



## ***Grain Growers of Australia***

I am pleased to be able to present the business plan developed by the independent working party commissioned at the Round Table in October 2009.

It is able to be viewed on the GCA website under the EVENTS tab.

This business plan seeks to address the principals outlined at this meeting and consider the issues identified by all stakeholders during the consultation process.

I believe it achieves these objectives and sets the foundation for an inclusive, credible, viable and sustainable grower representative body into the future.

### ***Principals developed at the Round table***

The principals agreed to by the participants at the October 2009 Roundtable are:

- The need for a national broadly-based **independent** body to represent grain producers' interests.
- The need to identify **sustainable** and independent **funding** for such a body.
- The need to find a structure that allows for effective representation, **accountability, autonomy** and **transparency**.
- An ability to interact with the rest of the value chain in developing an **All of Industry Body and activities**.
- The desire to regain a presence within the **NFF** structure.
- That a **staged approach** be followed to develop a full range of activities and breadth of membership. This is to have a focus on forming an effective national grower representative body in the first instance, with later expansion to matters concerning engagement with the broader industry and NFF to come with time.
- Considering structures and potential alternatives on their merits, without wanting to limit the **options** available.
- A desire to retain and **maintain the current functions** and activities of GCA.
- For the pros and cons of **alternative means for funding** a national body be analyzed and presented.
- That an **Independent Working Party** be formed to develop a Business Plan for agreement by grain producers, ideally early in the New Year. The business plan is to be developed to incorporate the matters raised

during the meeting and through **further consultation** with relevant groups. It was agreed that a staged implementation was important.

- A body that would provide **effective advocacy** for Australian growers.

## ***Consideration of All Stakeholders***

An extensive range of stakeholders were consulted in this process and I believe the plan considers and caters for issues identified by not only growers but other stakeholders in the industry.

**State Farming Organisations (SFO's)** have told us they no longer have the resources to fund peak councils to the level they have in the past. This is a result of reducing membership of SFO's whereby they no longer represent the whole grower community, and hence SFO's alone should not be expected to fund it.

The **Wider Grower community** have indicated they would like to have the opportunity to engage with a national Production Sector Body on issues such as R&D and Bio Security, Infrastructure and Industry engagement. These groups range from Farming System Alliances to the Corporate Farming Sector.

**Grain Growers Association (GGA)** have indicated they do not wish to fill the grower representation space as they are moving toward the industry good services and development functions.

**NFF** have said they wish to see an autonomous grain industry body to fill the position at their policy council to develop the National Agricultural Policy Agenda in areas such as Infrastructure, Environment, Trade, Industrial Relations and Taxation Reform. It has also been indicated this involvement would be considered on a gross value of production as a basis for membership.

The **Government**, and related agencies such as **DAFF** have said they wish to see a more inclusive and broader model of grower representation that will engage on the issues of R&D oversight and strategic planning, bio-security management, environmental and regulatory issues in a mature, commercial and pragmatic way.

**GRDC** have recognised the relationship with growers / levy payers needs to be enhanced to achieve the optimum returns for stakeholders and improved communication and engagement with the production sector.

**PHA/NRS** are keen to enhance the current relationships and statutory obligations with the production sector to develop improved bio security, quarantine and market access outcomes in partnership with growers and the trade.

The Rest of the Value Chain participants such as GTA and AGEA have told us the development of an **All of Industry** Body to promote Australian Grain and

provide industry good services and protocols that enhance the value of Australian Grain and develop a sustainable, competitive and secure value chain are imperative. However the missing link in any whole-of-industry activity at present is a credible, sustainable production sector body. This grower body, in my view, will engage in a co-operative and collaborative manner on issues of common interest but will negotiate robustly and with authority on issues that affect our members (the growers).

## ***Rhetoric versus Reality***

This business plan and consultation process has engendered much debate, where many positive and constructive responses have been received, however some negative responses have also been apparent.

Some sectors have recommended the exclusion of the SFOs whilst others have indicated a return to the past with domination by SFOs.

In my opinion both these views are unrealistic and unacceptable. SFO's do represent a sector of the grower community however they no longer have the hierarchical right to dominate and control such a body.

The reality is the opportunity to develop these structures in the past has been missed due to the philosophical debate about control of the grower representative space.

This must now be put aside and the growers must be given the opportunity to determine their own future and be given the “**opportunity, not obligation**” to contribute both financially and in person to policy debate and governance of the organisation.

The business plan in my view sets out principals of the operations and structure for a national grower body, incorporating transparency, accountability, inclusiveness and democracy whilst not being prescriptive in a detailed nature in all matters presented. This allows the participants of the roundtable to determine the finer details and mechanics of these issues. A comprehensive Terms Of Reference needs to be developed and an implementation group formed to manage the transition to a new way of operating a national grower body whilst maintaining the current functions at GCA.

The board of GCA have endorsed the plan as the best way forward for the Grain Growers of Australia and recommend you read the plan and participate in the debate.

## ***The Next Roundtable***

The next National Roundtable will be held on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2010 in Melbourne. Please see details on GCA website under the EVENTS tab.

I would **welcome all interested parties**, grower groups, and allied grower organisations to attend to deliberate and determine the future direction of National Grower Representation in an open, mature and pragmatic way, with one objective in mind:

**To develop the best representation for Australian Grain Growers and the Australian Grains Industry possible!**

If the rhetoric and difficulties of the past remain dominant and stall the opportunity that presents with this Business Plan, the current national representation arrangements, as encapsulated in the Grains Council of Australia, will come to an end. Many have emphasised that it is time to get on and make the changes necessary.

I believe we must grasp this opportunity to develop a sustainable and credible production sector body. Failure to do so will mean that grower interests will languish and the reputation of Australian grains will not be advanced with input from growers.

Regards,  
Jamie Smith  
Chairman GCA