



Registrar's report for NZ Wool Classers Association AGM 05/05/22 for year ending December 2021

I began in the role of Registrar in late February 2021, taking it on when Bruce Abbott stepped down. Bruce initially stayed on as Executive Officer and I am indebted to him for his knowledge passed on and time freely given, which allowed a functional transition.

Heartfelt thanks for all the support I have received from NZWCA Board members in this, my first year. Special mention to Chairman Bill Dowle and Secretary Annette Gamble for their wisdom and commitment, at times on a daily basis. It is a pleasure to work with you all on our shared purpose of ensuring there is a solid platform to enable achieving highest quality standards of wool preparation and presentation.

Appreciation is also due to our Classers, Graders and Associate Members, and our Sponsors, for recognising the value of a wool classer registration system and putting their money where their mouth is to do so. Administering the NZ Wool Classers Registration system and our advocacy for quality in wool preparation/presentation and wool education simply would not be possible without this support.

Registrar is not a role I had ever aspired to, however I have always felt strongly about the importance of maintaining a New Zealand classer registration system that is robust and respected, so it is an honour to find myself here. **Thanks to the work of others and those who have gone before me I believe NZWCA has a positive profile in the industry. This has been forefront in my mind with all I have done as Registrar this past year and maintaining this will continue to drive me.** What we do, what we stand for, our part in the quality wool chain, is on the radar in a world where wool's place in a global groundswell of demand for sustainable products is increasingly evident.

Multiple times since I have become Registrar, I have heard across a wide variety of platforms **acknowledgement of the value in and necessity of quality in wool preparation and classing.**

One example sums this up neatly: At the NZ Shearing Contractors Assn annual conference in New Plymouth in May 2021, Bruce Abbott gave a presentation for NZWCA. The NZ Merino Co speaker who followed began by endorsing what Bruce spoke of and said: "It can't be overstated how important wool preparation is, our contracts depend on it". Formal quality assurance and traceability programmes are now firmly part of the NZ wool pathway landscape. Wool was last September added into the NZ Farm Assurance Programme (which had previously been just for red meat) and the NZ Merino Company's ZQ system is long established and widely respected. Ensuring that wool that passes through and qualifies for ZQ and NZFAP endorsement can be traced to a qualified, registered classer or grader is surely a given. And yet, we are aware there is a complacency amongst some. **This goes to the heart of the value of classers and graders keeping their NZWCA membership current, and the NZ wool sector placing value on having engaged and informed wool classers and graders overseeing wool preparation and presentation. A proportion of my time since becoming Registrar has been getting an awareness on this raised.** Members, you can help. If you know a classer or grader is using a stencil with a registration number that is not valid, or worse, not theirs, speak up. To the person or anonymously to NZWCA.

Another area upon which I have spent a lot of time and focus in 2021 has been supporting and endorsing wool education and training. There is a shortage of funding and a historic lack of recognition from some sectors of the importance of this. Gone are the days when farmer Wool Board levies funded shearer and wool handling training and Massey and Lincoln Universities had wool chairs. Today, the framework that the NZWCA registration system rests upon are two qualifications; Certificate in Wool Technology and Classing, a two-year distance learning course, and the Grading course, developed by Bruce Abbott, distance learning backed by a three day block practical unit. These are delivered via Southern Institute of Technology and our association wholeheartedly endorses the wool tutors, Laurie (the legend) Boniface and Richard Gavigan. At times wool education like this sits uneasily within the current tertiary education framework and funding channels. In November I met with SIT management for the first time. I was able to ensure they understood how much our registration system depended upon quality delivery of the two qualifications and made the point that if NZWCA (and so the wider wool industry) didn't support what was being delivered by SIT the viability and credibility of the courses could be at risk. The dialogue continues and with the new Wool Impact body being created, opportunity may be there to stake out some ground for stability in and support for more wool harvesting training.

Classer and Grader registration upgrade Before Bruce Abbott resigned altogether from his NZWCA roles last year, he and I worked together to formalise and refresh the process for the upgrading of classer and grader registration. This was a complex job and we ended up with a system we were both happy with. The rewritten processes are now on our website and a summary was published in the August edition of the Shearing magazine. I flagged the changes when I



emailed all this information to NZWCA members as well as wool brokers, merchants, shearing contractors and other relevant wool industry people. We have had a number of classers submit for shed management/classing or grading reports so far under this new system and it is working well.

Our AGM/Industry Professional Development Day in May 2021 in Ashburton was successful and well attended. Bruce had laid the framework down for this and I picked it up and continued when I became Registrar. I was grateful to Bruce for creating the wool exercises for the day. We had a range of speakers and a visit to the NZ Sock Factory and the day was attracted positive feedback.

Staging a North Island Industry Day in 2021 was not so successful. Set for August 20 in Napier it had to be hastily postponed due to the whole country being put into Covid Alert Level 4 a couple of days prior. This was a big disappointment for Sonya Johansen and I, and I place on record my great gratitude to Sonya for her help in all aspects of putting the day together. It was the first time we had organised an Industry Day between us, and it was the first North Island one since 2019. We had over 40 people registered to attend (excluding speakers) and we were particularly pleased at the range of people. They included a contractor bringing a van load from Gisborne and a group of Smedley Station trainees and their tutors. Initially we postponed the day to October 6, however that had to be passed over as it was not possible to use the woolstore as our base while still in Alert Level 2. We had another go in March, but Covid alert level restrictions at the wool store got in the way again. We will get there in 2022!

Essential worker travel documentation for Classers in Covid Level 3 and 4 Given the August/September timing of the most recent Alert Level 4 and 3, smack bang in the busy pre-lamb shearing season time, it was obvious a strong 2021 version of a Classers essential worker pass was going to be needed and well used. I used the Shearing Contractors and Beef and Lamb farm workers versions as a starting point then added in relevant wording specific to Classers. It included a section pointing to our website as a way to verify that the classer using it was a registered member going about essential work. Chairman Bill gave it the go ahead, once I had made sure it ticked the boxes with MPI and MBIE. The availability of the travel document was advertised via email to members and on our website and Facebook. Then I tested it out myself by driving in Level 4 all the way from home in the Waikato to my annual classing work in Central Otago.

NZWCA are now live as a Brand Partner with Campaign for Wool NZ. See here: <https://www.nzwool.co.nz/partners/> Much respect for the work being done for wool by chairman Tom O'sullivan and his small team.

NZWCA newsletters and email communications with members These have also exercised my time.

The June and December newsletters and August mini-newsletter last year appeared to be widely read, a lot of good feedback was received. I have shared selected content from the newsletters via Facebook and email. Content has also been reprinted in Shearing magazine, thanks to Des Williams (Shearing mag editor and publisher) for the ongoing collaboration.

Social media The ability to spread awareness of what we are about via this channel is remarkable, given that it costs us nothing except a little bit of time. The association's online profile continues to grow positively, I am posting relevant information regularly. Stats tell us a post and photos on the NZWCA Facebook page summarising our Industry PD Day/AGM and thanking people the day after the 2021 Ashburton event had, at time of writing, reached 46,854 people and had 2,429 engagements. An NZWCA Facebook post at the end of April 2021, sharing an email warning from PGG Wrightson about not using Econopak wool packs has, at time of writing, reached 23,094 people and had 3963 engagements. In March 2021 I saw an Instagram post put up by Icebreaker noting Peter Burling's Icebreaker jocks waistband as he hoisted the America's Cup trophy high. I screenshot the Icebreaker post and used it in a post on NZWCA Facebook where I made the point that the Italians might have had the Woolmark on their sail but we had Pete Burling's wool undies. That post was shared multiple times and Facebook stats tell me it reached 7,843 people. Our Facebook page, at time of writing, now has 1016 likers and 1077 followers.

In closing I would like to reiterate what I wrote in my first report to the NZWCA Board, back in May 2021. **I see a juggle between doing the role of Registrar justice, whilst being mindful of what can be realistically achieved with the resources NZWCA has.** I need to place on record that I am consciously attempting to stick to what I see as core business, to ensure the role of Registrar that I ultimately will pass on to someone else (always the goal) will be one that does not rely on goodwill and voluntary hours to function. Passion for wool is a driver, the struggle is real!

Ngā mihi, nā

Marg Forde A1260
NZWCA Registrar