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Subject: 2020 Summit – outcomes for Agriculture

Two persons of interest to the Australian pork industry who attended the 2020 summit included Claire Penniceard and Robyn Boundy. The link for the final report is here: http://www.australia2020.gov.au/docs/final_report/2020_summit_report_4_rural.pdf

They were part of the subcommittee on Future directions for rural industries and rural communities. Outcomes and ideas from four subgroups which included the Agriculture Sub-Group, the Communities Sub-Group, the Infrastructure Sub-Group and the Sub-Group on SMEs, Tourism and R&D.

Below are the key themes and principles derived from discussions in the subcommittee's subgroups. Recommendations from this report will be considered by the Federal Government and will respond to the report by the close of 2008.

The Future of the Australian Economy

Infrastructure

Development of a master plan with clear framework for assessing infrastructure priorities. The plan should focus on where Australia has a competitive advantage—such as **agriculture**, mining and education.

Population, Sustainability, Climate Change, Water and Future of our Cities

Climate Change

Develop a National Climate Strategy for transforming Australia to a green economy that could be exported globally, including a national clean energy portfolio of several flagship projects—in 'natural advantage' categories such as **agriculture**, clean coal and renewable sources of energy.

The main area identified for more research [in climate change] and information related to **agriculture** and included:

- research into the soil's capacity to store carbon
- more research into the carbon footprint of different **agricultural** production methods (cropping versus livestock) and systems (including transport).

Australia could be a world-leading source of low-carbon products and expertise based on our natural advantages of sun, space and **agriculture**.

Water

Manage tropical water system conservation and sustainable use by limiting water system development to achieve healthy rivers whilst achieving the best economic outcomes – for example, water use for mining instead of **agriculture**.

By 2020, the optimum footprint of irrigated **agriculture** should be determined to allow better management of the **agricultural** footprint. Food production is a crucial factor in the water debate.

Intensive **agriculture** that manages water and energy efficiently and effectively should be encouraged.

The \$10 billion allocated to restore the Murray should result in twice the **agricultural** production for only half the amount of water, with the community engaged and common values recognised.

One hundred per cent of nutrient-rich waste water from urban centres should be re-used in **agriculture** instead of being disposed of.

Further institute ecosystem services payments to landholders to improve water quality on their land.

Water trading could be accompanied by payments to farmers to upgrade water infrastructure.

Sustainability

Develop a closed-loop economy to create a zero-waste society – a manufacturing system that deals with its own waste, minimising its ecological footprint, including the **agriculture** and energy sectors (high-emission sectors), with all buildings to be green by 2020 and flow-ons to all other parts of the economy.

Actively rebuild resilience in nature and societies to avoid further loss and potential catastrophic breakdown of ecosystems. This includes climate-proofing the economy: not just thinking ‘locking up’ areas; include carbon offsets, biodiversity banking, stewardship, and caring for country. Valuing and caring for biodiversity are essential. Fundamentally change the approach to **agriculture** by recognising the new opportunities and services climate change might bring.

We need to tackle the big sectors of transport and **agriculture**, to make significant gains in these areas in terms of energy efficiency, CO2 reduction and water conservation.

Future directions for rural industries and rural communities

1. Agriculture sub-group:
 - a. *improve our ability to service our domestic and global food and fibre markets.*

The main ideas for achieving these outcomes are described below.

IDEAS

- 4.1 Removal of regulatory food and fibre supply chain impediments and export services impediments.
- 4.2 Harmonisation of state and territory regulations; action by government to remove impediments associated with access to drought assistance.
- 4.3 A lessening of the regulation costs imposed on the food processing sector.
- 4.4 Streamlining the regulation of water markets.
- 4.5 Provision of matching government incentives under ‘mutual obligation partnerships’ for activities that deliver broad community benefits for remote, rural and regional Australia.

b. productivity and applied research and development

The main ideas for achieving this outcome were as follows.

IDEAS

- 4.6 Agreement on what the ‘drivers’ of productivity are by a broad range of stakeholders, so the drivers can then be benchmarked and measured. Each driver would require a government action agenda to facilitate industry improvement and to deliver progress.
- 4.7 Integrated research, development and extension for adaptation to climate change, to streamline and integrate investments across institutions (such as at CSIRO, government departments).
- 4.8 Removal of current impediments to adjustment – namely government subsidies that prevent the adjustment required to grow resilient businesses, both intellectual and economic.

c. Food security

The main ideas for achieving this outcome were as follows.

IDEAS

- 4.11 Establishment of a government unit to consider national and global food security matters and develop and implement new policies.
- 4.12 Examination of projected national food demands and the production systems required to enable sufficient food production to continue to be achieved within Australia’s environmental and resource constraints.
- 4.13 Promotion of healthy food to tackle societal problems such as obesity and measures that ensure human capital is retained in remote, rural and regional Australia.
- 4.14 Future policy being careful not to create food shortages by providing more favourable incentives for agriculture to participate in carbon markets.
- 4.15 Assessment of the crucial role of honey bee pollination in food production and adequate support for the honey bee industry.
- 4.16 Implementation of safeguards and building of industry capacity to preserve the genetic diversity of our plants and animals, including protection from exotic disease incursions through biosecurity measures.

d. A vision for rural Australia

The main ideas for achieving these outcomes were as follows.

IDEAS

- 4.17 Gaining consumer trust through the pursuit of sustainable production.
- 4.18 That the federal agriculture portfolio be transformed into a 'ministry for food, fibre, environmental services and shelter' to better reflect the products remote, rural and regional Australia provides.
- 4.19 A willingness on the part of consumers to pay more for sustainably produced food.
- 4.20 'Each child should be required to produce a real or virtual primary product' in order to better understand its origin and appreciate the effort and resources needed to produce it.

e. Rural promotion

IDEAS

- 4.21 Production of safe and healthy food.
- 4.22 Skilled people across all age groups who are passionate about working and living in sustainable and profitable parts of remote, rural or regional Australia.
- 4.23 Occupational training programs that support urban-rural migration and are backed by a diverse range of industries.
- 4.24 Promotion of remote, rural and regional Australia and its sectors within schools.
- 4.25 Promotion of remote, rural and regional Australia's cultural virtues – including Indigenous culture and the arts.

f. Finance and investment

IDEAS

- 4.26 Improved water security for existing users.
- 4.27 Provision of additional water infrastructure – including new dams – across Australia through a national program funded jointly by government and the private sector.
- 4.28 In already established agricultural regions, deliver innovative, efficient and cost-effective water savings and modernisation programs.
- 4.29 Fulfilment of the significant potential of north and north-west Australia, so that Australia can be 'the food bowl of Asia'.
- 4.30 Encouragement of Australia's growing superannuation and investment funds to invest in these ideas.
- 4.31 Restructure 22 faculties of agriculture across the country into a smaller number of faculties with centres of excellence as the focus.
- 4.32 Invest in human capital by strengthening regional high schools and post-secondary education facilities to limit the flow of rural children moving to the city for education.

2. Communities sub-group

Outcome: labour

The main ideas for achieving this outcome were as follows.

IDEAS

- 4.42 A skills audit of remote, rural and regional areas to identify labour and skills shortages and provision of training opportunities in communities where there are labour and skills shortages.
- 4.43 Facilitation of migration from urban areas to remote, rural and regional areas.
- 4.44 Establishment of partnerships between different industry sectors in remote, rural and

regional communities, to attract, support and retain labour – including provision of business mentoring schemes between urban and remote, rural and regional Australia.

Outcome: a work and skills program for foreign workers

IDEA

- 4.80 Establishment of a workforce and skills program that enables foreign workers to come to remote, rural and regional Australia for up to two years, to work under an Australian industry instrument.

3. Infrastructure sub-group

Outcome: harmonization of national regulation, licensing and standards

IDEAS

- 4.78 The Commonwealth making incentive payments to state governments in line with their progress with reform. Significant progress should be achieved within 12 months, with further progress built on each year until 2020.
- 4.79 Abolition of the states and territories and their replacement with amalgamated regional councils.

4. Sub-Group on SMEs, Tourism and R&D.

Outcome: education and awareness

The main ideas for achieving these outcomes were as follows.

IDEAS

- 4.87 Provide education on research and development results, including on-the-ground extension.
- 4.88 Inclusion of rural studies in a compulsory national education curriculum.
- 4.89 Long-term funding for research, including its extension, that goes beyond the current short-term bidding cycles.
- 4.90 Funding for the delivery of research extension services through application of a tiered levy on agricultural product customers such as supermarket retailers – and applied so that the levy cannot be passed on to consumers.
- 4.91 Investigation of the likely impacts of climate change on remote, rural and regional Australia as well as the likely adaptation requirements.
- 4.92 Facilitation of further community debate on the use of biotechnology in the production of food.

PRIORITY THEMES

The co-chairs identified five priority themes that encompassed the diverse ideas of the group:

- **Theme 1** - the challenges posed by climate change, with particular emphasis on its impacts on the food, fibre and forestry value chains
- **Theme 2** - nationwide harmonisation of regulation, standards and enforcement
- **Theme 3** - development of incentive schemes to promote environmentally sustainable behaviours and strategies
- **Theme 4** - attraction, recruitment and retention of people, families and businesses to remote, rural and regional communities
- **Theme 5** - broad parity of access to infrastructure and services for remote, rural and regional Australia.