

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – November 2020
PRESIDENT’S REPORT

The AAA is a member organisation recognised as the peak body representing the alpaca industry in Australia. During this past year your Directors have sought to ensure the association’s vision, mission and strategic plan have been upheld and maintained, as we continue to make progress towards our strategic goals.

To say the last 12 months have been difficult would be an understatement. It has been a year which has presented many challenges – drought, an unheard-of fire season, floods and COVID 19 – issues that have impacted on members personally, at a regional level and the company in general. It has been heart-warming to hear how members have rallied together to support those adversely affected.

The lack of shows in 2020 has had a significant impact on our industry. Whilst many have expressed disappointment in not being able to exhibit their latest generation of genetics, I have found it very re-assuring to hear so many express a disappointment in missing the social side of our industry. The words “missing my alpaca family” have been used frequently. It has never been more important to nurture the “family” aspect of our industry.

The AAA is a volunteer run organisation. Members contribute in many ways, be it as a Regional office bearer; a ribbon or inspection steward; the BBQ chief cook at training days, event co-ordinators, show convenors, and dare I say - being the “pooper scooper”. The list is endless and the Board thanks each and every one of you.

Three new committees have been formed to ensure our association is more inclusive and connected to the views of our members i.e. Member Services, Market Access and Trade and Education and Training. This is in addition to the already established Showing and Judging and Biosecurity committees. Special mention is warranted of the team convening the National Fleece Challenge (Paul Haslin, Lyn Dickson, Pauline Glasser and team) along with Sarah and Perry Wheeler – convenors of the Art, Craft and Product show to be held in early 2021. Both events create the opportunity during a COVID environment for members to exhibit and promote their breeding program and showcase the flexibility and diversity of our end product.

As an industry we rely on local efforts, enthusiasm and leadership to both run our Association and promote the alpaca industry. I encourage you to find a way to become involved.

It would be amiss not to recognise and thank the following Directors who have contributed at a Board level and resigned for various reasons during the past year.

- Steve O’Keefe and Sue Harris who resigned at the 2019 AGM in September
- Elected directors Ian Preuss, Rochelle Veitch, as well as Michelle Simberg who filled a temporary Board vacancy.
- Special appreciation is extended to Andrew Munn who served as President for 9 months of the year, resigning due to a work promotion overseas.

I would like to personally acknowledge and thank Carolyn Austin, Mick Williams, Cathi McMullen, Brett Fallon and Sarah Wheeler for volunteering to fill the vacancies created by the Director resignations, joining Trevor Parry and myself on the Board. Following the 2020 AGM, each will be duly elected onto the Board, following a nomination process open to all members of the AAA. We are a cohesive team, with different perspectives coupled with the ability to have vigorous debates - which all goes well for stability and good decision making at a Board level.

The Board has used the COVID quiet period to get our house in order so we can capitalize on opportunities as they present themselves in the future.

The below list is a snapshot of the activities at a Board level during the past 12 months.

- Alignment of portfolio committees to the AAA strategic direction from a governance and operational perspective.
- Networking with international counterparts to position the Australian alpaca industry as a global leader
- Liaison with Animal Health Australia on matters pertinent to animal health and biosecurity.
- Advocacy with federal and state MPs on matters of importance to our members including drought assistance, shearer access across state borders as well as international borders
- Continued advocacy on international market access for both live alpacas and alpaca fibre.
- Continued lobbying for the reopening of the New Zealand animal export pathway.
- Commenced protocol negotiation for a direct export pathway from Australia to the United Kingdom.
- Centralisation of Regional finances reducing the burden on Regional Treasurers - streamlining processes, reducing Association financial software and auditing costs, and enabling the removal of a qualification from our annual audit.
- Aligned Regional websites with the AAA website increasing brand consistency and messaging
- Introduction of family memberships
- Restructure of the Australian alpaca youth segment to mirror the regional structure
- Improved communication with members via the monthly AAA newsletter
- Increased industry promotion via social media platforms
- Increased two-way communication between the Regions and Board through regular regional president teleconferences.
- Updated Industry Codes of Conduct and developed a new Complaints Handling Procedure
- Extended our agreement for AWEX [Australian Wool Exchange Ltd] to manage the Alpaca Classer Registration System for a further three years.
- Marketing and promotional material distributed to Regions
- Re-established the Richard Dixon Scholarship
- Conducted annual Member Survey - results feeding into the Member Services and Education and Training Strategies
- Rewrite of Industry Advice sheets
- Conducted a Suri Fleece Length Survey to resolve Show Rule 56. This was done in conjunction with the Showing & Judging Committee with the objective of ensuring the process was open, transparent, fair and driven by those impacted by the change. A special thanks is extended to Annemarie Ashton-Wyatt for her independent professional advice in the structure of the survey and analysis of the results.
- Introduction of webinars and development of educational videos

The above list does not include governance activities which were addressed during the year.

Current projects yet to be completed include:

- “There’s No Business, Like Show Business” - a project to develop flexible COVID strategies to ensure we have a show season in 2021
- The development of a Research, Development and Extension strategy so we are ready to apply for future funding opportunities

- A review of the current IAR Rules to ensure they remain “fit for purpose” as our industry matures
- The development of a revised industry biosecurity plan to replace our outdated QAlpaca program

The significance of the above activities cannot and should not be underestimated. AAA Board Directors individually and collectively, together with the support from a number of committed AAA members, volunteers, and the AAA Staff have enabled this industry to continue its progress along a pathway of success.

We still have a way to go for our industry to realise its full potential, however there are a wide range of options and opportunities available for all alpaca producers, whether large or small holders to generate a financial return on their herds.

As we all eagerly wave goodbye to 2020, I encourage everyone to tap into the “alpaca family spirit” and collectively work together to overcome any challenges put before us in 2021.

I would like to sincerely thank Amanda and my fellow Directors for their support during my period as Interim President. You are a great team to work with. Whilst all Directors have contributed it is appropriate to make special mention of our ever-cheerful Treasurer Carolyn Austin who has done a sterling job as evidenced in the audited Financial Report.

I thank my partner Ada for her un-waiving support. I also ask each Director to thank your respective partner/loved ones on my behalf for supporting you during the past 12 months - putting up with the numerous Zoom meetings and hours of work. It has been appreciated.

I feel very confident in the future of our industry as I hand over the reins to Brett as our new President at the AGM.

I wish all AAA members great success with your future alpaca endeavours and look forward to seeing you in 2021.

Prue Walduck