

# Regional Workshop: Warragul

Workshop Output Report



# Background

The Warragul regional workshop is one of 23 regional workshops designed to contribute to the development of the Australian Dairy Plan – a nationwide plan for a profitable, confident and united dairy industry. This report captures the discussions held at that workshop. It is intended to provide a record for workshop attendees and a basis for those who could not attend the workshop to contribute to the conversation. This report will be combined with the reports of the other 22 regional workshops in the development of the Australian Dairy Plan.

## Workshop sessions

1. **The Set-Up: Why will this Plan be different?**
2. **How big is the appetite for change?**
3. **What needs to change?**
4. **What needs to be done?**
5. **What is success for the Australian dairy industry?**

## Workshop details

**Date:** 18 June 2019

**Location:** Warragul

**Facilitator:** Stephen Petris, Nous Group

**Coordinator:** GippsDairy

**Attendees:** approximately 80 people including around 37 farmers.

# 1. The Set-Up: Why will this Plan be different?

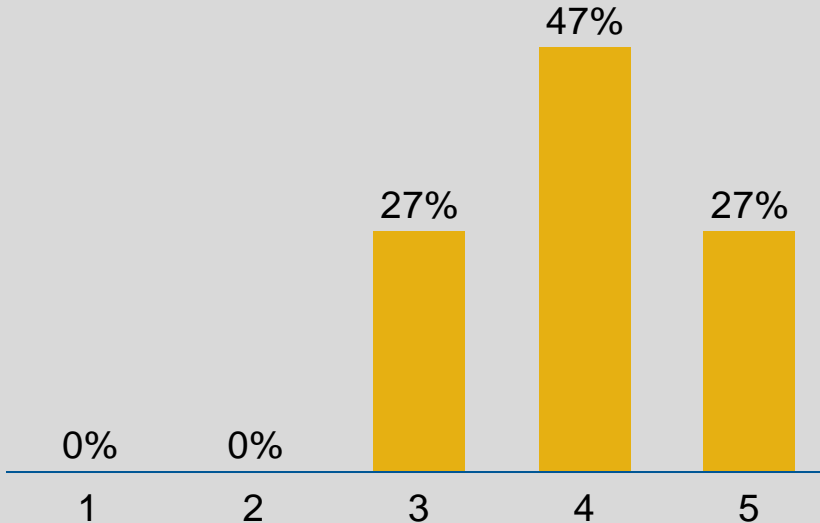
*The workshop was opened by local farmer Grant Williams*

## The facilitator set out the purpose of the Australian Dairy Plan and the workshop

- This is a great opportunity to shape the future of dairy by contributing to the development of the ADP
- But you've heard this before - what's different about this Plan? Why get involved?
  - The key players are working towards one national dairy plan, one set of national priorities, one voice in championing these priorities – that gives us more ability to drive change
  - This time the plan is being built from the 'bottom-up' i.e. by the people with 'skin in the game' – you!
  - The partners are committed to turning the plan into action through their individual strategic plans

## 2. How big is the appetite for change?

Participants voted on “how much change is required to get the industry to a better place”



N=64

1 = minor change, 5 = major change

In discussing the results, we agreed...

### *Why do we need to change:*

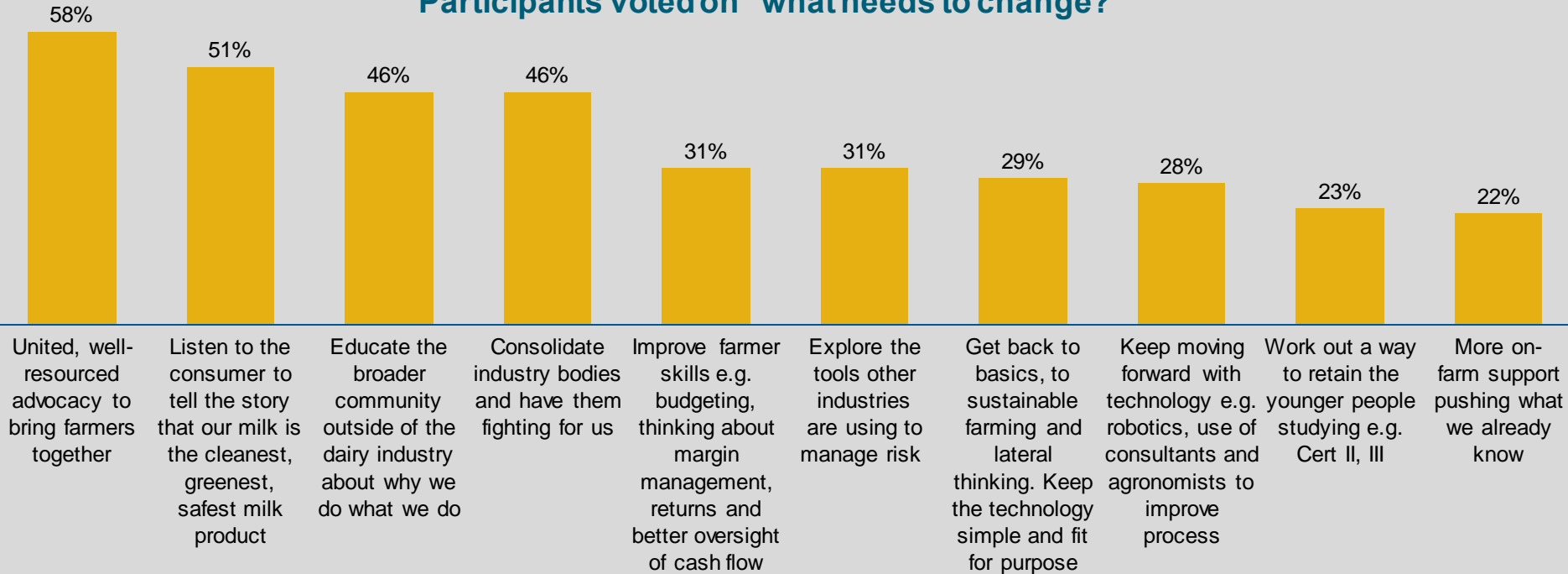
- We are anxious about discounting by supermarkets and the impact this has on the perception of our product
- We are concerned that the signals about price don't really reflect profit drivers - volatile seasons should impact price
- We understand the importance of succession planning and need to encourage young people into the industry
- Not enough is done to promote the industry and image of dairy products so the community values the benefit of our products
- We need to get good information out and adopted on farms i.e. to better educate our farmers

### *On the other hand:*

- Dairy farmers are efficient as an industry
- There is opportunity to promote the nutritional benefits of milk
- While we worry about price, we can't change the milk price easily. However, we can control other things on our farms e.g. accelerate use of technology to reduce costs, practice better farm business management

# 3. What needs to change?

Participants voted on “what needs to change?”



N=65

Top 10 ideas by percentage votes with participants voting on their top 5

## 4. What needs to be done?

We further developed our top prioritised ideas by thinking about what success would look like, how we might get there and what might hold us back.

United, well-resourced  
advocacy to bring farmers  
together.

We need one strong voice representing all dairy farmers at a national level. Unity will lead to strength and relevance.

We want to use the dairy plan to facilitate getting all the relevant stakeholders to the table. We want to streamline our peak bodies, reduce duplication, employ skilled people to advocate on our behalf and better communicate outcomes to our farmers.

The body would be financed through a levy of some sort. The body would be responsible for managing risk with the government e.g. advocating for changes to federal legislation regarding interference / trespassing; revisiting the DART review.

Listen to the consumer to tell the  
story that our milk is the cleanest,  
greenest, safest milk product.

Consumers do not currently understand the multifaceted responsibilities of farmers.

We propose promotion of the industry as a whole, to tell the story that our milk is the cleanest, greenest, safest milk product.

As farmers, we need to look at alternatives to current practices e.g. fertilisers, chemicals, which consumers find undesirable. To provide the assurance that we are the cleanest, greenest, safest milk product, we need low cost systems with organised information pre-farm-gate that assure customers that we are clean, green and kind. We need a single approach to audit across the industry.

Educate the broader  
community outside of the dairy  
industry about why we do what  
we do.

For us to be an industry of choice with a positive public perception in 2025, we need to educate the broader community about what we do through an increased advertising campaign, funded by a shared industry model.

Our brand is 'milk'. Advertising is needed to educate new entrants, consumers and the general public about the value of milk. We want milk to be valued as an essential part of a balanced diet, and dairy to be viewed as a sustainable industry.

Other ideas include using a new social media platform that has a positive view of the industry.

## 4. What needs to be done?

Consolidate industry bodies and have them fighting for us

We need an easily recognised, single body that everyone belongs to and everyone knows its role. The body needs to have the power and influence to unite the industry and advocate on its behalf.

The single body will engage members (industry) and consumers through two-way communication. It will advocate for our interests and the existence of the dairy industry.

Improve farmer skills e.g. budgeting, thinking about margin management, returns and better oversight of cash flow

Farmers need a better understanding of budgeting and cash flows and the fact that office work / business management is a priority. We need a cultural shift where every farmer has a budget and where the benefits of financial and risk management are promoted. Change the perception to where farmers spending time in the office is a good thing.

The industry needs a common language, where we talk about profitability, not production, metrics.

We propose a budgeting and cash flow tool that is simple and easy to use. We would also like greater resourcing of one-to-one engagement by extension officers.

Explore the tools other industries are using to manage risk

We need to look to other industries and understand what other tools are available to manage risks and to even out the highs and lows.

Examples of the types of tools that we could explore include: futures, hedging, long term supply agreements, farm management deposits, tools to help farmers hold more buying power e.g. feed prices, margin insurance, power bills.

## 5. What is success for the dairy industry?

Imagining the future of the industry, we articulated our vision by developing the front page of the industry newspaper.

# ***THE DAIRY TIMES***

June 2025

**In this issue, we look at dairy's journey to 2025 & celebrate the people and successes that have got the industry to where it is today.**

The dairy industry has changed a lot since 2019. Now we see a strong and united industry, collaborative and well-resourced.

“ I am a proud dairy farmer and my children see a future in this industry

”

- Dairy farmer

“ Supply can't keep up with demand

”

- Processor

“ The dairy sector is an important and valuable part of our economy

”

- Minister for Agriculture & Water Resources



# Appendix. What needs to change? (full list of results)

Longer term contract e.g. 4-5 years for secure milk pricing	Systems for more diversity in leadership not just gender, also form of ownership
More on-farm support pushing what we already know	Increase processor contribution to the industry e.g. some form of levy
Improve access to labour e.g. change visa requirements; e.g. promote dairy industry in education	Collaborative contracts for employment to manage labour more effectively and efficiently
Consolidate industry bodies and have them fighting for us	Work out a way to retain the younger people studying e.g. Cert II, III. Change mindset to signal that you are valued if you come into the dairy industry
Educate the broader community outside of the dairy industry about why we do what we do	Reduce conflicts re: off-peak and seasonal production
United, well-resourced advocacy to bring farmers together. E.g. Changes to federal legislation re: interference / trespassing, a signal that government supports us; e.g. More advocacy i.e. council rating	Listen to the consumer and push back on the idea that milk is not worth a lot. Tell the story that our milk is the cleanest, greenest, safest milk product. Low cost systems that assure customers that we are clean, green and kind
Less off-season incentives in order to better support low cost production systems. E.g. Push back on calving pattern to keep costs down and not get penalised	Get back to basics, to sustainable farming and lateral thinking. Keep the technology simple and fit for purpose
Improve farmer skills e.g. budgeting, thinking about margin management, returns and better oversight of cash flow	Formal mechanism connecting people who are winding down and getting out of the industry with those who want to enter the industry
Explore the tools other industries are using to manage risk e.g. hedging; e.g. Helping farmers get more buying power re: feed prices, power bills	Remember - everyday jobs need to be done, not everyone can be a manager or service provider
Keep moving forward with technology e.g. robotics, use of consultants and agronomists to improve process	Address disconnect re: the requirement to pay people more and the skills you get (e.g. Cert II, III)
Search for our signature product for dairy that we could be proud of	