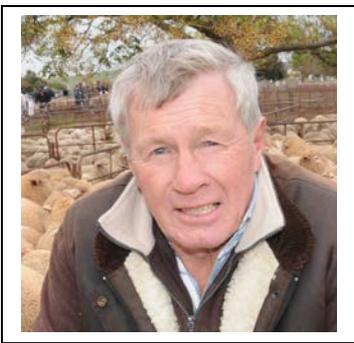




## STATE OF THE LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY

Summer 2014/15

Livestock SA board members contribute to a quarterly round-up, *State of the Livestock Industry*, to keep the broader community up-to-date on the industry's seasonal outlook, activities and issues.



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**KEY ISSUES:** Harvest, wild dogs, shearer support

HARVEST in the Mid North is variable – some areas were frosted and there has been a lot of damage throughout the Upper North. Conditions are still very dry which is starting to cause water shortages in some pastoral areas. Land owners need thunderstorms to start to come through otherwise there could be quite a few sheep on the market. We need

thunderstorms to create run-off for surface water.

Wild dogs continue to be a problem for the pastoral zone. While the dry conditions can help with control – some pups will not be reared because of a lack of rain and food – dogs are still a huge problem both inside and outside the dog fence. Livestock SA is continuing to pursue this issue and support national advocacy groups in developing an overarching strategy. I have given presentations on wild dogs at Robertstown, Burra and Old Koomooloo Station, in conjunction with the Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board for the Wild Dog Action Group. There will be another aerial baiting run inside the fence in March but the group is advising ground baiting be conducted because aerial baiting is only a top-up for this.

But now for some good news ... Livestock SA is continuing to support WoolTAG in shearer and shed hand training. In conjunction with TAFE, we are developing a toolbox to encourage new trainees into the industry which includes up to \$500 for new shearer trainees and \$200 for shed hand trainees. We all know that the industry desperately wants more shearers and shed hands and we have to be proactive in making sure they know about the opportunities in the wool industry but also supporting them once they have made the decision that ours is the industry they will make their career.

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**NAME:** Jack England

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**KEY ISSUES:** Harvest, stock planning for dry times, meat demand and prices, worm counts.

Harvesters have been running overtime in the South East and cereal yields have been somewhat of a pleasant surprise given the



ridiculously dry finish. While screenings are likely to be an issue if selling to the silos, sheep do not discriminate and will thoroughly enjoy the elevated grain protein levels that are likely to eventuate.

Those that have done their fodder and supplementary feed calculations would be best served to secure most grain as it comes off the header when storage is at a premium. The key is in how to allocate feed reserves, grain and potentially high nutritional value baled straw within a confinement regime to protect paddocks from overgrazing. Consulting a nutritionist can help with this or some hints and tips were offered at the recent drought feeding workshops at Kingston and Tintinara. If a stock plan has not already been made then it is not too late. Mine certainly helps me sleep at night!

Grinding beef prices have slid off their September highs but are still offering good returns. Feedlots are offering better returns with no risk than over-the-hooks with another intake scheduled for January for yearling stock. Prices for prime cattle should bring a smile to our faces come the break in the season but haven't we all heard that before! Currently yearling stock prices have reduced as expected due to weight of numbers but not as much as previous dry years which hopefully bodes well for the future.

Abattoirs have also been processing their grain fed stock ready for a fresh intake to cover some of the supply shortage in the new year, which has also inadvertently decreased available kill space. While abattoirs will be making fistfuls of money now, there will be some leaner pickings come early autumn/winter. Mutton prices have remained very strong and continue to have a good outlook for 2015. With \$5/kg lamb prices offered next year, producers should focus on opportunities and risks if they maintain stock numbers and feed them through. Those that did in the 2006 drought were not rewarded but perhaps numbers, and more importantly overseas markets, will have a greater influence in 2015.

Sheep producers should have completed or be considering their first summer drench for stock with high faecal egg counts as faeces harden due to the lack of green feed. About 5% of worms that reach the third instar larvae stage in November and December will still survive a normal summer. It may not seem like much but 5% of millions of eggs is still a heap to contaminate your pastures at the next soaking rain.



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**KEY ISSUES:** Season update, new water allocation system in the Western Mount Lofty Ranges catchment

SOMEONE turned the tap off very early in the season this year! Hay production is down significantly; we are seeing, in the extremes, areas at 20-30 percent of what would normally be considered average production. The lack of soil moisture is of most concern and will increase pressure on livestock producers as we enter the second half of summer and early autumn.

Hay and fodder costs are reflecting the lower supply, high demand environment we are currently in with little evidence we will see any easing in the near future. Stock prices are also under pressure as a result of the drier conditions with producers balancing the costs of continuing to hold stock versus entering a subdued market. Water supplies in dams are under pressure too.

Regarding natural resources management, there's a huge amount of concern about how the Western Mount Lofty Ranges will be managed and how the capital that's already been spent on water catchments and dams will be reflected in any new costs that will be applied by the government.

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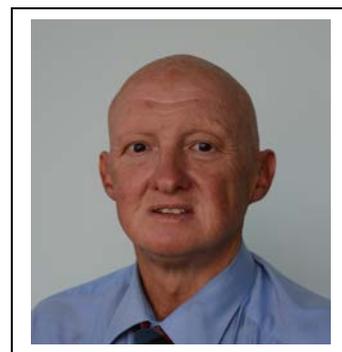
**NAME:** Alexander MacLachlan

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**KEY ISSUES:** Dry season conditions, new water allocation system in the Western Mount Lofty Ranges catchment



THE Fleurieu Peninsula had a late start to the winter and like most other areas had very little spring rain. The area did not receive the big rains in the Barossa and part of the Adelaide Hills in February this year, which were up to 150 millimetres in some areas. Sub-soil moisture is down, and the result is that feed supplies for the summer are tight and hay production has been greatly reduced. Hay is already moving into the area from external suppliers. Grain prices look to be good and holding up so extended feeding could be expensive. On a brighter note, lamb prices have held reasonable well and look to increase from here.

A key issue for the Fleurieu is the State Government's plan to levy farm water supplies in the Western Mount Lofty Ranges water catchment. While this is not new – most other catchments have a licencing levy regime – these were expedited due to the water resource nearing full allocation in some areas, when the environment was taken into account. But this was not the case for the Western Mount Lofty Ranges catchment, where the largest single water taker is SA Water.

The real concerning part is that the government is attempting to levy on an allocation basis rather than usage. For those that have dam supplies, this means you will be taxed on your evaporation, if there is a dry winter, you will be taxed on water not received, if the dam leaks back into the environment you will be taxed, if you have livestock drinking from the dam then they will be drinking taxed water. This is being attempted under the fallacy that this will enable the trading of water between catchments but catchments are so micro-managed that water allocations cannot be moved within catchments, let alone outside catchment areas, and is particularly true for surface water.



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**KEY ISSUES:** Season update for EP, State Cabinet meeting, membership call

WHILE the majority of Eyre Peninsula has enjoyed a better-than-average season, there are still pockets of well below-average, particularly around the Cowell and Arno Bay area where there was very little rain from May to July. The lower Eyre Peninsula had the opposite problem, with extremely wet and waterlogged conditions in that period, followed by almost no rain

from the end of July. North of Cummins, right through to Nundroo in the west, and Kimba in the north, have seen one of the best years in recent times, with good pastures, and some exceptional yields in cereals. A large percentage of farmers have, or nearly, completed harvest, which is very early so there should not be a problem finding time to relax over Christmas!

As with the rest of the state, the extreme dry in spring has seen less bulk in the pasture feed available for stock however, its protein and general quality is excellent. There may be a need for caution with grazing too heavily and too early because there is a long way to go before the next season kicks off. Good hay is already in short supply, as is feed grain, although if farmers are prepared to pay enough, there is some

around. There has been quite a lot of cereal straw baled in some areas, which may be a valuable commodity should there be a late break to the 2015 season.

Livestock in this region are in very good condition, and should mate up well. The lamb side of things is also looking positive, with good growth rates, and stable to slightly rising prices giving confidence to growers.

State Cabinet held a series of meetings throughout EP recently and it was very encouraging to see their interest in learning more about our region. After several days of 'having their ears chewed', they may be glad to be back in Adelaide! However, the Premier, Ministers, and staff should be congratulated for making the effort to meet with so many people, and they listened patiently during the visit. I, for one, have more confidence than before in the way that Ministers interact with rural people.

As 2014 draws to a close, I encourage all farmers to check their membership status for Livestock SA. As the peak advocacy group for sheep, cattle and goat producers in SA, Livestock SA is our representative body for Primary Producers SA (PPSA). Many have asked about what has happened to SAFF, and the answer is – they no longer exist. PPSA has only been operating for 18 months, but has been widely accepted by government and growers alike. It is worth remembering that, as a primary producer who pays various levies, your membership of Livestock SA is already covered. There is no cost to join, nor any ongoing cost for membership. Livestock SA is strongly 'grassroots' based, and intends to remain that way. A good example is the way in which members are involved directly in decision making, with voting by all members encouraged, and calls for nominations from the general membership to represent Livestock SA on various peak state and national bodies. So, if you're not a member, contact the Livestock SA office on 08 8297 2299 or visit [www.livestocksa.org.au](http://www.livestocksa.org.au) – it is probably the only free thing you will get in the run up to Christmas!!

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**KEY ISSUES:** Recovery from the Eden and Flaxmans Valleys bushfires

WHILE many people have rebuilt their lives and properties following the 2014 Eden Valley and Flaxmans Valley bushfire earlier this year, the memories are still very fresh.

Early in December, I attended a bushfire recovery workshop, 'Let's talk, our shout'. It was held at the Keyneton Primary School and all people affected by the Eden Valley and Flaxmans Valley fires were invited. ABC radio personality Peter Goers was emcee. The participants were led through a general counselling session, in three groups for ladies, men and children, followed by motivational speaker Derek McManus, a STAR force policeman who was critically injured in a siege in 1994. This was followed by a meal and fellowship. It was a very positive event supported through local organisations including churches, Rotary, councils and others.

Derek had many insights in his recovery from major trauma but one message was if there is a risk of events happening then pre-planning and implementing actions before the event happens will lower its stressful impacts. This is certainly true of major disasters like fire but as farmers there are many stressful times, such as drought and financial pressure, which some planning could help to alleviate.

It was highlighted that the amount of local and statewide support was critical and appreciated. Primary Producers SA, Livestock SA and the farming community generally rallied to support with fodder supplies, fencing materials and agistment. To know your livestock are catered for is a huge relief. PPSA has secured funding to undertake a project to investigate the coordination of relief efforts effectively.

