

CCA deserves credit for unity gesture: Hunt

by James Nason, 04 November 2014

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Norman Hunt

A prominent long-running critic of grassfed cattle industry structures says the Cattle Council of Australia deserves “great credit” for its decision to move towards a unity position with other groups.

Sydney-based lawyer Norman Hunt from Hunt Partners Solicitors represents two groups of cattle industry stakeholders, the Australian Meat Producers Group and the Concerned Cattle Producers.

At the recent Senate Inquiry both groups advocated for grassfed levies to be controlled and dispersed by a single directly-elected producer body representing all grassfed levy payers.

A similar position was supported by other groups including the Australian Beef Association, and ultimately formed the basis of the model recommended by Senators after their four month inquiry.

In comments to Beef Central yesterday Mr Hunt said he felt the new position taken by CCA last week to come into line with the reform proposals put forward by the ABA and AMPG/CCP did the council “great credit”.

“I feel that the CCA announcement of its new position on restructure for grass fed cattle levy structures was very encouraging for the beef producers of Australia,” Mr Hunt said.

“The CCA gesture and the consequent likely unified agreement on reform is a feather in the cap for Barnaby Joyce who recognised the need to reform the cattle industry organisational structures and called for the Senate inquiry into grass-fed cattle levy structures and systems.

“The CCA response also represents a feather in the cap for the Senators that sat on the inquiry committee with their exhaustive examination of the flaws in the current structures and their seven insightful major reform recommendations that laid the groundwork for the possibility of a unified way forward for grass fed cattle producers for the first time in 16 years.

“I am confident that if the Senate Committee recommendations are fully implemented, we will see the Australian cattle industry return to profitable viability in the not too distant future.”

Mr Hunt said the Senate committee’s recommendation for a total audit of MLA expenditure needs to be carried out so that the new Australian cattle corporation and other industry bodies can establish the levy income that will be required to support cattle producer R&D plus other revenue raising services for the producer industry.

“Needless to say in the past 16 years the cattle producers of Australia have been badly served by their organisational structures through no fault of their own or the people who have served in those organisational structures,” Mr Hunt said.

“Mistakes were made in the implementation of the 1996 red meat industry restructure that resulted in a flawed and somewhat dysfunctional producer organisational structure.

“These flaws were compounded by the very significant economic and structural changes to the makeup of almost all sectors the Australian beef and sheep industry since that time.

“It is important that all parties to, and factions in, the cattle industry now work together for the common good of the future of the cattle industry.”

Mr Hunt said it will now be crucial that the industry works together over the next few months in the interests of the industry as a whole to ensure that the proposed reforms are implemented in a constructive way for the benefit of all.

“I am much heartened from my initial discussions with the various sectors of the red meat industry which have filled me with optimism that this can be achieved.”

Topics: AMPG, Cattle Council, MLA, Senate