



**Queensland Country Life**

**15 December 2008**

### **Leading the way with the Meat Industry Strategic Plan**

An early task for me as President of Cattle Council of Australia was to lead a team of cattle producers from around Australia to a workshop in Sydney conducted by the peak industry organisation, Red Meat Advisory Council Limited (RMAC). This workshop aimed at developing the third meat industry strategic plan, or MISP3.

We were joined by representatives and nominees from the four other Peak Industry Councils and the Industry Companies, including MLA, for a spirited and thought-provoking one-day debate on what we considered the most important issues likely to affect our fortunes over the next few years and beyond.

RMAC has designed a three-stage consultative process for developing MISP3, with this being the second stage. The third stage will involve a series of break-out workshops in early 2009, finishing with the launch of the five-year plan by 30 June 2009.

I was impressed with the flow of creative thoughts, logical foresight and in-depth discussion of the widespread issues. The facilitator, Di van Meegen from Directions For Change, steered the 50 participants through a range of group sessions that, in the end, yielded six strategic themes on which the MISP3 document will be developed over the next few months: Marketing and Promotion, Ethical Standards, Innovation and R&D, People, Systems to Improve Market Access, and Industry Structure.

RMAC's three-stage process seems very logical. It commenced with a 24-hour blue-sky session in late October involving big thinkers from outside the existing industry structures. These people felt unconstrained by existing resources and knowledge and so were able to put forward challenging scenarios in terms of where our industry might be in 2020, ranging from being the only ethical supplier of red meat in the world to being a country without a red-meat industry.

Stages 2 and 3 of the process are using these scenarios for stretching participants' minds as a step towards dealing with realistic scenarios for the future.

Over the past five years, beef cattle producers have battled the hardships of drought, global market pressures and competition for scarce resources. However, we have also enjoyed growing demand for our quality product in domestic and international markets, in particular in parts of Asia and North America. We remain the world's second largest beef exporter and produce in excess of 2m tonnes of beef and veal each year, contributing a gross value of \$8 billion dollars to the annual economy.

Under RMAC's guidance, MISP3 will reflect this industry's importance to the Australian economy and to the supply of vital food to the world's growing population. It will shine a light on the direction our industry must go to stay ahead of the global challenges of environmental responsibility, animal care, production technology, the nurturing of its people and its ongoing battle for market share here and around the world.

While attendance at the MISP3 workshops is by invitation, producers will have an opportunity to submit their own thoughts into the detailed plan underpinning the strategic direction of the red-meat industry. This can be done by contacting Cattle Council of Australia ([cca@cattlecouncil.com.au](mailto:cca@cattlecouncil.com.au)) or RMAC ([admin@rmac.com.au](mailto:admin@rmac.com.au)). As the document takes shape, it will be posted on the RMAC website (<http://www.rmac.com.au/>). Be sure to visit the document once it is posted before presenting your views.

As this is my last column before Christmas, may I wish you a Happy Christmas and fruitful New Year.

