

an amazing amount of overtime this year... at Katanning, the plant has worked 21 Saturdays, showing the amount of stock for processing," Mr MacRury said.

"With increasingly complex lamb cuts we must keep up the requirements for markets willing to pay for more sophisticated cuts by reinvesting in automated technology."

He said work was continually focused on technology upgrades to offset the continuing labour shortage which remained one of the more stressful aspects of the business and required constant attention despite big efforts.

The Goulburn production plant management plans to put in a smart operation similar to that of Katanning within the next 12 months, to enable it be more competitive with other east coast lamb processors.

"It will safeguard our lamb business and back up the WA mutton business," he said.

WAMMCO was looking at a major upgrade to Katanning's cold chain freezer and chiller department, which required a \$10 million investment but would last long-term.

Product shipped in sea containers required an 80-90 day shelf life and a loss of one degree in temperature in product bound for North America could mean losing as much as a week of shelf-life.

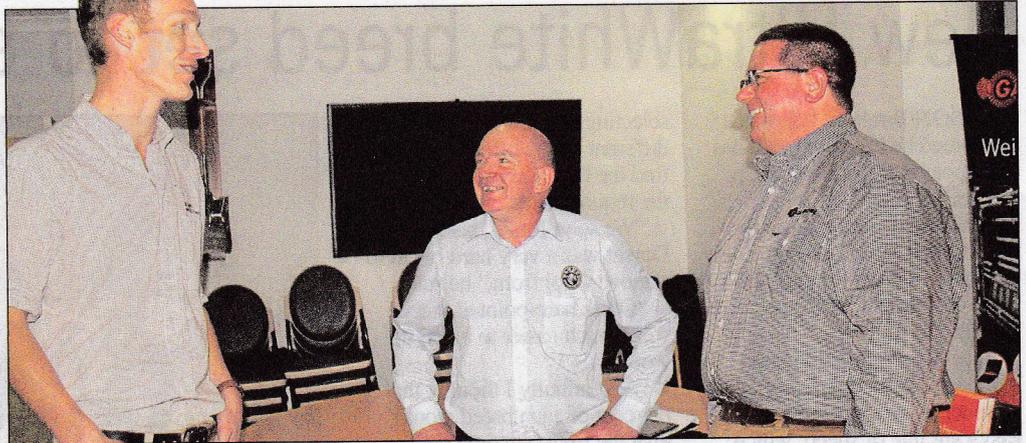
This was not tolerated by customers and could result in a risk of claims against meat consignments.

Mr MacRury said the skin business was the sheep industry's lowlight.

He said processors had been dumping skins in eastern Australia because of stockpiles in China.

Companies had been closed down by authorities in a push to force tanners to comply with new environmental regulations.

He hoped market congestion would ease by September.



WAMMCO International State Prime Lamb Carcase Competition sponsor and National Australia Bank Wagin agribusiness manager Phil Pavletich (left) and new Gallagher WA regional sales manager Craig Moynihan (right), enjoy refreshments with WAMMCO senior marketing executive Albert Baker.