

## AWI Directors



### Maree McCaskill

Maree comes to AWI from a background in natural resource management and agriculture. She has widespread knowledge of the production, processing and marketing of natural fibre, occupational health and safety and the need for commercially applied science to drive industry development. Maree also has more than 20 years of experience in animal husbandry, livestock transport and animal welfare.

As Chief Executive of the Australian Cotton Foundation (1988 - 1996), Maree developed relationships across government and the environmental network, during negotiations over a number of industry and wider farming issues. She was a key advocate for the industry and built the profile of the industry in Australia and overseas.

Currently CEO of the Beverage Industry Environment Council, Maree manages a group of 30 major corporations, who address post-consumer waste issues from industry. She has held positions on a range of boards and advisory committees, including the scientific and ethics review committee of the NSW Agriculture Elizabeth Macarthur Research Institute, CSIRO Animal Production and Livestock Industries, Biotech Australia and Red Cross Blood Bank and Transfusion Service. She was appointed by the Federal Government to the National Environment Education Council and the National Packaging Covenant Council and serves on both.

Maree brings to the AWI Board a working knowledge of business, government and agriculture. She is a well-known and active advocate for the rural sector, in particular for direct participation by growers in levy payer funded organisations. She was active in establishing AWI as a commercially-focussed research and development organisation, with expertise on the board which would deliver innovative and cutting edge programs to the wool industry. As Chair, Maree has the ability to listen to and consider all views and then concisely précis the various views put forward. This allows the AWI board to be very democratic in its consideration of projects and issues, and effectively utilises the considerable strengths and expertise of all directors.

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### Peter Sykes

When banker Peter Sykes saw a photo of his brother shooting and burying 2000 sheep in the midst of the wool crisis, he thought, “this is crazy – they have to be more valuable than that.” It was the stimulus he needed to spend the next 18 months researching how to make clothing out of wool which would appeal to all age groups, be unisex, and importantly, not be vulnerable to the vagaries of the ever changing fashion world. He decided on rugby jumpers, and while still working for Westpac in financial markets, started learning a whole new business - the wool clothing game.

It was a steep learning curve. Peter investigated top making, but realised it was a game for experts, not the sons of woolgrowers. For his first batch of Ruggers, Peter learnt about all aspects of wool processing, while keeping focussed on consumer preferences for garments that were easy care, soft, comfortable against the skin, light-weight, casual and fashionable, but still value for money. He put after-match jerseys on the backs of the Australian Wallabies and, in 1994, Woolaby was born. The company now sells wash and wear woollen products to more than 110 stores Australia wide. Gowings includes Woolaby in its ‘icon range’ and clothing is exported to the UK, New Zealand, Germany and the USA. Prince Charles, Bill Clinton and Sarah O’Hare all wear Woolaby.

A great incentives for Peter in setting up Woolaby was to make sure his children are not discouraged to go back on the farm. He wants them to be part of a profitable, exciting, rewarding business opportunity involving wool. Peter brings great skills in business development and wool processing to AWI. He believes his company’s must deliver to the market. This requires a better understanding of the textile characteristics of wool and the ability to translate this to on-farm production. Peter adds value to AWI fibre projects, such as the non-woven wool joint venture and other fibre making and processing projects. He also gives a wool producers’ perspective.

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### Don Nelson

Don Nelson graduated from California Polytechnic State University 1974 with a degree in Agricultural Business Management and moved into positions in the dairy nutrition and grain trading industries.

Since 1979, Don has worked with the J.G. Boswell Company, one of the largest cotton farming operations in the world with properties in the central valley of California and northern NSW. Don is currently Vice President of Marketing and Corporate and over the years has been responsible for all

marketing activities in the company. Included in his responsibilities is the coordination from farm gate through first line processing and ultimately to the consumer. His current projects include setting up Boswell’s operation in China and the development of corporate strategy for Plexus Cotton Limited as it relates to Extra Long Staple Cotton (the fine wool of the cotton industry). As in the wool industry, the major consumers of ELSC are the USA and Europe.

Don has travelled to and worked in almost every textile producing country in the world. This international experience in fibre marketing and trade is invaluable to AWI as it seeks to target overseas markets with new and innovative products. AWI plans to open an office in China – Australia’s largest market – and is sponsoring the 2002 China International Wool and Wool Textile Conference. Don has participated on many industry boards and committees addressing areas, such as on-farm research, textiles and the integration of promotional strategies, fibre management and measurement and cross education of growers to textile manufacturing. As a director of AWI he lends invaluable expertise to projects, such as spinning system conversion, which looks at converting traditional synthetic and cotton spinning systems used to produce interior textiles and apparel, to wool.

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