

## Citrus industry to embrace change

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The steps to restructure Australia's citrus industry have begun.

This week, the Industry's peak body, Australian Citrus Growers (ACG), has kicked off a series of regional road shows that will outline two possible structure options that could best service the Industry.

The move has the support of the Industry's grower-funded bodies who in 2005 endorsed the need to change the existing structure.

ACG President, Mark Chown said it was clear to all parties along the citrus industry's supply chain that the structure of the current grower-funded bodies was "based on a traditional, agri-political, regional representative model that is seen to be less relevant in these modern times".

"Never has the Industry met such a strong challenge for change from markets, production costs, export competitors and natural resources, as in these current tough times," Mr Chown said.

Within the Industry, growers currently support 13 citrus bodies through levies or voluntary contributions (this does not represent all citrus grower bodies).

In short, this equates to one citrus body for every 160 growers.

Mr Chown said obviously the timing of the Industry's restructure had been challenged by the increasing water crisis as well as the upcoming Federal Election.

He said, however, the peak body was committed to continue consultation with the Industry, during this uncertain period, about the restructure process with a more long-term view in mind.

"It is vital that we not only address the immediate issues but plan ahead for the benefit of not just the grower but the industry in general," he said.

"Obviously once we have finished the road shows we will reconvene and discuss the next step."

Mr Chown said, since 2005, the Industry had been independently reviewed and had developed a new direction - Citrus 2015 - which strongly recommended aligning all structures and resources.

To address the recommendations, the formation of a new national peak body was suggested with direct grower membership and regional presence.

The new peak body would also have a strong commercial influence from a board of seven (7) Directors with grower, supply chain and commercial experience.

The two possible structure options which focus on the type of regional presence required could be:

Multi Structure with improved coordination between the existing regional grower bodies by:

- Encouraging the amalgamation of regional grower bodies.
- Formal contracts between State Statutory Authorities and the new peak body.
- The multiple collection of various statutory levies and voluntary contributions will remain with varying levels of state, regional and national administration.

Or

Single Structure with full integration of all existing grower bodies by:

- Nationally coordinated programs through a regional presence as directed by the new peak body such as Industry Development Officers, contractors and sub-committees.
- One set of national levies and membership fees for a more equitable, efficient service delivery and leadership.

In 2008, levy payers will be asked to decide on the best possible, structural option to drive the Industry forward.

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