotic and contagious livestock disease, is only one aspect of government ensuring optimal communication and shared effort with the livestock industries. The Livestock Advisory Groups are an integral part of government understanding their industries and how the nuances of change can impact on these industries.

The success of any actions taken under the guidelines of the Emergency animal disease response agreement (EADRA) will be dependent on the caliber of the people involved and the rapport they have with the relevant people within PIRSA. Should the Livestock

Advisory Groups be dismantled, in accord with your proposal, then it would be anticipated that both the timeliness of the response and the quality of the responses in the event of an Emergency Animal Disease breakout would be compromised. The networks that are maintained by the Advisory Groups are invaluable to a timely and effective response in an emergency.

From a government perspective, these same networks provide an easy and safe "litmus test" to proposed changes, as new ideas can be gently introduced to the Advisory Group to ascertain the acceptability, or not, of the suggestions, before it goes to the wider industry and the media, for a hailstorm of criticism and the need to assume damage control strategies. It is much easier to have a quiet chat to a small group to determine if the idea should be progressed, than to have invested time and effort in an idea that will not "fly" ... !!

In summary, while the need to continually trim costs places inordinate pressure to identify areas that can withstand further reduction in budgetary allocation, I do not see any benefit from abolishing all South Australian Government boards and committees.

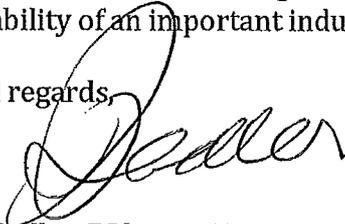
Should the livestock Advisory Groups be dismantled, the potential risks include:

- Delayed and compromised response in the event of an Emergency Animal Disease outbreak
- No "early warning system" to alert potential fallout from proposed changes to legislation or regulations
- No point of contact from government to industry, or vice versa, to discuss potential threats or challenges to viability and ongoing sustainability and success of industry

In short, the notion to dismantle the effective and readily accessed communication channels between the Minister, the Department and the Livestock industries that are already in place, lacks any good reason. They are a cost effective and easily utilized means of communication that have served both parties well and with minimal maintenance, will continue to serve the Government to advantage into the future.

I look forward to a more reasonable approach to the apparent cost of Government Boards and Committees and sincerely hope that the Livestock Advisory Groups are allowed to continue their good and effective work to ensure the ongoing viability and suitability of an important industry in South Australia.

Kind regards,



Lee Sadler BPharm FACP FGLF

PREM14D04633



Hon Jay Weatherill MP
Premier of South Australia

Ms Lee Sadler
Fleur de Lys Alpacas
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] SA 5172

Dear Ms Sadler

Thank you for your letter of 2 September 2014 to the Premier of South Australia, the Hon Jay Weatherill MP, about the Boards and Committees reform.

Your letter has been sent to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, the Hon Leon Bignell MP, as he has been asked to provide advice to Cabinet on the future of your committee.

Should you have any queries about your letter, please contact the Minister's office on telephone 8226 1210.

Yours sincerely


**Premier's Correspondence Unit
Office of the Premier**

5 September 2014

cc: Office of the Hon Leon Bignell MP, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries