Marketing our fibre, wool, is an important aspect of AWI’s business. Janelle Hocking-Edwards, Noel Henderson and I understand the value of marketing. We believe your interests will be better served by us on the Board of AWI because we bring with us extensive business acumen, creativity, as well as critical thinking skills, with a view to fine tuning the marketing function of AWI to reflect an increasingly complex and fragmented market. If you vote for the same old faces then that’s what you’ll get and frankly you cannot afford to do that. The wool industry cannot afford it.

We want to ask the hard questions and demand evidence before your levy dollar is spent. That will be a refreshing change.

You may ask, what does a veterinarian know about marketing? Well, I spent five years employed by the company that brought Ivomec to Australia. You do not survive in that industry for long unless your marketing skills are at the top of the class. I know that companies like Coca Cola, Toyota and Woolworths do not keep spending billions on marketing without testing its effectiveness. Why should AWI be any different when it’s your levy money involved?

I believe AWI needs to ensure that the spend on marketing is highly effective. With 60 percent of AWI’s budget going to marketing, it needs to not only strive for excellence, but be ahead of the game, employing top of their class graduates in the field. Reading through AWI’s marketing strategy and having observed their projects closely over the years, I believe there is much that can be improved and more rigour applied to strategies, aligned with the most up to date techniques that will ensure we are keeping right up there with our competitors. We need to make sure that we know what we don’t know so that we can employ the most highly qualified professionals to fill that gap.

Our fibre, wool, is a truly sustainable product, if you get it right. Other fibres have bigger hurdles to jump, in particular synthetics which will struggle long-term as their resource base supply (oil) is finite and their ‘enduring’ footprint is an environmental disaster. Cotton has serious issues as well. Wool, on the other hand, has a long-term positive story of sustainability, a marketer’s dream.

I work with a client who is engaged directly with an Italian mill on a supply contract. The mill needed the contract to be based on sustainability. We went it alone because, in our view, AWI could offer no tangible assistance. AWI could do more in this area, creating a sustainability road map for wool producers. Wool producers need this kind of support in an ever increasingly complex world, in which markets are becoming more and more fragmented and getting your message out there is challenging, to say the least.

Is AWI doing the best marketing job they can? We think not! Are they differentiating our product enough? We think not! Let’s change the culture, let’s challenge the AWI marketing strategy to take on some new disciplines so that our wool is not only being recognised for its inherent qualities but also for its long-term sustainability and producers are gaining real income growth for their efforts.

Vote for real change, vote for Noel Henderson, Janelle Hocking Edwards and myself, Phil Holmes and nominate one of us for your proxy. If you give them an ‘open proxy’, that is, don’t vote for any candidates and give a proxy to the chair, then you will get more of the same. You and the industry just cannot afford to do that.