



Top guns target best beef

NEXT week's Better Beef event at The Vines Resort on April 3 and 4 will target key industry issues when Harvey Beef's Michael Rapattoni, together with Craig Mostyn Group chief executive David Lock and T & R Meats chief Darren Thomas reveal their companies' expectations for the WA beef industry.

WALFA chairman Paul O'Meehan said never before have the three most influential WA beef processor heads been together on a single platform for questioning by a panel led by beef sector journalist Travis King.

"With our industry at a crossroads at present in WA, both lot feeders and cow calf producers will take their lead from the investment attitude of our processors whose infrastructure and risk exposure is generally significant," Mr O'Meehan said.

"Each recognises that they need producers to be profitable in order to guarantee the economics of scale of their processing plants – and so their perspective on this will be of enormous interest during a time of unprecedented input costs and reduced margins for the beef farm sector."

A team of three "big picture" specialists will paint the future scenario options in the lead up to the processor segment.

Futurist Paul Higgins from the Sydney-based company Emergent Futures will open the event with a broad look at the drivers for food and energy and

a discussion about the impact this will have on the beef industry in general and grain fed beef in particular.

Renowned for painting it without fear or favour, Mr Higgins' view will be challenging, at times confronting and consistently backed up with quality research.

"WALFA invited Paul Higgins to this platform because we want to know how it is and what it can be in terms of the future of grain fed beef in this state," Mr O'Meehan said.

"I'm sure his content will be controversial, but if it sparks a new way of looking at things and motivates us as an industry to address our current hurdles in a different light, then like him or not, that's got to be good."

Supporting Mr Higgins in this session is Profarmer chief Richard Koch who has recently been commissioned by the Australian Lot Feeders' Association to undertake a broad ranging review of the industry's opportunities and threats under the current and predicted future feed grains market.

MLA director and principal

of Hillside Meats, Peter Trefort, will be the third member of the opening session, with a presentation focused more on the solutions than the problems.

Mr Trefort's presentation is also set to issue a few significant challenges to the sector about marketing.

"Peter Trefort has a remarkably comprehensive perspective on the red meat

industry and he is unashamedly supportive of the WA sector and the opportunities it has in front of it," Mr O'Meehan said.

"We mightn't all like what Peter has to say either, but we need to listen and work together as an industry in order to bring his vision to reality."

The focus on industry issues will continue into the second day of the Better Beef event, with the morning session of the

second day devoted to producer perspectives.

"WALFA is absolutely committed to working with the cow-calf sector to get over the hurdles we have at the moment and to this end we've invited Bridgetown producer Mike Introvigne, together with Geoff Crabbe who manages the livestock interests of Stoney Pastoral Company, to put their perspective on the way forward.

"They will be joined by Ivan Rogers of Kylagh Feedlot at Tammin who sits on the WALFA executive and who will provide the lot feeders' position to the discussion panel."

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