

finalreport

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Enhancing extension skills to drive adoption in the northern beef industry

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Abstract

The variable rates of adoption of new technologies and improved management practices by beef producers across northern Australia has been low in recent decades. Improving the skills of extension officers from the Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia departments of agriculture that service the northern beef industry was recognised as one method of addressing this problem. The Persuasion Skills Training provided by C-Qual Agritelligence™ was identified as a program that would equip extension officers with techniques to increase adoption rates amongst northern beef producers. With funding from MLA, two-day workshops were held in Charters Towers, Queensland (Qld) and Darwin, Northern Territory (NT) during 2012-13. A total of 31 extension professionals participated in the training, two-thirds of whom had been working in extension for less than ten years. Detailed feedback from the participants is provided indicating that a wide range of skills were acquired and put into practice. It is too soon to ascertain the flow-on effect for industry. The Persuasion Skills training is recommended for other extension officers that service the red meat producers of Australia.

Executive summary

Negative to marginal returns over the last ten years for many beef producers in northern Australia have highlighted the need for adoption of management practices that will improve economic viability and environmental sustainability of their beef businesses. There is a wealth of available research findings that have the potential to address many of these challenges. These findings have been incorporated into a range of extension programs, projects, packages and activities to increase the rates of adoption. However for many of the big issues facing the northern beef industry such as breeder herd performance, the rate of adoption has been disappointingly low.

Therefore a new approach was needed to increase the adoption of a range of management practices across the northern beef industry. Although the level of extension services provided by the state departments of agriculture has declined over the last two decades, there is currently a high percentage of the current extension officers who are in the formative years of their extension career i.e. less than ten years of extension experience. To provide meaningful training that focuses on a new approach to extension for this cohort of extension professionals, the Persuasion Skills workshop was selected after contacting other industries that had participated in the training.

Two-day workshops were held during 2012-13 in Charters Towers for 16 Queensland beef extension officers, and Darwin for 15 Northern Territory and Western Australia extension officers. Workshop content was framed around the CaPTuRE™ Model of Persuasion with its elements of:

1. Consult the client
2. Package the concept
3. Tune the channels
4. Remove the barriers
5. Ensure commitment.

The workshop agenda was the same for both workshops (Appendix 1). The evaluation of the training was done via feedback at the conclusion of both workshops (Appendices 2 and 3) and follow-up evaluation seven months later for the Charters Towers group only (Appendix 4). Insufficient time had elapsed since the Darwin workshop for the follow-up evaluation. Feedback from all participating extension officers was very positive. Key outcomes from the training were:-

- All participants identified new skills that could improve their effectiveness as extension officers
- All participants recognised where and when these skills could be applied
- Eighty-seven percent of extension officers identified existing extension programs or packages that are currently used with northern producers that could be revamped using the Persuasion Skills principles
- Sixty-eight percent of extension officers identified themselves as being capable of evaluating and comparing outcomes of past extension events with the same event conducted using the Persuasion Skills gained at the workshop i.e. a “before and after” comparison

- Eighty-seven percent of extension officers identified themselves as being capable of explaining the skills and techniques that they learnt to other extension officers who had not done the Persuasion Skills training.

Seven months post-training, 88 percent of the extension officers who participated in the Charters Towers workshop had implemented their newly acquired Persuasion Skills in one or more of the following ways:

- Their interactions with graziers
- Day to day project work
- Conducting training events with graziers
- Making changes to existing extension packages and projects
- Other aspects of extension work.

While it is too early to identify any benefits to industry, there is a high and realistic expectation that the effectiveness of extension officers who participated in the training will be enhanced. Comments from participants indicated a high level of relevance to their role as extension officers, for example:

- It was a good demonstration of pulling together skills from other sources/workshops and highlighting the relevance to our own projects and the barriers we are currently facing with adoption
- A most valuable course with application in extension/project management on-ground and management [in] general
- Great content, applicable, we need to know this
- Well structured workshop with an excellent mix of activity, participation, information
- A large amount of new concepts that will prove invaluable in planning future projects.

Producer surveys and evaluation of extension programs, projects and events will provide the evidence (or otherwise) of positive change in the northern beef industry. The skills obtained by the 31 extension officers who participated in the Persuasion Skills workshop will significantly increase the probability of adoption of management practices that will move the northern beef industry towards sustainability and profitability.

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1 Background

The economic performance of north Australian beef producers has been poor over the last decade. The 2009 northern beef situation analysis report stated that the industry was in its worst state since the beef slump of the 1970's with average return on assets of 0.3% to 2.0%. Average beef producers tended to spend more than they earned in six of the last seven years, indicating the northern beef industry was generally in a very unprofitable and unsustainable state (McCosker, McLean & Holmes 2010). The report also identified that the top 20 percent of producers were performing well and that there was a need to organise effective and targeted extension programs to increase the performance of the balance of producers.

Extension services have been provided to northern producers at least since WW2. In recent decades this extension has been well targeted and has gradually moved towards a whole systems focus. Despite this, the uptake of R&D even when in a whole of enterprise context, has been low. To increase rates of adoption, the content and method of delivery of the extension message needs review. The aim of this project was to provide beef extension officers with additional skills in the delivery of extension services.

The Persuasion Skills workshop was developed about five years ago with the objective of providing extension officers with a simple framework for designing and delivering extension programs with a focus on adoption of new practices. The emphasis is on decision making and how to get the best designed programs so that they tap into the decision making processes of the target audience, changing attitudes and securing a commitment to act on new knowledge.

The concepts of the program are generic and not industry specific. Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) have supported the program over the last 2-3 years specifically for the grains industry. The program has also been shaped to meet the needs of the sugar industry (BSES Limited), the sheep industry (Sheep CRC) and the private sector. The two north Australia workshops were tailored to the northern beef industry.

In most agricultural industries extension officers have had little exposure to specific communication skills that tie in directly with selling an idea or new concept in a way that influences attitudes (that is persuasion). In many cases Extension Officers who have not been exposed to this understanding of human decision-making, benefit greatly and gain a new understanding of how to pitch their technology adoption messages.

The Persuasion Skills workshop has been developed by C-Qual Agritelligence™ to deliver techniques that enhance R&D Extension, distributor training and new technology uptake (See <http://www.c-qual.com/> for more detail).

2 Project objectives

2.1 Primary objective

To equip beef extension staff with the latest extension skills by April 2013 to increase adoption of practices that will improve the sustainability and viability of the north Australian beef industry.

2.2 Secondary objectives

1. Extension packages e.g. Stocktake, Fire Information Days, etc, will be redesigned using the Persuasion Skills techniques

2. All extension officers will apply the Persuasion Skills techniques to at least one of these extension events over the following 12 months and document the impact on participating graziers using QualData (Coutts & Affiliates)
3. In many regions the same series of workshops are conducted on an annual basis. At the next iteration of such workshops a comparison will be made with the outcomes obtained by analysing grazer feedback and actions from workshops pre and post Persuasion Skills training
4. Narratives of the extension events will be produced by extension officers to document successes from using the Persuasion Skills approach
5. An article suitable for publishing in MLA's Feedback magazine will be produced based on these narratives
6. Workshop participants will be required to provide training for those extension officers who did not receive the Persuasion Skills training (train the trainer).

3 Methodology

Persuasion Skills Workshops were conducted in Charters Towers and Darwin in 2012-13 for FutureBeef extension staff working in the north Australian beef industry.

The workshop content was tailored to the needs of the beef extension officers in attendance using a list of extension/adoption challenges and bios on the participants. The workshop trainers Bruce Howie and Jeanette Long perused the FutureBeef website to gain meaningful insights into the northern beef industry to make the workshops as relevant to the participants as possible.

The workshop content was framed around the CaPTuRE™ Model of Persuasion with its elements of:

1. Consult the client
2. Package the concept
3. Tune the channels
4. Remove the barriers
5. Ensure commitment.

At the end of each workshop the participating extension officers completed an evaluation questionnaire. Eight months after the Charters Towers workshop additional feedback was sought from all participants to assess the changes that had been made in their extension activities, projects and programs. There was insufficient time since the training for participants at the Darwin workshop to have made significant changes in their extension work.

4 Results

4.1 Participants

4.1.1 Charters Towers workshop

Fourteen beef extension officers, an agricultural economist and a landcare coordinator participated in the Charters Towers workshop.

AGENCY	ATTENDEES	LOCATION
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Kiri Broad	Mareeba
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Matt Brown	Rockhampton
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Kate Brown	Townsville

Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Byrony Daniels	Emerald
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Megan Debney	Charters Towers
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Laura Devlin	Emerald
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Tim Emery	Roma
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Jim Fletcher	Mackay
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Jo Gangemi	Biloela
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Karl McKellar	Charters Towers
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Olivia Pisani	Charters Towers
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Jane Pryor	Rockhampton
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Peggy Rohan	Emerald
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Bob Shepherd	Charters Towers
Dalrymple Landcare Committee	Raymond Stacey	Charters Towers
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	Lauren Williams	Mackay

All of these people were Queensland based. Only two members of this group had more than ten years of experience as extension officers, although an additional two people had participated actively in extension as beef producers for more than ten years. Most of the balance had less than five years of agricultural extension experience which made the Persuasion Skills training very timely in the formative years of their careers as extension officers.

Feedback on completion of the workshop from the 16 participants is shown in Figure 1a and Table 1a. The results from a second survey to ascertain how the learnings had been incorporated into extension activities eight months after the training are shown in Figure 1b and Table 1b.

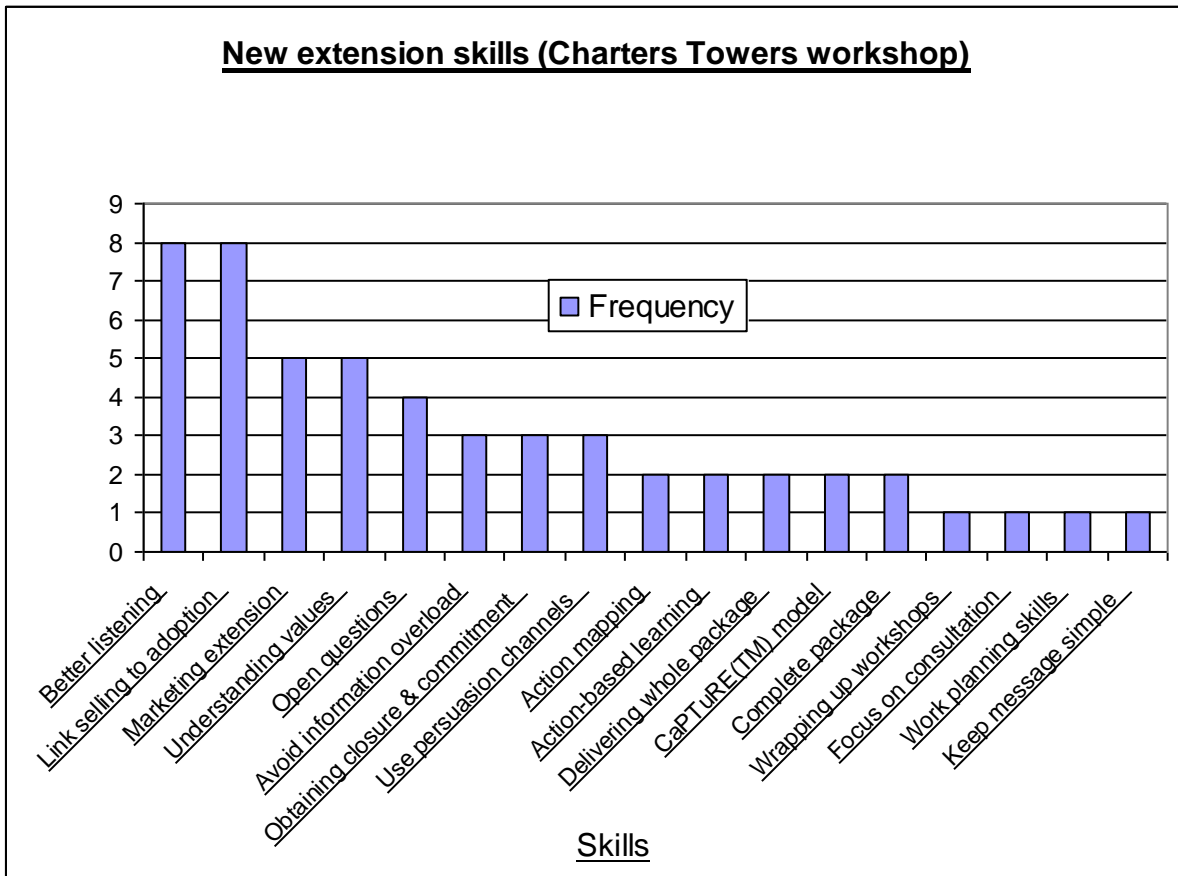


Figure 1a. Skills learnt by extension officers at the Charters Towers Persuasion Skills workshop.

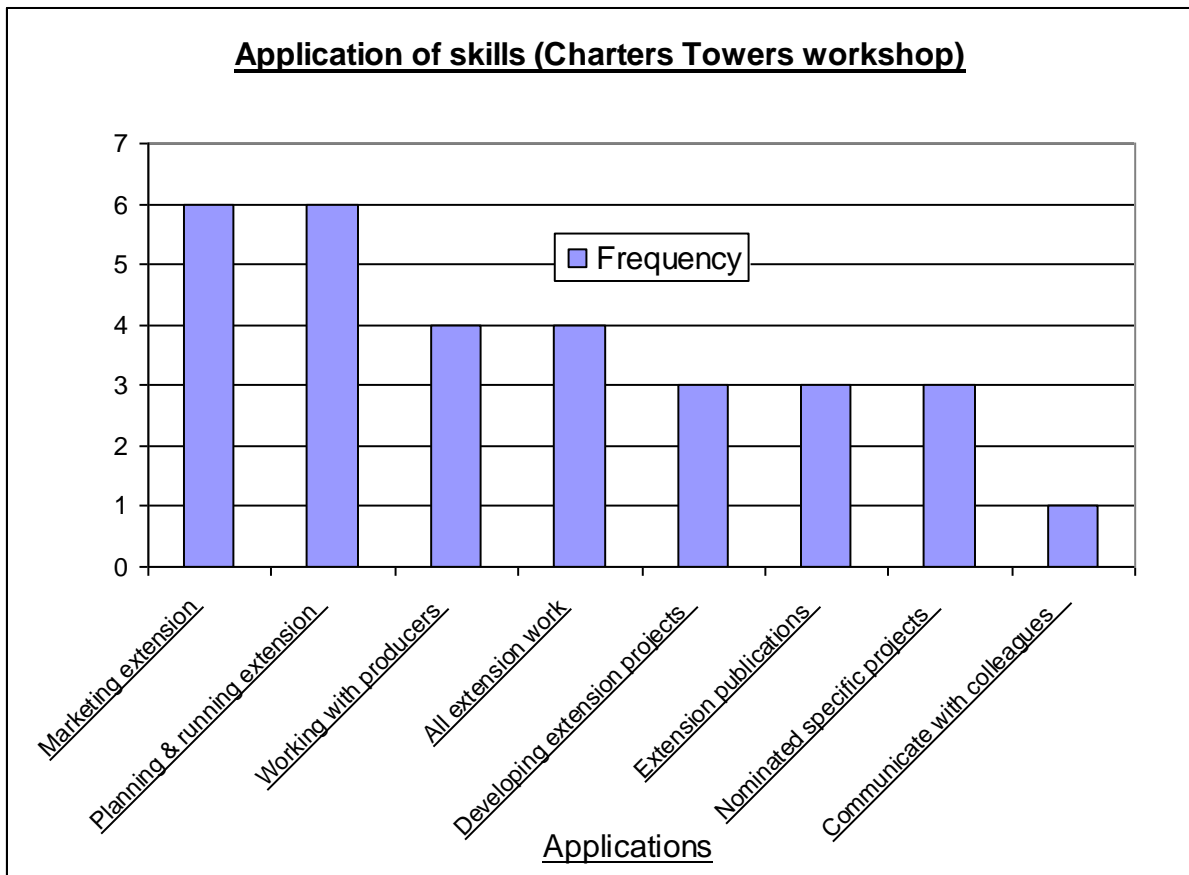


Figure 1b. Application of skills by extension officers at the Charters Towers Persuasion Skills workshop.

Table 1a. Feedback from the 16 participants at the Charters Towers Persuasion Skills Workshop (Note: numbers in brackets indicate number of times mentioned)

<p>Q1. New skills, techniques & ideas that will improve your extension effectiveness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better listening skills (8) • Skills to link selling to adoption (8) • Skills to better market extension activities e.g. flyer design, etc. (5) • Understanding values (5) • Asking open questions (4) • Avoid information overload (3) • Obtaining closure and commitment from producers (3) • Using the persuasion channels (3) • Action mapping process (2) • Make learning more action-based (2) • Delivering a whole package (2) • Using the Capture model (2) • Complete package (2) • Wrapping up a workshop (1) • Focus on consultation (1) • Work planning skills (1) • Keep the message simple (1)
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<p>Q2. Where & when could you apply these skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing of extension activities - workshops, field-days, etc. (6) • Planning & running extension activities (6) • Working with producers 1 on 1 or in groups (4) • In all aspects of extension work (4) • Development of extension projects (3) • Production of extension publications, newsletters, reports, surveys, etc. (3) • Nominated specific projects (3) • Communication with colleagues (1)
<p>Q3. Identify training activities, projects or packages where these skills & techniques could be applied</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grazing BMP • All MLA EDGE packages • Stocktake • Testing Management Options workshop • Grazier information Days • Business packages e.g. Breed Cow Dynama workshops • Producer Demonstration Sites projects e.g. heifer management & wet season P • Producer needs assessment surveys • All extension activities
<p>Q4. Nominate one activity, project or package that you would be willing assist in re-packaging</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breeding EDGE • Grazing BMP • All packages (5) • Any associated flyers & brochures • EDGE packages • Nutrition EDGE • Stocktake • GLM EDGE • PDS • Land reclamation module in GLM EDGE
<p>Q5. Can you compare the outcomes from an extension activity conducted pre and post training?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (12) • No (2) • Not sure (2) <p>Activities nominated:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grazing BMP • Stocktake • Pasture Rundown Days • Fire Management Information Days • GLM EDGE
<p>Q6. Could you explain the skills & techniques to other extension officers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (15) • Nil response (1) <p>Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will be passing information to others not at workshop • Won't remember everything, but will pass on the things that I use • Given time to formulate a response • Teach to learn • Share and ensure buy-in • Would need to refresh myself first

Table 1b. Putting training into practice since the Charters Towers Persuasion Skills Workshop

<p>Interaction with Graziers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More emphasis on the 'how' and 'what' questions rather than the why. Attempt to get closure with graziers in an effort to get commitment to act/adopt a new practice • Improved my listening skills when talking to producers at workshops – using active listening and open questions, especially when requesting feedback on the Grazing BMP modules • Reviewed how we engage with clients and build relationships • Avoid overloading with facts and figures when advertising extension events • Spending time in discussion with graziers and trying to get to the heart of what motivates them (i.e. work life balance, maintaining a good breeder herd, having enough time to participate in social sport, or finding quality staff etc) • Employed active listening skills when conducting grazing practice surveys with graziers • After learning the skill of active listening in the workshop, now have an acute awareness of listening to intent in producers voices when discussing their commitment to DAFF projects • Can now generally tell if a producer is genuine and enthusiastic about participating in a project and when they are not (i.e. committing to GMP surveys, committing to a producer group) • The information provided in the workshop about building relationships has helped to develop relationships with producers • The most important thing is often not what you know but that you are passionate and genuinely care; producers respect this • Pass on knowledge and skills regarding technical information in a way that considers target audience values and motivation • Endeavour to continue to take this values approach in my day to day dealings with graziers • Use industry relevant language with beef producers • Find what the other person wants and tailor the message around that point and then introduce other points etc look for common ground/needs/wants first • More open and advantageous to ask 'how' they do that, Instead of 'why' they do that, and follow up with, 'what' is the advantage of doing that? e.g. managing pockets of black basalt in red basalt, and what was the advantage of doing it that way, generated a more comprehensive answer
<p>Day to Day Project Work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In reviewing flyers for field-days and producer forums, more emphasis is placed on the Persuasion Skills principles when providing feedback to beef extension officers • Change the way I word things so that I hit triggers • Developing invites to field days with less information • Making advertising more direct and selling the topic a little more • Tried to simplify and reduce the printed information that we hand out • Making action plans simpler and more relevant to graziers in the Grazing BMP program • Design of information flyers /emails used to advertise field days such as the Bull days and the Ian Braithwaite days • Facilitation of the Young Producers Consultation Workshop was designed to utilise new technology, be interactive and allow people to

	<p>give their views</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-made field day flyers to make them more engaging for the audience; (a before & after example of a field-day flyer on a Breeder Management Info Day is shown in Appendices 1 and 2) • Used new skills in the design of field-day and workshop flyers • Changed the way promotional material is constructed (flyers) for extension events. Previously based on information, details, facts. Now based on minimal but catchy text, emotive pictures, targeting persuasion channels. (Pasture rundown flyer shown in Appendix 3) • Designed posters for the Young Producers' Workshop based on Persuasion Skills principles • Kept principles in mind when designing other promotion posters e.g. Fire Information Day and Breeder Day at Wambiana • Design advertising brochures and extension articles using Persuasion Skills principles • The importance of catching people's attention when advertising events such as workshops/field days etc. This includes making sure flyers have a catchy heading, the right balance between words and pictures and colours that complement the design and make it easy to read • Make workshop flyers more exciting
<p>Conducting Training Events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a less data centric approach in presentations. e.g. at the fire day at Thalanga, rather than graphing participants to death, plainer English was used, with a focus on long term land condition focus and the advantage this might have for passing on an asset to children/family or increasing the asset value at the end of their tenure, as an attempt to elicit an emotional response • More emphasis on promoting non-technical advantages of changing management e.g. removing a land degradation eyesore that everyone drives past between the front gate and the house • Helped in targeting our workshops • Changed workshop delivery to begin with capturing expectations, this has proved very successful and gives a focus for guest speakers to talk about the issues that are raised by the participants • Consider the persuasion channels that most appeal to our audience and then making sure the message hit the mark with a short paragraph or picture • Focused on the Interest and Inspiration/Emotion channel • Moved away from the rational side as that is not what makes people come to a day • Creating posters to appeal at an emotional level – rather than heavy in scientific research • Posters for the Young Producers Consultation Workshop in Charters Towers and also in progress a summary of the McIvor report "Sustainable Management of the Burdekin Grazing Lands - a technical Report" • Sat down with my team and we used the different channels of persuasion to work out some key messages to try and get better uptake and retention of important information that was being presented at a field day • Used facilitation ideas directly from the PS workshop at the Young Producers Workshop, specifically the "sticky wall" process of displaying information • Greater focus on obtaining adoption among graziers, not just increasing

<p>Changes to Existing Extension Packages/ Projects</p>	<p>knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognised the need for more hands-on activities in workshops e.g. the Land Reclamation module of GLM EDGE has some activities, but needs more • Training used in the first collaborative FutureBeef project, 'Review & update of FutureBeef training packages project' to use persuasive channels and methods to achieve action focused practice change rather than dissemination of knowledge and assuming that that will result in practice change • Worked out ways to package the benefits on Wet season P feeding that would be better received by producers who have heard the message many, many times, yet have never fed P lick • Involved in the Extension Training Packages review project and have used the CaPTuRE Persuasion Map to review the Breeding EDGE package. The major strength of the package is that the information provided is completed backed by factual evidence and is delivered in a way that results in attitudinal change of participants. It is therefore very successful in leading to improved on-farm breeding practices. Recommended that these strengths of the package be protected in the review process • Changes were made to the Burdekin GLM EDGE package in mid-June 2012 to make it more interactive and hands-on - these changes were verified by the Persuasion Skills Workshop in Charters Towers in September
<p>Other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CQ BEEF Newsletter, particularly when we were looking for titles to entice people to read articles • Prepared a webinar on the PS training to share with the extension team • Developed an action plan process for the Grazing BMP modules that captures the 'stage of attitudinal change' of the client: from 'knowing to doing' <p>"Removing the barriers" by asking producers to identify what it is that prevents them from achieving 'industry standard' or 'above industry standard' for particular practices in the Grazing BMP. Through group discussion, it is possible to split these barriers into 'tangible' and 'intangible'. A valuable process that allows people to see what it really is that is holding them back</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key producers indicated that the Young Producers Consultation Workshop was a useful exercise - particularly the use of the KEEpad system which as a result will be used for the Cairns NBRUC conference in August • Poster design and presentation at the Cairns NBRUC • Educated other staff members who did not participate in the workshop on the ways that we promote messages to producers and the theory behind utilising persuasion channels to elicit decision making • Instigated the Young Producers' Workshop as a consultation process • Use appropriate language style in reporting

4.1.2 Darwin Workshop

Fourteen beef extension officers from the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland and a beef industry body executive officer from Western Australia participated in the Darwin workshop.

AGENCY	ATTENDEES	LOCATION
Dept Agriculture & Food WA	Rebecca Butcher	Moora
Dept Agriculture & Food WA	Anne-Marie Huey	Derby
NT Dept Primary Industries & Fisheries	Ben Beumer	Darwin
NT Dept Primary Industries & Fisheries	Arthur Cameron	Darwin
NT Dept Primary Industries & Fisheries	Casey Collier	Tennant Creek
NT Dept Primary Industries & Fisheries	Pieter Conradie	Alice Springs
NT Dept Primary Industries & Fisheries	Trisha Cowley	Katherine
NT Dept Primary Industries & Fisheries	Whitney Dollemore	Katherine
NT Dept Primary Industries & Fisheries	Jane Douglas	Tennant Creek
NT Dept Primary Industries & Fisheries	Trudi Oxley	Katherine
NT Dept Primary Industries & Fisheries	Dionne Walsh	Darwin
NT Dept Primary Industries & Fisheries	Jodie Ward	Katherine
NT Dept Primary Industries & Fisheries	Heidi Wright	Katherine
Qld Dept Agriculture Fisheries & Forestry	David Smith	Charters Towers
WA Beef Council	Lauren Johnston	Bunbury

Feedback on completion of the workshop from the 15 participants is shown in Figures 2 a & b and Tables 2 a & b. This is a combination of feedback collected by Bruce Howie (C-Qual Agritelligence™) and a departmental evaluation.

Additional feedback from both workshops is shown in Table 3.



Figure 2a. Skills learnt by extension officers at the Darwin Persuasion Skills workshop.

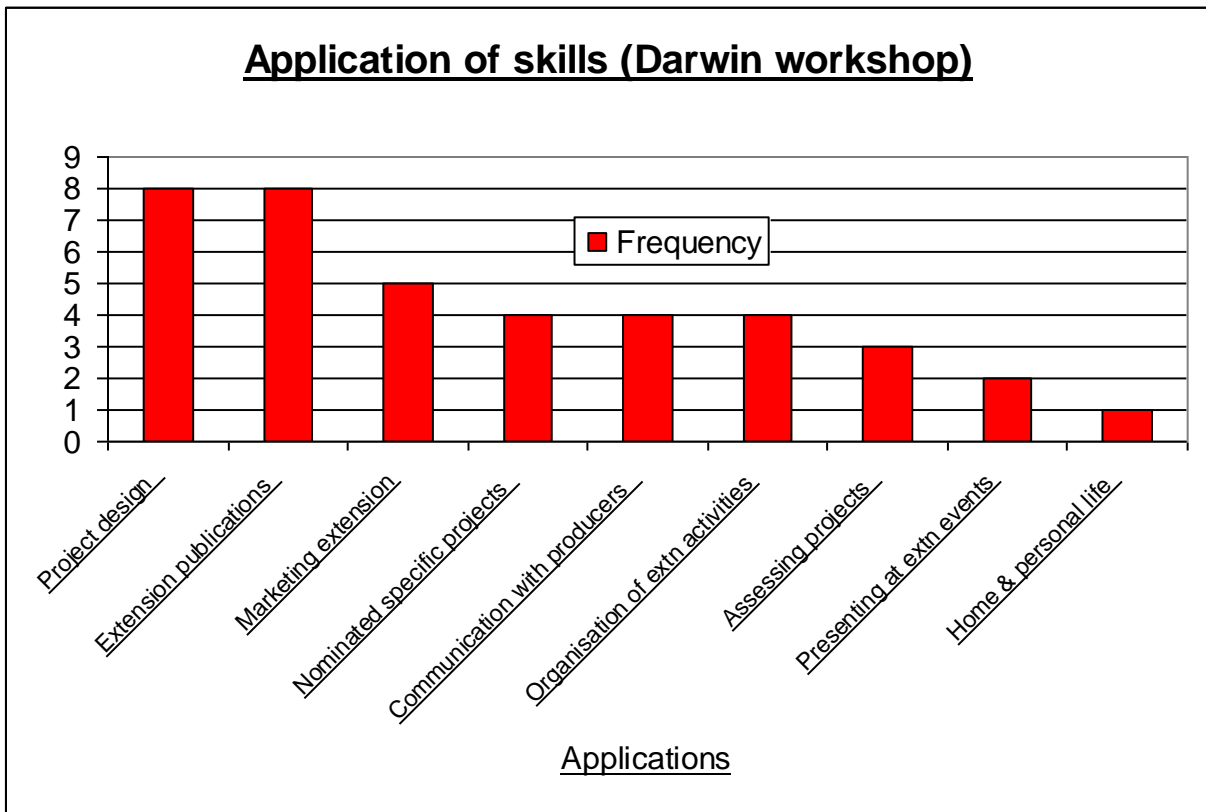


Figure 2b. Application of skills by extension officers at the Darwin Persuasion Skills workshop.

Table 2a. Feedback from the 15 participants at the Darwin Persuasion Skills Workshop
(Note: numbers in brackets indicate number of times mentioned)

<p>Q1. New skills, techniques & ideas that will improve your extension effectiveness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Packaging the concept (14) • Tuning the channels (14) • Skills in consulting the client (13) • Ensuring commitment (13) • Removing the barriers to adoption (12) • Skills to better market extension activities e.g. flyer design, etc. (6) • Asking open questions (6) • Better listening skills (6) • Using the persuasion channels (6) • Keep things simple (6) • Using the Capture model (5) • Understanding values & benefits (5) • Delivering the complete package (5) • ORID (4) • Know what producers want (4) • Identify barriers to adoption (4) • Distinguish between intent, content & emotion (3) • Gaining commitment (3) • Avoid information overload (2) • Use of planning models (2) • Follow-up (1) • Analysis paralysis (1)
<p>Q2. Where & when could you apply these skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project design (8) • Production of extension publications, newsletters, reports, surveys, etc. (8) • Marketing of extension activities – workshops, field-days, etc (5) • Nominated specific projects (4) • Communication with colleagues & producers (4) • Organisation of extension activities (4) • Assessing project applications (3) • Presenting at extension events (2) • Home & personal life (1)
<p>Q3. Identify training activities, projects or packages where these skills & techniques could be applied</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All MLA EDGE packages • Pastoral newsletters e.g. Barkly Beef, Katherine Rural Review • Producer Demonstration Sites projects e.g. weaner management, polled cattle, & wet season P • Herd management forums • Rangelands management course • Genetics extension • Business management • All DAFWA extension
<p>Q4. Nominate one activity, project or package that you would be willing assist in re-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herd management forums • Blue-sky Benchmarking • Rangelands Management Course • Weaner management DVD • Pastoral newsletters • Evaluation of all projects • Business management

packaging		
Q5. Can you compare the outcomes from an extension activity conducted pre and post training?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (9) • No (4) • Not sure (1) • Nil response (1) <p>Activities nominated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified 	
Q6. Could you explain the skills & techniques to other extension officers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes (12) • Partially (1) • No (1) • Nil response (1) <p>Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At a minimalist level • To an extent • With teaching aids and manual • Need time to reflect and collect first • All extension staff need an awareness of the PS principles • Need to practice first • Need to share this knowledge & skills with others who couldn't attend • Maybe once I have been implementing these techniques for a year 	
Q7. How would you rate the workshop? (1 = disagree) & 5 = agree)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoyable • Thought provoking • Had new information for me • Useful • Length (2 days) was just right • Had the right amount of theory • Had the right level of theory • The pace was just right 	<p>4.8</p> <p>4.7</p> <p>4.5</p> <p>4.7</p> <p>4.7</p> <p>4.7</p> <p>4.7</p> <p>4.7</p> <p>4.6</p>
Q8. How useful would you rate the workshop exercises in helping to increase your learning? (1 = not useful & 5 = very useful)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring definitions of extension & adoption • Active listening and open questions • Integrated fly management packaging scenario • Evaluating your project for 'completeness' • Tune the channels – aligning your project with persuasion channels • Core values assessment • Advertisements in tune • Sticky wall to Identify and categorize different types of barriers • Poster design • CaPTuRE Persuasion Map 	<p>4.1</p> <p>4.6</p> <p>3.8</p> <p>4.5</p> <p>4.3</p> <p>4.4</p> <p>4.8</p> <p>4.7</p> <p>4.7</p> <p>4.7</p>

Table 2b. Putting training into practice since the Darwin Persuasion Skills Workshop

Interaction with Graziers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will be asking for opinions of what a good stockman is/does and then use these terms and values when referring to observations they could be making out in the paddock, by asking them what they notice cattle are eating, where they are eating, how far from water they are grazing, locations of poisonous plants, etc.
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Day to Day Project Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am be putting images of graders, bulldozers, road trains full of cattle, etc in Top Paddock to attract the attention of producers • I think differently about how I promote events and projects • I consider which core values I am trying to target and try to develop messages and images that will appeal • One of my colleagues commented that he thought the flyer we had designed for the benchmarking project was one of the best he'd ever seen produced from our WA Beef team - it was designed using all the principles and values learned in the Persuasion Skills course ("My Beef My Business" flyer shown in Appendix 4)
Conducting Training Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking technical courses along the lines of the Persuasion Skills course could go a long way to assist us in our efforts to improve adoption in the northern beef industry • In the delivery of the Barkly Rangeland Management Course I tried to present material in a manner that played on the participants values rather than just "here are the facts and figures" • Encouraging discussion/interaction between participants and presenters • The use of pipe-cleaners
Changes to Existing Extension Packages/ Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used the Capture framework for project planning as a part of the NABRC "Bringing it all together" theme • At a recent GLM workshop I went through the presentation and cut a lot of slides that were included because (as I now know) we had the data and liked talking about it, rather than because it was what the participants really needed to know. I believe the workshop was all the better for it. • In developing a new project and I am putting it through the CaPTuRE™ model to ensure all aspects are considered and potential barriers and strategies to overcome them are identified • I am working on a benchmarking project that has a history of poor adoption by Industry and have created a more effective advertising campaign and improved the project to a level that I'm confident we have a good package to sell
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing the training amongst the extension officers in the north has provided a common language and frameworks for promoting the adoption of technology • Presented our light bulb moments at WA Beef Team meeting and the Project Manager is now considering running a workshop in WA

Table 3. Other comments from the Charters Towers and Darwin workshops

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, I feel privileged to have been part of this amazing workshop • Would be valuable to all extension officers - old and young • As a "brand new" staff member, I feel a bit uncomfortable about saying we have been doing it all wrong, we need to do this [workshop]. BUT am still willing to help pass on information • I was very impressed with the enthusiasm and capabilities of the new crop of beef extension officers in DAFFQ. That section of DAFFQ will be in very good hands in future • Great workshop • It was a good demonstration of pulling together skills from other sources/workshops and highlighting the relevance to our own projects and the barriers we are currently facing with adoption • A most valuable course with application in extension/project management on-ground and management general. Good refreshed, but also with excellent new material • Need extension officers on the ground
--

- Excellent – well worth the 2 days
- Well structured workshop with an excellent mix of activity, participation, information
- Thoroughly enjoyed it
- Could make the fly control exercise less technical
- I wonder how much people really absorb when they are building intricate helicopters and 'models' out of pipe cleaners. Distracting
- Great content, applicable, we need to know this. Presenters kept audience enthralled, entertained, good content fables very applicable
- Activities great, really reinforced the key messages, kept us moving and paying attention. Good duration, any longer would have been too much. Loved the pipe-cleaners, balls, helps me learn (textile person)
- I have evaluation forms at the end of workshops
- Very insightful workshop. A large amount of new concepts that will prove invaluable in planning future projects
- It helped to put some cases of adoption/not in perspective
- I enjoyed it, hope I can find the time to implement/practice things I've learnt
- I thought everything worked really well
- Perhaps some hints/tips on rebranding poorly run projects in the past would be helpful
- Overall, I found the Persuasions Skills workshop to be one of the most enlightening and beneficial courses I have attended in my career as an Extension Officer
- I found the persuasion skills workshop in Darwin to be a revolutionary and insightful course
- Without the support from MLA, I would never have had access to such wonderful training
- It has really changed my thinking and my approach in engaging farmers in the work we do
- It was clear to me from the course that the key to adoption is having a good package - something I've been striving towards ever since
- Without having attended this training, I don't think I would be able to add as much value to projects as I can now
- I found this course to be very informative and helpful for planning and implementing future extension activities
- A most valuable course with application in extension/project management as well as general management. Good refresher with valuable new material
- A follow-up course would be great to see how we are all going with extension plans
- Paradigm shift of what it means to be an extension officer. Has made me feel more confident that I can be an effective agent of change
- I am a slow learner so the current evaluation will be more positive in a few days when I've had the chance to learn & reflect upon today's learning
- Very insightful workshop. You shifted my world view significantly, thanks, and especially how I view my role as a change agent/support person
- A huge amount of new concepts (some of which I found confronting) that will prove invaluable in planning future projects/products
- Enjoyable. Good to share presenting between two people to keep it fresh. Could possibly have been completed in 1.5 days
- Numerous light bulb moments throughout the course. One of the most effective workshops I have attended. Thank-you very much
- I really enjoyed this workshop. By far the most meaningful extension training I have ever received. Thank-you very much

The following outcomes have resulted from completing the Persuasion Skills training:

- 100% of extension officers identified new skills that could improve their effectiveness as extension officers
- 100% of extension officers recognised where and when these skills could be applied

- 87% of extension officers identified existing extension programs or packages that are currently used with northern producers that could be revamped using the Persuasion Skills principles
- 68% of extension officers identified themselves as being capable of evaluating and comparing outcomes of past extension events with the same event conducted using the Persuasion Skills gained at the workshop i.e. a “before and after” comparison.

87% of extension officers identified themselves as being capable of explaining the skills and techniques that they learnt to other extension officers who had not done the Persuasion Skills training.

5 Discussion

The feedback data indicates a high level of acquisition of new skills amongst the 31 participating extension officers.

1. *Extension packages e.g. Stocktake, Fire Information Days, etc., will be redesigned using the Persuasion Skills techniques*

Participants identified several extension packages where Persuasion Skills techniques will be incorporated into their redesign; these included the MLA EDGE packages, Testing Management Options workshop, Stocktake package, BreedCow Dynama herd models, Producer Demonstration Sites, regional beef industry newsletters and producer forums.

2. *All extension officers will apply the Persuasion Skills techniques to at least one of these extension events over the following 12 months and document the impact on participating graziers using QualData (Coutts & Affiliates)*

Persuasion Skills techniques incorporated into extension were primarily for publicity and the promotion of workshops to entice greater participation eg Breeder Management days with Dr Ian Braithwaite and a Pasture Rundown field day, and the use of specific techniques during workshops e.g. the Young Beef Producers workshop where the sticky wall technique was used to collate producer ideas and feedback.

3. *In many regions the same series of workshops are conducted on an annual basis. At the next iteration of such workshops a comparison will be made with the outcomes obtained by analysing grazier feedback and actions from workshops pre and post Persuasion Skills training.*

A fire management Information day was held in the Charters Towers region after the Persuasion Skills training, but due to the low attendance on the day, a realistic comparison was not possible. More extension activities will need to be held before valid comparisons can be drawn about the efficacy of the Persuasion Skills techniques.

4. *Narratives of the extension events will be produced by extension officers to document successes from using the Persuasion Skills approach*

While many examples of the use of the Persuasion Skills techniques are provided by the extension officers who attended the Charters Towers workshop (Table 1b) only the Young Producers workshop was conducted entirely using these skills, namely:

- The workshop was instigated as a consultation process - the first step suggested at the Persuasion Skills workshop
- Posters were designed for the workshop based on principles from the Persuasion Skills training
- Facilitation ideas directly from the Persuasion Skills training were used at the Young Producers Workshop, specifically the "sticky wall" process of displaying information.

While a narrative from the Young Producers' workshop has not been produced, feedback from the young beef producers who attended was very positive; including:

- Usefulness of the activity for your business rated an average of 4.9 out of 7.0 across the 16 participating graziers
- 100% of participating graziers were able to access available resources related to their management decisions
- 93% of participating graziers had a better understanding of extension and the role of DAFFQ officers

For other extension events, it was not possible to conduct them entirely using the Persuasion Skills principles as there is a big requirement for extension packages to be revamped. This will be a major task.

5. *An article suitable for publishing in MLA's Feedback magazine will be produced based on these narratives*

No progress.

6. *Workshop participants will be required to provide training for those extension officers who did not receive the Persuasion Skills training (train the trainer)*

Three of the extension officers who participated in the Charters Towers workshop prepared a webinar on the training to share with the wider beef extension team (aimed predominately at extension officers with more than ten years extension experience). This webinar has not been run, but it is ready to go when there is interest. Training in the context of an animal health extension event was also provided to one of the Queensland regional beef managers by three of the participants of the Charters Towers Persuasion Skills workshop.

6 Conclusion

The positive feedback from extension officers and the achievements in the limited time since the Persuasion Skills workshops were completed indicates that the training has provided them with a new set of valuable skills to incorporate into existing and future extension programs. To adequately assess the effectiveness of the training in changing extension delivery, a follow-up survey by the end of 2014 will be required. The impacts on northern beef producers and their beef businesses can only be assessed in the longer-term by industry survey and evaluation after individual extension events and projects.

While the majority of the participants at the Charters Towers and Darwin workshops had less than ten years of extension experience, there is another cohort of more experienced extension officers who would benefit from the Persuasion Skills training.

7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1. Persuasion Skills workshop agenda

Day 1

- Arrival & introductions
- Overview and persuasion framework
- Concepts of extension and adoption
- Consultation as the foundation for persuasion
- Packaging a concept for a mainstream audience
- Tune the channels - persuasion channels
- What values and emotions have to do with science and logic
- Summarise and close day 1

Day 2

- Barriers to adoption
- Promoting your concept
- Securing commitment
- Making it stick – creating a plan
- Action plan
- Summary, final discussion and close workshop

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7.2 Appendix 2. Evaluation of the Charters Towers Persuasion Skills training workshop

To make the best use of the skills and techniques that you have learnt, please complete the following questions:-

1. What new skills/techniques/ideas have you been exposed to during this workshop that would improve your effectiveness as an extension officer? Please list 3 to 5 points.
2. Where & when could you apply these skills?
3. Can you identify any of DAFF's existing training programs/packages that could be re-packaged using these skills/techniques? If yes – which ones?
4. Please nominate one of the above programs/packages that you would be willing assist in re-packaging.
5. In terms of workshop evaluation would you be able to compare the outcomes from one DAFF workshop conducted in 2011/12 with the same workshop run this year using your recently acquired Persuasion Skills eg the "Fire Management Information Days" Yes / No. Comment please.
6. Would you feel comfortable explaining the skills/techniques that you have learnt to other extension officers? Yes / No

Comment

Your name please: _____

Please provide any other comments/suggestions from the workshop.

7.3 Appendix 3. Evaluation of the Darwin Persuasion Skills training workshop

1. Please place an X in the appropriate box where 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree

I found the workshop...

	disagree			agree	
	1	2	3	4	5
Enjoyable					
Thought provoking					
Had new information for me					
Useful					
Length (2 days) was just right					
Had the right AMOUNT of theory					
Had the right LEVEL of theory					
The pace was just right					

2. What aspects of this workshop will have the greatest impact on adoption?

3. Do you feel that this workshop has improved your ability to:

a. Consult the client, which requires:

(please place an X in the appropriate box)

	No, it hasn't added much	Not sure	Yes, I will do it better
listening to and understanding the client			
uncovering issues & reaching a common understanding of them			
establishing credibility, confidence and trust			
identifying what motivates clients for change			
determining clients' stage of attitudinal change			

b. Package the concept, which includes:

	No, it hasn't added much	Not sure	Yes, I will do it better
recognizing the need for a 'complete package'			
identifying the components of a 'complete package'			
Evaluating extension material in terms of its market readiness			

c. Tune the channels, which involves

	No, it hasn't added much	Not sure	Yes, I will do it better
identifying persuasion channels			
using persuasion channels that are matched to clients			
tapping in to both rational and non-rational channels			

d. Remove the barriers, which includes

	No, it hasn't added much	Not sure	Yes, I will do it better
distinguishing between tangible and intangible barriers			
identifying motivators to overcome decision inertia			
eliminating confusion and ambiguity			
minimising the change and avoiding complexity			
setting clear direction			

e. Ensure commitment, which requires

	No, it hasn't added much	Not sure	Yes, I will do it better
proposing specific actions towards adoption			
creating a 'call to action' to close the sale on an idea			
using closed questioning to confirm actions			
implementing a plan that confirms and maintains adoption			

4. How useful would you rate the workshop exercises in helping to increase your learning?
Where 1 = not useful and 5 = very useful

	1	2	3	4	5
Exploring definitions of extension & adoption					
Active listening and open questions					
Integrated fly management packaging scenario					
Evaluating your project for 'completeness'					
Tune the channels – aligning your project with persuasion channels					
Core values assessment					
Advertisements in tune					
Sticky wall to Identify and categorize different types of barriers					
Poster design					
CaPTuRE Persuasion Map					

5. Has this workshop revealed the need for further training? Y/N If yes - What areas or topics:

6. Do you have any other general comments or suggestions?

7.4 Appendix 4. Follow-up evaluation seven months after the Charters Towers Persuasion Skills Workshop

Participants were asked to provide examples of how they had put the Persuasion Skills training into action in their extension work in the Dept of Agriculture; specifically:

- Day to day work on projects
- Interactions with graziers
- Running of current training events with graziers
- Evolving changes to existing extension packages/projects that have been made, or planned to make in future

7.5 Appendix 5. Example flyer advertising a breeder management information day before the Persuasion Skills training



**INVITATION TO:
BREEDER MANAGEMENT INFORMATION DAYS**

These free information sessions will provide Northern Beef Producers with the latest information on profitable breeder management systems for Northern Australia. The Mitchell River Watershed Management Group would also like feedback on how they provide support to graziers.

Topics will include:

- Profitable production and grazing systems
- Breeder management
- Nutritional management
- Bull selection and replacement heifer management
- Local industry issues
- Support Mitchell River Watershed Management Group can provide to graziers

When	Where	Time
Monday, Oct 22	Mt Molloy Wetherby Station	9.00am - 3.00 pm

Smoko & Lunch: Provided free

Keynote presenters:
 Dr Ian Braithwaite – Leading industry Vet
Management systems for Northern Australian beef herds
 Peter O'Reagain – DAFF
Profitable Grazing Systems on Wambiana
 Tim McGrath – DAFF
Mt Emu Case Study - Preg testing and herd segregation
 Linda Soteriou-MRWMG
Development of Mitchell River Watershed Strategy

For more Information & RSVP: Tim McGrath (0427405011 or timothy.mcgrath@daff.qld.gov.au)
 Joe Rolfe (0427 378412) or joe.rolfe@daff.qld.gov.au
 Please RSVP by 15/10/12



7.6 Appendix 6. Example flyer advertising a breeder management information day using principles from the Persuasion Skills training workshop

From this To this



Are you getting where you need to be?

Breeder Management Information Day
Wetherby Station, Mt Molloy

Featuring:

- Management systems for North Australian beef herds– leading industry vet Dr Ian Braithwaite
- \$\$\$ and sense– the Wambiana story– Peter O’Reagain
- Pregnancy testing and herd segregation– Mt Emu story– Tim McGrath
- Forum on how the Mitchell Watershed Group can support graziers



Monday October 22nd 2012
Wetherby Station, Mt Molloy
9am—3pm
Smoko and lunch provided free
Please RSVP by 15th October

Contact: Tim McGrath 0427 405 011 timothy.mcgrath@daff.qld.gov.au
Joe Rolfe 0427 378 412 joe.rolfe@daff.qld.gov.au




7.7 Appendix 7. Example flyer advertising a pasture rundown information day using principles from the Persuasion Skills training workshop

Action against pasture rundown








Improve pasture management and give Couch the boot!



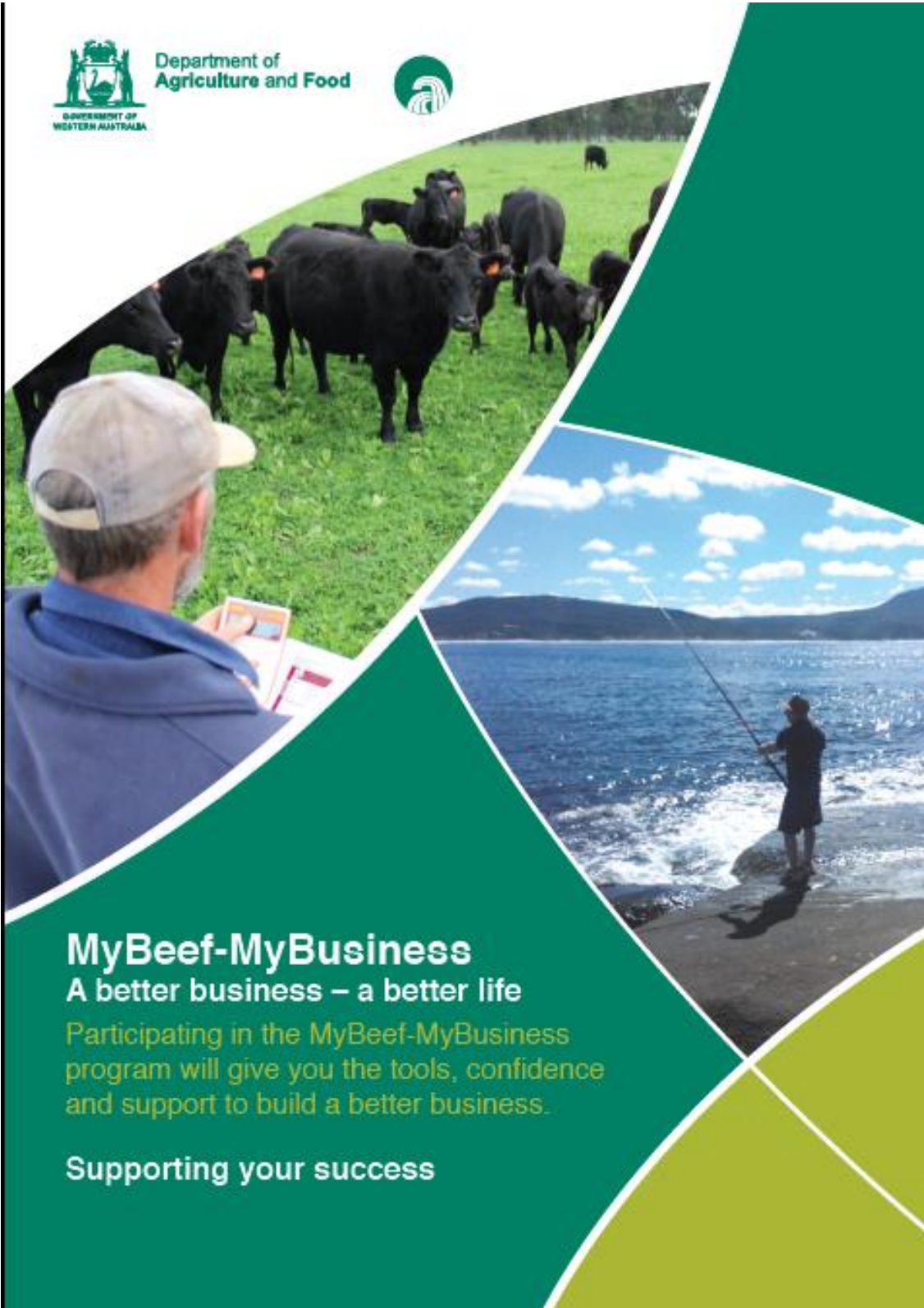
Ben & Julie Pini's
'Lancewood Stn' Nebo Mt Coolon Rd
Wed 5th December 8am – lunchtime



Please RSVP by 3 Dec: It's FREE!
Lauren Williams - DAFF Mackay
P: 4967 0732 M: 0467 804 287 E: lauren.williams@daff.qld.gov.au

What are the causes and symptoms of pasture rundown?
What can we do to address it?
Why is Couch taking over even with minimal grazing?
How do we bring better species back?



7.8 Appendix 8. Example flyer advertising a My Beef My Business workshop using principles from the Persuasion Skills training workshop



 Department of
Agriculture and Food 

MyBeef-MyBusiness
A better business – a better life
Participating in the MyBeef-MyBusiness
program will give you the tools, confidence
and support to build a better business.

Supporting your success

Data collection begins 1 July 2013
so register today to secure your place.

Cost per business;- \$400 + GST

More information and registration:

Allison Watson Ph: +61 8 9892 8437

Email: allison.watson@agric.wa.gov.au

Rebecca Butcher Ph: +61 8 9651 0540

Email: rebecca.butcher@agric.wa.gov.au

What participants have to say about the program

'A great opportunity to have a different look at our business and also an opportunity for interaction with our fellow producers.'

Pam McGregor, Kojonup

'Provides all the measurements you need to perform a critical analysis of your beef business.'

Pierre Brockman, Badgingarra

'The business analysis lets you know where you sit and gives you a better idea of how you can improve your business.'

Jean and Harley Webb, Narrikup

'Being involved in the WA beef business analysis has given us accurate figures to allow us to objectively assess where our business is at and identify opportunities for improved efficiencies.'

Tim Prosser, Scott River.

'We will learn more about profitability from each other by discussing profit drivers than we will ever gain from buying expensive bulls or chasing new breeds.'

John Fry, Donnybrook



8 Bibliography

Howie B. (2012) How to use persuasion skills to drive technology adoption. C-Qual Agritelligence Pty Ltd. 22/41 Phillips Street, Cabarita, NSW 2137

McCosker T., McLean D. & Holmes P. (2010) Northern beef situation analysis 2009, Project B.NBP.0518, Meat & Livestock Australia Limited, North Sydney, NSW.