

POSITION DESCRIPTION – BOARD DIRECTOR

ROLE:	Board Director
REPORTS TO:	Chair (currently Steve Burt)
CURRENT BOARD:	Steve Burt (Independent Chair); Andrew Biele (SA Director/Deputy Chair); Angela Ewing (Specialist Director); Sean Mason (Specialist Director) Chad Nickolls (SA Director); Gavin Howley (NSW Director); Jennifer Garonne (Managing Director/Secretary)

ABOUT MALLEE SUSTAINABLE FARMING INC

Mallee Sustainable Farming Inc. (established in 1998) is a farmer-driven, not-for-profit organisation dedicated to delivering research, development and extension initiatives to the dryland Mallee regions of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia where rainfall received is less than 350mm of rainfall annually.

Mallee Sustainable Farming Inc (MSF) serves the 700 dryland farmers in the tri-state Mallee area, with offices in Tailem Bend, South Australia and Mildura, Victoria. The organisation operates within a vast region spanning over seven million hectares, stretching from Balranald (NSW) in the east to Murray Bridge (SA) in the west.

MSF has a track record for supporting the development and adoption of drought resilient sustainable farming systems across the region through its dedicated staff and contractors. Despite the on-going impacts of rainfall variability, many Mallee farmers have increased crop yields by over 50% in the past 20 years through intensification and adoption of new practices, coinciding with the research and extension impacts provided by MSF in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Federal Government - Future Drought Funding and Grain Research and Development Corporation. Key areas of adoption (by up to 85% of farmers) include improved seeding systems, a focus on soil moisture monitoring and conservation, improved crop nutrition through variable rate technology and management of sub-soil constraints.

However, farmers in the SA, VIC, and NSW Mallee have identified productivity decline and expansion of at-risk soils as one of the greatest emerging challenges expected to significantly impact their ability to farm within 10 years. These soils are at greatest risk of the impacts of climate change and shifting rainfall patterns. They are also increasingly impacted through soil acidity and water repellence resulting in significant reductions in productivity due to being more prone to soil erosion through reduced groundcover.

Farmers need to be supported with good science to protect the fragile natural capital of the Mallee, whilst achieving production gains to sustain global food demand and aligning with society expectations is critical.

MSF is the only organisation dedicated to undertaking research and extension activities in the Mallee region of SA, VIC and NSW. Through this organisation, these farmers will have access to locally relevant research to support practice change.

Through a strong Board, the dryland farm industry will be provided with the required gains to keep Mallee landscapes, farm businesses and regions viable.

Vision: Dynamic, profitable and sustainable farming.

Mission: Provide excellence in Research, Development & Extension initiatives for the dryland Mallee of South Eastern Australia.

Purpose: Protect and enhance the natural environment by encouraging sustainable practices.

GOVERNANCE INFORMATION

MSF is governed by a Board of Directors comprising up to six elected farmers, two from each state and invited Specialist Directors.

Farming Directors

MSF seeks Mallee farmers interested in nominating to become a Farmer Director with the following attributes:

- enthusiasm to contribute to the strategic direction of MSF to support the dryland farming industry in the Mallee tristate region;
- a strong interest in research, development and extension to provide knowledge for farmers to make informed decisions on the management of their properties; and
- governance experience or willingness to gain knowledge through participating in governance training.

Farmer Director terms are for a period of two years with a nomination sought annually from each state.

The Constitution provides that three farmer directors will retire each year. These directors are able to seek re- election. The term of office will be effective for two years.

The MSF Board conducts regular self-assessment and reviews to assess performance and determine what skills are required to take the organisation forward in the future.

Specialist Directors

Specialist Directors are invited to join the Board, based on additional professional skills required for the Board to undertake its duties more effectively.

Specialist Directors' appointments are made annually at the time of the AGM (usually October). The role of the Specialist Director is to bring experience, expertise and knowledge to the Board table to enhance the performance of the organisation as a whole.

Specialist Director skills commonly sought are best practice governance, experience financial experience, senior industry experience and business management experience.

Role of the Board:

The Board of the organisation is required to:

- a) Set the strategic direction and objectives of the Association; provide accountability including risk management and policy making.
- b) Undertake employment of the key executive and management employees/contractors whose job is to carry out the day-to-day management of the organisation, within the framework of policies and strategic guidelines established by the Board.
- c) Ensure succession planning is in place for the Board, Executive and key management.
- d) Maintain the integrity and reputation of the Board.
- e) Ensure the organisation is solvent and meets all fiduciary requirements.
- f) Ensure that, as far as possible, the Association achieves, and acts in accordance with, and carries out its objectives as outlined in its statement purpose.
- g) Be accountable to the Association's members for its performance as required by the Association Act and other laws applying to the Association.
- h) Ensure that the Association performs its functions in a proper, legal, effective and efficient way.
- i) Ensure that a duty of care and diligence is exercised in meeting the Board's responsibilities.

KEY SELECTION CRITERIA

The Board is seeking skills and experience that compliments and/or fills gaps in the preferred Board skill set and provides the diversity as identified by Board skills need assessment as a priority but not necessarily limited to.

Personal Competencies

- Communication skills - effective listener and communicator, respectful of other viewpoints, constructive questioner.
- Critical thinking - capacity to critically analyze complex information, distills key issues and develop innovative solutions to problems.
- Policy development – the ability to identify key issues and develop appropriate policies to define the parameters within which the organisation should operate.
- Team player and contributor – capacity to work with other directors as a team and contribute equally and confidently.

Minimum requirements of all directors:

1. Aged 21 years or over.
2. Have suitable qualifications, skills and experience (as determined by the Board) to discharge the functions of a director.
3. Has not been expelled from membership of the organisation at any time.
4. Supports the goals, principles and purpose of MSF.
5. Not to be absent without the consent of Directors from three consecutive meetings of the Board.
6. Able to maintain public trust and confidence in the Board, including public

perception of the ability to do so. Supports the Board code of conduct, i.e. membership of another organisation or personal /self-interest should not be perceived as presenting a bias or perception of gaining advantage or unduly influencing decisions of the Board.

7. Governance skills to understand the role of the Board or willingness to undertake training within an agreed period of time.
8. Financial literacy to understand and interpret financial reports.

TIME COMMITMENT

The MSF Board meets four times per year, usually February, June, September and December. Meeting locations vary within the tri-state region. Depending on the time of the year and the commitments of directors, the meeting can be held online.

BOARD RECOMPENSE

Mallee Sustainable Farming Inc. is a not-for-profit organisation established by the Mallee dryland farming community, with a volunteer Board. In recognition of costs incurred by Board directors in contributing their time away from their business, the following is provided:

- Annual directors fee, reviewed annually, which recognises the additional time and cost demands on directors. The level of fees paid represents out-of-pocket expenses in running own home offices and attendance of regular/ad hoc meetings. Reimbursement is made for reasonable travel and accommodation costs incurred in the course of director duties.

APPLICATIONS OR MORE DETAILS

To discuss this opportunity and to submit your expression of interest please contact Steve Burt on 0419 007 398 or sburt@bigpond.net.au or Jenny Garonne 0430347522 at jenny@msfp.org.au.