GRAIN TRADE AUSTRALIA
Facilitating Trade

Chair's Address – 2026 AGM

Good morning, everyone, and thank you for coming.

I'll keep this reasonably short. Most of you heard me talk about the state of the industry at AGIC not long ago, so today I want to focus on what GTA has delivered this year, and on thanking the people who made it happen.

Another thing I like to say is that in the trade, time is measured in days, weeks or maybe months. GTA fills the role of making sure that the tasks or projects that get measured in months, years or even decades also get done. This year has been a particularly eventful one, and there are a few things which deserve special mention.

The highlight for me this year was finishing GSAMS, the Grain Storage Assets and Management Standard. It takes the department's export requirements and the requirements of the Code and puts them into one standard. Sites approved under it can meet their export obligations with less red tape and the same outcome.

What I think is significant is that a regulator has accepted that a standard written by industry can carry real regulatory weight. That doesn't happen by accident. It happens because we built something they could trust, and it is a good example of industry and government getting it right together.

Every company in this industry wants its people to get home safely at the end of the day. That is non-negotiable. Our concern with the new workplace exposure levels and a new Peak Limit has never been about safety. It is that the limits can't be reliably measured in a timely manner at site today, and there is no evidence they would make anyone safer. Meanwhile, phosphine is the main tool we have to protect stored grain, and there is no viable alternative at scale.

We have made real progress. Victoria has deferred the new limits by three years, to December 2029, and South Australia has deferred them to July 2028. This has been a solid joint effort by GTA, NWPGP, GrainGrowers, Grain Producers Australia, NSWF, Agforce, Grain Producers SA, GRDC and the members who worked alongside us on this. Special thanks to GNC, CBH and Bunge, who made significant collaborative in-kind contributions that will also benefit industry more broadly.

But the job isn't done. Other jurisdictions, until publicly declaring otherwise, are in effect still on track for 1 December 2026. We remain hopeful we may see some movement. A patchwork of different rules doesn't work for a supply chain that crosses state borders every day. We will keep pushing for one national approach, with enough time to get the measurement right.

Five Under 30 had a record number of applicants this year.

Grain used to be seen as dusty and boring, something people stumbled into. That has changed. Bright young people now actively choose this industry, and it is great to see.

The program works because of the mentors who give their time. This industry runs on relationships and trust, and the earlier you learn that, the better.

Food security is now a front-page issue. It moves markets and it moves governments, and that makes a united grain industry more important than ever. GTA has a voice in the National Food Security Strategy through Pat O'Shannassy's seat on the National Food Council.

Internationally, it was a busy year. AGIC Asia brought more than 550 delegates together in Shanghai and Ho Chi Minh City. Afterwards, with support from the Australian Government, we led industry roundtables in Shanghai to strengthen our ties with China, still our largest grain export market.

We also keep making sure Australia is heard where the global rules are set and in particular through Pat's role as the president of the International Grain Trade Coalition.

2025–26 was another strong season: around 73 million tonnes produced, more than 50 million tonnes exported, and about $23 billion in value.

I said it at AGIC and I'll say it again: the next few years will most likely not be as kind as the last few. Crops will normalise, El Niño is back on the cards, margins are tight, and fuel and fertiliser costs are up. I won't go through the whole list again.

What I will repeat is this: it is in the tough parts of the cycle that this industry does its best work. Pressure doesn't break us. It sharpens us.

GTA turns 35 this year and we will celebrate this milestone at the Gala Dinner tomorrow tonight.

A lot has changed in 35 years, but our job hasn't: facilitate trade, and keep it efficient, fair and open. We do recognise that the real work of keeping the industry together happens in our Technical Committees, Sector Councils and Working Groups. This year that work includes putting the Market Choice Framework for GM Crops and our Stewardship Framework for New Technologies into practice (with GM wheat potentially on the horizon). In both cases, the industry answered the hard questions itself, before someone else answered them for us.

This leads me to some specific thank yous:

- to our members, for your support;
- to everyone who volunteers on our committees, because you are the backbone of this industry;
- to the Board, past and present, who also give their time for free; and
- to the GTA team, who really do go above and beyond. AGIC Week this year was a perfect example.

Thank you.

Ole Houe
Chair – Grain Trade Australia