

29 March 2021

## **NEW PROJECT MANAGER FOR WOOL WORKFORCE PROJECT**

Former shearer and current Honours Science student Locky West is about to channel a life-long passion for Tasmania's wool industry into recruiting, training and retaining shearers and shed hands.

Mr West has just been appointed Project Manager of Primary Employers Tasmania's latest Workforce Development Project, which is funded by the Tasmanian Government through Skills Tasmania.

He will dedicate an average of one a day week to researching why there is a shortage of shearers and shed hands, developing a Workforce Action Plan, coordinating shearing shed visits by coaches, promoting wool industry careers to schools and working with training providers to identify pathways to formal qualifications.

"I spent 13 years shearing and managing shearing teams, working in a full range of conditions from -5 degree frosts in shearing sheds at Ross to shearing goats in 49 degree heat in the Middle East," Mr West said. "I have a huge passion for Tasmania's sheep and wool industries and am very excited about promoting careers, training and support in shearing and wool handling.

"For too long shearing hasn't been recognised as a 'proper career' so I will be working as hard as possible to see a formal qualification developed for shearing, similar to that available for building or plumbing, so more school leavers consider life-long work in the wool industry.

"Many people living in the cities don't even know that shearing and wool shed work exists as a possible job option and career path."

Mr West finished school at the end of year 10 to join a shearing team and developed a strong interest in humanitarian work while shearing in the Middle East. He recognised a need to engineer low-cost medical equipment for people in developing countries, and decided to pursue a Degree in Science to further his dream.

"To move back to Tasmania and be completing my Honours Degree while taking on a role that can make a difference to the shearing industry is perfect for me," Mr West said.

"Tasmania's isolation and clean and green production ensures there is a very bright future for the wool industry, and therefore for shearers and shed hands."

Primary Employers Tasmania President Felicity Richards congratulated Mr West on his appointment, which will deliver real and practical outcomes on the ground to assist Tasmania's wool industry.

"It is essential that the project is industry led so we have also appointed an Industry Steering Committee comprising representatives from Primary Employers Tasmania, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, Australian Wool Innovation, shearing contractors, growers and wool brokers," Ms Richards said.

"Many Tasmanian wool growers have been impacted by a shortage of shearers, which has been in part due to border restrictions preventing shearing teams travelling to Tasmania.

"We need long-term solutions to attract, support and retain shearers and shed hands and Primary Employers Tasmania sincerely thanks the Tasmanian Government for recognising this and funding this important project for the wool industry."

**For more information, please contact:**

-Sarah Hirst

M: 0448 906021

E: [sarah@sarahhirststrategy.com.au](mailto:sarah@sarahhirststrategy.com.au)