

Raising the farmer voice to influence policy

Laura Bennett

2024 Scholar, Western Australia



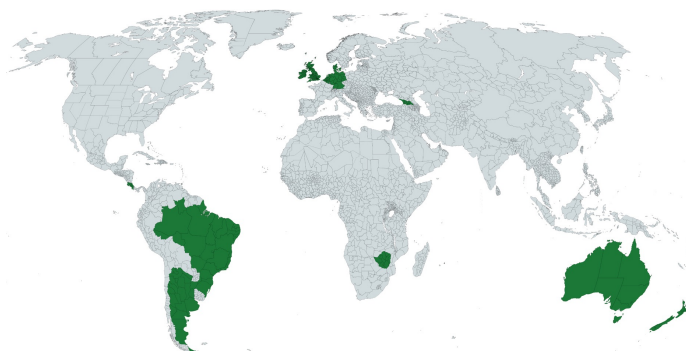
Research Purpose

- Australian farmers face increasing regulatory pressure while farm businesses continue to grow in scale and complexity.
- While Australian growers have a strong history of adapting to challenges, policy could soon evolve at such a rate that businesses are unable to adapt quickly enough to remain viable.
- Farmer advocacy is essential to shape public narratives, maintain credibility and uphold social licence, but current advocacy structures do not represent all farmer viewpoints and reactive approaches can undermine trust, reputation, and damage political capital.
- As farmers focus on innovation, productivity and sustainability within their own operations, how can they also remain connected, informed, and influential in shaping the policies that affect their businesses?

Key Learnings

- **Unified and proactive advocacy** – Farmer influence is strongest when voices are unified, messages are clear, and engagement is proactive.
- **Collaboration and cohesion** – Shared goals and strategic messaging strengthen influence.
- **Accountable leadership** – Diversity and inclusion in leaders, succession planning and strong governance ensure advocacy groups remain relatable and credible.
- **Financial sustainability** – Diversified funding and partnerships support longevity and value for members.
- **Storytelling matters** – Sharing compelling, genuine narratives positions advocacy groups and farmers as informed partners, not just opposition.

Travel



Recommendations for Industry

- **Unify farmer voices** – Reduce fragmentation by coordinating messaging across groups, strengthening state–federal alignment and creating structures that balance local independence with national coherence.
- **Shift to proactive advocacy** – Move beyond reactive crises–driven responses by anticipating issues, shaping narratives early, building bipartisan relationships and positioning farmers as solution–oriented partners to policymakers.
- **Communicate value clearly** – Demonstrate the impact of farmer voices and membership fees through transparent updates, recognition of both small and large wins and tailored engagement that closes the feedback loop.
- **Invest in diverse leadership** – Ensure advocacy groups remain relatable and future–ready by fostering inclusive leadership, empowering emerging voices and developing strong pathways into decision–making roles.
- **Diversify revenue and services** – Secure long–term sustainability by expanding practical member services, developing ethical commercial partnerships and reinvesting revenue into advocacy and member value.
- **Strengthen governance** – Build trust and credibility through modern governance practices including clear strategy, succession planning, director term limits and transparent accountability measures.
- **Expand strategic alliances** – Broaden influence by mobilising the supply chain, engaging with unexpected partners and strengthening urban–rural connections through genuine, relatable storytelling.

Thank you to my sponsor



Contact

Laura Bennett

0409 928 080

laura.bennett@outlook.com.au