



GRAINS AUSTRALIA

Grains Australia is in business!

The beginning

“We want an Industry Good Company”. That was the collected view of many people across the Australian grains industry in the years post-export deregulation.

It took much time, effort, discussion and negotiation, however in August 2020, Grains Australia Ltd (GAL) was launched as a joint initiative of the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC), Grain Growers Ltd (GGL), Grain Producers Australia (GPA) and Grain Trade Australia (GTA).

Directors of GAL were [announced](#) as Terry Enright (Chair), Catherine Cooper, Rebecca Reardon, Stuart Richardson, and Andrew Young – see [link](#) for details.

In November 2020 the board appointed Jonathan Wilson as its inaugural chief executive officer.

GRDC, GGL, GPA and GTA continue their involvement with the organisation as members of the GAL Advisory Committee – effectively a ‘sounding board’ that meets regularly to provide advice, feedback and comments.

Conversations

Keeping in touch with GAL’s diverse group of stakeholders remains a challenge, especially in the establishment phase and especially in a world of lockdowns and travel restrictions. The telephone and computer have been the main communication tools for Jonathan since his appointment. It has meant a great many phone calls and virtual meetings, although notwithstanding the travel difficulties, Jonathan has met up with various industry groups, stakeholders and individuals across Perth, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Adelaide.

We are making progress

The August 2020 media release talked about combining multitudes of industry good

Grains Australia Constitution – key company objects:

“to provide specific industry good services and functions that enhance the competitiveness and profitability of the Grain industry across the value chain in domestic and international markets, as set out below:

(i) to engage and communicate with grain value chain organisations and other businesses where required to develop priorities for the Grain industry to support a competitive environment and maximise the impact and benefit of industry good services;

(ii) to establish and maintain a grain variety classification system that is based on the requirements of the consumer and end-product requirements for Grain;

(iii) to provide services that maintain and improve trade and market access for Grain;

(iv) to develop long-term market and consumer analysis and product awareness to support the longer term demand for Grain and value creation for the Grain industry;

(v) to ensure the Grain industry has the technical support and training for its customers and its participants;”

organisations, which is indeed the aim, with the intention of maintaining current service levels while enhancing and adding value to the Australian grains industry. Yes, but how? The answer is carefully, properly, and in considerable detail.

The industry groups that formed GAL had long nominated Wheat Quality Australia (WQA) and the Grains Industry Market Access Forum (GIMAF) as the first organisations for inclusion, with others a short step behind.

It’s important to recognise that the corporate governance and business planning requirements here are considerable, for all concerned – hence the amount of time and effort that must be focused on WQA and GIMAF. We are not starting from scratch – we are seeking to work with existing, well-established organisations that perform important functions. Their work, those



In February Trade Minister Dan Tehan met with Maddison McNeill, Andrew Weidemann, Jonathan Wilson and Tony Russell
functions, must continue unhindered while background organisational changes occur.

Over the past six months GAL has discussed with various additional industry organisations their concerns and requirements, seeking appropriate ways forward. And as we have all found out, the virtual world runs slower when trying to work through complex discussions! It has been difficult, however we believe we now have the appropriate structure and aim to provide a stable base for the incumbent organisations and functions.

For GAL as a whole, we are spending considerable time developing sound strategy toward achieving our objectives – important given the many things we aim to achieve.



Richard Simonaitis, Jonathan Wilson and David McKeon

Wheat Quality Australia

As the first example of consolidation progress, as of 1 July GAL is now the sole member of WQA. This was achieved after the former members of Wheat Quality Australia Limited, GRDC and GTA, admitted GAL as a member of the company and then resigned their own memberships, leaving GAL as the single member – as per the WQA Constitution.

This has meant changes to the WQA board, with new members Terry Enright (Chair), Rebecca Reardon and Stuart Richardson joining ongoing director Malcolm Finlayson. GAL acknowledges the considerable contribution made by the former and recent directors, including Don Plowman, Ron Osmond and Kim Halbert, to bring about this transition. We specifically recognise the work and commitment of Don Plowman as outgoing Chair of

both the board and the Wheat Classification Council.

The work of wheat classification is unchanged, with the council continuing its current membership until at least the end of 2021, the Variety Classification Panel functioning as normal, and all WQA staff members continuing with the company. The WQA transition requires the board to continue until at least Q1 2022. The 2021-22 wheat variety master list is due for release in August 2021, as per normal timeframes.

Industry working together

GAL welcomed the recent [announcement](#) by Federal Minister for Agriculture David Littleproud of funding for several important industry projects through the Australian Government's Agricultural Trade and Market Access Cooperation (ATMAC) programme.

What might not have been so obvious in the announcement was the achievement it represents in grains industry cooperation, after GAL led the process on behalf of the industry to identify and champion projects that deliver greater diversity of export market options, which will ultimately mean greater market access for growers. It's a great example that we are definitely stronger together – when the industry joins together for a common goal, we do seem to get traction.

GAL is also a member of the government's industry advisory panel to give views on all ATMAC applications.

Ongoing funding secured

GRDC has now confirmed multi-year funding for Grains Australia to support its key activities as per the constitution. This funding enables GAL to become firmly established and begin to deliver the clear wishes of the industry to consolidate and coordinate industry good activities.

It is important to recognise that funding from GRDC is not limitless. Bringing various organisations together into the one corporate entity is intended to create efficiencies, but it does not eliminate the cost of performing various tasks. As the GAL model for delivering industry good functions grows and develops, industry will need to consider and resolve how to fund the various activities required.

Get in touch

If you want to know more about what Grains Australia is doing, please contact Jonathan at: jonathan.wilson@grainsaustralia.com.au