

# Northern Poultry Cluster: Newsletter

## POULTRY CLUSTER ENTERS NEW PHASE

In November 2006 the Northern Poultry Cluster entered a new phase, with the announcement of financial support from Regional Development Victoria, the poultry industry, the City of Greater Bendigo, and the Shires of Loddon and Campaspe, as an "established cluster".

Minister for Industry, Innovation and Regional Development, John Brumby said the cluster was one of the successful initiatives supported under the Government's *Regional Innovation Clusters Program*.

"Forming industry clusters in which companies work collaboratively can help improve competitiveness and lead to increased market share," Mr Brumby said. "The Northern Poultry Cluster is an important new development in the Bendigo region that will help to develop the local poultry industry by strengthening innovation and productivity, and boosting the region's natural competitive advantages.

The cluster aims to increase local industry competitiveness by tackling industry-wide issues such as bio-security, increased competition, waste disposal, planning controls and security of stock feed supplies".

Mr Brumby said demand for Australian-sourced chicken meat and eggs remained relatively small in export markets, however opportunities existed to export innovative and niche products. "Experience with other clusters around the State shows that success in the marketplace can flow from activities based on information sharing and collaboration." Mr Brumby said.

Mr Brumby said the *Regional Innovation Clusters Program* is providing \$2.9 million over three years to promote cluster development in vital industries including food, wine, health and ICT. "The program recognises the key role that clusters play in boosting innovation, developing skills and commercialising ideas and knowledge," he said. "It forms part of our continuing drive to promote new growth opportunities across our regions and to make provincial Victoria an even better place to live, work and invest."

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## VICTORIAN BROILER CODE REVIEW BEGINS

Local Member of Parliament for Bendigo and Former Minister for Agriculture Rob Cameron announced a review of the Victorian Code for Broiler Farms last October 26<sup>th</sup>. He said a report by the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC) recommended that the code be reviewed.

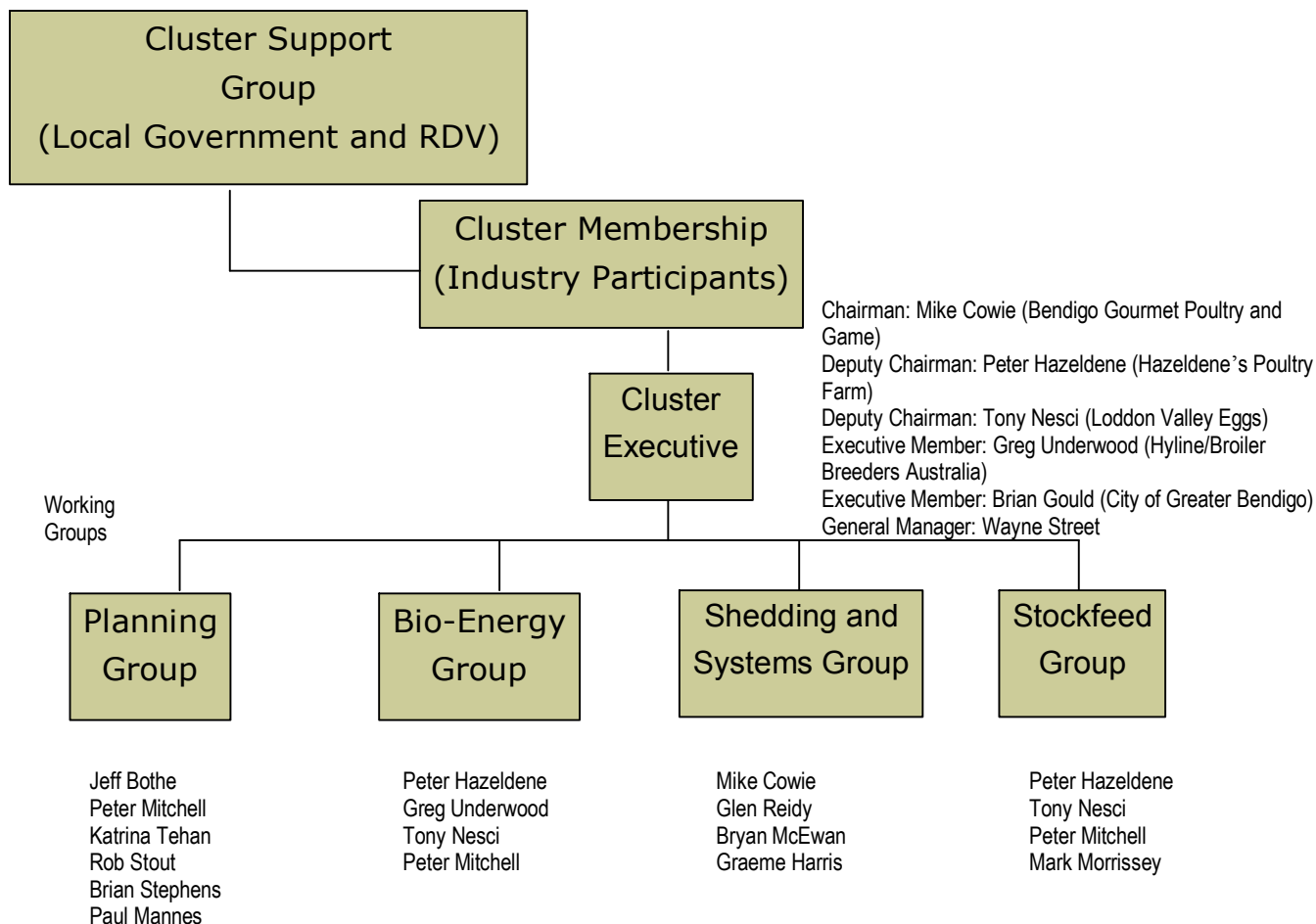
"Victoria's broiler industry is worth \$400 million a year to the State's economy and demand for chicken meat continues to grow," Mr Cameron said.

"It is important that future growth of the industry is undertaken in an environmentally sustainable way and that it recognises the needs of both the industry and local communities. The code provides the basis for planning, design, assessment, approval, construction, operation and maintenance of broiler farms in Victoria."

Mr Cameron said significant research was already underway in conjunction with the Broiler Code Committee to assist with the review.

The Broiler Code came into effect in 2001 and is part of the Victorian Planning Provisions and is due for review every five years or as required. The review will be conducted by the Department of Primary Industries on behalf of the Minister for Planning.

## Cluster Organisation Structure



## SUCCESSFUL FORUM FOR OPERATIONAL STAFF OF NORTHERN REGION COUNCILS

The Council of the Greater City of Bendigo recently teamed with the Northern Poultry Cluster in hosting a professional development session for operational staff of Councils in the region.

- Key presentations during the forum were delivered by
- Janine Price, Intensive Animal Officer, Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), who provided a comprehensive summary of the implementation of the Broiler Code, environmental risk assessments, and the types and number of complaints received by the EPA on poultry farms
  - Allan Cowley, Team Leader Strategic Planning, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, who described the status of the industry on the peninsula and the practicalities of the Broiler Code.
  - Jim Smith, Victorian Farmers Federation, who gave an excellent outline of industry responses and initiatives, including Chicken Care.

The session was held on November 29<sup>th</sup> with over 20 participants including operational staff, councillors and senior staff from the City of Greater Bendigo and the Shires of Buloke, Loddon, Campaspe, and Central Goldfields.

Presenters were invited to give a shortened version of the session to all the Bendigo City Councillors later in the evening of November 29<sup>th</sup>.

Following the success of the forum, the Poultry Cluster will work closely with Councils in 2007, toward a common approach to planning controls for the poultry industry throughout the region, and to develop designated intensive animal zones in appropriate locations.

## FARM DIVERSIFICATION: THE NAME OF THE GAME?

Is game bird production the new opportunity for Northern Victorian broadacre farmers? With drought, climate change and widespread concern over future access to water, there has never been a time when broadacre farming has faced more uncertainty.

Are game birds a sustainable long-term diversification option? If growers are part of a demand driven supply chain, the answer is yes. The Northern Poultry Cluster project "Shedding and Systems" is piloting the development of a small supply chain for broadacre farmers interested in growing quail. The Cluster has held two successful grower forums in Birchip and Bort, attracting over 60 interested people.



*Mike Cowie addressing participants at the Birchip Forum*



*Quail Barbecue at the Birchip Forum*

The supply chain involves shedding and systems developed through the Cluster and

- Development of a cost-efficient shedding system to encourage new participants in the contract growing sector
- Commercial supply chain partnerships involving growers, processors and shed/systems manufacturer

Once the quail sector pilot is implemented, the systems will be potentially rolled-out to

- Other game birds
- A regional game bird strategy (involving both Glenloth Game and Bendigo Poultry and Game)
- Broilers
- Broiler related products (eg poussin)

## NORTHERN POULTRY BIO-ENERGY COMPANY TO BE ESTABLISHED

Seven representatives of the Northern Poultry Cluster Bio-Energy Working Group visited Biomass Energy Systems and Technology Pty Ltd (BEST) on the New South Wales Central Coast last October and had a first-hand look at the pyrolysis system for generating energy and char.

The Working Group has resolved to establish a new company to oversee the further development of a bio-energy venture for adding value to poultry waste.

Further development of the venture will begin in 2007 with independent assessments of the technology options and the financial viability of a northern region bio-energy plant (including connection of the plant to the electricity grid, and the financial benefits of green energy)

## OTHER NEWS IN BRIEF

### Processed Cardboard as Alternative Poultry Litter?

The Cluster is trialling recycled cardboard as a potential alternative litter for broiler sheds. The Melbourne based manufacturer believes the product has excellent absorption and aeration properties, and there is an abundant supply of the raw material.

### Tracking and Tracing Systems for Bio-Security

The Poultry Cluster was invited to be one of three major participants in developing "tracking and tracing systems for agribusiness bio-security" as part of an application by Curtin University to the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC). RIRDC has advised that the application has passed the selection criteria for the first phase of the approval process and we are now preparing a more detailed work program. If the application is successful, this program will be a logical extension to the Cluster's "Shedding and Systems" project.