

# Regional Workshop: Taree

Workshop Output Report



# Background

The Taree regional workshop is one of 23 regional workshops designed to contribute to the development of the Australian Dairy Plan – a nationwide plan for a profitable, confident and united dairy industry. This report captures the discussions held at that workshop. It is intended to provide a record for workshop attendees and a basis for those who could not attend the workshop to contribute to the conversation. This report will be combined with the reports of the other 22 regional workshops in the development of the Australian Dairy Plan.

## Workshop sessions

1. **The Set-Up: Why will this Plan be different?**
2. **How big is the appetite for change?**
3. **What needs to change?**
4. **What needs to be done?**
5. **What is success for the Australian dairy industry?**

## Workshop details

**Date:** 31 May 2019

**Location:** Taree

**Facilitator:** Stephen Petris, Nous Group

**Coordinator:** Dairy NSW

**Attendees:** Approximately 45 participants including around 30 farmers.

# 1. The Set-Up: Why will this Plan be different?

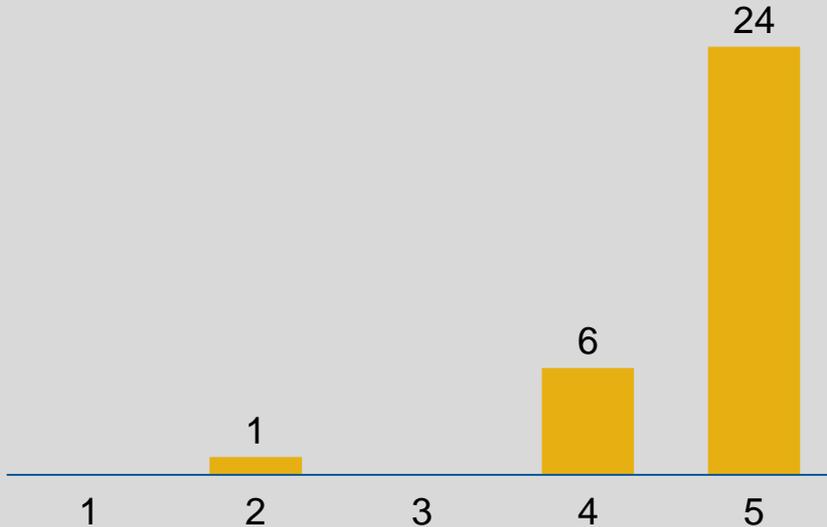
*The workshop was opened by local farmer Tim Bale .*

## **The facilitator set out the purpose of the Australian Dairy Plan and the workshop**

- This is a great opportunity to shape the future of dairy by contributing to the development of the ADP
- But you've heard this before - what's different about this Plan? Why get involved?
  - The key players are working towards one national dairy plan, one set of national priorities, one voice in championing these priorities – that gives us more ability to drive change
  - This time the plan is being built from the 'bottom-up' i.e. by the people with 'skin in the game' – you!
  - The partners are committed to turning the plan into action through their individual strategic plans

## 2. How big is the appetite for change?

Participants voted on “how much change is required to get the industry to a better place”



N=40

1 = minor change, 5 = major change

**In discussing the results, we agreed...**

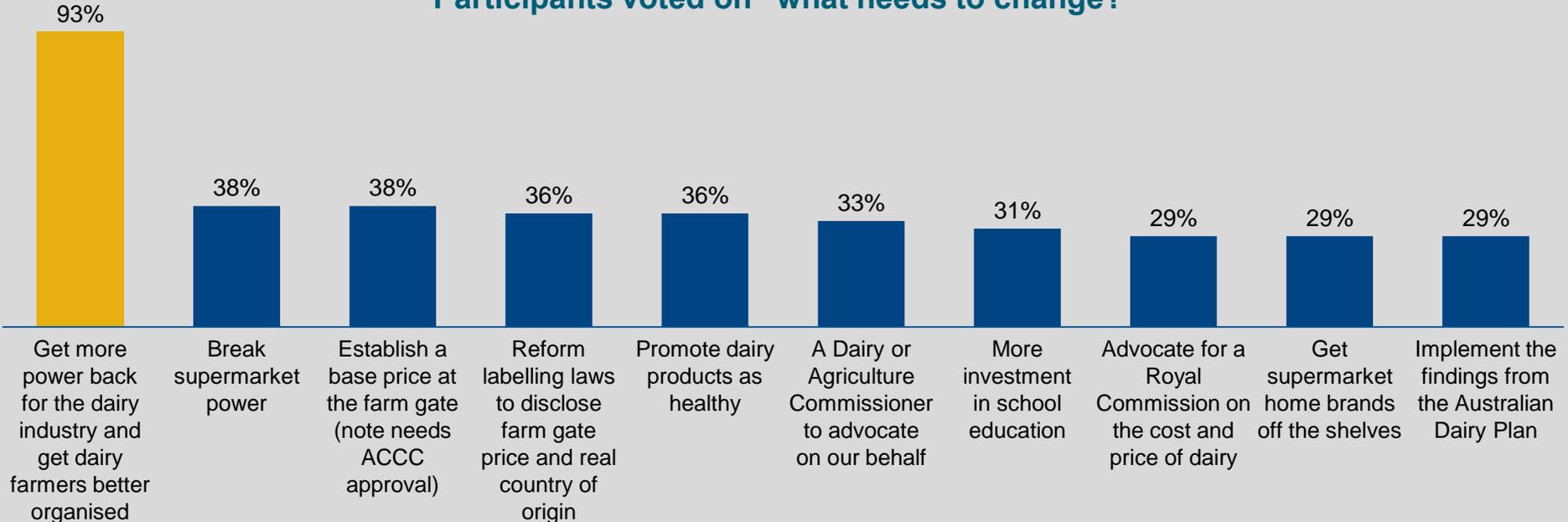
Big change is needed because we want a sustainable future for this industry and we want our grandchildren to drink Australian milk.

The change is urgent because we're going broke and seeing increased health issues in our communities. People's mental health is getting worse and people are working too hard which isn't physically safe.

It's not just us, regional communities depend on the dairy industry. Casual workers have lost jobs on farms and local businesses are losing income.

# 3. What needs to change?

Participants voted on “what needs to change?”



N=42

Top 10 ideas by percentage votes with participants voting on their top 5 (electronic voting (slido) plus paper-based voting.

# 4. What needs to be done?

We further developed our top prioritised ideas by thinking about what success would look like, how we might get there and what might hold us back.

## Get more power back for the dairy industry

We need to get better organised as a group. This means restructuring for united advocacy and getting the processor money out of our advocacy arrangements.

We note that this will require ADF constitutional change and engagement across regions to create buy-in.

As a first step we should create a steering committee to overcome some of the challenges we face.

## Break supermarket power

If we succeed in this space then by 2025 we can expect to see the supermarkets with no more than a 20% market share and the ACCC with powers of divestment. As a consequence we will see higher prices in Coles and Woolworths.

Getting there will require us to have a united voice to government. This will require the requisite leadership and skills at the top levels of the dairy industry.

## Reform labelling laws to disclose farm gate price and real country of origin

We propose to use a combination of legislative changes and marketing/education to achieve truth and transparency in labelling.

Labelling will be clear about what price the dairy farmer gets from each product sold and will clearly differentiate between local and imported products.

# 4. What needs to be done?

## Promote dairy products as healthy

If we succeed, in 2025 milk will be regarded as a superfood and there will be an increase in consumption on a per capita basis.

Getting there will require us to educate key audiences including schools, doctors and dentists, revisit the 'legendairy' campaign, and define 'milk' (identifying products such as almond milk as inaccurate).

## More investment in school education and make sure its fair and accurate

Dairy Australia needs to urgently put in place promotion of dairy via social media, radio and TV.

We need to run a schools program with dairy products in schools and dairy education. Dairy Australia should deliver this program.

We also need to do more promotion on social media.

## Get supermarket home brands off the shelves

If we succeed, in 2025 we will be generic-branding free.

To get there we need to first explore what can be achieved through legislation. Solutions may be:

- a maximum percentage of home branding that can be marketed by any retailer
- greater transparency in labelling on who brands are owned by.

## 4. What needs to be done?

A Trade Commissioner for  
Agriculture to advocate on  
our behalf

By 2025 we expect to see a federal trade commissioner working out of Canberra ensuring that Australian trade policy supports the Australian dairy industry.

Achieving this will require us to lobby the Commonwealth Agriculture Minister, working with other agriculture industries.

## 5. What is success for the dairy industry?

Imagining the future of the industry, we articulated our vision by developing the front page of the industry newspaper.

# ***THE DAIRY TIMES***

June 2025

**In this issue, we look at dairy's journey to 2025 & celebrate the people and successes that have got the industry to where it is today.**

The dairy industry has changed a lot since 2019. Now we see rising confidence, improved returns, thriving communities with farmers enjoying an improved work/life balance with is translating to new entrants.

“ In 2019 we met and discussed the future of the industry. Today we are seeing the results.

”

- Dairy farmer

“ We are developing new products for new markets in an expanding industry

”

- Processor

“ The dairy industry is no drama, it looks after itself throughout the supply chain

”

- Minister for Agriculture & Water Resources

# Appendix. What needs to change? (full list of results)

Get more power back for the dairy industry and get dairy farmers better organised as a group, united advocacy, restructure and get the processor money out

Break supermarket power e.g. reform ACCC to have the power to require divestment in oligopolies

Establish a base price at the farm gate linked to the CPI – note needs ACCC approval

Reform labelling laws to disclose farm gate price and real country of origin

Promote dairy products as healthy to combat competition from products like almond water

A Dairy or Agriculture Commissioner to advocate on our behalf e.g. in free trade agreements

More investment in school education and make sure its fair and accurate

Advocate for a Royal Commission on the cost and price of dairy

Get supermarket home brands off the shelves (what leverage do we have)

Implement the findings from the Australian Dairy Plan – timeline

Have a structured training pathway from worker to farm manager to encourage young people and find ways to support it – lift the level of expectation

Link up with other export industries to increase pressure on government for a lower exchange rate

Research and development to find components of milk that might be more valuable e.g. medicine

Ensure accountability for how levies are spent

More focus in research and development on profitability and cost reduction and e.g. significant breakthroughs in technology

Legislation of negotiation ability for farmers

More investment in major water security infrastructure e.g. dams

More transparency in the pricing structure of supermarkets

Revisit what is free trade

Better information with more focus on the fundamentals of profitability