



HOTLINE

Newsletter of the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria

November 2011

Your UDV levy at work

So what does the UDV do and what value does it generate?

This is a hard question to answer. Not because we don't have anything to talk about. In fact it is a hard question to answer because we have so much to talk about it is hard to know which issues to focus on.

First of all understand that the UDV is a part of a much larger farmer representative family. A family that relies on farmers paying a membership to fund its activities. The membership levy that I pay to the UDV helps the UDV, it helps the VFF, it helps our national dairy body, the Australian Dairy Farmers and it helps the National Farmers Federation.

So what might my levy payment be used for?

Lets look at some big picture issues with just a few examples for you to consider. On the national stage your levy payment is helping develop and present the dairy farmers response to the Carbon Tax. And your levy is helping with the farmers views on the future management of the Murray Darling Basin. Your levy has contributed to an active farmers voice in the review of drought support and financial hardship packages. And it helped present a dairy farmers perspective on the supermarkets discounting milk.

And on the national scale your levy did other things too. They are not as high profile but I think they are important. It helped explain to people that wanted to remove cheque books from our lives that they still play an important role for farmers. The new world of electronic money transfers is not always available in our world. Your levy helped explain to people reviewing the types of chemicals we can use why we need to keep using those chemicals. Your levy helped pay for farmers

to be represented in the many discussions relating to employment and industrial relations matters.

Imagine the cost to our businesses without diesel fuel rebates. That was a possibility just a few years ago but the farmers voice prevailed. The levy was very valuable at that time.

At a state level your levy was also very busy. It helped maintain the many transport related concessions farmers receive including discounted registration fees. Your levy provides a voice in the future direction of the DPI and was important in influencing the state government's decision to abolish the fire services levy.

So what about the dairy industry? What has your levy been doing in the dairy industry?

I mentioned earlier the work by the ADF in challenging the supermarkets decision to discount fresh milk. Because the membership levy helps organise the dairy industry, the ADF was able to give a strong voice to dairy farmers concerns. It is true fresh milk discounting is less of an issue to Victorian dairy farmers than other states, but permanent discounting of cheeses, butter and other dairy products would be a major concern.

Locally the levy helped present the dairy industry argument for government funding for 3 phase power upgrades in the south west. It helped with the water required for dairy wash downs and it helps with the development of the Sustainable Water Strategy in Gippsland and Western Victoria. The levy membership kept dairy farmers exempt from the onerous cooling tower auditing requirements and was used to secure state government funding for building stock over and under road passes.

I could go on with numerous other examples.

The point is the levy of every member is used to provide a dairy voice. A voice that is organised, a voice that is researched and a voice that is respected by those who make decisions that affect the way we all do business.

Sometimes your levy works on small issues. Sometimes it works on the big issues. But because the levy is paid, UDV, VFF, ADF, NFF have some capacity to represent me and my business.

So here is the challenge for everyone. Are we all willing to contribute to that voice? Are we willing to voice our opinion where it can make a difference? Are we willing to contribute in some way? Because at the moment all this work is being done on behalf of all dairy farmers but is being funded only by those who are members.

Or are we going to have an opinion but not take it anywhere that can make a difference?

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Future Focus

The future. On the farm the picture is certainly much brighter and the prospects for that to continue look strong. But as always challenges loom. Significant issues like water, the carbon tax, animal welfare.

These issues will not be resolved to our satisfaction because it is the right thing to do or it is what farmers want. They won't be resolved to our satisfaction because our industry is an important employer through regional areas or because of the export dollars we generate.

Often a decision will depend on the view of Treasury. It's about the economics. Not your farms' economics or your industry economics. It's about the state economics or the national economics.

And we are in competition. That is, as farmers we must compete. Not with our trading competitors. We must compete with the other voices.

There are a lot of voices out there. Some very organised and very well funded voices. Some

voices that do not share the same views as farmers. Some voices that want significant changes to the way we do business.

Some of these voices have had an impact locally. We can't walk our cows along many local roads because some voices were concerned their cars might be getting dirty.

One of the loudest voices focuses on animal welfare. Take the time and look at what the Animals Australia web site says about dairy farming. They are unhappy about how you manage your cows and how you manage your calves.

It is easy to dismiss these views. But it is never wise to underestimate. Especially when you consider the impact on your business if they get what they want.

But you are in a fortunate position. Because of the investment of some dairy farmers, an investment that stretches back decades, you have a voice. A voice that is organised, well researched and well respected by those making the decisions. You have the UDV/VFF/ADF/NFF.

And you have a voice that welcomes your involvement. Infact, a voice that needs your involvement – be that your opinion, your expertise or your experience. Or your membership.

So what are we to do? The easy thing to do is to sit back and do nothing. Or criticise. Or express an opinion where it can't make a difference.

Or you could take some positive action. You could bring your opinion, your experience or your expertise to the UDV.

I know that is not for everyone. But you can support those representing you locally, or through the region, across the state or right across the country.

The UDV needs support. Your membership levy is helping in many different ways.

I hope that you too can see that benefit.

Kerry Callow
President

United Diaryfarmers of Victoria

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Dairy Levy Poll

Dairy Poll 2012 is of vital importance to every participant in the Australian dairy industry.

The dairy industry in Australia employs over 40,000 people, is responsible for export valued at over \$2.4 billion, and dominates the supermarket shelves domestically. Why? Because we as dairy farmers invested in our own future via the Dairy Services Levy.

In March 2012 dairy farmers will be asked to vote for one of three options to determine the rate of the Dairy Service Levy, that is, the level of funding for essential activities that will shape the future of our industry. Every dairy farmer pays the levy so every dairy farmer will be given the chance to vote.

The United Dairyfarmers of Victoria (UDV), the dairy group of the VFF, support an increase to the levy for a number of reasons. The levy is our investment in research and development, international and domestic market intelligence and on-farm programs and education. The levy provides each and every dairy farmer with the collective funds to tackle the 'big ticket' items that challenge the industry; issues such as changed government policy, consumer expectations, education to help mitigate damage from floods and drought. These challenges are coming at us with increasing frequency and our investment through the levy ensures our ability to adapt to change.

The Dairy Poll is about our own future, and that of the next generation of farmers. There has not been an increase in the levy for 10 years, however there have been increasing demands on our expectations from Dairy Australia. An independent assessment has estimated that farmers receive a benefit of \$3 for each \$1 invested by Dairy Australia – an indication that we truly reap more than we sow.

So, what level of investment are you as dairy farmers prepared to make in the future of our industry?

The UDV would like to thank the following supporters of the 2011 UDV Annual Meeting and Conference



Confirmation of contact details

Have your contact details changed? Would you like to ensure we have your preferred contact details?

To be in the running for the chance to win a Rydges Melbourne Accommodation Package – 1 night stay at Rydges Exhibition Street, Melbourne for 2 people including breakfast, please advise your

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ONE LUCKY MEMBER WILL WIN THE PRIZE. Simply return your details by November 30th 2011 to Georgina Livery at the UDV on Email : glivery@vff.org.au or Fax: 03 9207 5611



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