**BEEF CENTRAL EDITORIAL**

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**Where to from here for Cattle Australia?**

Environmental sustainability, biosecurity and costs of production. These are just some of the areas that grass-fed cattle producers want Cattle Australia, the proposed peak body for the sector, to focus on when it launches in July 2022.

These insights, along with many others, were gleaned from the recent public consultation period on Cattle Australia’s work priorities, which invited producers and industry stakeholders to have their say on what Cattle Australia’s national focus areas should be to ensure the new entity could represent their interests and support industry growth.

The consultation process resulted in a strong level of interest in Cattle Australia from producers and industry stakeholders, with broad producer reach achieved - notably through the Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) databases, which allowed information to reach over 200,000 subscribers. The Restructure Steering Committee conducted numerous engagement activities, such as webinars, a nationwide advertising campaign in print and digital media, regular stakeholder briefing sessions, attendance at industry events and regular newsletters to support industry participation and engagement. These activities resulted in 200+ submissions and correspondence being submitted to Cattle Australia for consideration and close to 500 levy payers registering their interest in receiving regular updates on the new entity.

The public consultation period has done exactly what the Restructure Steering Committee intended it to do – it has helped raise awareness of Cattle Australia’s purpose, objectives, and remit, as well as unearth what grass-fed cattle levy payers require from their peak industry body to futureproof the industry. It has also reinforced the need for Cattle Australia, an organisation committed to providing a visible, unified, and influential voice for producers as well as clear leadership and direction for the broader grass-fed cattle industry. Producers have spoken and they want a peak body that offers inclusion, producer representation, and strong industry advocacy and this is what Cattle Australia has set out from the get-go to deliver.

The feedback received has been incredibly valuable to the Restructure Steering Committee, who have been using it to inform discussions on Cattle Australia’s organisational design, constitution, priorities, and funding model. Some key decisions made by the Restructure Steering Committee in relation to these areas include agreement on membership eligibility (all payers of the grass-fed levy will be members of Cattle Australia and entitled to a vote) and identification of membership categories (Cattle Australia will have Industry and Associate membership categories).

Submissions received during the public consultation and stakeholder engagement process will also guide the Restructure Steering Committee as it directs its attention to drafting the constitution, securing medium-term funding, and creating a database in collaboration with MLA and other industry groups to help facilitate democratic elections.

With the intended launch date of Cattle Australia rapidly approaching, the Restructure Steering Committee is also focusing on what the transition process will look like for the transfer of Cattle Council of Australia’s (CCA) responsibilities to Cattle Australia. The Restructure Steering Committee have identified a phased approach which means a Board transition process will be required between CCA and Cattle Australia post-1 July to allow time for the election process to be fully developed and implemented. Discussions with CCA on this process are ongoing but both parties agree that this is our one chance to realise a new peak body for the grass-fed cattle industry that represents the interests of all Australian cattle producers, so it’s important that we proceed carefully to ensure we get this right.

One of the members of the Restructure Steering Committee described the Committee’s role as being responsible for putting together all the different puzzle pieces to create Cattle Australia. I agree with this analogy, but in reality, there is added complexity, as some puzzle pieces aren’t always easy to identify, some change shape after you think you’ve put them in the right spot and others we may not even know about yet. This means that what fits well and looks right initially can, after further consideration, consultation, and observation, require reworking. Fortunately, the public consultation process has reinforced that we are working on the right puzzle, and we do have the right pieces – now, it’s just a matter of putting them together in a way that not only realises an influential, representative peak body, but also strengthens industry support, cements confidence, and builds long term respect and support for the new organisation. This is why, although the consultation period has closed, the Steering Committee will continue to liaise with stakeholders as the development of Cattle Australia progresses.

It is exciting to see Cattle Australia take shape and become a peak body that will allow the sector to elevate its national policy priorities and industry advocacy efforts and ensure grass-fed levies support grass-fed producers and a stronger grass-fed economy. On behalf of the Restructure Steering Committee, I would like to thank those who have submitted feedback on Cattle Australia during the consultation period. Your input is invaluable and will help us create an organisation that can achieve its mission of being the voice of grass-fed cattle producers, leading the cattle industry to a stronger, more sustainable future.

To find out more about Cattle Australia and sign up to our newsletter, visit our website [here](https://www.cattleaustralia.com.au/).