MEDIA RELEASE

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Simon Riddle and Peter Thomas announced as WoolProducers Australia new leadership team

WoolProducers Australia has announced Simon Riddle as their new President and Peter Thomas as Vice-President.

The announcement follows WoolProducers' AGM held in Melbourne on Thursday, 12 November where immediate past President Steve Harrison, stood down after completing his maximum four-year term as President.

Mr Riddle thanked Mr Harrison for his service to WoolProducers and the wider wool industry "Steve has contributed immensely to the wool industry including a number of essential policy decisions and industry good programmes to take the industry forward".

"Some of these issues include the development of the trade diversification, the Sheep Sustainability Framework, both livestock and wool traceability reform and industry structural reform", Mr Riddle said.

Mr Harrison was farewelled at a board dinner, with former Presidents of WoolProducers attending, which is reflective of the high regard in which he is held.

Mr Riddle said he looked forward to working with Mr Thomas, the WoolProducers Board and staff to continue advocating in the interests of all Australian woolgrowers.

A key priority of WoolProducers remains ensuring that wool industry bodies and overarching structures are reflective of the current industry and its needs and are fit-for-purpose.

An example of this reform is the proposed merger of the Australian Wool Exchange (AWEX) and the Australian Wool Testing Authority (AWTA). AWTA members approved the constitutional changes needed for the merger at their Annual General Meeting in October, and AWEX members will vote on the proposal on 19 November 2026.

Mr Riddle is a director of AWEX representing woolgrower interests and has participated in facilitating the merger.

"Woolgrowers ultimately pay for the services these organisations provide, so they are entitled to expect structures that are efficient and accountable," Mr Riddle said.

"My focus throughout this process has been to ensure that woolgrower interests are safeguarded under any new entity going forward."

The new leadership team takes up its role at an important time for the industry.

"The recent improvement in the wool market is welcome, but one good run of prices does not rebuild a flock," Mr Riddle said.

"Growers need confidence that wool will remain profitable before they commit to it for the long term. That means secure and diverse markets, efficient industry services and policy settings that are practical on farm."

Mr Riddle said WoolProducers would continue to advance its Trade Diversification Plan, building on this year's engagement with Vietnam, Bangladesh and India.

"Reducing our reliance on a single market and encouraging more early-stage processing capacity in other countries, is one of the most important things we can do to manage risk for Australian woolgrowers," he said.

WoolProducers will also continue its work on sheep health, welfare and biosecurity, including traceability arrangements that are practical and cost-effective for growers, mandatory pain relief for mulesing, which WoolProducers has supported since 2018, and efforts to return a footrot vaccine to Australian producers.

"I look forward to positively contributing to industry decisions and representing growers in key discussions with industry and other stakeholders," Mr Riddle said.

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About Simon Riddle
Simon Lives in North-East Victoria with his wife and two children. They own and operate an 18–19-micron self-replacing merino flock and poll merino stud, currently lambing down around 2000 ewes. Simon joined WoolProducers in 2020 as the VFF Livestock Delegate and was elected in 2023 as an Independent Director. Simon was elected Vice President in 2023 and has also sat on the AWEX Board since 2025.

About Peter Thomas
Peter is a 5th generation wool producer who operates a self-replacing merino flock in central west Queensland with his wife and family. Peter holds a Bachelor's in Business (Agribusiness) and has gained experience in other sectors of agriculture including rural finance, grain marketing and logistics and Queensland DPI. Peter is also a director of the AgForce Sheep, Wool and Goat Board.

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