



MEDIA RELEASE

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RED MEAT REFORM GATHERS STEAM

An overhaul of Australia's \$18 billion red meat and livestock industry drew one step closer today with the release of a Green Paper with options for the future of the sector including the role of live exports and manufacturing.

The Green Paper was developed in response to an overwhelming appetite for reform of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) put in place 20 years ago to define the roles, responsibilities and funding of Australia's red meat industry bodies.

Lead Reviewer and Chair of the Red Meat Reform Taskforce, Mr Jim Varghese AM, encouraged anyone with a stake in the industry to read and comment on the Green Paper at www.rmac.com.au/mou by 14 March 2019.

"This Green Paper aims to comprehensively present where the industry is now and what a better future for the red meat industry would look like," Mr Varghese said.

"Consultations with industry bodies and the broader business community have found growing recognition of the need for change to the way the Red Meat MoU, and by extension the red meat industry, operates: change is wanted and needed."

"Through the Green Paper consultation process, we are seeking to build a consensus from industry that change is needed so we are empowered to take bold steps to rewrite the Red Meat MoU."

The Green Paper is part of an Independent Review of the MoU, which aims to position the industry for a better future by having the best structure to meet increasingly urgent challenges including climate change and other environmental factors, animal welfare, low levels of investment, changing consumption patterns, and technological disruption.

The Green Paper outlines four options for potential reform: incremental change to the status quo; law of the jungle; a hybrid model, and; a revitalised red meat industry led by a new organisation.

Independent Chair of the Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC) Mr Don Mackay has backed the call for bold and ambitious reform identified by stakeholders.

"Our industry has achieved an enormous amount and we want it to keep on growing. Our duty is to ensure 20-year-olds entering the industry now – as businesspeople or employees – have a capable, streamlined and high performing industry over the next 30 years."

"Good governance with clear roles and responsibilities is important in any organisation; in an industry as diverse as ours with 82,000 businesses right along the supply chain, it is critical.

"A refreshed MoU is needed to give the clarity and accountability needed to meet the unprecedented challenges and opportunities in front of us.

“I’m pleased to see the independent Taskforce has seen a strong appetite for change in its discussions, and I encourage people right across the red meat supply chain to give the Taskforce broad and constructive feedback until 14 March,” Mr Mackay said.

END

Media Contacts: RMAC CEO Anna Campbell, anna@rmac.com.au, 0448 692 245

MoU Review Secretariat Dr Michael Morgan, Michael@rmac.com.au, 0438 822 663

Background to Australia’s red meat industry

- Australia exports 70% of its red meat production
- We employ 438,100 Australians directly and indirectly
- We contribute \$18.4 billion to the GDP
- We are a network of 82,500 strong businesses from paddock to plate.

Background to the Independent Review of the Red Meat MoU

- After more than 20 years, it is time to take a critical look to ensure if the MoU is fit for purpose to guide the red meat industry through future challenges
- A Red Meat Reform Taskforce has been formed to provide an independent assessment of how the Red Meat MoU can create real value for Australia’s red meat and livestock businesses, and what the Red Meat MoU should look like to position the industry to meet future challenges and opportunities
- To do this, the Taskforce will consider the operation of the Red Meat MOU, the role of industry and government signatories and ongoing risks and opportunities to the industry
- The Taskforce is responsible for undertaking comprehensive consultation with signatories to the Red Meat MOU, industry stakeholders, red meat retailers and the community, and developing a set of recommendations for the consideration of the Minister and Red Meat MOU signatories.

Independent Review of the Red Meat MoU – summary process

Before

- Announced September 2018 by RMAC, with bi-partisan support from the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources and Shadow Minister for Agriculture
- Independent nine-member Taskforce appointed
- Consultations with MoU signatories.

Now

- Green Paper released for national consultation between 14 February – 14 March 2019
- Aims to promote a productive discussion about governance arrangements needed to build a better red meat future.

Next

- Independent Taskforce uses consultation feedback to refine its findings and develop a final report with recommendations for reform
- Signatories to the MoU will provide a public response to the recommendations
- Signatories will be responsible for implementing the response.

About Mr Jim Varghese AM

- Mr Varghese is a renowned policy thinker and reviewer. He has 33 years’ experience in the public sector and over 10 years’ experience in the private sector.
- He is a former Director General of the Queensland Department of Primary Industries, the Chair of Springfield Corporation and the Chair of the Australia-India Business Council

- His most recent public policy review was one of just two [rated 9/10](#) for having ‘excellent process’ by independent think-tanks.

About the Red Meat Reform Taskforce

- The exceptional Taskforce was appointed after a national call for applicants. A skills-based appointment process was followed to provide both industry and governance / policy skills, and was subject to a third-party analysis of being sufficiently arm’s length. The members are **Will Barton**, Chief Executive Officer, Gundagai Meat Processors; **Gary Burridge**, former-CEO Northern Cooperative Meatworks Company and experienced export meat processing executive and director; **Jane Kellock**, Sheep farmer & woolgrower; **Kara Knudsen**, Knudsen Cattle, and Nuffield scholar; The Honourable **Paul Lucas**, former Attorney General, Queensland State Government and experienced company director, adviser, lawyer and State Cabinet Minister; The Honourable **Fiona Nash**, former Nationals Senator for New South Wales, former Minister for Local Government and Territories, former Minister for Regional Development, former Minister for Regional Communications and former Minister for Rural Health, and current Strategic Advisor for Charles Sturt University; **Troy Setter**, Chief Executive Officer, Consolidated Pastoral Companies (CPC); **Stacey Wordsworth**, agriculture sector media and communications specialist.