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MMfS State Coordination Tasmania 2010 – 2013 (Phase II)

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Abstract

Making More from Sheep is a majority market extension program funded by Meat & Livestock Australia and Australian Wool Innovation. Phase II of MMfS commenced in Tasmania in October 2010 with delivery and business planning occurring concurrently. The project ended in November 2013. Andrew Bailey from TIA was the State Coordinator with responsibility for planning, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Delivery involving partner organisations provided best practice management information and tools to sheep producers with target KPIs exceeded across all three tiers of engagement category. Forty-one events were delivered to 768 participants. Satisfaction and value scores averaged across all events measured 8.7 and 8.6 respectively, with confidence increasing by 1.3 units.

Executive Summary

The Making More from Sheep (MMfS) project is the key extension and communication program for MLA and AWI for the Australian sheep industry. It seeks to provide producers with the knowledge, skills and confidence that will drive practice changes to increase the profitability, sustainability and risk management capacity of their enterprise operations. Tasmania's MMfS 2010 – 2013 program (Phase II) was developed and implemented in line with the agreed State Business Plan, which focused on three key target areas; business plan development, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture's (TIA) Senior Industry Development and Extension Officer, Mr Andrew Bailey (MSc), successfully managed this project as State Coordinator, for the period of the current contract.

Accountability and performance success focused on the following key deliverables:

1. Development and implementation of annual operating plans.
2. Proactive relationship management and networking with key stakeholders including producers, MLA, AWI, industry partners, deliverers/facilitators, and interstate colleagues.
3. Design and coordination of extension activities to meet the needs of producers eg. producers manual, workshops, case studies, interactive applied learning activities, field days, and distribution of information through a wide variety of communication channels.
4. Development and maintenance of a provider database.
5. Collection, collation, monitoring and analysis of participant evaluation data, to evaluate and report on progress against plans and performance targets and build knowledge and understanding of current and future producer needs
 - a. Category A activities focused on building awareness, satisfaction, value and intention to change in providers who participated in extension activities (KPI – 60% evaluation sheets completed and returned).
 - b. Category B activities focused on evaluation of shifts in knowledge, skills and confidence levels of providers who participated in extension activities (KPI – 80% evaluation sheets completed and returned).
 - c. Category C activities focused on assessing practice change and extension program impact on providers who participated in extension activities (KPI – 80% evaluation sheets completed and returned).

For the 2010 – 2013 reporting period, the MMfS program was delivered successfully at 41 separate events throughout Tasmania. A total of 768 producers and their families/staff participated in these events, significantly exceeding all A, B and C targets set. The key performance targets for Tasmania are indicated in Table 1, including the number of attendees in each flock size class and event type (A, B or C).

Table 1 - KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND PRODUCER SEGMENTATION – TASMANIA

Category	Measure	Sub-category		Description	Businesses Engaged by Throughput (% of Producers / Production Value)			
					Medium 500- 1000hd (27% / 25%)	Large 1000- 2000hd (14% / 26%)	Very Large >2000hd (7% / 34%)	Total (48% / 85%)
A	Awareness of MMfS	A1	Outcome	≥ 70% of target sheep (wool and sheepmeat) producers aware of MMfS (a) 2015				651
		A2		≥ 70% of target lamb	78	42	19	139
B	Participation in MMfS	B1	Outcome	≥ 30% of producers in A1				117
		B2	Impact	≥ 30% of producers in A2	23	12	6	41
C	Practice change/s from MMfS	C1	Outcome	≥ 50% of producers in B1				59
		C2	Impact	≥ 50% of producers in B2	12	6	3	21

Invaluable networks and relationships with a wide range of stakeholders were maintained and grown over the 2010 – 2013 reporting period, particularly with Tasmanian producers. This is reflected in a significantly enhanced provider database and well-supported events by industry partners; not to mention the wide range of high-calibre presenters/experts we were able to engage for our extension events.

Most of the extension events were workshops, field walks, or seminars, and showed the significant value which can be gained by undertaking collaborative events and coordinating MMfS activities with other programs and industry partners associated with sheep, animals, and grazing projects. For example, the last workshop in this funding period combined three related presenters; Jason Trompf talking on lamb survival, Janelle Hocking Edwards from PIRSA on the value of lamb meat and production traits and site results from national and Tasmania research, Phil Jarvie on the value of vaccination on lamb survival and maximising carcass value, and practical vaccination issues in Tasmania.

Indicators for monitoring and evaluation were high, with an average of 87% producer satisfaction reported. Producers also reported an average event value level of 86% and average increases in producer confidence of approximately 1.3 units.

Changes to attendance registration and the use of workshop “clicker” technology also saw the evaluation return rate at 100% in the second two years of the reporting period, after lower than anticipated return rates for Category A and B events in year 1. This has ensured that the overall performance of the Tasmanian delivery of the project at the completion of Phase II was very high and the projects contracted performance indicators.

The reputation and profile of MMfS in Tasmania is very positive. It is recognised as delivering timely, credible, independent and high-value information to producers in a manner that is engaging and allows for strong interaction and a range of learning styles. There has also been a strong emphasis on ensuring adult learning principles are foremost, including recognition of prior experience and a blended design style which incorporates both new information and tactile reinforcement.

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1 Background

Making More from Sheep (MMfS) is MLA and AWI's key majority market program servicing the sheep meat and wool industry of Australia. Phase II was to capitalise on the achievements of the first three years of the program where substantial awareness and development of producer knowledge and skills had been achieved. The current program aimed to maintain build on the existing experience and skills of producers with examples of relevant best practice information available from credible speakers and in the MMfS manual. The aim was to also see this skills development manifest as practice change and were appropriate as quantifiable change, either as productivity measurements or as improved financial outcomes or efficiencies.

Prime lamb and wool producers across Australia, along with major service providers were used to identify the key profit drivers identified key aspects of the meat and wool business. These primary themes formed the basis of the MMfS producer's manual. A series of eleven support modules were the key resource for producers seeking to identify and implement improvement in their sheep businesses. The manual format incorporated overarching principles, supporting procedures that enact the principles and tools and information to assist successful and appropriate implementation of action.

Further promotion and raising the level of awareness of the MMfS resource and the principles it promoted remained an important objective in Phase II.

In Phase I of MMfS the activities in Tasmania focussed on building awareness and knowledge for the target audience. At the end of Phase I this had been achieved successfully with high levels of awareness in both the wool and sheep meat sectors. In Phase II greater emphasis was to be applied to achieving and measuring on-farm practice change consist with Category B and C type activities. In particular four key modules were seen as key profit drivers and central to improved profitability and increased production; (a) business skills, (b) pasture production and utilisation, (c) fertility, lamb survival and turn-off and (d) genetics.

A key part of the program was to also identify the impact of MMfS on where producers where investing capital or resources in their business as a result of changes in enterprise direction due to MMfS learning's or practice change. The greater emphasis on Category B and C activities in this phase was aimed at qualifying those changes and if possible accessing the economic value of the changes.

This approach has meant MMfS, and its sister program More Beef from Pastures, have also worked on co-delivery of areas of common interest. In particular, the two co-ordinators identified a producer desire for increased business thinking in decision making. This area was a core theme and underpinned the Category C approach of quantifying practice change with the economic benefit achieved over time.

2 Project Objectives

The MMfS program had three broad objectives. They can be summarised as: development of a State business plan, its implementation and lastly, monitoring and evaluation of the delivery of the plan.

MMfS TAS State Coordinator provided the local/regional input into the design of MMfS activities and facilitates the engagement of producers through their own schedule of local extension and communication events. Working with the National Coordinator, the State Coordinator is responsible for delivery of the annual state business plan to achieve the awareness, engagement and practice change targets. Additionally, the State Coordinator will deliver the defined monitoring and evaluation data specified in the State Business Plan. A State business plan will also engage the private sector in each state in line with the MLA extension investment principles.

The implementation of the plan will also include directing resources, training and engaging a team of public and private sector delivers/facilitators as appropriate, maintain an attendance database of participants, fulfil administrative and reporting requirements, participate in broader MLA extension of MMfS achievements through identifying case study candidates.

The 2010-2013 phase of Making More From Sheep (MMfS) has sought to capitalise on the awareness of the program achieved in Phase I.

Specifically the program aimed to achieve producer engagement in four key areas represented through specific modules in the MMfS manual. The key areas are enterprise analysis, feed base, genetics and lamb turnoff.

Specific key performance indicators (KPI's) for Tasmania are outlined below in Table 1.

Table 1. STATE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND PRODUCER SEGMENTATION FOR TASMANIA

CATEGORY	IMPERATIVE	PRODUCER ENGAGEMENT			
		Size of Enterprise			TOTAL
		Med 500 - 1000	Large 1000 - 2000	Very Large >2000	
AWARENESS (A)	Maintaining broad industry awareness (70% of Tas wool & sheep producers)	78	42	19	139
KASA (B)	Building knowledge, skills and confidence (30% of Category A)	23	12	6	41
PRACTICE CHANGE (C)	Supporting adoption and practice change (50% of Category B)	12	6	3	21

The engagement KPI's have guided the direction of activity in conjunction with a business plan developed for the contract period.

An explicit program target has been to engage with larger commercial businesses where change can potentially have most significant economic impact and to facilitate a progression of program awareness to identifiable change adoption.

In delivering activity to meet these KPI's the program has also had a goal of engaging and working with the private sector.

Integral to the program has been the implementation of more effective monitoring and evaluation process. These were additional targets for the MMfS related to the administrative process.

Meeting collection targets for evaluation in each Category were defined. For Category A activities the achievement target of feedback sheets was at least 60% of participants. In category B and C activities the evaluation objective was to conduct and record knowledge and skill audits with at least 80 % of participants, and additionally for C category participants to record practice change implementation.

The collection, collation and reporting of this evaluation data in a standardised format also represented a key program objective.

3 Methodology

The coordination and implementation of the project required the development of a business plan to guide activity development, development and implementation of the evaluation processes, regular reporting to MLA, engagement with delivery partners, and a range of producer events on core modules and evaluation of those events. Engagement of core allied stakeholders was a major component of the project.

A business plan was developed to cover the contract period and document the achievement of the identified KPI's. The principal technical areas addressed in the business plan were related to management of the business and cost of production, genetics, better utilisation of the feed base, and increased lamb production. These issues were deemed to have the most significant potential impact within prime lamb production systems.

Initially activities were designed to engage producers capable of improvement who had identified interest in participating with the program. Activities were organised around practical and hands-on type events that had immediate impact on their enterprises. As a consequence they were in advance of developing issues in the Tasmanian environment. For example, conducting pre-mating workshops to achieve target conditions scores for higher conception rates, late-pregnancy/early lambing workshops to ensure lamb survival, or fertiliser workshops prior to the spring pasture growth. This ethos also characterised the engagement with agribusiness. Strong links were developed with Sheep Connect Tasmania to identify and consolidate areas of interest, appropriate times and venues. Sheep Connect Tasmania, because of the electronic network and mailing list, was initially used as the primary promotions channel. The use of the data base allowed focussed emails rather than whole of state email broadcasts. Local regions could be contacted, and then followed by sending material to specific individuals known to be active co-ordinators for rural or community activities in those areas. This fulfilled the business plan through engagement with local and state wide engagement with a range of service providers and industry-related groups to reach target audiences. It also allowed fine tuning of events to specific local issues that added to the event. For example, the fires in Tasmania in 2013 were not just confined to southern Tasmania. Contact with local community groups, service providers, prominent farmers and relief co-ordinators gave a better picture of the local issues and technical issues when delivering the three events on feed budgeting and shortages. Coincidentally, the midland and northern events were also undertaken with imminent fires disrupting the events for some attendees.

The data base on previous attendance was also used to focus effort on the needs and likely attendance of events in particular areas. The data base also gave an indication of how far producers were likely to travel for information and participation in events on specific issues. The distance producers were prepared to travel varied markedly within the state. Northern and North-Eastern producers were generally prepared to travel in excess of 100 kilometres, whereas Midlands producers were generally less than 50 kilometres.

A diverse range of expertise was used as an informal delivery network. The Tasmanian agricultural delivery sector does not currently support a wide range of consultants participating in local group training or individual coaching in the wool and sheep meat sector. Individual consultancy, most commonly of a financial nature has been the norm, supported by expertise from production agronomists aligned with merchandising agencies. As a consequence MMfS undertook the core role of delivery, engaging with private businesses and other agencies to facilitate relevant activity and sourcing of experts to deliver identified modules.

Despite the absence of an autonomous network of deliverers either organising their own events or contracted to do so by the program, private industry was engaged at numerous delivery points. For example, the rural agents were highly supportive of the program and

helped in promotion of events with insertion of flyers in company mail-outs, discussion and transport of clients identified as likely to benefit from specific workshops, and and catering and logistics. The partners also sourced supporting workshop material, advised on appropriate venues and on occasions contributed to speaker travel costs. This has included co-delivery with Elders Ltd, PGG Wrightson, Tas Global Seeds, Incitec Pivot, Pfizer, ServeAg, and Macquarie Franklin.

Other organisations engaged in collaborative activity have included NRM North and NRM South, Tasmanian State Government (Department of Primary Industries Parks Water and Environment), Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (Meat Council), Sheep Connect Tasmania, More Beef from Pastures, CRC Sheep (Chris Shands), Sheep Genetics, Productive Nutrition (San Jolly), Ag Concepts (Robert Herrmann) and JT AgricSource (Jason Trompf).

Working with a range of local organisations and developing the relationship an effective delivery strategy and added variety and depth to the content of the event. The local groups either had access to additional funding, access to additional supporting speakers, resource materials to the MMfS material, or use their relationships with producers for identifying suitable host sites.

Delivery has been undertaken with the input of two local and well-respected Producer Advocates; Nathan Anderson and Robbie Toll. These engagements have been effective and illustrate working relationships developed across a wide range of stakeholders and groups within the Tasmanian agricultural landscape. Both advocates supported key speakers by providing examples of the ways they applied the information or key principles of the workshop to their operations, and if possible the financial or managerial benefits. The varied landscape of Tasmania and the specific types of operations these two presenters undertake limited the opportunities to employ them and be seen as relevant to the specific audiences.

The use of producer champions, generally the host farmer of the event MMfS had state producer advocates that were identified as widely recognised and credible producers with good articulation skills. However, a number of reasons did not always allow these producers to be used in activities suited to their specialty. Often the learning outcomes were enhanced by having the host producer add input into the specialist deliverers program were appropriate. Local attendees seemed to relate to the example more fully, had a better understanding of how the host farmers practical examples evolved and applied to their area, and lastly, knew they could contact the host person for further discussion at almost any time. There appeared to be a reluctance to contact producer advocates after the event. Adopting this approach widened producer support and engagement.

Identifying the best producer speaker was undertaken with consultation with other TIA staff, industry service providers and key producers. It allowed a good range of suitable and credible speakers to be identified, along with host properties with appropriate best practice activities being undertaken that supported the MMfS module being delivered. At other times the Tasmanian co-ordinator had to draw on the specific knowledge of industry people and their client relationships to enlist speaker hosts.

Monitoring and evaluation was a priority for the program. Locally the program put significant effort into the evaluation procedures seeking to advocate to all attendees the value of the evaluation within activities and collect information wherever possible and appropriate. Evaluation material was developed based on the content of the specific event and in consultation with the deliverer, and where possible the use of MMfS library of evaluation questions. The evaluation questions were generally of a “knowledge” type and not of a higher-order “interpretation” or “analysis” nature. These higher order questions could be addressed further in Category C events.

4 Results

4.1 Modules delivered

In the three years of Phase II of the MMfS project, extension activities primarily focused on four core modules of “Plan for Success”, “Turning Pasture into Product”, “Gain from Genetics” and “Wean More Lambs”. These modules were identified by both producers and MLA as core themes that underpinned the program.

Activities in all these areas were undertaken with good attendance for each event, excellent scores on value ad satisfaction, and producer’s ability to articulate where practice change would occur in their own operation in the immediate or medium term. Three key modules were identified by producers as their preferred learning needs, either from face to face discussions or in return evaluations. The other priority module (business development) was only identified sporadically and only a small number of producers were sufficiently enthusiastic to undertake the strong theoretical and traditional classroom based learning activities needed in that module. At the end of Phase II the events within the core modules met the 60% criteria. The OJD events of 2011 and 2012 were seen by producers as of significant importance and were well attended and highly successful. As a consequence the number of OJD events diluted the impact of the other core modules.

The project was very successful, with attendance and all Category B and C performance indicators being scored highly. An overall summary of frequency of MMfS modules delivered is shown in Figure 1 below. This achieved the key performance target of 60% of events being in the four core areas of business development, genetics, feed base utilisation and lamb productivity.

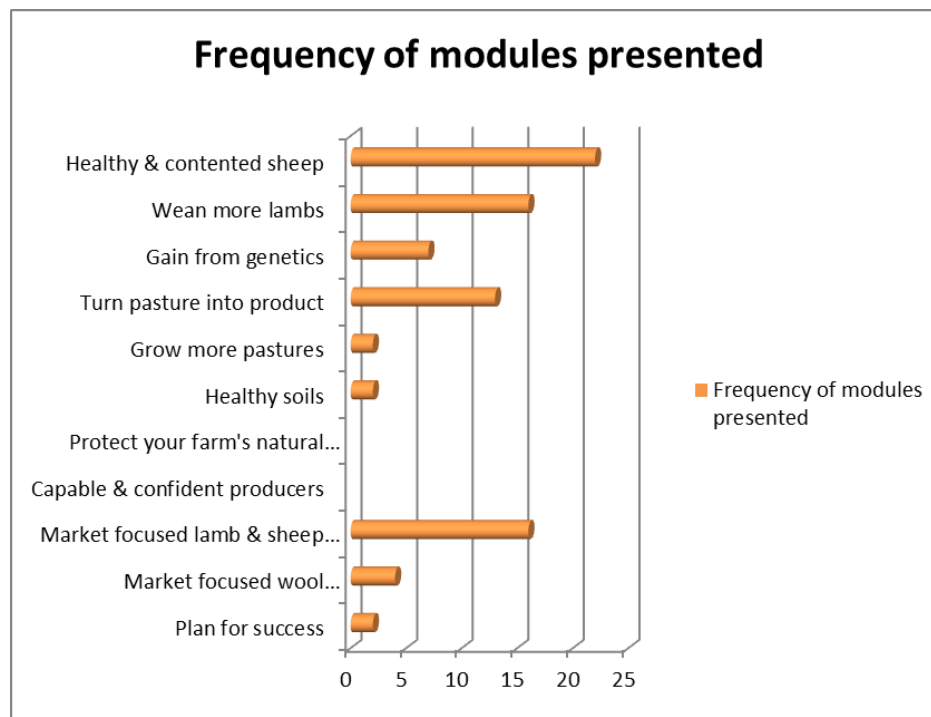


Fig 1. Frequency of MMfS modules delivered in Tasmania 2010 – 2013 (including upcoming events).

A number of producers throughout the state suggested improved business understanding and decision making was an important area for activity development. However activities

were limited to cost of production in recognition of the difficulties posed for engagement in this specific area, and willingness of sufficient producers to identify this as an area of priority. Attempts to undertake similar activities in the past have met with the same outcome. A significant hurdle appears to be the group dynamic and degree of disclosure of specific and perceived sensitive enterprise information. Producers in the key target audience categories may also use the specific services of other service providers (such as accountants, business developers and consultants) to provide this service, especially as they seem to have credibility and familiarity with their specific operation.

The extension activities undertaken have shown the significant value which can be gained from the attendees by undertaking collaborative events and coordinating MMfS activities with other programs and industry partners associated with sheep, animals, and grazing projects. High levels of value and satisfaction were recorded on monitoring and evaluation sheets for attendees, personal communication with supporting organisations indicated high levels of satisfaction with the event outcomes and a willingness to undertake more collaborative events in the future.

MMfS in Tasmania has achieved a high level of credibility and awareness since its inception. The last event was undertaken in collaboration with Sheep Connect Tasmania and Macquarie Franklin. Sheep Connect Tasmania was used as a broad network advertising outlet and this assisted in keeping the profile of MMfS and the event active. Macquarie Franklin added value through an additional speaker, Dr J Hocking Edwards, who spoke on related lamb production, eating quality genetics, local research sites and the implication of the research.

While the reporting period is closing for Phase II, MMfS in Tasmania has been approached to coordinate two upcoming events before Phase II ends.

Firstly, Elders has partnered with MMfS to provide a merino genetics workshop for all producers, and through MMfS has sourced the services of Sheep Genetics to present appropriate material on the day as well as visiting Tasmanian producers interested in progressing specific genetics issues while they are in Tasmania. Other keynote speakers have been organised for this workshop. This has been reported as a Category A event as it was designed to have producers increase their understanding of genetic objectives, new trait indicators being released by Sheep Genetics and their impact on breeding, and the commercial implications. At this stage it is an engagement event, and not a Category C type undertaking. The event was designed to be of a Category B type but Sheep Genetics staff presented material aimed at a Category A standard only.

This will present an opportunity for providers who attend to see the benefits of scientific and evidence based improvement, and most importantly, to see that such initiatives are incorporated into MLA-sponsored genetics performance recording schemes. Discussion and hands-on session with a range of rams from multiple studs allowed for considerable discussion. Both breeders and producers were able to articulate their breeding objectives and whether the type of animal on display would meet the commercial objectives each had in mind. There was a strong emphasis on producing better sheep that met both wool and meat markets, were faster growing, built a better carcass and were more feed efficient. The discussion was related back to the genetics module in the MMfS manual and other MLA material.

Secondly, our industry partners have requested assistance with a grazing and pasture management field day organised by NRM North. This will focus on grazing options, pasture identification, grazing strategies and feed budgets. Three speakers including the MMfS Co-ordinator will attend. A key focus will be on using MMfS grazing tools, assessing pasture mass and developing easy to use and update feed budgets.

Both events are expected to attract high audience attendance. Elders have undertaken a strong promotion and MMfS has utilised Sheep Connect Tasmania to also promote the event.

4.2 A team effort across the State

MMfS was the sole or key driver of the MMfS events organised in Tasmania for this reporting period, however, attendance and support from other service providers was significant in driving interest and in delivering efficient and effective logistical support. The support of other groups also added broader value to the overall event and encouraged attendance. Note the spread of events throughout the State (refer Figure 2 below).

Service providers have indicated they are in a good position to often identify specific clients that would gain value from specific events, thus promoting and encouraging client attendance as well as providing transport for a number of clients.

4.3 Attendance

The use of three years of producer attendance records also allowed for focused regional promotion to ensure good attendance.

The end result has been an excellent attendance at all events. Broader industry support was also received from a range of agribusinesses by way of provision of advertising and promotion, speakers and supporting material.

Attendance records show that MMfS has a good blend of attendance with 39% of attendees coming to their second or greater number of MMfS events (refer Figure 3 below). Clearly, MMfS is continuing to engage with new producers but is also retaining previous attendees by providing additional extension programs of relevance and interest.

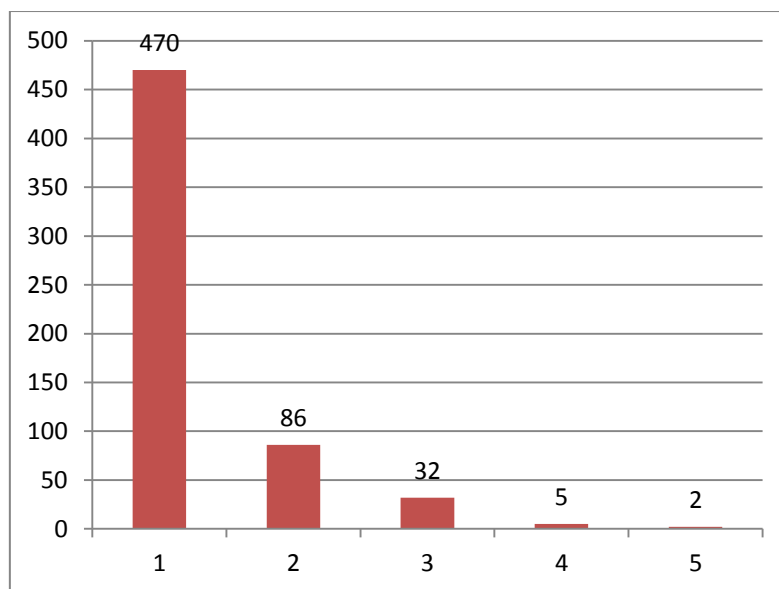


Fig 3. Frequency of individual producers' attendance (n=768) at MMfS events over Phase II

The attendance rates have also increased with a focus on partnering with other allied industry services providers. The last event "Your Lambs, Your Profit" was delivered with support from Sheep Connect Tasmania, and Macquarie Franklin. These two delivery partners added speakers on allied topics and ensured attendees saw additional value in the

event. The other partners were also able to report and demonstrate on relevant issues to the main topic and add depth to the discussion. For example, Dr Hocking Edwards reported on the progress of the meat eating quality project and the importance of aspects that related to local on-farm management issues that Dr Trompf had also been discussing.

4.4 Evaluations

The MMfS Tasmania fulfilled all the requirements of the contract for evaluation purposes.

In summary they were;

The standard MMfS monitoring and evaluation processes will include:

Category A: Measuring awareness, satisfaction, value and intention to change

At least 60% participant feedback sheets using the standard MBfP.

Category B: Measuring shifts in knowledge, skills and confidence (KSC)

Pre and post knowledge and skills audits are to be conducted with at least 80% participants of category B activities. using the standard MMfS spreadsheet.

Non accredited training will require the 100% usage of the generic MMfS pre and post knowledge and skills audit questions. Accredited training activities will ensure key MMfS audit questions are used for at least 30% of accredited courses delivered to ensure these courses can be included in the overall MMfS M&E reporting.

Category C: Measuring practice change and program impact. Practice change will be recorded for 80% of participants in all category C activities.

Lastly, the state co-ordinator will assist in identifying and recruiting case studies to enable tracking of profitability and productivity gains as a result of participating in the MMfS program.

The MMfS program is ahead of its contracted performance targets although the recording for monitoring and evaluation purposes has had a number of problems early in the program that have given a low recording rate in some indicators. Events over the last year have addressed the low capture rate as well as continuing to provide events focussed on the core modules.

The operating plan for this period was on target and exceeded the performance targets for all categories (A, B and C type events). These results are summarised below (Figures 4 – 6). Tasmania achieved its key performance targets in the contract and in some cases exceeded them several fold.

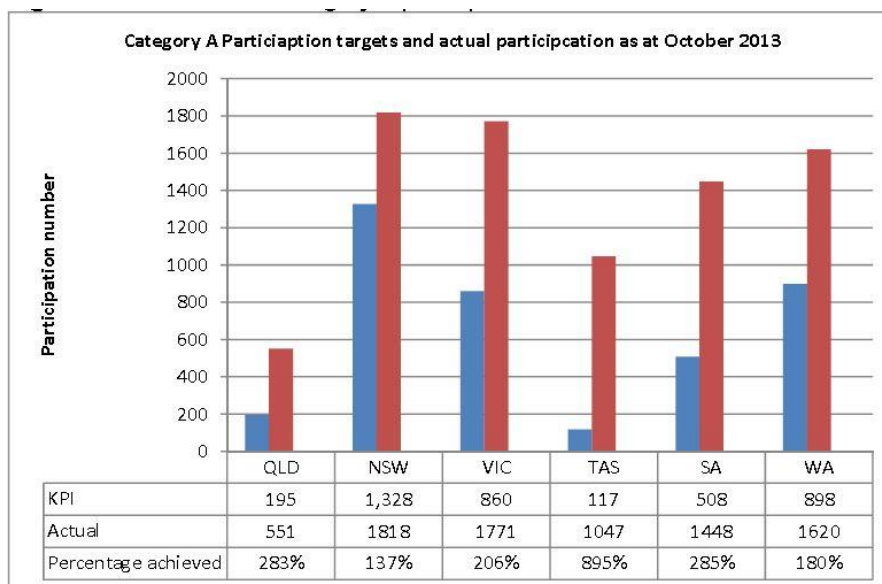


Fig 4. Summary of Category A participation against targets

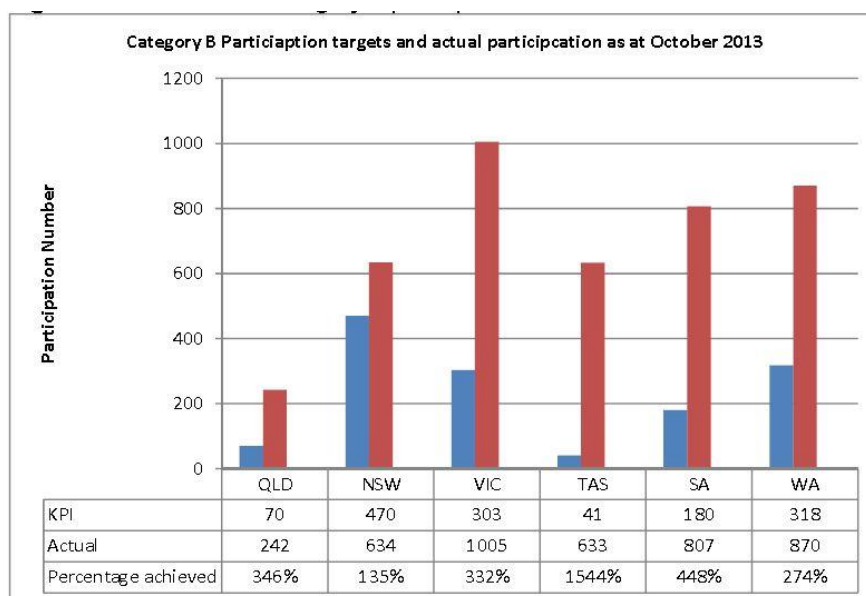


Fig 5. Summary of Category B participation against targets

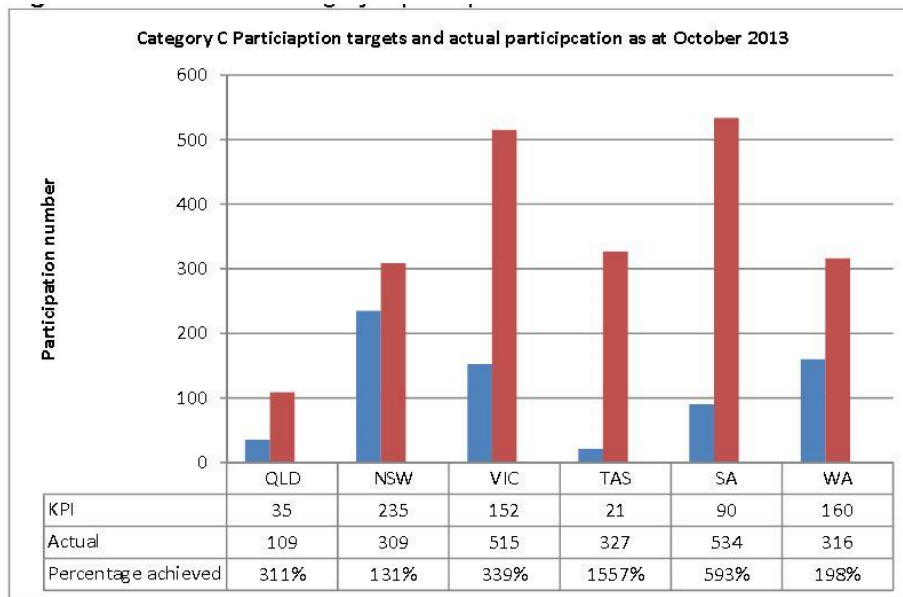


Fig 6. Summary of Category C participation against targets

All evaluation data has been submitted before the required dates and in an acceptable form. In three events the deliverers and the other industry partners supplied 'clicker' technology and this also helped with large attendances to ensure capture rates for attendance were perfect. Figure 7 below summarises these outcomes.

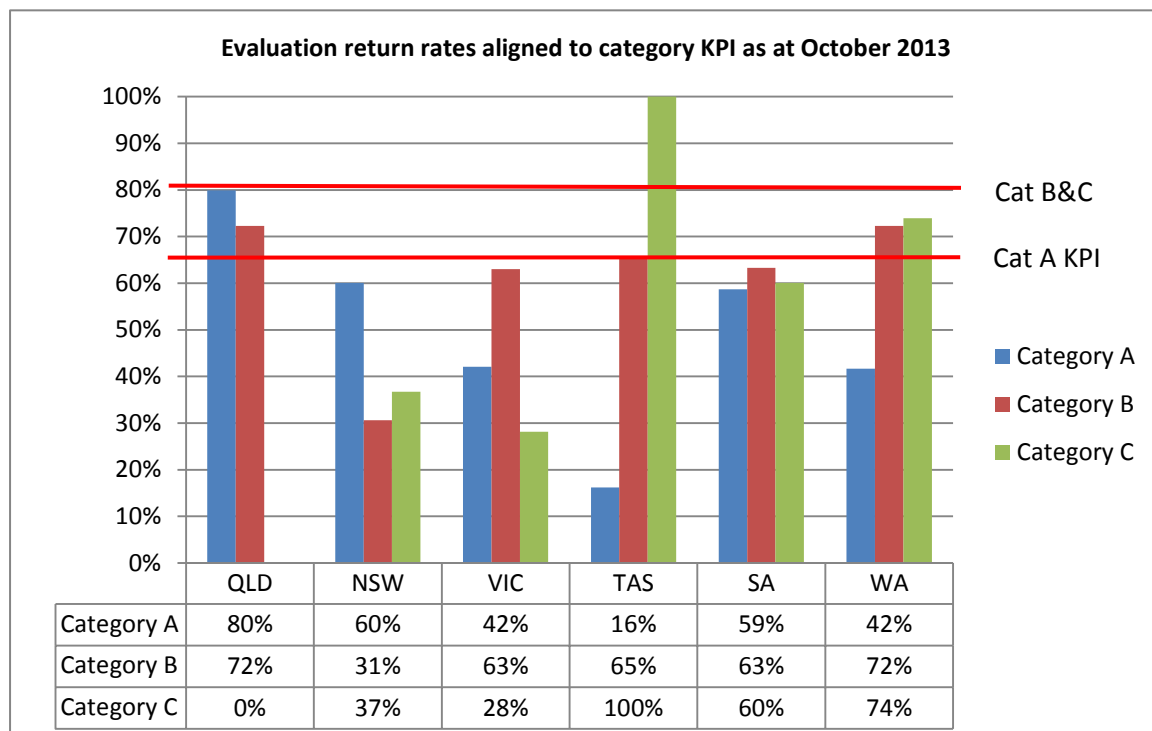


Fig 7. Evaluation return rate by state at October 2013

The evaluation rates of 60% for Category A activity was not achieved. At the start of the program there was confusion as to how evaluation was to be handled. Attendance at early

Category A events was high, and in most cases too high to be able to handle evaluations or ensuring return of evaluation forms. At one event over 200 people attended and the event program was beyond the scope of distributing and collecting evaluations. This was addressed in future events. Category B and C events were evaluations reached 65% and 100% respectively. The required level was 80%. The levels rose significantly after the first year when a better understanding of evaluation requirements and process was achieved.

4.5 Producer profile

The target audience (producers) have exceeded the expected audience profile in that average flock size is in excess of 3500 sheep.

While the MMfS plan and KPI's for Tasmania was targeted to achieve coverage of 15% of producers with 2000 sheep, the program overall achieved coverage of 65% of producers with more than 2000 sheep. Refer to Figure 8 and Table 2 and 3 below.

The MMfS program in Tasmania was clearly engaging with producers across the profile. The program had a stronger impact on the large producer component than originally anticipated. However, the nature of reporting and local knowledge suggests they were represented either by employees or disguised in the results as smaller individual properties of the overall enterprise.

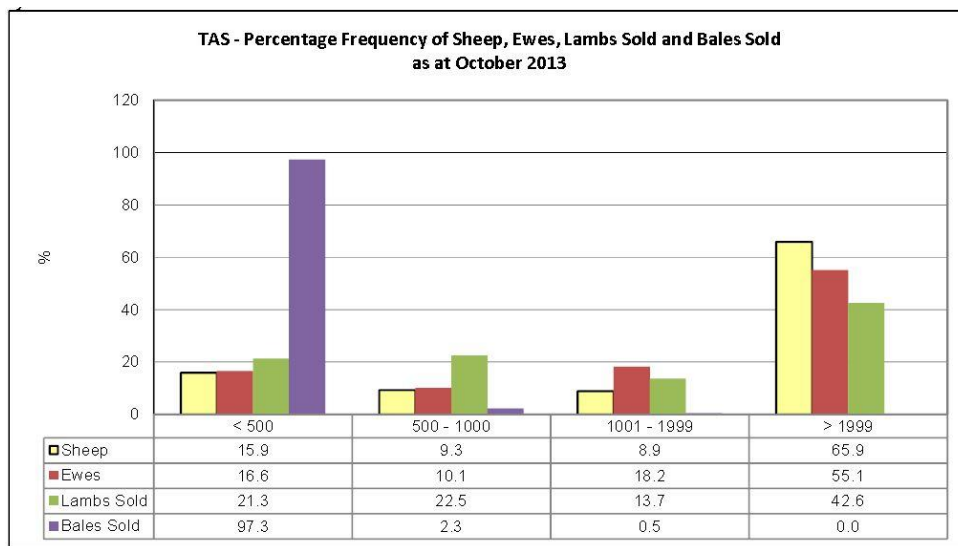


Fig 8. Flock size

	Average number of sheep	Median number of sheep
Sheep flock size	5658	3500
Ewe flock size	3850	2500
Lambs sold	2344	1400
Wool bales sold	147	100

Table 2. Flock details

	No. of providers
Property less than 100 hectares	25-30
Property between 100 – 499 hectares	40-50
Property between 500 – 2499 hectares	100
Property between 2500 – 24999 hectares	70-80

Table 3. Frequency of property size of Tasmanian producers who attended MMfS events (Note: of the participants who supplied property size information (23%), the median property size was 1288 ha, with the majority of producers (41%, managing between 500 – 2499 ha.

5 Discussion

The delivery of MMfS in Tasmania has been a successful example of partnering with local and interstate organisations and deliverers. In three years the delivery of events has been varied, in line with the expressed needs and expectations of producers and supporting organisations. In addition it has been achieved within budget and achieved the key performance targets in the delivery contract. The engagement of partners has been positive, key partners were excited and keen to undertake more activities with MMfS Tasmania as a means of projecting their own objectives but being associated with a program that was seen by producers as valuable, worthwhile and delivering credible, timely and practical material and skills.

The strong communication and engagement process with other stakeholders ensured events were focussed but had a range of material and depth to provide interest to all attending. It also ensured that supporting partners had staff in attendance to cover all the likely queries from participants. Mainland participants were approached either because of their successful delivery of topics or the long standing and credible relationship with Tasmanian producers in the past.

All but two modules of the MMfS Manual were delivered during Phase II. The two modules, the natural resource module (number 5) and capable and confident livestock producers (module 4), that were not delivered. This was because they were not considered a priority by producers and there was a lack of interest to achieve adequate numbers to organise a viable event. Business/enterprise planning was conducted only once. Previous attempts in other programs, and the MMfS effort to undertake this module have been disappointing and maybe reflect the attitude of producers that this is a sensitive area. They may decide their specific business planning and advice comes from other providers with a greater understanding of their issues, and not something that they wish to disclose in a small but public arena.

All events achieved high attendance levels. In particular, events that had strong practical or “hands-on” elements enjoyed high attendance. For example, the two highest attended events were “Lamb Survival” involving lamb autopsies undertaken by attendees, and “Safe and Effective Vaccination for OJD Control” using a range of vaccination equipment on yarded sheep. Some 1/3 of producers engaged with MMfS on an ongoing basis attending more than one event.

There was a wide range of industry support from private sector including resellers, service providers, brokers and consultants. Allied service providers used MMfS to add value to their events as well as supporting and encouraging their customers to attend MMfS events, viewing the relationship and participation as good for both business and producers. Service providers provided a range of advertising and promotion for events. For example, MMfS event fliers were added to producers monthly business statements as a means of promoting events, showing industry support for MMfS and relevance of the topic. Other organisations supported MMfS with inclusion of events on their web sites and emails of coming events to their clients. On occasions some resellers provided additional catering facilities or organised venue facilities to support other local rural needs (eg obtaining the use of meeting rooms and local caterers to support area football teams). The potential challenge as lead organisation on these events would normally be the participation details and responses from attendees regarding future needs. All supporting organisations respected that this data was MMfS and never requested copiers. It was possibly not an issue as other states because the attendees were generally known by most supporting organisations.

The positive reputation for delivery of valued content has been built on over both Phase I and II. Producers and local industry service providers have increasingly enquired about how

the MMfS program could meet their needs either by communicating their suggestions and needs in evaluation forms, by email or in face to face discussions. A survey of over 50 producers throughout Tasmania was also undertaken early in Phase II. It sort to identify their learning needs and where they matched with MMfS modules, and whether they were state or regional issues, and also if they were of an immediate or longer term nature (such as drought feeding, grub or pest attack vs pasture development and sustainability). .

Satisfaction and value levels were high and similar to results reported by other states. Across three years of the program the satisfaction levels reported by producers averaged 8.7 (out of 10) and value of all session's average 8.6 (out of 10). Knowledge and skills assessments pre and post event went from 38.7% correct to 66.3% correct, a 41% improvement.

Demographic profile of attendees was often incomplete data, particularly information regarding the age, contact details, size of flocks or annual turn-over. Presumably producers were sensitive about protecting personal information and the need for others to know it. However anecdotal evidence suggests that producers from a wider range of locations around Tasmania were attending MMfS events organised in more locations than in the past, or were travelling to them because of the value they saw in attending.

Challenges going forward:

- The age profile of attendees has dramatically expanded in Phase II through the support of adult education events undertaken by TAFE with farmers wishing to improve their business and management skills. While not an MMfS event, it has provided an opportunity to engage with farmers actively seeking new and relevant information. These highly motivated young people will be key to maintaining attendances in MMfS events and driving practice change with a good cost-benefit analysis outcome due to longer recovery time.
- The development of irrigation schemes throughout Tasmania, but particularly in the midlands, where the bulk of Tasmanian sheep are located, has refocused producers on profit drivers and achieving acceptable returns on assets. It has also meant renewed interest in wool and prime lamb production to capitalise on improved productivity from land development. For those without irrigation infrastructure, there are still opportunities to improve lamb turnoff to supply those with irrigated pastures. The changing nature of the local industry will mean opportunities for MMfS to assist producers to identify learning needs and skills development. For local sheep producers there will also be the need to evaluate the relative cost of production of alternative broad acre agricultural enterprises relative to sheep production.

6 Appendix 1

COMPLETED KEY EXTENSION AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES INFORMATION (from July to October 2013)

Event Title	Location and/or region	Month (or season)	Activity Cat. A, B or C	Farm business target No.	MMfS module/s	Presenters/ facilitators		Participant fee Y/N (amount)	Delivery partner/links with other program (private, DPI etc)	Potential Advocate participation
Confident livestock producers	Happy Chef, Longford,	August	C	15	Plan for Success (Module 1)	Rob Herrmann Ag Concepts 1300 987 742		Y, \$50@ for workbook	More Beef from Pastures	N
Scanning for success	6.1.1 Mt Vernon, Melton Mowbray	July	B	19	Wean More Lambs (Module 10)	Chris Shands Terry O'Toole		N	CRC Sheep T O'Toole, local pregnancy scanner	N
Scanning for success	Leighlands, Perth	July	B	28	Wean More Lambs (Module 10)	Chris Shands Terry O'Toole		N	CRC Sheep T O'Toole, local pregnancy scanner	N
Your Lambs, Your Profit	Tomahawk	Sept	B	40	Wean More Lambs (Module 10)	Dr J Trompf, Dr B Jackson (DPIPWE Vet) Dr Hocking Edwards (SARDI) P Jarvie (Zoetis)		N	Sheep Connect Tasmania, Macquarie Franklin	N
Your Lambs, Your Profit	Bothwell	Sept	B	27	Wean More Lambs (Module 10)	Dr J Trompf, Dr B Jackson (DPIPWE Vet) Dr Hocking Edwards (SARDI) P Jarvie (Zoetis)		N	Sheep Connect Tasmania, Macquarie Franklin	N
Your Lambs, Your Profit	Blackwood Creek	Sept	B	53	Wean More Lambs (Module 10)	Dr J Trompf, Dr B Jackson (DPIPWE Vet) Dr Hocking Edwards (SARDI) P Jarvie (Zoetis)		N	Sheep Connect Tasmania, Macquarie Franklin	N

7 Appendix 2

PLANNED KEY EXTENSION AND COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES INFORMATION (planned activities November 2013)

Event Title	Location and/or region	Month (or season)	Activity Cat. A, B or C	Farm business target No.	MMfS module/s	Presenters/ facilitators		Participant fee Y/N (amount)	Delivery partner/links with other program (private, DPI etc)	Potential Advocate participation
NRM Pasture trials in the Tamar Valley	Exeter	16 th November (completed)	A	45 attended	Turning Pasture into Product Using "Pasture Tool" and "Lamb Planner"	Adrian James A Bailey		N	NRM North,	N
Making Meat and Money from Merinos	Campbell Town	28 th November	A	65+	Gain from Genetics Using Sheep Genetics "ASBV's a guide for ram buyers"	Luke (Sheep Genetics, MLA) Bruce Michael Andrew Michael Wayne Lehmann Richard Harkness Stephen Kellok		N	Elders Rural Sheep Genetics	Y Bruce Michael