



## Registrar's report - NZ Wool Classers Association AGM 13.05.24

I want to begin by acknowledging the importance of the shared values of our member **Classers, Graders and Associate Members, and our Sponsors**. Simply put, administering the NZ Wool Classers Registration system and our association's advocacy work for quality in wool preparation/presentation, and for wool education and training, wouldn't happen without your support. Thank you and long may it continue!

In no particular order here are (I hope) most of the things that have kept your Registrar busy, and your Board involved since the 2023 NZWCA AGM.

### **Our response to the non-wool contamination in bales, flagged by WoolWorks**

In 2023 WoolWorks went public with figures proving an alarming rise in incidences where items other than wool were being found in bales. The financial cost and the reputational cost to the NZ wool industry is huge for something that is completely avoidable. NZWCA helped spread the word through our membership and also via social media. We also decided to produce a poster for wool shed walls, to raise awareness. What has been created – and will be available at our AGM/Industry Day on May 13 for the first time – is a result of satisfying collaboration. Wording for the poster, which contains checklists for prior to and during shearing came from invited contributions, the graphic design was done free by a member, Samantha Harmer P2214 and WoolWorks are paying for a print run of 500 posters on tough rip resistant paper.

### **Formal complaint process**

It was agreed in 2022 our association needed a formal complaint process so after Board input and careful consideration the NZWCA version was finalised in 2023 and placed on our website <https://woolclassers.org.nz/members-area/complaints-procedure/>

### **Things classers want to know**

A recurring subject I've come across in my interactions with classers this past year has been around the business of being a classer. Register for GST or not? Add extra for ACC or not? Charge \$40 an hour or \$1 per fleece for classing? Whilst NZWCA cannot set rates or how to operate, I do think it would be valuable to collect such information from classers anonymously and share it. If there are questions you have about the business of being a classer, please send them to me and if there is enough demand, I will put together an online survey giving everyone the opportunity to contribute anonymously. Then I will collate the information and make it available.

### **Classer Award process and nomination forms placed on website**

<https://woolclassers.org.nz/members-area/nomination-form-for-nzwca-classer-awards/>

The nomination and judging process for the annual NZWCA Classer Awards has been documented. It is available for all to see on our website, along with an online nomination form which wool buyers and brokers/wool representatives/area managers can use to submit nominations. Thank you to the brokers and buyers who support the Classer Awards each year by noticing and nominating classers and graders, you are appreciated - the awards couldn't happen without you. A special thank you for your positivity and making the transition to online nomination forms so willingly.

### **Wool harvesting training advocacy**

In September NZWCA Patron and Board member Allan Frazer and I attended an all-day online meeting run by Muka Tangata (People Food and Fibre Workforce Development Council) exploring the development of micro credentials for wool harvesting qualifications, aiming to have them set up and funded whilst

avoiding the historic and ongoing frustration of forcing this kind of training and qualification into existing generic models.

Sonya Johansen (NZWCA Board member) and I then became members of the working group at the pointy end of the project. Our group was tasked with the development of the technical part and delivery of the new micro credentials. We have had numerous online meetings and two in-person sessions and at the time of writing our group is almost there.

Why have NZWCA people spend the time and resources? It's simple. If we as an industry don't keep working to have established, quality wool harvesting training widely and freely available the whole industry is at risk. Without the capability to deliver well-prepared, well-presented wool to the market, to manufacturers and ultimately to consumers, our industry can't function.

### **NZWCA profile at events**

We had a profile and our banner flying at the wool expo at the Waimate Spring Shears in October 2023, at the Canterbury Show in November 2023 and the Wanaka Show in March 2024. Thank you to Board members Mitchell Young and Tracy Paterson for representing the association and making space for us alongside WoolWorks at Waimate and Matakanui Stud at Canterbury respectively.

Board member Terence Mulcahy and I represented NZWCA on our own stand at the Wanaka Show, extremely generously sorted for us by former NZWCA chair Martin Paterson, now president of the Upper Clutha A&P Society which runs the Wanaka show. He found us space in a tent in a perfect spot situated right beside the door to the Fleece Competition entranceway and adjacent to the sheep judging pens.

Terence and I agree there is huge value in NZWCA having a presence there. We had two days of many conversations with a really wide range of people about what NZWCA stands for, supports and our role in the industry. There were people who came to our stand who didn't know anything about wool (and just wanted to talk about our wool samples and wool as a consumer item) and wise and experienced wool growers, buyers, exporters, and many in between. We were even able to connect a farmer looking for a new classer with a Provisional Classer we knew was at the show because she'd popped into our tent to say hello.

### **Adding Classer registration validity to wool quality assurance programmes**

Administering the NZ Wool Classer and Grader Registration system, and protecting the integrity of that system, is a core role of the NZ Wool Classers Association (NZWCA). Over the course of the year we have engaged with the administrators of the two main wool quality assurance programmes – ZQ for NZ Merino Company and the wool addition to the NZ Farm Assurance Programme – and suggested consideration be given to including a wool grower clause which could cover off ensuring wool classer and grader stencil validity into their programme audit/compliance systems.

<https://woolclassers.org.nz/members-area/news/safeguarding-the-kiwi-stencil/>

We have been highlighting that use of a NZWCA stencil that is not current and valid, or is not registered to the person who has classed/graded the wool, is fraudulent. This topic was on the agenda of the most recent National Council of NZ Wool Interests Inc (NZWCA is an associate member) meeting which Bill and I attended, and we will continue to flag this issue throughout the industry.

As I see it, there's two prongs here: 1) The NZ wool industry is better for a classing and grading system that is trusted and respected and 2) from an individual classer's point of view, I know I worked hard to get my Kiwi stencil, I don't want to see the registration system undermined. Therefore, if you see misuse of a stencil, at any stage of wool harvesting or processing, please call it! As Registrar I'm available to handle any misuse observations in a way that ensures anonymity.

### **Industry visits**

In November chairman Bill Dowle and I took the time for some industry member visits in Christchurch. At the NZ Merino Company office, we introduced ourselves to the new CEO Angus Street when we met with him and Blair Davies. Next, we caught up with Al Boa who was Board Secretary / Group Financial

Administration Manager for Wool Research Organisation of NZ (WRONZ). Al has since retired. He has been a strong champion of the WRONZ scholarships for Certificate of Wool Technology and Classing that NZWCA administers, thanks Al. And lastly, we went to the GS Schneider office where Steve Finnie and Helen Cameron gave us an insight into how things are for wool buyers and exporters and we filled them in on our association activities.

### **New Zealand's only tertiary level wool education is the Certificate in Wool Technology and Classing**

The delivery of this qualification is currently via the Southern Institute of Technology/Telford, and frontline in this sometimes challenging education environment have been the tutors Laurie Boniface (retiring at the end of June) and Richard Gavigan, who are currently employed at 0.5 each. For example, it was incredibly frustrating for them to have 69 Cert Wool Tech students (a record number in recent years) either wanting to start or already undertaking study at the beginning of 2024. However, a ruling from Te Pukenga (the mega body that was going to take over all institutions like SIT, but now isn't) decreed that SIT could no longer offer fees free courses. When this was protested a decision was made to make Otago and Southland students fees free, but anyone doing SIT courses from other parts of NZ had to pay. So that 69 students dropped to 42 in Semester 1 this year. Then, just as Bill, Richard, Laurie and I had agreed on the wording for a letter laying out the effect on the wool courses, to be distributed widely including to politicians, there was an about-turn and from Semester 2 onwards, it will be fees free again. With Laurie retiring I believe we as an association need to be mindful, and make sure the wider wool industry knows, just how important support for the Cert Wool Tech course is. It's the only tertiary qualification in wool available in NZ and is the academic prerequisite for gaining provisional classer registration. All of the above is why I wanted to include getting Richard down to Laurie's retirement acknowledgement at our Mosgiel Day in May. Compared to many tertiary qualifications there's a lot of extra work that goes into a course like Cert Wool Tech, for example, maintaining a collection of relevant wool samples, and also pastoral care of students who are often working as well as studying.

### **Resuming awards and trophies for NZ Certificate in Wool Technology and Classing students**

Several years ago a change in the Southern Institute of Technology/Telford system meant only pass or fail grades were visible to the tutors. This meant the NZWCA/Telford award system for top students was set aside. However, another change, a nudge from former Registrar Bruce Abbott, some admin co-operation from Telford, a prolonged effort and collaboration between the wool tutors Laurie Boniface, Richard Gavigan and myself saw the awards reinstated for 2023. These were announced in our December newsletter Pg 20 <https://woolclassers.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/December-2023-Newsletter.pdf> and 2023 top overall student Jody Salmon will be presented with the NZWCA perpetual silver cup at our Industry PD Day on May 13. The cup resides at Telford.

### **Massey Wool Association**

The Massey Wool Association has been officially wound up, a sad sign of the times for wool. It had been inactive for the past 10 years or more so Laurie Boniface and others initiated the formal dissolution. Annette, Bill and I have had ongoing communications with them re the MWA dissolution. There is around \$12,000 remaining MWA funds and the members doing the winding up requested that some of the money should be used to support the running of Wool Clip Grading (Q Courses) courses. NZWCA has agreed to administer this money.

### **WRONZ Scholarship**

This scholarship provided by the Wool Research Organisation of NZ WRONZ is \$5000 a year for NZ Certificate of Wool Technology and Classing students (\$1000 per student), administered by NZWCA. We now have split the scholarships into two time periods as there are two Cert Wool Tech intakes each year, it only seemed fair. Currently the payment of the scholarship is in increments and conditional on a student passing. This year we are also introducing the requirement that the scholarship student won't

get paid their last \$250 increment unless they furnish proof they have acknowledged WRONZ and connected with the organisation. From the outset the successful scholarship recipients are encouraged in their scholarship advice letter to “maximise this scholarship by using it as an opportunity to network and connect with wool industry organisations and people”.

The person at WRONZ who has championed this scholarship, Al Boa, retired late last year. I was pleased to meet and have a good talk with his replacement, Tim Lonsdale at the Wanaka Show.

## **NZWCA Industry and Wool Days – Whanganui and Blenheim**

Our 2023 NZWCA North Island Industry Day was in Whanganui in October. Huge thanks to the staff and management of Bremworth Spinners and Elco Direct who not only supplied our venue but also went out of their way to help Board member Sonya Johansen and I before, during and after the Industry Day. Wool tutors Laurie Boniface and Richard Gavigan were there too, once again North Island Day super-supporters – speakers, suppliers of some wool samples, set up, pack up and even spent their lunch time helping to mark the wool exercises. And finally thanks to all who attended – most of our members are in the South Island – especially the speakers and the two contractors (Stu Munro Shearing and Paewai Mullins) who filled vans and sent staff.

The NZWCA Marlborough Wool Day was held in Blenheim in late January. It was the initiative of Board member and local classer and contractor Ratapu Moore who undoubtedly achieved the aim of putting on a positive day bringing wool growers and other wool people together. Big thanks to all Board members involved, Bill Dowle, Terence Mulcahy, Karen Wilkins-Duff, Mitchell Young and especially Ratapu and her husband Angus who invested a massive amount of time, energy and resources to make this day happen. Originally it was planned for this day to be in April 2024 however the date had to be brought forward at short notice due to the retirement of Bob Butt and the closure of the woolstore which was the venue.

### **Phew, almost there!**

In closing, I want to share an observation about the NZWCA events like the two above: For all the negative talk about how low things are for the NZ wool industry, the fact that it never seems to be difficult to find willing speakers to give of their time and share what they know is illustrative of the number of really great people in our country’s wool waka. I’m grateful to be on board with you all, thank you.

And last but definitely not least, thank you to the members of the NZWCA Board who have supported me and my Registrar role through the year. Our association is fortunate to have such a committed group of people who hail from across the wool sector giving their time and experience. Particular mention to secretary Annette Gamble, chairman Bill Dowle, vice-chair Tracy Paterson and former vice chair Sonya Johnsen who are always there for operational matters and always a pleasure to work alongside. You enable me to do my job to the best of my ability and, speaking personally, you ensure there is enjoyment along the way.

Ngā mihi, nā

*Marg Forde* A1260

**NZWCA Registrar**

**19.04.24**