

corporate affairs



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The aim of AWI's Corporate Affairs portfolio is to deliver effective communication between AWI and its key stakeholders. The Corporate Affairs portfolio seeks to inform and influence:

- woolgrowers, so they better understand the value of what AWI does and are aware of R&D outcomes;
- Government, so it recognises the value of R&D for the wool industry; and
- users of Australian wool (such as manufacturers and retailers), so they understand the benefits of Australian wool and the value of new technologies and innovations.

Key outcomes and achievements

Communicating face to face

AWI hosted seven major forums in 2004/05 that were attended by more than 1,700 woolgrowers and industry representatives:

- 'Pathways to Profit' forums at Dubbo NSW, Armidale NSW and Naracoorte SA.
- Two joint AWI/MLA 'Making more from Merinos' forums in Northam, WA and Katanning, WA.
- A woolgrower forum as part of the IWTO Congress in Hobart, Tasmania.
- Woolgrower forum prior to the AGM in Ballarat, Victoria.

AWI staff or Board members also presented at more than 60 other industry forums and events around Australia during 2004/05. Product suitcases showcasing new AWI product developments and/or AWI display stands were on show at 34 industry events. The AWI Innovation Showcase was visited by nearly 4,000 people at eight industry events before it ceased operation in October 2004 and was sold due to concerns about the operational costs. Resources were instead focused on forums. Twice during the year, industry organisation representatives and state farmer bodies provided their input on industry issues directly to key AWI staff and senior management at information exchanges held at AWI Sydney offices.

AWI helpline – easy access to information

The average number of calls to the tollfree AWI helpline increased by 94 per cent during the year, up from 156 calls per month to 303 calls per month. The helpline was used for general information about AWI, company projects and programs, event registration and for the TIMERITE™ service. The AWI helpline started providing the TIMERITE™ optimum spray date to woolgrowers in July 2004 and this accounted for about a third of all calls to the helpline during the year.



Above: The AWI website received more than 5.5 million hits during the year.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Average daily visitor numbers to the AWI website www.wool.com.au increased 42 per cent during the year to an average of 1,097 visitors per day.
- More than 1,700 woolgrowers and industry representatives from across Australia participated in AWI forums during the year.
- Woolgrowers, industry and the public were able to access information on the outcomes of AWI projects by way of 24 new or updated AWI fact sheets covering all key program areas.
- The effect of the campaign by extremist animal rights groups against the Australian wool industry was largely minimised, with AWI taking a leading role in the industry's response to the threat.



Getting the message out through rural, metropolitan and regional media

Media is an important communication tool for AWI, and media releases, advertisements and television were used to gain widespread coverage for AWI projects and initiatives. There was wide coverage in the rural and regional media, as well as in the metropolitan media, and international textile and trade media. AWI research and innovation initiatives were also featured in the *On The Land* rural TV show broadcast across Australia.

Research and development publications

Publications were distributed at industry events and most were available electronically on the AWI website. Publications were also made available on request from the AWI helpline on 1800 070 099. AWI's flagship publication *Beyond the Bale* was published six times during 2004/05 and distributed to shareholders and stakeholders. A total of 24 new or updated fact sheets were produced during the

year highlighting the outcomes and benefits for woolgrowers of a range of AWI projects such as *Woolcheque*, *Woolfleece* and *Battling the blowfly*. The brochures and reports listed in Appendix C were also produced. Shareholders were sent three letters from the AWI Chairman during 2004/05.

Wool industry response to extremist animal rights groups

AWI took a leading role in the Wool and Sheep Industry Taskforce, which was formed to respond to the campaign by extremist animal rights groups against the Australian wool industry.

During 2004/05, the Taskforce vigorously built up and applied a global strategy to ensure a positive outcome for the Australian industry. This strategy included:

- public support from key politicians and ministers, and key bodies such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Australian Veterinary Association;

- providing information to the media, and the development and launch of the www.woolisbest.com website;
- face-to-face meetings and direct communications with retailers, processors, manufacturers and others in the wool pipeline;
- industry agreement to fast-track a number of R&D programs that will enable an end to mulesing by 2010;
- legal action intended to restrain extremist animal rights groups from threatening clothing retailers; and
- a marketing program to inform retailers in the US and UK about Australian wool.

Online and web communications

A major redevelopment of the AWI website www.wool.com.au was undertaken during 2004/05 to deliver easier navigation, more content and a refreshed look and feel. The new site was launched in April 2005. Visitor numbers to the AWI website increased 42 per cent during the year to an average of 1,097 visits per day. More than 5.5 million hits to the site were recorded during the year. Subscriptions to AWI e-newsletters increased 56 per cent during the year to 5,133. Several web-based decision support tools were also developed and launched by AWI during 2004/05 including *TIMERITE™* (www.timerite.com.au), *Wormboss* (www.wormboss.com.au), *Woolcheque* (www.woolcheque.com.au) and *Wool on the Web* (www.woolontheweb.com.au).

Top: Woolgrowers are informed about new technologies during hands on demonstrations at AWI forums.

Future goals

The future goals of the portfolio include:

- Ensure industry and government stakeholders continue to regard AWI as transparent, accountable and delivering value on R&D investment.
- Establish AWI's credibility as the global innovator for the Merino apparel textiles industry in China, the US and Europe.
- Increase the proportion of shareholders and stakeholders in Australia who have a fair to good understanding of AWI's activities and role in the wool industry, and hold the company in good regard.



AWI 'Pathways to Profit' forums

Corporate Affairs

CASE STUDY



Producers came out in force from across many regions of NSW, southern Queensland, South Australia and western Victoria to attend three 'Pathways to Profit' forums held by AWI last year.

Nearly 700 producers attended the forums at Naracoorte, SA and at Dubbo and Armidale, NSW, to get a first-hand account of the latest in wool research, development and innovation designed to improve on-farm productivity and build demand for Australian Merino wool.

Mat Westgarth from 'Tewkesbury' at Warren, NSW, attended the Armidale forum and was impressed with the information and resources provided.

"It was good to see the scope of research that is going on at the moment in the wool industry... I thought the pastures and genetics information was great and meeting

woolgrowers who are involved in the research made it much more relevant to people involved," Mr Westgarth said.

Rob Hamilton from 'Paralands' at Millicent, South Australia, attended the Naracoorte forum and was particularly interested to hear about new wool product innovations and marketing information presented.

"To see the end product being thought of, and hearing how AWI is planning to expand the use of wool, is great. It was encouraging to hear these people have such good ideas for driving demand and use of the products."

An overwhelming 97 per cent of producers who completed feedback surveys at the forums said they would attend another forum.

Above: Twenty four new or updated fact sheets about AWI projects were issued this year.

Top: Events held by AWI raise awareness and understanding of AWI activities and project outcomes.