

**PRESS RELEASE 2 November 2018**

**Minister Littleproud meets with Cattle Producers Australia**

Minister Littleproud met with Cattle Producers Australia (CPA) recently at the home of Wangaratta VFF President, Natasha Lobban. Members of that branch and the Ovens Valley Branch of the VFF along with other CPA members showed strong support for CPA.

CPA Chair, Dr Paul Wright travelled from Taroom in Queensland to talk with the Minister where CPA members called for action for the Minister to financially support the organisation. Dr Wright outlined how a unified agreement was reached in February 2015 by industry leaders to deliver a truly representative new grass-fed cattle producer body to replace the Cattle Council of Australia.

Dr Wright noted that the need for this new truly representative organisation had been recognised in recommendations from two Senate inquiries and endorsed by the recent ACCC Cattle and Beef Market Study Report.

Dr Wright thanked both the Ovens Valley and Wangaratta VFF branches for their involvement in initiating the Senate Inquiry into the Effect of Market Consolidation in the red meat industry, that was called after the alleged buyer boycott at Barnawartha Sales Yards in 2015.

Dr Wright went on to highlight to the Minister that the Senate reports acknowledged the level of dysfunction in cattle producer representation citing the events surrounding the 2011 suspension of the live cattle export trade to Indonesia, which demonstrated the extent to which the current bodies and structures do not work. The Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC) was incapable of making a decision because of the conflicting commercial interests of the different industry sectors it represented. RMAC was unable to fulfil its advisory role to government.

Dr Wright made it clear that progress in the establishment of CPA was being hampered by the lack of seed funding and questioned the Minister on this matter.

Dr Wright said that, *"the approval of the \$500,000 Federal Grant from the Leadership in Agricultural Industries Fund, to be allocated for CPA seed funding and leadership, was withheld after Cattle Council of Australia (CCA) members unilaterally withdrew from the Implementation Committee in January this year."*

The CCA resignation came under the direction of their State Farm Organisations (SFO) base because of concerns about the adequacy of the CPA Grant seed funding and SFO's refusal to give up their current position in the grass-fed cattle producer Peak Council. Making it difficult for the Implementation Committee to fulfil their task in establishing the new representative body in the 15 Representative Regions across Australia.

Dr Wright went on to say, *"In the absence of access to the Grant funding the volunteer Implementation Committee members have been funding the establishment of CPA themselves, paying all their own traveling expenses and obtaining all the necessary professional assistance to hold constitutional workshops and incorporate CPA. We have now just started on the CPA membership drive and the grant funding was to provide for meetings and seminars in each of the 15 Regional Electorates across Australia that form CPA's representative base. It is big ask for the volunteer Implementation Committee to continue to fund this out of their own pockets"*.

Minister Littleproud advised that he had withheld payment of the Grant for the establishment of the new organisation in the hope that the CCA could return to the CPA Implementation Committee process in accord with the original position when the seed funding Grant was announced.

Minister Littleproud said, *"It should be an industry owned body, it should be a body that you and your grass roots tell me exactly what you want and how you want your representatives to walk into the halls of Canberra and tell me what they want."* He went on to say, *"The biggest problem I have is when 3 or 4 different bodies from one industry tell me 3 different things - how do I make a decision when I'm told 3 different things?"*

Attendees sought answers as to why the Grant funds had not been allocated to CPA with the Minister holding steadfast to his request for industry to reunite and proceed together.

The Minister said *"Producers have unique concerns that need to be addressed"*, and advised that he was prepared to facilitate a meeting between Cattle Council and the CPA Implementation Committee and if that meeting was successful the \$500,000 would become available immediately but if agreement was not achievable that we would need to explore a Plan B option with the separate bodies.

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#### ***About Cattle Producers Australia***

Cattle Producers Australia Ltd (CPA) is the new voice on issues that affect grass-fed cattle production businesses. We offer a new era of leadership in advocacy and governance for the grass-fed cattle industry. As a democratically elected organisation, all grass-fed cattle producer members have voting rights and equal opportunity to stand for election. Policy Advisory Councilors will be elected from 15 regions across Australia. Control of CPA will be directly in the hands of grass-fed levy paying cattle producers.

For more information or to become a free member of CPA, please visit:

<https://cattleproducers.com.au/>

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