

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN LIVESTOCK REGION: BOARD DIRECTOR NOMINEE PROFILES

Robert Bell



Our businesses are based in a location known as The Plains in the southwest of WA between Bunbury and Busselton. I've been in the cattle industry since 16 years old working in all facets of the production chain. After 10 years of stock and station agent auctioneering and live export, lamb buying for Woolworths and V & V Walsh, I returned home to the family dairy farm helping convert it to a beef enterprise. We started raising 1500 Friesian bull calves per year while transitioning into a breeding herd of 700 breeders and a 800-head capacity feedlot running five months of the year.

The family also was starting into pasture seed production at the time of which I helped drive the marketing and sales, whilst also travelling overseas to bring back a blueprint of how to build a successful seed business.

Today with my wife Kellie, we run the M and AJ Bell Farms and Bell Pasture Seeds businesses employing 12 staff.

Bell Seeds has seen significant growth and expansion servicing over 146 rural stores and 1500 retail clients sourcing seeds from all over the world. Recently we've added tropical seeds to its portfolio to supply the north of Western Australia and the N.T., sourcing raw product from Queensland and Brazil.

On the farms the breeders are gone and in their place is a grass-fed contract with Coles supermarkets supplying the Graze brand with 50 grassfed only bodies of beef every two weeks all year round. We also trade another 500 head opportunistically. The cattle integrate well into the 1400ha of specialty pasture seeds we produce.

Recently I completed a Nuffield scholarship into sub surface tile drainage, with a focus on improved land change to drive farming profitability while limiting our impact.

Why are you seeking a position on the Board?

Recently I have become aware of aspects of the cattle industry that need some attention including:

- limited access to new innovation
- biosecurity being under-funded, seeing examples of pests like shot hole borer entering WA, and
- The lack of new ideas in the research and development space, mainly due to the way funding is delivered to the grassroots.

I've learnt through previous experiences that strong advocacy is the key to long-term beneficial changes for the beef industry and being part of Cattle Australia I can help drive these outcomes.



How will you represent the interests of the grass-fed cattle industry as a Director?

Western Australia can be seen as cut off or remote due to our separation from the rest of Australia. Having strong representation is key to help address leading issues that producers are enduring.

Being director of the largest seed business in Western Australia enables myself to have direct contact with a large range of producers from a diverse area to be able to form valid views on current industry needs.

Being a producer myself enables an understanding of real world effects of bad policy that is sometimes well meant.

Experience in the grass-fed cattle sector.

1995-1997 sale yard worker Boyanup for Elders Ltd.

1997-2002 livestock auctioneer Elders Ltd.

2002-2004 livestock buyer for V & V Walsh and Woolworths abattoir Bunbury.

2006 to current director of M & AJ Bell Farm and Bell Pasture Seeds.

Understanding of the purpose of a peak industry body.

A director of Cattle Australia is required to represent the grass-fed cattle levy payers to the best of their abilities.

Help provide clear direction and policy to advocate for the best outcomes for the grass-fed sector whilst also shaping research and development for long-term gains in the industry.