



House of Assembly

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Page 5053

SHEEP INDUSTRY BLUEPRINT

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light) (15:06): My question is to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. How is the state government working with industry to ensure the sustainable growth of the sheep, wool and lamb sector?

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL (Mawson—Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Minister for Forests, Minister for Tourism, Minister for Recreation and Sport, Minister for Racing) (15:06): I thank the member for Light for the question. Today marks a significant day for the South Australian sheep industry. The industry has worked together to create a plan to increase value and international competitiveness.

The South Australian Sheep Industry Blueprint maps the industry's growth strategy for the next five years. It was

launched this morning at an industry event in Hahndorf and is a real milestone moment for the sector. One of the key objectives of the blueprint is to grow the SA sheep industry's production and value from the current base of \$1.48 billion a year to \$1.8 billion by 2020. That is an increase of 20 per cent and something that I am sure we would all welcome.

The blueprint is based on four pillars: resilient and profitable production systems; efficient value chains that optimise total returns; enhancing community and consumer support; and building industry capability and capacity. The collective targets of the plan include a 7 per cent increase in the ewe flock, a 4 per cent increase in weaning rate, a 4 per cent higher average daily weight gain in lambs and a 5 per cent increase in wool production.

The list of how industry will do this is comprehensive and aligns with existing plans for industry development. The blueprint is an initiative of sheep producers through Livestock SA and the South Australian Sheep Advisory Group. Its development has been supported by the University of Adelaide and with \$140,000 from the state government through Primary Industries and Regions SA. The blueprint supports the state government's economic priority of premium food and fibre produced in our clean environment and exported to the world.

South Australia's sheep, wool and lamb industry is vitally important to the state's economy and for jobs in our regions. There are 7,000 livestock properties managing a flock of 11 million sheep, with more than 15,000 people employed by the industry. It is already a solid performer, growing year on year, but we know there is potential for further growth. By supporting the development of this blueprint, the state government is investing in the growth and development of these industries into the future.

Mr Whetstone: The farmers are investing, not the government.

The Hon. L.W.K. BIGNELL: The farmers appreciate the government working side by side with them on developing things like this. The blueprint offers a united approach across the entire value chain to help the SA sheep industry achieve much more than each business or sector could by going it alone. In fact, more than 150 producers and industry participants, together with an 18-person working group, have directly contributed to the blueprint, demonstrating the high level of support this process has had. The sheep industry has demonstrated tremendous initiative in developing the blueprint and the subsequent actions required to increase productivity, quality and the value of sheep meat and wool. I congratulate all of those involved.

It was terrific to be in a shearing shed a couple of weeks ago over on Kangaroo Island. We met with Keith Bolto, the property owner of Bolto Wool, his wife Lyn and their sons Colin and Keith; Christine Berry, the Chair of KI Wool; and Greg Johnson, the local vet and Kangaroo Island Wool company officer. Keith's family run a grazing area of 1,500 hectares and are specialist wool producers in the drier, sandier parts of KI. KI Wool represents one-fifth of the island's wool production. It is a highly innovative and motivated group that works very hard to manage and market the KI clip.

I must say that it was tremendous to be in Tokyo last year and to walk into a department store and see suits hanging there, none of which would fit the member for Hammond or me, but nonetheless they were made of Kangaroo Island wool, and they had the tags hanging off the cuffs proudly promoting the fact that they had been made from wool from Kangaroo Island. So, again, it is great to see a Kangaroo Island sector working together to make sure that their wonderful island and their wonderful produce are celebrated internationally.