

# Minutes // 2023 RGA Branch Annual General Meeting

## Mirrool Branch

Griffith Southside Leagues Club

5<sup>th</sup> June 2023

**Meeting opened:** 5:10pm

**Chair:** Chris Morshead

**Attendees:** Chris Morshead, Darrell Fiddler, Steve Lanza, Frank Dal Bon, John Hornbuckle, Rob Colpo, John Bonetti, Greg Bonetti, Melissa De Bortoli, Glenn Andrighetto, Ian Parisotto Julian Zanatta, Georgina Pengilley, Christopher Proud, Carmel Cristofaro, Pip Connolly, Peter Herrmann, Neil Bull, Graeme Kruger

### **Apologies:**

Laurie Arthur, John Bradford, Jeremy Morton, Leigh Vial, Ian Mason, Simon Bonetti, Hayden Cudmore, Veronica Cudmore, David Dissenga.

### **Minutes from previous meeting**

Moved: Chris Morshead; Seconded; Greg Bonetti

### **Business arising from the minutes**

Steve Lanza – Questioned if there has been any update from Telstra since the connectivity issues were raised at the RGA AGM. Graeme Kruger updated the RGA's advocacy in this space.

### **Branch President: Chris Morshead**

Chris Morshead welcomed guests to the meeting, RBA and John Hornbuckle.

Chris reflected on the CY23 season, which was not ideal, it brought many learnings.

Chris announced he will be stepping down as president to allow room for another person step into the role. He thanked everyone for their support during his time as president.

### **Branch Elections**

Chris Morshead declared all positions vacant and handed over to Peter Herrmann to conduct the elections:

**President:** Darrell Fiddler  
Nominated: Chris Morshead, Seconded Frank Dal Bon

**Vice President:** Drew Braithwaite  
Nominated: Chris Morshead Seconded: Darrell Fiddler

- Secretary:** David Dissenga  
Nominated: Chris Morshead Seconded: Darrell Fiddler
- Central Executive:** Chris Morshead , Darrel Fiddler  
Nominated: John Bonetti, Seconded Steve Lanza
- CE Alternate:** Glen Andrezza, Steven Lanza, Drew Braithwaite, Melissa De Bortoli, Greg Bonetti  
Nominated: Chris Morshead, Seconded: Darrel Fiddler
- Seed Committee:** Steve Lanza (Delegate) Ben Crump (alternate)  
Nominated: Chris Morshead, Seconded: Darrel Fiddler

Peter Herrmann handed over to the newly elected Branch President Darrell Fiddler. Darrel took the Chair and thanked the outgoing President Chris Morshead.

### **RGA President Peter Herrmann**

Mr Herrmann provided his RGA Presidents report, speaking about the following.

- Welcomed branch members, staff, and board of SunRice and the RGA to the meeting and thank everyone for their participation in the RGA.
- Introduced himself and discussed his recent trips to the area.
- Thanked RGA members, delegate and staff
- Peter Herrmann gave update of his rice harvest
- He reiterated the importance of the RGA especially when it comes to vesting. and gave an update on the RGA's work in the past year and what is arising in the next few months. A lot of work has been done behind the scenes particularly in the area of Water Policy. He highlighted the importance of having relationships and maintaining access to politicians and their offices. The RGA is against buybacks and continues to advocate for Growers in this space.
- Encouraged members to speak up if there are issues that concern them. The RGA welcomes their feedback.
- The year RGA received funding from AgrFutures for a Capacity Building, focusing on our next generation of leaders and our current leaders, supporting growers with change readiness, a series of workshops focusing on key industry topics. The reintroduction of the Rice industry Graduate Program. Under the program they have held a Women in Rice Forum. Over the coming 6 months keep an eye for workshops focusing on the RD&E strategy, WH&S, Farm Business Finance, Next Generation Leadership program and our Established leaders program.
- The 2023 Australian Rice Growers' Conference will be held in Griffith. Tickets are now on sale. He encouraged people.

### **SunRice Update**

- Apologies from Laurie Arthur as he is the Solomon Islands on business.
- Final pool price for CY22 will be released in July, it is currently under board review.
- UK free trade agreement was live last week which will increase the customer pool

- Vesting, SunRice is aligned with the RGA's views
- CEO Rob Gordon is retiring at SunRice AGM, new CEO Paul Serra will be shadowing Rob Gordon for a period of time.
- The 2023 AM will be held at Leeton. AGMs will alternate location in the coming years.

John Bonetti asked to know why they had to wait.

\$390 unacceptable that some crop has been carried over since last year

Chris Morshead question how other companies do elections.

Frank Dal Bon suggested we need more younger candidates

### **Rice Breeding Australia (RBA)**

- RBA was established in June 2022 to transition breeding from NSW DPI. Is a company set up by SunRice, RGA and AgriFutures.
- Dr Chris Proud as RBA's breeder RBA has 6 staff that were part of the previous breeding program and selected based on their skills
- RBA is working on the water productivity target set by industry through the strategic plan
- RBA is focused on cold tolerance to provide yield stability to rice growers as well as lodging, maturity and aerobic adaptation
- RBA is working closely with SunRice to ensure that we are focusing on the correct quality classes for the next 10-15 years
- RBA has established offices and seed processing and storage facility at Brady Way in Leeton. RBA is working at the NSW DPI glasshouse facilities for another 2 years until a new facility can be built that is fit for purpose
- RBA has established 5 year agreement with Knagge family just outside Leeton as a homesite. RBA will be conducting trials across the region to ensure varieties are well adapted
- RBA is working on fast tracking new varieties from the old program, new back crossing program and crossing to ensure delivery to rice growers
- RBA has made some small changes that has seen delivery of varieties from the start of the process reduced by 5 years and doubling of glasshouse capacity with the simple switch of a tray size
- RBA is present at the Rice Management Committee RBA welcomes transparency, questions and the opportunity for growers to come and see what they do. RBA is operating with a commercial mindset and maximizing return to growers on the levy dollars  
The new breeding program has been able to double the number of plots in the existing greenhouses.

### **Voice of the Levy Payer Update**

- Highlighted the importance of feedback to the program through the VOLP project.
- Neil touched on the new Capacity Building Project
- The VOLP Increase in levy. Want grower input in levy funds
- Neil echoed RBA, welcoming feedback
- Explained the different areas of work under the AgriFutures Rice RD&E Program, Rice Breeding, Rice Extension, Capacity Building Program, Agronomy, and the VOLP.

- Feedback is welcomed in all forms – online, phone calls, meetings, drainage meetings.
- There has been consistent feedback on research objectives.
- Response of the feedback will be shared. It is a closed loop program.

**MOTION:**

Vote of thanks to Rob Gordon for his time and service to the rice industry

Moved: Frank Dal Bon Second: Chris Morshead

CARRIED

**General Business**

Steve Lanza brought up the issues of snails. – Julian mentioned SunRice is doing work on getting final approvals to use a particular pesticide to combat this.

John Hornbuckle – gave an overview and update on his project on low-cost irrigation automation. He commended Australian ricegrowers on being world leaders in what they do and reiterated how important is to focus on innovation. He will be running workshops later in the years.

Meeting closed: 6:35pm

