

# MLA elects three new directors

MITCH VLEESKENS

17 Nov, 2011 05:53 PM

THE three new directors up for election at the Meat and Livestock Australia annual general meeting were all appointed in Longreach, Queensland, today.

Joining the board will be Dr Michelle Allen, Mr Geoffrey Maynard, and Mr Rodney Watt.

Dr Allen was elected with a vote of 82.65 per cent; Mr Maynard with a vote of 89.69pc, and Mr Watt with a vote of 85.35pc.

They replace outgoing directors Peter Boyden and Grant Birbridge, and chairman Don Heatley.

A new chairman will be announced Friday morning.

Also elected were selection committee representatives Ian McCamley (cattle), Warren Barnett (lotfeeders), and Ben Hooper (sheep).

The special resolution to wind up MLA by the end of 2012 was defeated with 89.61pc of voters against the motion.

A similar resolution was defeated last year with a vote of 84.7pc against the motion.

Earlier in the day, attendees were invited to question and put forward their views on what shape peak industry councils should take in the future.

Many questioned the current role and efficacy of a system where the lines between policy and service were increasingly blurred, and a consensus for change was clear in the air.

Central Queensland beef producer Graeme Acton called on the panel to clearly define the role of the peak industry councils.

Others to take to the microphone included NSW producer John Carter, who called for RMAC to implement a taskforce to engage with grass roots members in order to discover what it is producers need from councils.

RMAC chairman, Ross Keane, who also conducted the forum, said the council had a commitment to put together a review, and comments made today would help shape its guidelines.

He said RMAC would be discussing the forum at its AGM next Monday, but he was particularly disappointed at the forum's length, which at 90 minutes also included short presentations from the peak industry councils.

"There didn't seem to be enough time to cover everything," he said.

"We'll take these comments back to our members at our AGM next Monday."

Other questions from the crowd covered topics such as the response to the live export suspension, dealing with environmental groups, and industry lobbying and marketing structure.

Fielding questions were representatives from the Red Meat Advisory Council, Cattle Council of Australia, Sheepmeat Council of Australia, the Australian Livestock Exporters Council, Australian Lot Feeders Association, and the Goat Industry Council of Australia.

To start the day, attendees heard updates from across Meat and Livestock Australia's various sections, such as its contribution to research and development, the proliferation of Meat Standards Australia grading, and marketing and communications undertakings.

As part of the forum, questions were invited from the audience, and covered topics such as MLA's response to the social and online media saturation of Animals Australia during the live exports suspension, and efforts to protect MSA compliance through auditing.

The MLA AGM is to be held later this afternoon.

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