



21st Oct 2020

To: The Hon David Littleproud
Federal Minister Agriculture
Cc; Mr Andrew Metcalfe
Secretary to The Department of Agriculture.
Senator Susan McDonald
Chair of Rural Affairs Committee
Senator Bridget Mckenzie

Re: 2019 Australian Wool Innovation Director elections:

Potential election of directors interference by AWI board of board candidates:

Dear Sirs,

In 2019, I stood for the AWI board elections. I had been successful on previous occasions, achieving majority wool grower support in 2008 and onwards, becoming AWI's finance and audit committee chair, and chair of the Woolmark/marketing committees during these years.

I stood down in 2011 to allow new directors to peacefully enter the AWI board. In 2019, owing to ongoing AWI board governance issues, I again stood for election and collected 134 signatures from levy payers. One hundred verified signatures were needed to stand for board director elections.

In 2020, the following events lead me to write this letter to seek rectification of what I believe were potential breaches of the AWI board election process.

I initially asked permission of the AWI company secretary, Mr Jim Story, if I could run a ticket of three people on one signature collection form, as has been done in previous years when Roger Fletcher and I stood on one ticket form together, and later when Laurence Modiano's ticket of five directors stood together on one form.

Permission was given and clarified by Mr Jim Story. It is a process of convenience and ease to put three names on one form as a ticket, and let wool growers sign the nomination form, especially on behalf of potential professional directors who do not live in country areas, making it impossible for them to collect signatures to be able to stand for elections. I don't believe there is anything in the company's constitution precluding this nomination process.

About half way through my collection of signature process for this ticket, (several weeks), I was contacted by the AWI secretary and informed by phone and by email, that I was no longer able to collect signatures on behalf of my two other director candidates. This meant that I had to start the process all over again of collecting signatures for myself, and sadly had to discard my two other high profile University of Sydney scientists on my ticket. I had no doubt, at that moment, that my ticket was a serious threat to the current sitting board.



I had to re-start the process of collecting 100 signatures of registered woolgrower levy payers so that I could stand as an independent director. I collected 134 woolgrower signatures before the deadline of close of nominations.

Mr Story and Link Market Services verified 97 growers as legitimate registered levy payers, but I was subsequently denied a chance to stand for the board elections and was officially informed that I hadn't qualified.

Not having access to any of the registered lists of woolgrowers shareholders, I was able to ask my signatories for proof that they were indeed registered to allow me to stand for elections, as all 134 signatories were officially entered days before the closing date for nominations. I was able to confirm that other signatories among my 134 were indeed registered with AWI, which took my tally to 99 confirmed signatories.

Although Mr Story said he would assist with the validation of the names on my list of 134, I believe this arbitrarily ceased before the bona fides of all names was ascertained. I was then informed by Mr Jim Story that because they couldn't identify these signatories, I was still disqualified from standing for elections. I believe that for potentially political reasons, Mr Story and AWI, may not have treated my nomination in a similar fashion to my nominations in other years.

I am certain that my 2019 board nomination process was correct and feel that I was obstructed in standing owing to my large base of woolgrower support for myself and previously my (joint) ticket. I believe I should have been allowed to stand and then allow woolgrowers to decide if I was a suitable candidate.

I am seeking your guidance as to what next steps are needed to investigate these processes that have led me to write this letter.

I believe that the level of assistance and the uncharacteristic impromptu action by Mr Story in rejecting my nomination indicates a possible level of political interference in the process. If am wrong I would be very happy to offer my sincere apologies.

As it stands, it is very difficult and highly unlikely under the current system that fresh professional board talent will stand for AWI board elections. This is something, in my opinion, is badly needed to improve the corporate culture and governance issues that has continually challenged AWI over the past few years.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Olsson'.

Charles (Chick) Olsson
Director
Awga
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