

# Regional Workshop: Maffra

Workshop Output Report



# Background

The Maffra regional workshop is one of 23 regional workshops designed to contribute to the development of the Australian Dairy Plan – a nationwide plan for a profitable, confident and united dairy industry. This report captures the discussions held at that workshop. It is intended to provide a record for workshop attendees and a basis for those who could not attend the workshop to contribute to the conversation. This report will be combined with the reports of the other 22 regional workshops in the development of the Australian Dairy Plan.

## Workshop sessions

1. **The Set-Up: Why will this Plan be different?**
2. **How big is the appetite for change?**
3. **What needs to change?**
4. **What needs to be done?**
5. **What is success for the Australian dairy industry?**

## Workshop details

**Date:** 19 June 2019

**Location:** Maffra

**Facilitator:** Stephen Petris, Nous Group

**Coordinator:** GippsDairy

**Attendees:** approximately 41 people including around 24 farmers.

# 1. The Set-Up: Why will this Plan be different?

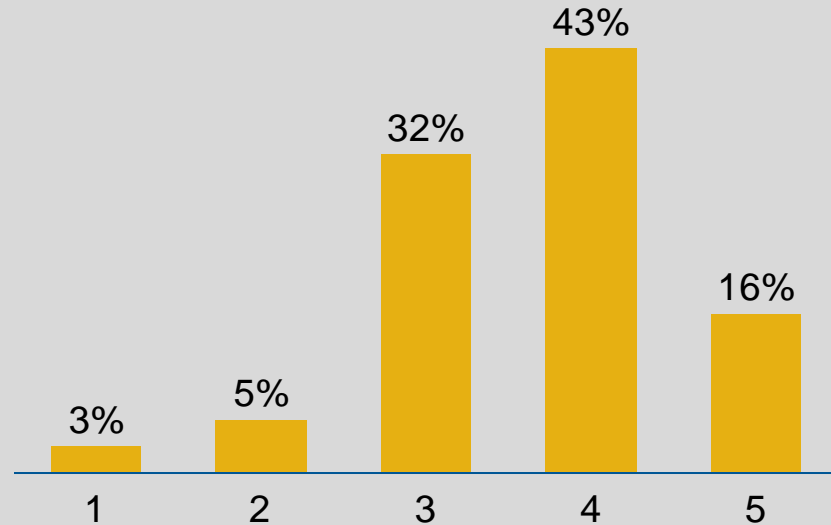
*The workshop was opened by local farmer Graham Nichols*

## The facilitator set out the purpose of the Australian Dairy Plan and the workshop

- This is a great opportunity to shape the future of dairy by contributing to the development of the ADP
- But you've heard this before - what's different about this Plan? Why get involved?
  - The key players are working towards one national dairy plan, one set of national priorities, one voice in championing these priorities – that gives us more ability to drive change
  - This time the plan is being built from the 'bottom-up' i.e. by the people with 'skin in the game' – you!
  - The partners are committed to turning the plan into action through their individual strategic plans

## 2. How big is the appetite for change?

Participants voted on “how much change is required to get the industry to a better place”



N=37

1 = minor change, 5 = major change

In discussing the results, we agreed...

### *Why do we need to change:*

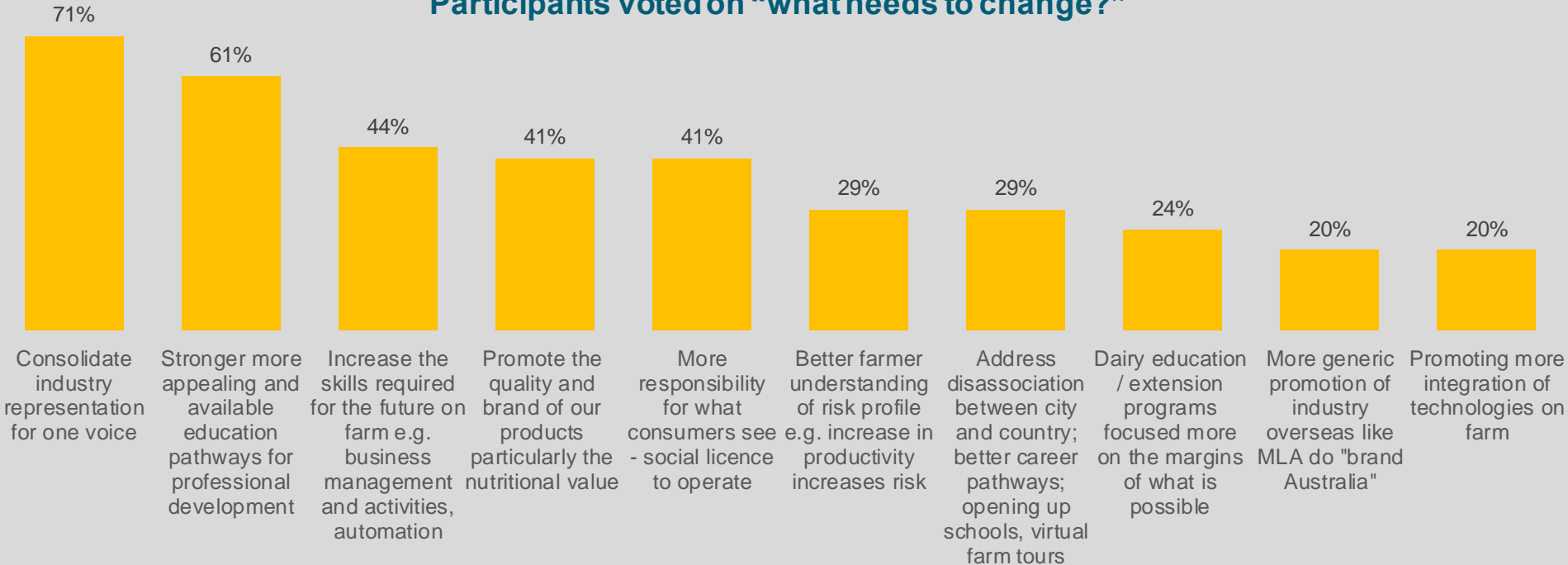
- We are concerned about the value of milk and dairy products and the financial strain its putting on businesses
- We need to have a profile within the political and general community; consumer perception; political profile; social licence to operate
- Impact on the environment - moving forward on the social licence end, will face more challenges and find strategies to more effectively communicate with our communities. Need to be carbon neutral
- Cost of resources has increased over the last 10 years, land value increasing, younger people buying in is challenging
- Corporatised agriculture isn't supporting succession planning and will change the way people are employed on our farms
- Inequality in how some industry participants are rewarded
- Education pathways have crumbled. Some of the science undertaken hasn't been ground-breaking, referencing the same old research
- We need to break the mindset that we know all the answers to allow us to explore things that we haven't previously thought about

### *On the other hand:*

- No other industry provides the same level of resources to the education (TAFE) sector
- Good structure. Not many other industries have opportunity for value adding in processing; not many have capacity for R&D
- Farmers are passionate, innovative and prepared to put their money where their mouth is. There is huge wealth in farming and great livelihoods

### 3. What needs to change?

Participants voted on “what needs to change?”



N=41

Top 10 ideas by percentage votes with participants voting on their top 5

## 4. What needs to be done?

We further developed our top prioritised ideas by thinking about what success would look like, how we might get there and what might hold us back.

### Consolidate industry representation for one voice

We need to grasp the opportunity of an ADP while we have got it in a single voice. We propose the consolidation of industry representation into one body “Dairy Australia Limited” that is responsible for research and development, advocacy and education and training. One body will eliminate confusion and empower milk producers to work together.

We recommend that processors have their own separate body.

### Stronger more appealing and available education pathways for professional development

To become an industry that people aspire to be part of in 2025, we need a clearly articulated pathway that people can access easily that includes schools, on-farm training and university training.

We need to promote the diversity of what is available in dairy. We want to be an industry that values growing skills sets.

### Increase the skills required for the future on farm e.g. business management and activities, automation

In order to increase skills required for the future, especially business management, we need to flip the current education extension model from bottom down to a bottom up approach and utilise cross-sector ideas and approaches to learning.

As an industry we need to promote the benefits of continuous improvement and learning. We would like to design innovative opportunities to learning across a variety of formats to give farmers the choice on how they learn.

## 4. What needs to be done?

Promote the quality and brand of our products particularly the nutritional value

In 2025, we want consumers and the community to appreciate the value of the dairy industry – both locally and nationally. We want our products to be at the front of the supermarket and provide a profitable return to farmers, to be the product of choice over alternatives, and to be recognised as a healthy product.

To do this, we need to sell the story “paddock to plate” – that milk is clean, green, fun, healthy and tastes good. We need to promote the positive scientific nutritional benefits. Milk is the one food source that is in the home that an 8 month old or an 88 year old can consume.

More responsibility for what consumers see – social licence to operate

We want to be known for genuinely caring for our cows and our environment and lead by example. Dairy is valued by consumers and drives a proactive environmental agenda.

This means that industry needs to be more open and willing to talk about these issues and to speak up when we see room for improvement. We need to ensure that farmers have the education and information to determine what is an acceptable practice. We need to reward best practice and look to overseas models as examples. We also need to set the bar higher and be bolder on animal welfare and the environment.

## 5. What is success for the dairy industry?

Imagining the future of the industry, we articulated our vision by developing the front page of the industry newspaper.

# ***THE DAIRY TIMES***

June 2025

**In this issue, we look at dairy's journey to 2025 & celebrate the people and successes that have got the industry to where it is today.**

The dairy industry has changed a lot since 2019. Now we see record levels of farm profitability leading to a positive outlook and a more sustainable industry.

“ Dairy is an industry that people aspire to be part of

”

- Dairy farmer

“ We are overwhelmed by the demand for our premium range of products

”

- Processor

“ Dairy is now the leading industry in animal welfare and environmental sustainability

”

- Minister for Agriculture & Water Resources



# Appendix. What needs to change? (full list of results)

Consolidate industry representation for one voice	Promoting more integration of technologies on farm
Stronger more appealing and available education pathways for professional development	Communicate with farmers in modern ways that enable more participation with bodies
Increase the skills required for the future on farm e.g. business management and activities, automation	Better understanding of business risk posed by climate variation
Promote the quality and brand of our products particularly the nutritional value	Focus on attracting better quality people into the industry, recognise importance of upskilling, employing the right people, easier entry for new farmers
More responsibility for what consumers see - social licence to operate	More support for export marketing recognising we are often competing against subsidies
Better farmer understanding of risk profile e.g. increase in productivity increases risk	Use information we already collect to drive more efficient farming; pool resources to get traction in innovations e.g. big data
Address disassociation between city and country; better career pathways; opening up schools, virtual farm tours	Focus more on the mindset of dairy farmers and be respectful of the right to choose how to farm, more positivity
Dairy education / extension programs focused more on the margins of what is possible	Understand what we forego by not taking up genetic modification
More generic promotion of industry overseas like MLA do "brand Australia"	