



**RICEGROWERS' ASSOCIATION
OF AUSTRALIA INC**

RGA PRODUCTIVITY AND INDUSTRY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE 2019 - 2020

Policy Document

V1

OBJECTIVES

The PIA committee's objectives are to:

- ensure government and industry investment and regulations aim to maximise the net profitability of growers, and
 - maintain and improve cross-industry collaboration and coordination in the interests of growers and industry participants.
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RGA PRODUCTIVITY AND INDUSTRY AFFAIRS (PIA) COMMITTEE AND REPRESENTATIVES

Name	Branch	Position
Robert Massina	Berriquin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RGA President
Denise Kelly	Coleambally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RGA Industry Affairs Committee Chair
David Lashbrook	Coleambally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFF Economic and Farm Business Grower Rep
Di Morona	Hay	
Antony Vagg	Deniliquin	
Scott Jewell	Berriquin	
Linda Fawns	Deniliquin (CE Alternate)	
Angela Urquhart	Berriquin (CE Alternate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFF Telecommunications and Social Policy Grower Rep
Alison Glenn	Wakool	
Rachel Kelly / Charleton Glenn	NA – RGA Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFF Farming Systems Committee Staff Rep • NFF Economic Policy and Farm Business Committee Staff Rep • Grain Harvest Management Scheme Consultative Committee Staff Rep • Rice Research and Development Advisory Panel – Delegate • Rice Crop Protection Working Group – RGA representative.
Belinda Lambert	NA – RGA Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NFF Telecommunications and Social Policy Committee Staff Rep • Rural, Regional and Remote Communications Coalition Rep
Graeme Kruger		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rice Research and Development Advisory Panel – Alternate • Fuel Tax Credit Alliance – RGA representatives • Irrigation Research and Extension Committee – RGA representative.

RGA PIA Policy Document Control

Version	Date	Change description	Change Author	Date Approved by PIA Committee
1.0	21/4/2020	Changes to align with Environment and Sustainability Policy document updates	Charleton Glenn	20/04/2020

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1. Research, Development and Extension

The Rice Industries Research, Development and Extension program has four key components:

- **Plan:** The Rice Program Five Year Research, Development and Extension Plan 2016/17 – 2021/22. The Plan outlines four key objectives for investment:
 - Rice breeding – varietal and quality improvement;
 - Development of an aerobic rice system;
 - Farm productivity – crop inputs, crop protection and the farming system; and
 - Extension, communication and partnership development.
- **Funding:** The program is funded by grower levies, the Rice R&D Levy, with matching funds contributed by the Commonwealth government (in accordance with the national Research and Development Corporation model).

The Rice R&D Levy is regulated under the *Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Act 1999* and the *Primary Industries (Excise) Levies Regulations 1999*. The Regulations provide that the current levy is:

- R&D levy - \$2.94 per tonne of rice (on or after 1 January 2009)
- Plant Health Australia levy - \$0.06 per tonne of rice (on or after January 2009)

In addition, investment is made by both SunRice and the NSW's Department of Primary Industries predominantly through the Rice Breeding Partnership.

- **Governance:** The Rice Research and Development Advisory Panel oversees the administration of the program. The Panel is made up of skills based appointed representatives.
- **Administration:** The Program is administered and coordinated by AgriFutures Australia (previously Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation or RIRDC).

The Rice Extension Program was developed by the RGA following the reduction of NSW government funding to the public rice extension program. Rice Extension is funded through the Rice Industries RD&E program.

The RGA'S Policy Positions:

- The RGA seeks an increase to the Rice R&D Levy (the grower levy).
- The RGA seeks that research be increased into the benefit of rice in crop rotations with other summer crops, for example cotton.
- The RGA seeks information regarding Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) investment in the Murray/Murrumbidgee.

1.1. Water Use Efficiency

Improving on-farm water use efficiency reduces the volume of water required to produce each tonne of rice, ensuring the long term sustainability of the industry and continuing community support. Efficient water use also helps reduce the effect of rising water tables

RGA Policy Position

To ensure growers minimise water use by adopting best practice in the following aspects of crop management.

- Planning and implementing efficient irrigation layouts.
- Crop seedling techniques and timing.
- Recycling and storage infrastructure.
- Crop agronomy and crop rotation.

1.2. Water use budgeting and planning

Effective water use budgeting and planning enables rice growers to make sustainable resource management decision.

RGA Policy position

Our policy aims to improve irrigators' decision making about water use by improving expertise in the following areas:

- Gross margins and the opportunity cost of different water options.
- Effective scenario planning to manage water availability risk.
- Knowledge of the water market and water trading rules.

2. Telecommunications

Voice and data telecommunication services are sub-par across much of the rice growing.

Having adequate telecom services is critical to the ongoing success of individual businesses as productive technologies such as big data become more and more reliant on telecommunication technologies.

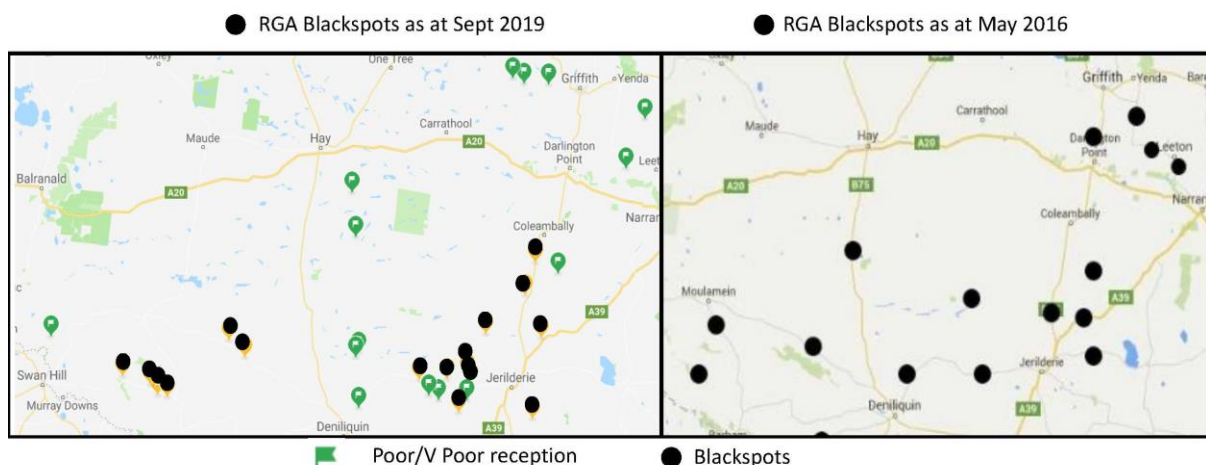
Led by the National Farmers' Federation, the RGA has joined forces with a number of other rural industry and community peak bodies to campaign for increased investment in telecommunication for the bush: the Rural, Regional and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC). For further information visit: <https://farmers.org.au/get-involved/campaigns/rrcc-data-drought.html>. In particular, the RRRCC seeks:

1. Guaranteed access to voice and data services
2. Equitable voice and data services that meet minimum standards and reliability
3. Continued program to expand mobile coverage
4. Digital capacity building for regional, rural and remote Australia
5. Affordable communications services for regional, rural and remote Australia

The RGA'S Policy Positions:

- The RGA seeks access to high quality, reliable and affordable telecommunications services that are critical for regional development and underpins the adoption of innovative digital technologies on farm.
- The RGA seeks that the Regional Telecommunications review recommendations must be implemented in full, including a long term commitment to a telecommunications fund for infrastructure investment in regional Australia.

A comparison of mobile reception from May 2016 to Sept 2019



These maps were created using data collected by the RGA's May 2016 survey of 41 member representatives and Sept 2019 survey of 45 member representatives located across all seven RGA branches. Members were asked to provide GPS coordinates for mobile coverage blackspots located within their branch.

3. Transport (including RMS and GHMS)

3.1. Roads and Maritime Service

In NSW vehicles that travel on public roads are regulated by the Roads and Maritime Service (RMS) and the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR).

To drive on the road network, vehicles need to be within certain weight and dimension limits. Vehicles outside these limits may require special permits, or must travel under conditions.

- **Light vehicles and combinations** (Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) or Aggregate Trailer Mass (ATM) not exceeding 4.5 tonnes) - Light vehicles and light combinations that exceed the prescribed dimension limits can travel under the *NSW Light Vehicle Agricultural and Load Exemption Ministerial Order 2015* if they meet the requirements of the Order.
- **Heavy vehicles and combinations** (GVM or an ATM of more than 4.5 tonnes) - Heavy vehicle operations are regulated under the *Heavy Vehicle National Law* and *National Regulations* by the NHVR.

Agricultural vehicles and equipment Permits

Under the *Heavy Vehicle National Law* an agricultural vehicle is defined as an agricultural machine or agricultural implement. An agricultural vehicle is considered a Class 1 restricted access heavy vehicle if it, together with its load, does not comply with a prescribed mass or prescribed dimension requirement. Examples of an agricultural vehicle include harvesters, tractors, augers and conveyors.

A Class 1 agricultural vehicle will not require a permit to operate provided the movement of the vehicle complies with all of the requirements and travel conditions outlined in a Notice or Ministerial Order.

If a Class 1 agricultural vehicle does not comply with the mass or dimension limits set out in a Notice or Ministerial Order, an operator must obtain an access permit.

3.2. 2016/21 NSW Grain Harvest Management Scheme

The NSW Grain Harvest Management Scheme (GHMS) promotes the safe and productive movement of grain. It is designed to decrease this risk, protect roads and to increase productivity and efficiency. The GHMS also seeks to provide a productivity benefit for growers and a higher degree of visibility to road managers of the use of their road assets. The *NSW Class 3 GHMS Mass Exemption (Notice) 2016* provides that the Scheme will continue to operate from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2021.

Under the scheme, eligible heavy vehicles may exceed regulated total mass limits by up to 5% when delivering specified grains, including rice, to participating grain receivers in participating council areas.

Local councils may decide to participate in the scheme for the complete period or for specific time periods and may also specify access conditions. We note that seven of the eight councils within the rice growing region have elected to participate in the scheme until its current expiry in June 2021, with Murrumbidgee choosing to only participate until June 2019. Some of these councils have placed conditions on their participation (Berrigan, Carrathool, Edward River, Griffith, Hay, Murray River and Murrumbidgee). AGS is a participating grain receiver (PGR) and must provide data on all vehicle deliveries, including overloaded deliveries, to Roads and Maritime for compliance and enforcement action.

The RGA is a member of the Grain Harvest Management Scheme Consultative Committee.

3.3. Fuel Tax Credits

The purpose of the fuel tax credits scheme is to remove the effect of fuel tax on business inputs.

Fuel tax credits also recognise that the fuel tax excise is an implicit road-user charge originally introduced to fund public roads. Farmers operate vehicles and machinery on farms not public roads.

Fuel tax credits are claimed by a range of industries and by households. They are vital to the competitiveness of industries operating in regional Australia.

The RGA is a members of the Fuel Tax Credit Alliance.

Large export earning industries such as agriculture rely on diesel to operate heavy machinery off-road and to operate in remote areas off the electricity grid.

The RGA'S Policy Positions:

- Any changes to existing fuel tax credit arrangements would amount to a new tax on regional and rural Australia and would significantly impact on the competitiveness of Australian agricultural industries including the Rice Industry.

4. Chemicals and other grower inputs

As new pests or diseases are identified, or resistance develops to existing chemicals, access to safe and effective chemicals becomes critical to the rice industry. In particular the Rice Industry seeks chemical solutions to Barnyard Grass, Stem Rot and Dirty Dora, just to name a few.

4.1. Chemical Registration

The registration and access to chemical products within Australia is regulated by the Commonwealth government authority, the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) up to—and including—the point of retail sale. Beyond this point the state and territory governments are responsible, including controlling the use of these chemicals.

In determining the registration of a product, the APVMA assess the product for safety, efficacy, trade and labelling. The APVMA manages potential risks posed by chemicals, among other things, imposing conditions on approvals or registrations, and through requiring that certain information be contained on chemical product labels. Furthermore, in the event of a contamination of a product, the APVMA has the power to compulsorily recall the product.

4.2. AgVet Collaborative Forum Project

Australian farmers have less access to chemicals than many of their international competitors.

The purpose of the forum is to increase investment in chemicals in Australia through facilitating cross-sector discussion between industry, government and commercial chemical companies on options for more efficient and effective chemical investment. Through the Forum, industries identify issues requiring chemical solutions and these were allocated a priority according to the technical

viability of a solution and commercial registrant support. The Rice Industry is an active participant in the AgVet Collaborative Forum.

4.3. Chemical handling and application

Ensuring the proper handling and application of farm chemicals is necessary to maintain safe working conditions on farm. Minimising agricultural chemical spray drift is also important to protect nearby vegetation and waterways. It is also a mandatory legal requirement where there are adjacent sensitive crops.

RGA Policy positions:

Our policy aims to ensure all grower and spray applicators in the industry use best practice management when handling and applying chemicals. This includes:

- Ensuring chemicals are stored, handled and transported in compliance with regulations.
- Ensuring all chemical application is carried out in accordance with product labels.
- Understanding and monitoring conditions while spraying to prevent drift damage.
- Recording all chemical applications in accordance with regulatory requirements.
- Consulting with neighbours about chemical applications intentions.
- Encouraging the use of closed intake systems for chemical induction.

4.4. Other Grower Inputs

Machinery - Precision Agriculture

Currently there are a number of precision agriculture products on the market that do not communicate with one another. This can be a burden to growers who own different systems and implements.

5. Farm Safety and Grower Welfare

Farms can be dangerous places – whether it's dealing with farm machinery, working with chemicals, keeping kids safe, feeling down or getting back to work after an injury – there is help and support available to keep growers, their workers and families alive and well.

Work Health and Safety legislation (WHS) in all States and Territories requires employers and managers to manage health and safety. The Duty of Care responsibility applies to all 'Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) (including officers of a company and trustees) and extends beyond employees to all people who work, including contractors, sub-contractors and volunteers.

Responsibilities of rice growers include:

- Consulting with workers and other duty holders/PCBUs to implement WHS programs
- Providing a safe workplace and organising safe systems of work
- Maintaining work areas, machinery and equipment in a safe condition, including quad bikes.
- Ensuring safe use, handling, storage and transport of plant, hazardous chemicals and dangerous goods
- Assessing the health and safety risks to employees and others in the workplace, and taking effective risk control measures

- Providing adequate information, induction, instruction, training and supervision to employees
- Providing facilities for the welfare of workers.

The steps for Work Health and Safety Risk Management include:

- Identifying Hazards - The most important first step to improving safety on farms is to identify all the hazards to health and safety on the farm.
- Assessing Risk - Where a hazard has been identified, then an assessment of the risk associated with the hazard must be made. The degree of risk is a combination of the potential severity of injury and the frequency of exposure to the hazard. In all instances where there is significant risk of serious injury or death, urgent action to fix the problem should be planned.
- Risk Control - Once hazards of significant risk have been identified then action should be planned and implemented to control that risk. Generally, eliminating the hazard is the most effective solution and every effort should be made to eliminate hazards. However, practicalities and cost often limit this option, referred to as reasonably practicable. From most to least effective, control measures include:
 1. Eliminating the risk
 2. Substituting the risk for a lesser risk
 3. Engineering controls, including design for safety, guarding and other isolation solutions
 4. Designing safer work procedures, practices and training
 5. Using personal protective equipment.

Farmsafe Australia and SafeWork NSW provide resources to assist farmers to manage health and safety risks on farm.

6. Business management and training

ACTION: needs to be expanded.

We facilitate the provision of scholarships to assist growers and their families and provide training opportunities designed to develop the next generation of rice industry farmers.

7. Industry Leadership including diversity

ACTION: update with reference to RGA leadership programs.

The capacity of growers and the broader community to improve skills and understanding, share knowledge and work collaboratively on environmental management is critical to achieving sustainable conditions, economic stability and social amenity for the region.

RGA Policy Position

The Rice Industry's policy is to foster capacity building by enabling growers and others to improve and share their skills and knowledge. This includes the following

- Maximising grower participation in learning opportunities.
- Preparing growers and other key community members for leadership roles
- Engaging in community activities.
- Maintaining industry, social and cultural history.
- Building networks and partnerships.

8. SunRice Grower and Shareholder Governance

ACTION: Update section

9. Trade and Vesting

ACTION: The RGA to continue to advocate through various channels the benefits of vesting for our membership database and engage with industry bodies such as NFF are advocating for rice to be included in discussion on free trade agreements.