

BOARD DIRECTOR NOMINEE PROFILES

Southern Director Role

Mac McArthur



I was raised on a cattle and sheep farm in New Zealand and graduated B.Agr.Sc. from Lincoln University before coming to Australia to work as a stockman on cattle enterprises in New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland.

My first technical appointment was Livestock Technical Officer at the 22,000-head Metropolitan Farm at Werribee, followed by eight years as a Beef Extension Officer with Agriculture Victoria. A Churchill Fellowship took me to Canada, the United States, France, Germany and the United Kingdom to study beef performance recording, progeny testing, breeding programs and extension methods.

I then held four executive roles: Extension Director for Echuca and Kerang; Regional Manager for Agriculture Victoria's North Central region, based in Bendigo and covering Mildura to Shepparton; General Manager Extensive Livestock for the Queensland Department of Primary Industries, responsible for most aspects of the Queensland beef industry and for the Tuberculosis Freedom Assurance Program; and Head of the Department of Agriculture in the Falkland Islands, where my team and I rebuilt the national beef herd into a commercial Angus bull-producing herd supplying European Union markets.

I hold an M.Agr.Sc. and am an Associate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. I now work as an agribusiness consultant from Echuca.

I am a member of Cattle Australia's Regional Consultative Committee, corresponding regularly with twelve leading beef producers in my region and returning Board answers to them.



For ten years I have coordinated Best Wool-Best Lamb discussion groups in the Loddon Valley and at Cosgrove-Dookie, organising more than eighty events. I coordinate the Careers and technology Hub at the Australian Sheep and Wool Show, and I founded Agritravel, which takes producers and agribusiness staff on international study tours.

Why are you seeking a position on the Board?

Cattle Australia is a young organisation carrying an old responsibility: making sure grass-fed producers are heard where decisions about their businesses are actually made. I want to help it hold that ground. Three things draw me.

First, levy accountability. Producers contribute around \$75 million a year through the grass-fed transaction levy, most of it to MLA marketing and research, and the current review is the first comprehensive look since 2006. I have spent years watching levy-funded research either reach farmers or stop at the laboratory door. I know what makes the difference, and I am willing to ask hard questions about value.

Second, land management. CA's Land Management Commitment sets out to build reporting framework suited to Australian production systems rather than imported ones. I have worked on pasture condition, grazing management and herd productivity as commercial questions rather than compliance ones, and I would bring that view to the Board table.

Third, biosecurity and market access. I coordinated the final phase of Australia's bovine tuberculosis eradication and managed an emergency disease response. Producers carry the cost when these systems fail, and the work is never finished. I am not seeking the position for standing. I have held the roles that confer that.

I am seeking it because I have the time, the health and the appetite to do the reading, make the meetings and drive to the properties, and because the Board benefits from someone who has sat on the government side of the table and knows how policy is made, funded and implemented, and why it sometimes fails on farm.

If elected I would serve the whole grass-fed constituency, support Board decisions once made, and declare my consulting interests openly from the outset.

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

Representation begins with a reliable way of hearing from producers, and I already have one.

As a Regional Consultative Committee member I correspond regularly with twelve leading beef producers, put their questions to Board members and return the answers promptly. That last part matters most. Producers stop telling you things when their questions disappear.

Ten years of running discussion groups has taught me that often the most useful information comes from the person who disagrees with the room, and only if they expect to be listened to rather than



managed. A regional seat is a mandate to bring regional experience into national decisions, not a licence to argue only for my district. The grass-fed sector is not one business.

Extensive northern operations, temperate southern systems, Western Australian producers, family enterprises and corporate herds face genuinely different economics, and a position that suits one can damage another. Working across Victoria, Queensland, the Falkland Islands and New Zealand has given me the habit of asking who a proposal costs before asking who it pleases.

I would represent producers by doing three things consistently. Listening first, through the RCC and directly, including to producers who are not joiners and do not come to meetings. Testing every policy against on-farm consequence: what it does to cashflow, labour, land condition and market access on a real property. And explaining Board decisions back to members plainly, including the decisions they do not like, rather than leaving them to read about it afterwards.

Where I disagree with the Board I will say so in the room and support the decision outside it. Where I hold an interest that bears on a matter, I will declare it and step out.

Experience in the grass-fed cattle sector.

My production experience is hands-on and measured. At the Metropolitan Farm at Werribee I helped manage a 22,000-head beef enterprise with twenty-four stockmen. Trained by a senior veterinarian, I pregnancy tested the 10,000-cow breeding herd across four summers.

We traced poor fertility to venereal disease in the bull herd and lifted calves marked per cows joined from about 54 per cent to 95 per cent over five years.

It remains my clearest lesson in what accurate diagnosis is worth to a grazing business.

In the Falkland Islands the national herd was a semi-wild mob of mixed breeding left from the old station herds.

Rather than attempt whole-herd improvement, we selected sixty cows and heifers quiet enough to handle, used embryos and semen from Australian the Mania and Lawson Angus genetics, and within five years had a commercial Angus bull-producing herd.

Bulls were leased to island farmers, which spread the genetics quickly and produced beef for European Union markets, with the entry requirements that implies.

As a Beef Extension Officer I ran interbreed steer weight gain and carcass competitions, which put producers in front of their own carcass data rather than their own opinions, and field trials on grazing management and drenching regimes. Through the discussion groups I coordinate I stay current with what southern producers are actually paying, marking and receiving.

Close family own and have owned grazing and cropping farms in the Deniliquin and Wambo districts, and I grew up on a cattle and sheep farm before working as a stockman across three states.

Understanding of the purpose of a peak industry body.



A peak body exists to turn thousands of individual commercial interests into one credible position, and then to be believed when it states it.

Credibility is the whole asset. It's built by evidence, consultation and consistency, and it is spent quickly by overreach or by looking captured.

Cattle Australia's particular task is to speak for grass-fed producers without owning the systems that spend their money. CA does not collect the levy and is not MLA.

The Commonwealth collects it and directs it to MLA, Animal Health Australia and the National Residue Survey, with roughly \$3.66 of every \$5 going to marketing and \$0.92 to research and development.

CA's job is to hold those investments to account on producers' behalf and to test whether the settings still suit the industry paying for them. I have spent much of my career on the other side of that conversation, as the government manager whom peak bodies lobbied, negotiated with and occasionally rolled.

Departments and ministers respond to a body that arrives with evidence, a clear ask and producers visibly behind it. They discount a body that arrives with a grievance.

That experience also taught me that advocacy must address adoption, not only principle. When electronic cattle tags were introduced, Victoria subsidised them and uptake was strong.

In Queensland, where I was then General Manager, they were not subsidised and uptake was poor: same technology, same argument, different terms. I put the case to the Minister and lost it. Producers adopt what stacks up on their terms, and a peak body that forgets this can win the argument and change nothing.

A peak body must also stay apolitical and work effectively with whichever government is elected.