

**VICTORIAN FARMERS FEDERATION
41st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
AT THE VFF GRAINS CONFERENCE
MINUTES- FOR COMPANY SECRETARY APPROVAL**

24 January 2020 @ 11:30-12:00

Tatalia Function Centre, Rich River Golf Club Resort, Moama, NSW

Board Attendees: David Jochinke Chair / VFF President / Director
Zena Burgess Independent Director
Andrew Dix Finance & Audit Committee Chair / Independent Director
Ashley Fraser Grains Group President / Director
Nathan Free Horticulture Vice President / Director
Emma Germano VFF Vice President / Horticulture President / Director
Tim Kingma Pig Group President / Director
Leonard Vallance Livestock President / Director

Guest Attendee: Luke Messer General Manager – Finance & Operations @ Australian Farmers Shared Services Ltd (via phone)
Tony Pititto Audit Partner @ Grant Thornton (via phone)

VFF Staff Attendees: Stephen Sheridan Returning Officer/CEO
Gary Bottomer Finance Governance Manager and Company Secretary
Annabel Mactier Senior Stakeholder, Policy & Advocacy Advisor
Jessica Evens Executive Assistant
Simon McNair Grains Manager
Paula Fitzgerald Member & Stakeholder Engagement Manager
Mick McCarthy Member & Network Development Representative

Members/Guests Present:

Andrew Wells	Amelia Pope	Sharon Hocking	Sara Nesbit
Scott Young	Gregor Heard	Russell Hocking	Graham Nesbit
James Hinton	Faye Vallance	Margaret Hards	Joshua Turnbull
Alan Malcolm	John Knight	Ron Hards	Tony Linklater
Gwen McLean	Mark Bennett	Peter Lawless	Colin Coates
Chris Sharkey	Murray McDonald	Wayne McDonald	Peter Lang
Marshall Rodda	Brett Gledhill	Eileen Jorgensen	Lloyd Milgate
Jason Mellings	Gary Gale	Brian Barry Jnr	Allan McKenzie
Craig Henderson	Michael Morcom	Christine Plant	David Wilson
Wendy Lang	Bridie Williams	Keith Plant	Anne Wilson
Ian Hastings	Mark Collins	Joel Pymmer	Geoff Pearse
Peter Tuohey	Karen Collins	Julie Weidemann	Carolyn Pearse
Cathie Hastings	Matthew Collins	Kaye Touhey	Kyle Pearse
Keith Erhardt	Robyn Gulline	Marie Milgate	Teghan Pearse
Mary Erhardt	Gregory Knight	Craig Quick	Andrew Weidemann
Noel Barr	James McEachern	John Hoornneg	Alistair Gabb
Eleonore Barr	Pamela Fraser	Lee-Ann Thompson	Anthony Mulcahy
Stuart Wilson	Peter Rhompson	Pauline Henderson	Ryan Milgate
Glenda Wilson	Tim Watson	Anthony Stibbard	John Lees
Ian Morris	James Weeks	Carol Lawless	Nick Evans
Ben Bennett	Miranda Rose	Jason Palmer	David Johnson
Angus Verlay	Spencer Weir	John Powell	Claire Johnson
Chris O'Rourke	Frank Deane	Gwen Malcolm	Sarah Johnson

01 Welcome & Apologies

- 01.1 The Chair opened the 41st Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) Annual General Meeting at 11:48 and welcomed all members, directors, delegates, guests and staff.
- 01.2 Paul Mumford, UDV President sent his apologies.

02 Quorum

- 02.1 It was **agreed** that the 41st VFF AGM could proceed as there was a quorum of members present. Members present 100. 9 valid proxies received. 2 invalid proxies received.
- 02.2 Of the 9 valid proxies received
- 9 appointed the Chair as Proxy
 - 8 instructed the Chair to vote FOR the Resolution at hand
 - 1 instructed the Chair to vote AGAINST the Resolution at hand

03 Minutes of the 40th VFF Annual General Meeting held on 26 February 2019

- 03.1 The Minutes from the 41st VFF AGM, held on 26 February 2019, were **accepted** as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Moved by Ian Hastings / Seconded by Allan Malcolm / Carried

04 President's Report

- 04.1 The Chair was handed to Emma Germano, VFF Vice President, the President was asked to provide his report.
- 04.2 David Jochinke spoke of the difficult seasons that farmers experience, with droughts in the North West and some of the wettest conditions in the South West at the same time.
- 04.3 The President addressed the Grain members present stating that grain growers have had a great season, at the same time water prices have sky rocketed. Water prices, along with drought are some of the most difficult issues that the VFF is dealing with.
- 04.4 Another challenge the VFF and the farming community are facing is farm invasion by animal activists, who are misrepresenting animal welfare on farms to the general consumer. The VFF have been vocal through the media, social media and at the Government level on this issue. At the same time as a farming community understanding that the way we have done things in the past may not be the appropriate way to do things in the future but also defending our position.
- 04.5 The President spoke about the challenges that the VFF faces in bringing commodities together and representing farmers in the greatest issues facing farming communities. The VFF will need to change, the change is unknown at this point in time but members are encouraged to think about what they want this organisation to be.
- 04.6 The President took questions from the floor:
- 04.7 VFF Member, Peter Tuohey asked the President if the money raised in the Disaster Relief Fund will be used to assist farmers affected by the fires this season.

The President confirmed that the Disaster Relief Committee had met and staff are actively looking at the various options in which assistance is needed by farmers and farming communities. The Committee will meet again in the next week.

- 04.8 VFF Member, Ian Morris spoke to the President about the major issues facing dairy farmers and asked that the VFF unite on the issue of the Australian Dairy Plan.
- 04.9 No further questions were raised, the VFF Vice President asked for the President's Report to be approved.

Moved by David Jochinke / Seconded by Marshall Rodda / Carried

05 Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee's Report

- 05.1 The Finance and Audit Committee Chair introduced himself to the members and provided an update on VFF Finances.
- 05.2 The Finance and Audit Chair spoke of negative results within the financials and highlighted that memberships and levies do not cover the operational day to day running of the VFF, however the expenses of the organisation were below budget on previous years. There needs to be some growth in membership to ensure a viable future for the VFF.
- 05.3 VFF Member, Ian Hastings raised a query around the Deed Poll and the accumulated funds, which he highlighted were to be used to underpin investigations on the grains group's behalf. Is the Deed Poll still in operation and only accessible with the approval of the Grains President?

The Finance and Audit Chair acknowledged that the Deed Poll Funds are subject to the Deed Poll Agreement clauses relation to usage and income distribution. In general whilst all Commodities receive a budget from VFF, the Grains group receives additional income than others due to its allocation of income from the Deed Poll Funds.

The VFF Chair added that the Deed Poll is still operational and that the VFF Executive Board have governance over the funds, along with the Grains President/Director.

- 05.4 VFF Member, Andrew Weidemann asked for an update on the NFF House asset.

The Chair provided an update stating that VFF was a founding member of NFF and has a 12% share of NFF House in Canberra and told Andrew that he could provide a more detailed update at a later date.

06 Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) Report

- 06.1 The CEO addressed members with an update.
- Farrer House is currently undergoing upgrades to seek out a higher rental return.
 - There are now two Independent Directors on the VFF Executive Board.
 - New managers are in place within the VFF.
 - Internal systems are being reviewed and replaced for a more efficient sustainable future for the VFF – the current membership system doesn't allow for future development within the organisation.
 - The VFF are undertaking Government funded projects to provide relevant services to the farming community. Smarter, Safer Farms is a safety project being undertaken by the VFF.
 - Advocacy – the VFF is currently focussed on raising the profile within the media

- 06.2 Allan Malcolm raised the issue of adversity vs membership fees along with the declining VFF membership and wanted to know the plan to tackle this issue.

The CEO again highlighted the need to improve internal systems in order to provide strategies to tackle declining membership and assist going to market. There are fewer farms and larger farms now along with issues such as drought, fire, milk levies, rates and water prices among many other key issues. The CEO told the members that it's possible that the business model may need to be changed, as well as looking at core business to target non-members and raise the VFF profile.

- 06.3 Andrew Weidemann suggested that the VFF look at levy based production and to consider the South Australian system.

The CEO said that everything is on the table at this point in time. The Chair added that he would like to see members engaged in changes to the organisation and urged members to speak up to the custodians of their organisation.

- 06.4 The CEO Update was approved.

Moved by Christine Plant / Seconded by Allan Malcolm / Carried

07 Receive and Consider the Financial Report for the Year Ended 30 September 2019.

- 07.1 The Financial Report was **noted**.

Moved by Andrew Dix / Seconded by Leonard Vallance / Carried

08 Appointment of Auditor

Proposed Resolution: THAT Grant Thornton be appointed as auditor of VFF and its controlled entities for the financial year ending 30 September 2020

- 08.1 The above mentioned resolution was approved

Moved by Leonard Vallance / Seconded by Peter Tuohey / Carried

09 Close

- 09.1 The VFF AGM was closed by the Chair at 12:31