

Call for Expressions of Interest

Expert Panel Chair

Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) is seeking an independent Chair of the Expert Panel. The Expert Panel convenes once each year to review and rank research, development and adoption (RD&A) proposals submitted to the MLA annual call for sheepmeat and grassfed beef RD&A. This Expert (peer review) Panel process delivers independence, quality, objectivity and transparency to project review and selection by MLA.

The roles of the independent Expert Panel Chair are:

- To work with MLA to select an Expert Panel from an established pool of “pre-selected” technical experts. The Charter of Operations for the Expert Panel (Appendix 1) describes the selection process for panel members, their roles and responsibilities and the Panel’s mode of operation. Selection of at least 10 technical experts from the pre-selected pool:
 - provides an appropriate balance of skills and knowledge to assess and rank the technical merit of full RD&A proposals submitted to the MLA annual call
 - minimises the risk of real or perceived conflicts of interest for Panel members.
- Assist MLA in distributing proposals to relevant Expert Panel members and appointing lead reviewers.
- Conduct tele-conferences with lead reviewers ahead of the Expert Panel meeting.
- Assist in collating reviews on project proposals, and where required, to provide additional commentary on projects.
- Lead the Expert Panel in discussion, and manage conflicts of interests and differences of opinion.
- Provide a list of rankings and commentary on individual projects to MLA.
- Participate in Red Meat Panel meetings, as an observer.
- Up to 12 days per year will be required.

Selection criteria

MLA is seeking candidates for appointment as independent chair of the Expert Panel. Applicants for the chair role should demonstrate:

- independence from MLA and research organisations
- a strong track record in an area of research, development and extension/adoption relevant to grassfed beef and/or sheepmeat
- evidence of peer acknowledgement of skills
- a commitment to the on farm component of the red meat industry
- significant experience in leading independent, quality, objective and transparent peer review processes
- ability to manage actual and perceived conflicts of interest
- commitment to maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the peer review process
- willingness to work with MLA in conducting an independent, transparent review process for the annual call and to assist MLA in clarifying outcomes of the review process to applicants.

Pending the successful conduct of MLA’s 2019/20 annual call from 21 January 2019 to 15 February 2019, the Expert Panel will convene for up to two days in the week commencing 11 March 2019.

Submission of expressions of interest

Expressions of interest (EOIs) for the Expert Panel Independent Chair position should be submitted to MLA addressing the selection criteria.

EOIs should not exceed four pages, and be submitted electronically to Irene Sobotta isobotta@mla.com.au by COB Tuesday 23 October 2018.

Face to face interviews will be held in Sydney on 15-16 November 2018. Appointment will take place shortly after this by signing a *Letter of Appointment* with MLA. One to two days of work will be required in December 2018 in collaboration with current Expert Panel chair.

For further information, please contact:

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Current Expert Panel Chair

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Appendix 1 – Expert Panel Charter of Operations

This charter of operations sets out the governance arrangements and decision making processes for the Expert Panel.

Objective

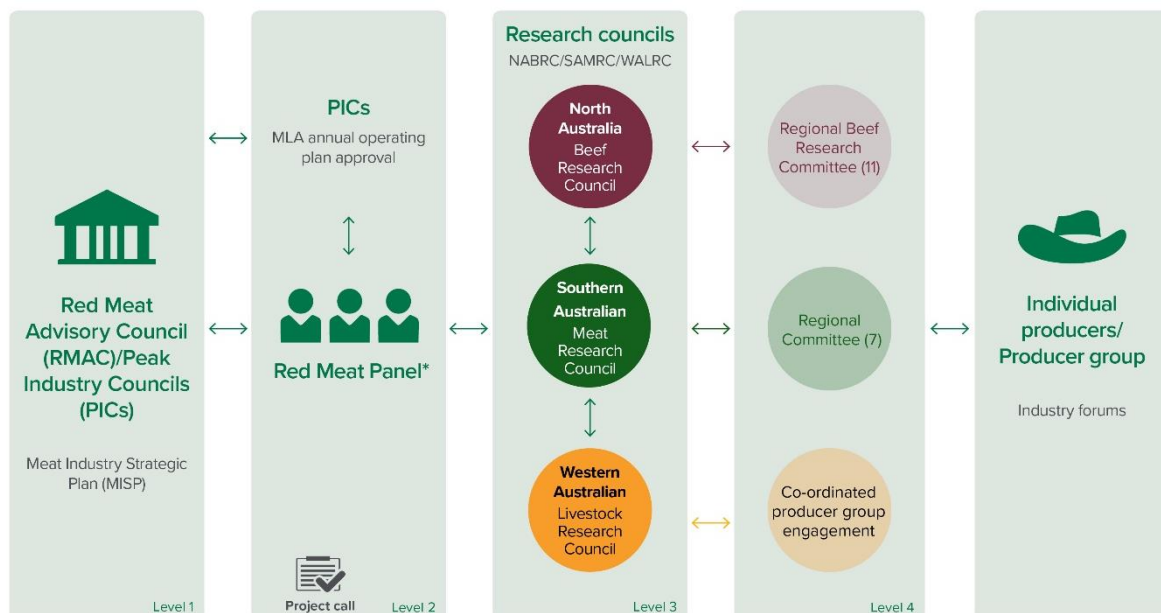
The Expert Panel will deliver quality, objectivity and transparency to the process of selecting research, development and adoption (RD&A) projects for investment of grassfed beef and sheepmeat levies by MLA.

Description

MLA has a regional consultation framework for directing RD&A investment for grassfed cattle and sheepmeat levies. The framework enables transparency in the process of priority setting, project assessment, external peer review processes and the achievement of outputs and outcomes from RD&A investment.

The regional consultation framework is based on four levels of consultation:

- red meat industry strategy, including the Meat Industry Strategic Plan (MISP 2020), the MLA Strategic Plan 2016-2020 (MLA 2020) and the Sheep and Beef Industry Strategic Plans (SISP 2020, BISP 2020) – broad strategic direction on RD&A investment
- Red Meat Panel – specific outcome advice on national RD&A priorities and portfolio balance
- Research Councils - the North Australia Beef Research Council (NABRC), Southern Australia Meat Research Council (SAMRC) and Western Australia Livestock Research Council (WALRC) – regional prioritisation of outcomes
- regional committees and coordinated producer groups – clear avenues for grass-roots producers to identify relevant RD&A priorities.



* The Red Meat Panel consists of the Chair and a producer member from NABRC, SAMRC and WALRC, a representative from Cattle Council of Australia (CCA) and Sheep Producers Australia (SPA) and two MLA General Managers. The Panel then provides advice to the MLA Board on the investment priorities.

Figure 1: the regional consultation framework

MLA runs an annual call for grassfed beef and sheepmeat RD&A, in conjunction with the regional consultation framework. Table 1 illustrates the annual call process.

Table 1: 2019/20 annual call timelines

Stages in MLA annual call	Opening date	Closing date
Red Meat Panel convenes to identify national RD&A priorities and Terms of Reference for the 2019/20 annual call based on regional consultation	28 and 29 August 2018	N/A
National priorities for sheepmeat and grassfed beef RD&A published on the MLA website	Week commencing 3 September 2018	N/A
Annual call for projects in response to terms of reference for priority sheepmeat and grassfed beef RD&A published on the MLA website	Week commencing 10 September 2018	19 October 2018
Producer panels work with MLA to assess preliminary proposals for their fit with RD&A priorities and benefit to producers	29 October 2018	7 December 2018
Proponents of unsuccessful preliminary proposals notified	21 January 2019	N/A
MLA invites full proposals for projects that address national RD&A priorities for sheepmeat and grassfed beef	21 January 2019	15 February 2019
Expert panel reviews the technical merit, team capacity, innovation and significance of full proposals	12-13 March 2019	N/A
Red Meat Panel reconvenes to review and endorse the suite of 2019/20 projects that achieve a balanced RD&A portfolio for investment of sheepmeat and grassfed beef levies	12-3 May 2019	N/A
Proponents of unsuccessful full proposals notified	June 2019	N/A
New grassfed beef and sheepmeat RD&A projects commence subject to MLA approval processes and research provider acceptance of standard MLA terms and conditions	July 2019	N/A

The process is a staged annual program management and approval process, which involves evaluation of the RD&A portfolio balance by the Red Meat Panel, an annual call for new short, medium and long term investments, as well as review of existing projects.

The Expert Panel will provide an independent review of the technical merit of full RD&A proposals submitted to MLA following review of the preliminary proposals by producer panels and MLA.

Functions and roles

Other research and development corporations (RDCs) use specialist and/or regional panels to evaluate and assess RD&A proposals.

The Expert Panel will make formal, independent, scientific, peer review of full RD&A proposals a feature of MLA's project approval process for sheepmeat and grassfed beef levies. The Panel will assess and rank the technical merit of all full proposals submitted in response to the MLA annual call.

The Expert Panel will:

- use an evidence-based approach to assess the scientific merit of full RD&A proposals submitted to MLA through the annual call, including:
 - reviewing a benefit/cost analysis (BCA) for each project where appropriate, prior to the panel meeting
 - formal scoring/grading and ranking of each project
- develop and apply a clear decision making framework based on a terms of reference and guiding principles for engagement
- rank based on technical merit, the research projects and programs that address the terms of reference for MLA's annual project call for the investment of sheepmeat and grassfed beef levies in priority on-farm RD&A
- provide the information required for effective reporting of decisions to endorse or reject RD&A proposals to:
 - the proponents of the research proposals
 - the Research Councils and regional committees that form the regional consultation framework
 - the Red Meat Panel.

Panel membership

The independent Chair of the Expert Panel is selected via an open and transparent recruitment process based on responses to a terms of reference. The Chair is appointed for a three year (renewable) term and:

- has a very strong track record of achievement in an area of research, development and extension/adoption expertise relevant to grassfed beef and sheepmeat
- significant experience leading independent, quality, objective and transparent peer review processes
- demonstrates commitment to the on farm component of the red meat industry and to maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the peer review process
- professionally and proactively chairs panel meetings and tele-conferences, including managing meeting agendas, facilitating or leading discussions
- works with MLA to develop meeting and tele-conference agendas and manage the completion of action items and correspondence

- participates as an observer in Red Meat Panel meetings where required to address specific technical questions on scientific merit.

MLA will conduct an annual open call for expressions of interest from technical experts to be considered for pre-selection to a pool of potential Expert Panel members with:

- a strong track record in their area of research, development and extension/adoption expertise relevant to grassfed beef and sheepmeat
- experience in peer review
- commitment to maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the peer review process
- an interest in and commitment to the on farm component of the red meat industry.

The call for expressions of interest for panel member positions will require response to terms of reference developed by MLA and the independent Chair of the Expert Panel.

MLA and the independent Chair of the Expert Panel will review EOIs and recommend appropriately skilled and experienced applicants for addition to a pool of pre-selected technical experts. The pool will be reviewed annually, and expressions of interest called to expand the pool and to fill any existing or new skills gaps.

Each year, MLA will convene one Expert Panel of technical experts from the pre-selected pool of technical experts. The independent Chair of the Expert Panel and MLA General Manager of the Producer Consultation and Adoption (PCA) business unit will recommend at least 10 panel members. Panel membership will ensure an appropriate balance of skills and knowledge to assess and rank the technical merit of full RD&A proposals submitted to the MLA annual call, and minimise real or perceived conflicts of interest.

Expert Panel members and their roles are described in the table below.

Member/s	Role
Independent Chair	Ensure reporting, consistency and equity
At least 10 technical experts from the pool of pre-approved technical experts with track records in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • animal health • animal welfare • natural resource management • climate adaptation/methane production • plant breeding • pasture agronomy • soil science • pest animals • animal nutrition • animal genetics • meat science • reproductive science • whole farm systems • extension and adoption • other on-farm RD&A areas. 	Determine and rank the technical merit of full RD&A proposals submitted to the MLA annual call that address the terms of reference for investment of sheepmeat and grassfed beef levies.

MLA R&D managers will address any points of clarification identified by the Expert Panel in the course of the Panel's assessment of the technical merit of full proposals. This may include (but not be limited to) advice on the existing MLA portfolio of RD&A within each discipline and the fit of projects with past and current sheepmeat and grassfed beef RD&A and industry plans.

The Panel may choose to invite observers to Panel meetings to address industry priorities, RD&A capacity and portfolio balance. Observers may include the Chair of the Red Meat Panel and other MLA managers.

Panel operation

Groups of up to three Expert Panel members will be assigned a suite of full proposals to assess, matched to their area of expertise or broad industry knowledge. Panel members will assess each proposal using a 50:25:25 weighting based on:

- scientific quality and innovation (50)
- outcomes are achievable and deliver against industry RD&A priorities (25)
- team quality, performance relative to opportunity and contribution to career development, particularly early career researchers (25).

The Panel will rank each full proposal as High, Medium or Low based on technical merit. Ranked full proposals will be presented to the Red Meat Panel for review and endorsement.

Meetings

The Expert Panel will convene for up to two days each year in Sydney to align with the MLA annual call. The Panel may also conduct teleconferences if required.

MLA will provide the following secretariat services to the Expert Panel:

- plan and organise face to face meetings including meeting venue and accommodation for members
- plan and organise teleconferences as required
- record and distribute meeting minutes and action list for all Expert Panel meetings
- provide additional support and communications as required.

MLA will provide funding support for venue hire and catering for meetings. MLA will also pay sitting fees for the independent chair (\$1,200/day ex GST) and panel members (\$1,000/day ex GST) to attend face to face meetings along with out-of-pocket expenses including travel and accommodation.