Is Advocacy needed when activism is so easy?

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What we heard about advocacy

• “The VFF just fights with government”
• “Farm reps use divisive language that alienate the industry”
• “There is not enough constructive work with the government”
• “What are they doing that helps us?”
What is the difference between activism and advocacy:

• Advocacy
  – “The act of arguing in favour of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy”
  – Three pillars
    • Relationships, sound policy, respect
    • Communication to decision makers directly
  – Pre-emptive influence
  – Can be either pro-active or reactive
  – The soft touch of effective advocacy
    • “It could have been worse...”
  – Examples: budget allocations, taxation changes, drought policy development, MDBP
What is the difference between activism and advocacy:

• Activism
  – “The policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change”
  – Often the result of a lack of relationships or unsuccessful advocacy
  – Generally based on a single issue
  – Can use questionable tactics – sometimes illegal
  – Reactive to an issue
  – Communication to decision makers through media
  – Goal is to raise awareness of the problem to exert political pressure or to punish those opposed to their views
  – Examples: GAIC, animal welfare activism, occupy movement
Is activism easy?

• Depending on the goal!
• If the goal is awareness it can be easy
• Social media has delivered a new level of social democracy
• Social media stats are used as news
• Have the ability to hurt relationships because there is a single focus
Is advocacy needed?

- Yes, but why?
- Activism can be avoided through quality advocacy
- Advocacy delivers on pre-emptive benefit
- Policy makers are looking for industry input
- There will always be a need for activism but the success of that approach is questionable
What do industry advocates need to do better?

• Communicate what we do better

• Emphasize the positive influence for the industry more

• How do we reduce the reliance on media?
  – We rely on the media to spread our message to non-members / community
  – The media often more interested in the divisive
Conclusion

- There will always be a need for both advocacy and activism
- Depending on the issue one approach may work better than the other
- Successful advocacy relies on relationships
- The VFF needs to communicate to the industry better on their goals and successes