

15th April 2013



The Editor

Dear Sir

Social License and Stewardship

When Grain Producers Australia advocates for a “Stewardship Program” for the Australian grains industry the only detail they neglect to mention is that under this system grain growers will be forced to grow their crops under the watchful eyes of numerous external stakeholders, each with their own opinion on what is best for the industry, and for the farmer.

In other words, a social license to operate.

If the representative bodies of Australia’s grain growers feel they are unable to defend the use of registered herbicides without a stewardship program, then perhaps they should consider abrogating their assumed leadership roles, and let those who are prepared to be more vigorous in the defense of these vital chemical tools assume that responsibility.

Even now, the GRDC and the GPA are engaging in plausible deniability over the ownership of the program, with the GRDC distancing itself by claiming it was “they” who want to implement the program, whilst “we” just provided the funding.

Whatever the circumstances, the GPA said in a letter to all State Farming Organizations last year;

“Over recent months, GPA and the Grains Research and Development Corporation in collaboration with the stewardship taskforce have been working to clarify the need for a grains industry stewardship initiative and to scope out such an approach with the industry. The taskforce met at GRDC on 23 April.”

What this shows is GPA and GRDC working hand in glove to implement the program whilst keeping the levy payer in the dark.

The future prosperity of Australia’s grains industry depends on innovation, productivity and profitability, and not some ill considered commitment to a “Stewardship Program” that will only satisfy minority pressure groups for the short term.

Stewardship programs will add more interference, more restrictions, and more paperwork to the existing regulatory burden that is already carried by the grain growing industry. We only have to look at the reduction in buyer competition and the closed markets in the live export industry to see what happens when a “social license” is applied to an industry.

The continuing demand for Western Australian grain and its price premium over East Coast grain is evidence enough that there is no need for third party arrangements to interpose themselves between the willing seller and the willing buyer.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Snooke', is written over a horizontal line.

John Snooke
Chairman - PGA Western Graingrowers Committee and
Farmer from Cunderdin