

final report

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Pasture Updates Tasmania

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Abstract

The objectives of the Pasture Updates contract between MLA and Macquarie Franklin were achieved. Between January 2013 and December 2015, Macquarie Franklin delivered two Pasture Updates activities each year, totalling six activities.

The contracted participation rate was an average of 50 producers per activity, totalling 300 producers across the three years of the contract. The total participation rate achieved was in excess of 858 people (Table 1).

Each year, one Pasture Updates activity was delivered via the Red Meat Updates format, and the other as a standard Pasture Updates activity.

Red Meat Updates has become Tasmania's premier red meat industry event and has been consistently rated highly in terms of format and content by attendees.

There are currently a number of MLA funded programs operating in Tasmania that have an awareness raising component in their contracts; including various research projects, producer research sites, pasture updates and market majority extension programs. There is an opportunity to gain great efficiencies across these programs by having an overarching event, such as Red Meat Updates, which can

- achieve the **awareness** raising requirements for each program;
- show the **connections** between the programs (improve the cohesiveness of the links between MLA investments);
- highlight **research outputs**;
- **context** the importance of research outputs
- remind the producers of the **tools and resources** MLA has available;
- showcase **what is possible** (stretch targets) and motivate producers to want to improve;
- highlight examples of **what producers are doing** to work towards achieving these stretch targets; and
- **signpost** activities and programs producers can get involved in to enable them to build knowledge, skills and make meaningful on-farm practice change.

There is enormous benefit to both producers that are time poor and funding bodies that have finite resources, to have a single platform such as red Meat Updates to achieve awareness raising requirements that have real impact and cohesiveness across red meat enterprises and MLA's investment portfolios.

Executive Summary

The objectives of the Pasture Updates contract between MLA and Macquarie Franklin were to:

- Coordinate the development and implementation of two pasture technical updates each year in Tasmania, over 3 years;
- Engage 50 producers at each Pasture Updates activity (totalling 300 across three years);
- Highlight MLA research output related to increasing pasture production and converting pasture into product;
- Develop partnerships with regional producer networks and other organisations to support the development and delivery of the updates; and
- Conduct annual reporting of monitoring and evaluation results that demonstrate shifts in knowledge, skills and confidence and where appropriate, practice change and participant's reflections on direction and research needs around the topics presented.

These objectives were achieved. Between January 2013 and December 2015, Macquarie Franklin delivered two Pasture Updates activities each year, totalling six activities. The contracted participation rate was an average of 50 producers per activity, totalling 300 producers across the three years of the contract. The total participation rate achieved was in excess of 858 people (Table 1).

Table 1 Summary of Pasture Update activities

Year	Pasture Updates event 1 "Red Meat Updates"		Pasture Updates event 2 "Pasture Updates"	
	<i>Details</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>Participants</i>
2013	Red Meat Updates Launceston 12 June 2013	270-300	Pasture Updates Currie, King Island 30 October 2013	85
2014	Red Meat Updates Launceston 20 June 2013	230	Pasture Updates Whitemark, Flinders Island 28 October 2014	20
2015	Red Meat Updates Launceston 30 July 2015	230	Pasture Updates Cressy 5 November 2015	23

Each year, one Pasture Updates activity was delivered via the Red Meat Updates format, and the other as a standard Pasture Updates activity.

The Red Meat Updates concept originated from the Pasture Updates contract between Macquarie Franklin and MLA, and was driven by producers engaged on the project working group. Feedback from the red meat industry in Tasmania at the time was that whilst there was demand for information about pasture research and resources, there was a strong need for a broader industry event that provided updates on red meat sector opportunities, challenges and developments, and provided a forum for industry wide networking.

The Red Meat Updates working group was pivotal in the development of the Red Meat Updates concept and in driving the program agenda for all three Red Meat Updates events delivered. The group's in-depth industry understanding and technical knowledge was critical to the success of the event, both in terms of engaging red meat producers and attracting event sponsors. As a result, Red Meat Updates has become Tasmania's premier red meat industry event and has been consistently rated highly in terms of format and content by attendees.

The three other Pasture Updates activities were smaller scale events. The events on King Island and Flinders Island involved working with the local producer groups to develop a targeted, relevant program which was well received by participants. The final Pasture Updates activity at Cressy was focussed on increasing awareness of current pasture related research.

All Pasture Update activities featured MLA funded research and extension programs, presenters and tools. MLA was a member of the Red Meat Updates working group and had input during the development of the program and gave final approval of the program in terms of meeting the Pasture Updates contract requirements.

Feedback from producers and sponsors of Red Meat Updates indicated there is strong demand for the continuation of the event. The current funding model for the event is unsustainable and requires modification to ensure the ongoing success of the event.

There are currently a number of MLA funded programs operating in Tasmania that have an awareness raising component in their contracts; including various research projects, producer research sites, pasture updates and market majority extension programs. There is an opportunity to gain great efficiencies across these programs by having an overarching event, such as Red Meat Updates, which can

- achieve the **awareness** raising requirements for each program;
- show the **connections** between the programs (improve the cohesiveness of the links between MLA investments);
- highlight **research outputs**;
- **context** the importance of research outputs
- remind the producers of the **tools and resources** MLA has available;
- showcase **what is possible** (stretch targets) and motivate producers to want to improve;
- highlight examples of **what producers are doing** to work towards achieving these stretch targets; and
- **signpost** activities and programs producers can get involved in to enable them to build knowledge, skills and make meaningful on-farm practice change.

There is enormous benefit to both producers that are time poor and funding bodies that have finite resources, to have a single platform such as red Meat Updates to achieve awareness raising requirements that have real impact and cohesiveness across red meat enterprises and MLA's investment portfolios.

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1 Background

Macquarie Franklin applied by competitive tender in 2012 to deliver MLA's Pasture Updates program for three years in Tasmania from 2013-2015. This report summarises the contract deliverables and the project success in delivering against them, using a modified delivery format which has proven very successful in Tasmania.

2 Project objectives

2.1 Objectives

The objectives outlined in the E.INF.1309 contract are specified below.

By 30 November 2015 the following will have been completed:

- Coordinated development and implementation of 2 pasture technical updates per annum in Tasmania. Location is to be one in the northern midlands, north east or north west and one on King Island, providing broad coverage enabling access by as many producers as possible.
- A minimum of 50 producers are to have participated at each of the Pasture Update each year (goal over 3 years of 150 producers minimum).
- MLA research output will be presented at each of the Updates related to increasing pasture production and converting pasture into product.
- Partnerships will be formulated with regional producer networks and other organisations to support the development and delivery of the updates.
- Annual reporting of monitoring and evaluation results that demonstrate shifts in knowledge, skills and confidence and where appropriate, practice change and participant's reflections on direction and research needs around the topics presented.

2.2 Additional details

The additional details outlined in the E.INF.1309 contract are specified below.

Content: Each Pasture Update will comprise:

- Specific R&D output from MLA and partner investments (this may include investments from AWI, GRDC, DA, RIRDC – MLA can assist in this process).
- Explicitly stated 'Take home' messages to stimulate action from each topic.
- Case study/demonstration (visit) of producers implementing the technology.
- Outline a "communication package" for participants at each Update that provides a pathway for them to access pasture-based R&D output – ie other local work, information sources to assist making change.
- Signposting to relevant MLA (and others) products or initiatives such as More Beef from Pastures, Making More from Sheep that can assist producers increase their skills, knowledge and confidence to adopt a technology.
- An evaluation of the activity. This evaluation will cover the research content, format of the day, relevance of the area to their business and the participant's reflections on direction and needs for future research in that topic area.
- A minimum target audience of 50 producers is required for each Pasture Update.

- Content that is presented must be supported by the underpinning science.
- Each Update is to have two main components, approximately balanced 80:20, with content directly related to increasing pasture production, and a converting pasture into product respectively.
- Update content must be approved by the MLA R&D Communication and Extension Manager.
- Payments from MLA are to support: speaker fees, travel & accommodation; advertising, promotion and printing costs; catering & venue booking; co-ordination fee per Update event.
- A 6 monthly financial statement indicating areas of expenditure at each of the Updates over the previous 6 months is required.
- Topics to be presented are to be timely and relevant.
- Topics that have been flagged for consideration with partner organisations include:
 - New varieties and where they fit in the system
 - Certified seed – why purchase compared to cheaper uncertified seed
 - Endophyte update
 - Persistent legumes
 - Integrated pest management
 - Evaluation of new pasture genetics
 - Rebuilding collapsed pasture systems in the mixed farming zone.
 - Update on farm pasture demonstrations/trial work being undertaken as part of regional program such as EverGraze, Future Farm CRC, crop and regional MLA Producer Demonstration Sites – pasture sequencing, pasture utilisation and animal production opportunities
 - Pasture decision tools eg Feed Demand calculator, Rainfall to Pastures Growth outlook tool, pasture cost calculator, Pasture Picker, EverGraze while farm grazing strategies, farm nutrient mapping
 - Ad hoc timely issues such as pests, weeds and managing wet soils
 - The breadth of topics in the Updates is to include feedbase, NRM and animal production.
 - Each update is to promote use of the pasture picker, feed demand calculator, Phosphorus tool ("5 Easy steps") or other tools/ information as requested by MLA.
- Sponsors of each Update (MLA, Macquarie Franklin) and local interests are to be promoted each Update. Where possible seek engagement with the Grassland Society of Southern Australia.
- Evaluation of each update is to be completed as defined by MLA and will include content, presentation, producer feedback on the research topics.

3 Methodology

3.1 Red Meat Updates

3.1.1 Background

The Red Meat Updates concept originated from the Pasture Updates contract between Macquarie Franklin and MLA, and was driven by producers engaged on the project working group. Feedback from the red meat industry in Tasmania at the time was that whilst there

was demand for information about pasture research and resources, there was a strong need for a broader industry event that provided updates on red meat sector opportunities, challenges and developments, and provided a forum for industry wide networking.

The name “Red Meat Updates” was approved by MLA on the proviso that it incorporated the content requirements of the Pasture Updates contract and that the pasture related sessions in the program retained the Pasture Updates wording.

Only one of the two Pasture Update activities each year was incorporated into the Red Meat Updates format. The Red Meat Updates event was held in Launceston each winter and promoted as a state-wide event. This was followed up by a smaller scale Pasture Updates event held in spring. In 2013 the follow up Pasture Updates event was held on King Island in collaboration with the King Island producer group, in 2014 on Flinders Island again in collaboration with the local producer group and in 2015 in northern Tasmania in collaboration with Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture.

3.1.2 Red Meat Updates working group

The Red Meat Updates working group was formed in December 2012 once the project contract was finalised and met three to four times each year since its inception. The group is comprised of producers, industry (private and public sector), researchers and advisor representatives, including a representative from MLA. The group has been chaired by Basil Doonan from Macquarie Franklin, as the nominated person on the E.INF.1309 contract.

As detailed in the contract, engagement with the Grasslands Society of Southern Australia (GSSA) was encouraged. This was achieved by inviting two GSSA members to join the working group to be the conduit between Red Meat Updates and the GSSA. In early 2013 the Tasmanian branch of GSSA went into recess, with key committee positions unable to be filled, however the original GSSA members on the working group remained committed to this role.

The working group was pivotal in the development of the Red Meat Updates concept and in driving the program agenda for all three Red Meat Updates events delivered. The group’s in-depth industry understanding and technical knowledge was critical to the success of the event, both in terms of engaging red meat producers and attracting event sponsors. As a result, Red Meat Updates has become Tasmania’s premier red meat industry event.

3.1.3 Schedule of events

Pasture Updates activities were delivered based on the schedule outlined in Table 2. In winter each year one activity was delivered as Red Meat Updates, followed by a smaller scale Pasture Updates event in spring.

Table 2 Schedule of Pasture Updates activities in Tasmania between 2013-2015

Year	Pasture Updates event 1	Pasture Updates event 2
2013	Red Meat Updates Launceston 12 June 2013	Pasture Updates Currie, King Island 30 October 2013
2014	Red Meat Updates Launceston 20 June 2013	Pasture Updates Whitemark, Flinders Island 28 October 2014
2015	Red Meat Updates Launceston 30 July 2015	Pasture Updates Cressy 5 November 2015

3.1.4 Program development

The program for Red Meat Updates was developed by the working group, with brainstorming sessions held eight to nine months prior to each event to enable time to develop a strong and cohesive program relevant and attractive to red meat producers and event sponsors, and to meet MLA's requirements.

The format of the program was relatively consistent for each event (Figure 1). The concurrent sessions (sheep updates, beef updates, irrigated pasture updates and dryland pasture updates) enabled the wealth of program content generated by the working group to be accommodated and MLA's Pasture Updates requirements to be met.

To break up the day and to add an interesting dimension to the event, the timeslot after lunch incorporated a more interactive feature (e.g. butchers demonstration).

PROGRAM FORMAT		
Welcome		
Keynote address		
Morning tea		
Concurrent sessions		
Sheep Updates (3-4 presentations)		Beef Updates (3-4 presentations)
Lunch		
Feature (e.g. butcher demonstration or virtual farm tour)		
Concurrent sessions		
Irrigated Pasture Updates (3-4 presentations)		Dryland pasture updates (3-4 presentations)
Networking drinks		

Figure 1: RMU program format

3.1.5 Event coordination

Events were coordinated by Macquarie Franklin. The scale of the Red Meat Updates was a conference for 200-300 people with 20-30 program chairs and presenters, costing between \$90,000 - \$110,000 to run.

Coordination involved chairing and supporting the working group, finalising the program and confirming speakers, event promotion, logistics management, event administration, securing sponsorship, event evaluation and delivery on the day.

3.1.6 Event funding

The event was funded by MLA, Macquarie Franklin, sponsorship and attendance fees from non-producer attendees who were not sponsoring the event. In 2015 the funding breakdown was:

- 45% Macquarie Franklin
- 37% Sponsors
- 16% MLA (\$10,000 Pasture Updates contract + \$5,000 additional cash sponsorship)
- 2% Paying attendees

MLA also made significant in-kind contributions to the running of all three events by providing speakers including the MLA celebrity butcher for the 2013 and 2014 events and other speakers as noted in Tables 4 and 5.

The exact breakdown of funding varied a little between years, however each year \$30,000 - \$40,000 of additional sponsorship (beyond the E.INF.1309 contract) was sourced by approaching organisations with an interest in Tasmania's red meat industry. The remaining shortfall was funded by Macquarie Franklin.

3.1.7 Evaluation

3.1.7.1 Event evaluation

Evaluation of each event was based on the evaluation forms provided by MLA. Variations to the standard Pasture Updates evaluation were confirmed with MLA when required.

Additional evaluation was conducted by Macquarie Franklin each year to build on the data collected at the event and to gain a more indepth understanding from attendees and sponsors about what worked well, what didn't and improvements and ideas for the future. This was comprised of follow up phone calls and interviews with people who had attended the event. Individual working group members also assisted in collecting feedback through their peer networks and reporting back to the working group.

Following each event the working group held a meeting to debrief on the event and commence planning for the next event. The debrief was a valuable exercise and enabled a process of continued learning and improvement in delivery.

3.1.7.2 Sponsor survey

Following the 2015 Red Meat Updates event, a sponsor survey was conducted. The purpose of the survey was to understand why organisations do or don't sponsor Red Meat

Updates, what would make it a more attractive sponsorship option for them and whether they would be interested in supporting the event in future. The survey also asked sponsors about their preferences about the frequency of the event in future – annually, biannually or did it still have a valuable role at all.

The survey comprised of 15 questions and was constructed in Survey Monkey. The survey link was distributed to key sponsor contacts via email. A reminder email was circulated 10 days after the initial email. Due to time constraints no follow up phone calls were made.

The information was collected to inform the future of Red Meat Updates beyond the E.INF.1309 contract.

3.2 Pasture Updates

3.2.1 Schedule of events

As detailed in Table 2, three Pasture Updates events were delivered under the E.INF.1309 contract, each at a different location to ensure geographic spread:

- King Island in 2013;
- Flinders Island in 2014; and
- Cressy in 2015.

3.2.2 Program development

Each Pasture Updates event was developed with input from local producer groups and MLA, with the final program supplied to MLA for approval. The King Island and Cressy events were delivered in collaboration with the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, highlighting MLA funded research being conducted in Tasmania, as well as relevant presentations by other speakers. Where appropriate, material developed for Red Meat Updates was presented or made available at the Pasture Update events.

3.2.3 Event coordination

The coordination of each Pasture Updates event varied. The King Island event was coordinated in conjunction with More Beef from Pastures and the King Island Producers Group, the Flinders Island event was coordinated by Macquarie Franklin and the Flinders Island discussion group and the Cressy event was a collaboration between Macquarie Franklin and the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture.

3.2.4 Event evaluation

Evaluation of each event was conducted based on the evaluation forms provided by MLA. Variations to evaluation questions were approved by MLA when required.

4 Results

4.1 Evaluation results

4.1.1 Participation

The participation KPIs of the pasture Updates contract were exceeded. Red Meat Updates consistently attracted 230 plus attendees across the three years of the contract. The first year of the event was free for all participants, however in the second and third year, the cost to attend was \$200 per person if not a red meat producer or sponsor. This resulted in fewer industry people attending who were not supporting the event, and more producers attending. The growing popularity of the event with producers highlights the demand for the continuation of Red Meat Updates beyond this contract.

Table 3 Numbers of participants attending Pasture Updates activities in Tasmania between 2013-2015

	Red Meat Updates	Pasture Updates
2013	270-300	85
2014	230	20
2015	230	23
Total	858 +	

4.1.2 Program format and content

4.1.2.1 Red Meat Updates

Overall the format of the day rated highly in the evaluation conducted, with positive feedback from attendees in regard to being able to tailor the day to meet their needs. A small number of people said they were disappointed they were unable to see all presentations, however this feedback reflects the strong program content.

Table 4 Summary of evaluation results for Red Meat Updates events

	2013	2014	2015
What worked well/highlights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inaugural Red Meat Updates event attracted 270-300 attendees • Networking opportunity for industry • Producer speakers • Lamb butcher and value chain demonstration • Lunch featuring Tasmanian red meat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event attracted 230 attendees • Virtual Farm Tour – Benham • Marketing presentation (Tim McRae, MLA) • Producer speakers • Charging non-producer attendees, to provide sponsors with more value • Lunch featuring Tasmanian red meat • Media (newspaper) sponsorship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event attracted 230 attendees • Virtual Farm Tour – Greenvale • Charging non-producer attendees, to provide sponsors with more value • Producer speakers • Richard Norton – producers appreciated hearing from him • John Roche – challenging the audience to look for real evidence when making decisions • Lunch featuring Tasmanian red meat • RMU social media and established past participant contact list for event promotion
What didn't work so well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsored buses to transport producers to the event 	Beef value chain presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newspaper advertising ineffective and expensive
What MLA funded research, speakers and tools were featured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autumn ill thrift project findings (Basil Doonan, Macquarie Franklin) • Ringarooma Towards 2000 with Legumes (Peter Ball, TIA) • EverGraze Hamilton Proof Site (Ralph Behrendt, VIC DPI) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future pasture technologies (Linda Hygate) • Keynote address & Southern beef situation analysis findings (Tim McRae) • Interactive beef value chain presentation (Doug Piper & Sarah Strachan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLA update, market forecast (Richard Norton, MLA) • What has upskilling in pasture management done for your business? Reinforcing use of MLA tools. (Frank Archer, Landfall) • MLA's Feed demand calculator

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The latest in eating quality science (Sam Gill, MLA) • Ryegrass endophyte toxins (John Webb-Ware, Mackinnon Group) • Master Butcher presentation: Economic impacts of lamb size and condition on producing cuts that meet market demand (Lachlan Bowtell and Gary McPherson, MLA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLA Challenge (John Ramsay, Ramsay Agriculture) • Lean Meat Yields and Eating Quality trial update (Janelle Hocking-Edwards SARDI) • Tour of Tasmania's pasture trial sites, including Pasture Variety Network Trial (Rowan Smith TIA) 	<p>(Cameron Allan, MLA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasture Variety Trial Network (Cameron Allan, MLA) • Using tools and information to make effective decisions Reinforcing use of MLA tools. (Chester Partnership)
Linkages to other follow on activities/programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasture Updates (King Island, 2013) – Autumn ill-thrift research project and Ringarooma Towards 2000 trial. • Pasture Updates (Flinders Island, 2014) – producers from Flinders Island who attended RMU 2013 requested an extended session on autumn ill-thrift project findings and John Webb-ware to discuss endophytes. • More Beef from Pastures activities associated with Ringarooma Towards 2000 trials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasture Updates (Flinders Island, 2014) – focuss on autumn ill-thrift and endophytes. • Making More from Sheep and More Beef from Pastures extension programs, including the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lamb survival workshops ○ Maximising Red Meat Returns ○ Planning for Pasture Renovation Success ○ Pasture Principles grazing course • Producer Research Sites promoted. • Pasture Variety Trial Network promoted. • MLA Beyond the Gate Tasmanian Tour (2014) • MLA Challenge blog / outcomes • MLA Feedback Magazine – consultation with producer group organised to coincide with RMU 2014. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making More from Sheep and More Beef from Pastures extension programs, including the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lamb survival workshops ○ Sheep health under irrigation ○ Fantastic Fodder ○ Pasture Principles grazing course • Producer Research Sites promoted. • Pasture Variety Trial Network promoted.
Content rating	<p>Excellent: 46%</p> <p>Very good: 48%</p> <p>Good: 6%</p>	<p>Excellent: 46%</p> <p>Very good: 49%</p>	<p>Excellent: 54%</p> <p>Very good: 38%</p> <p>Good: 6%</p> <p>Didn't answer: 2%</p>

4.1.2.2 Pasture Updates

Table 5 Summary of evaluation results for Pasture Updates events

	2013 King Island	2014 Flinders Island	2015 Cressy
What worked well/highlights	Collaboration with King Island beef producers group and including Pasture Updates as part of their major forum for the year meant audience included the majority of beef producers on the island.	Collaboration with Flinders Island producer discussion group enabled the program to be focussed and relevant.	Collaboration with Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture allowed researchers to engage directly in an informal setting with producers. Holding the field day at the research farm enabled the trials to be discussed in “the flesh”.
What didn't work so well	Challenges during the development of the event in ensuring the integrity of the Pasture Updates event requirements were maintained.		Timing – the day ran late.
What MLA funded research, speakers and tools were featured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autumn ill thrift project findings (Basil Doonan, Macquarie Franklin) • Ringarooma Towards 2000 with Legumes (Peter Ball, TIA) • Feedbase investment plan overview (Mick Quirk, MLA) • MSA Index & Optimisation (Terry Farrell, MLA) • Domestic & Export Market Update (Ben Thomas, MLA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on findings from MLAs southern situation analysis (Linda Hygate, MLA) • Future pasture technologies (Linda Hygate, MLA) • Autumn ill thrift project findings (Basil Doonan, Macquarie Franklin) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasture Variety Network Trial (Tony Butler, TIA) • Producer Research Site – realtime biomass estimation (Tony Butler, TIA) • IFOD (irrigated fodder) trial (Rowan Smith & Gary Martin, TIA)
Linkages to other follow on activities/programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of MLA research and marketing programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producers more aware of MLA feedbase investment program. • Highlighted Producer Research Site at Waterhouse 	<p>Producers more aware of MLA feedbase investment program and local pasture research trials underway:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pasture Variety Network Trial • Producer Research Site <p>Upcoming More Beef from Pastures and Making More from Sheep activities promoted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheep health under

			irrigation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplementary feeding • Beef cattle pre-joining sessions • Pasture Principles
Content rating	Value: 8.7 / 10 Satisfaction: 9.1 / 10	Excellent 38% Very good 54%	Excellent 12% Very good 41% Good 35%

4.1.3 Intended practice change

The percentage of people who completed an evaluation form following the event, who indicated they would implement a practice change as a result of the activity, is summarised in Table 6 and Table 7.

4.1.3.1 Red Meat Updates

Table 6 Summary of practice change evaluation results for Red Meat Updates events

	2013	2014	2015
All	54%	49%	67%
Producers	64%	75%	65%

4.1.3.2 Pasture Updates

Table 7 Summary of practice change evaluation results for Pasture Updates events

	2013 King Island	2014 Flinders Island	2015 Cressy
All	NA	85%	47%
Producers	80%	92%	60%

The percentage of producer respondents at Red Meat Updates who indicated they would implement a practice change following the event was very similar across the three events (64% - 75%). The purpose of the Red Meat Updates event was very clear for each event, that the focus was on raising *awareness* of the opportunities for improvement and signposting the pathways for producers to build their knowledge and skills through other programs and activities. Taking this into account, the intention for practice change following these events is relatively high.

The smaller Pasture Updates activities involved smaller groups of producers. For the King Island and Flinders Island events, the local producer discussion group assisted in the development of the program to ensure the content was targeted and expanded upon issues they had previously identified. These activities were more a *knowledge* raising activity, rather than awareness raising, therefore it would be expected that the intention for practice change following the activity would be higher, which was what was observed in the evaluation process. Both of the King Island and Flinders Island activities recorded high percentages of producers intending to make a practice change following the event (KI 80%, FI 92%).

The Cressy Pasture Updates event was different, again, as it was a small group of producers, however it was not targeted to an established producer group. The content of the program was not developed in consultation with producers, it was run to raise awareness of the research outcomes from pasture trials currently being conducted. Compared with all other activities delivered under this contract, it had the lowest rating when it came to a producer's intention to implement a practice change as a result of the event. However, as the purpose of the event was to raise awareness of pasture research, there was not an expectation for producers to make meaningful practice changes as a result of the event.

When interpreting these results and when designing activity evaluation in future, it is important to do so with the following points in mind:

- What is the purpose of the activity? To create awareness, develop knowledge, build skills or a format that supports practice change?
- What is the scale or complexity of the intended practice change?

Addressing these points will enable more meaningful conclusions to be drawn from the event evaluation.

4.1.4 Future research topics identified

This question was very poorly answered by those who completed evaluation forms. The majority of the time the question remained unanswered, or where there was a response, it was not relevant (e.g. general feedback on the day, topics they want covered at the next event etc.).

The focus of five out of the six activities delivered under this contract (excluding Cressy Pasture Updates) was not focussed solely on research, therefore this question was “out of the blue” on the event feedback form. It was also not clearly framed and the space for a response allowed for only a few words, which is insufficient to describe the issue or topic in detail.

The timing of the evaluation also wasn’t appropriate for this question – as it was asked as part of the event evaluation when people were filling out the form so that they could leave, not a time when they would be mulling over research ideas. Responses can also be biased by the topics covered by presentations during the event.

Whilst this is a valuable question to ask, including it on the event evaluation form has not proved to be a successful means of collecting the information. Other ways of collecting this information should be considered, for example a separate session with interested producers to workshop issues that require further research, follow up interviews with selected attendees after the event where ideas can be extracted or introduce MLA committee producer representatives at the event and encourage producers to discuss their ideas with them to convey back through the relevant channels.

How to best extract valuable information from producers on this topic requires further consideration. Mixing it in with an awareness raising activity has been shown not to be a fruitful option.

4.2 Resulting industry collaboration

Broad industry collaboration occurred as a result of this Pasture Updates contract. Collaboration was at a number of levels, involving MLA, producers, processors, research organisations, industry organisations, Tasmanian Government departments, consulting companies, financial institutions, livestock agents and rural merchandising companies. Collaborations are listed below.

Red Meat Updates working group

- Producers: Frank Archer, Georgie Burbury, Rob Tole, Iain Bruce

- Organisations: MLA, Macquarie Franklin, Grasslands Society of Southern Australia, Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, PGG Wrightson Seeds, TP Jones & Co, Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment.
- Programs represented: More Beef from Pastures, Making More from Sheep, Sheep Connect

Red Meat Updates funders

- MLA
- Producers: Landfall Angus, Lambpro
- Processors: Greenham Tasmania, JBS Australia, Tas Quality Meats
- Meat buyers: Melrose Wholesale Meats
- Livestock agents: Roberts Ltd., Webb & Woodiwiss
- Financial institutions: Rabobank, Westpac, Commonwealth Bank, NAB
- Agricultural businesses and organisations (rural merchandise suppliers, seed companies, advisory services etc.): Macquarie Franklin, Roberts Ltd., TP Jones & Co, PGG Wrightson Seeds, Datamars Zeetags, Proway, Incitec Pivot Fertilisers, Impact Fertilisers, Performance Feeds, Midlands Tractors, Handley AB, Tasmanian Alkaloids, Smithton Veterinary Service
- Media: Tasmanian Country newspaper
- Other organisations: Agrifood Skills Australia, NRM South, Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association

Red Meat Updates program

- MLA: presenters on the program each year (including keynote address by Richard Norton in 2015), promotion of MLA tools, promotion of MLA funded research, promotion of MLA funded extension programs.
- Producers: a minimum of 5 producers on the program each year, plus producer chairs.
- Industry: processors, meat buyers, livestock agents, agricultural businesses, TFGA, Macquarie Franklin.
- Government: DPIPW staff presented on multiple animal health topics, vermin control, chaired sessions.
- Researchers: Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture was on the program each year and had a research display at the event, researchers from other institutions.

King Island Pasture Updates

- MLA: presenters (Ben Thomas, Mick Quirk, Terry Farrell), run in collaboration with More Beef from Pastures, promotion of MLA funded research (Towards 2000 grazing trial)
- Producers: King Island Beef Producer Group
- Industry: Contributions from many agricultural businesses.

Flinders Island Pasture Updates

- MLA: presenters (Lynda Hygate), promotion of MLA funded research (autumn ill thrift, phosphorus efficiency in legumes trial at Waterhouse)

- Producers: producer group input into the program for the day.
- Government: presentations on animal health aspects.
- Industry: Supported by PGG Wrightson Seeds.

Cressy Pasture Updates

- MLA: MLA funded research (Pasture Variety Network Trial, Producer Research Site – realtime biomass estimation etc.)
- Producers: speakers on the program
- Researchers: run in collaboration with the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, promoting the outcomes of their pasture research projects
- Industry: sponsored by PGG Wrightson Seeds, run in collaboration with Macquarie Franklin

4.2.1 Sponsors survey

A survey of organisations who had sponsored Red Meat Updates, as well as some organisations who have not sponsored the event, was conducted in September 2015 to better understand a sponsor's perspective of the event.

Nineteen existing/potential RMU sponsors completed the survey. From sponsors' perspective, the primary purpose of RMU is:

1. To increase producer awareness about opportunities for improvement
2. To increase knowledge and skills of producers
3. Networking opportunity for industry players

Networking and the information presented were the most positive aspects of the event nominated by sponsors, while key improvements were maintaining the high quality of presenters (especially local presenters).

The costs to deliver and where the funding for the event has been sourced was poorly understood by sponsors. There is a perception that MLA is a far greater financial contributor to the event than it actually is. Sponsors would be more likely to sponsor the event if:

- An industry body or producer group was coordinating the event
- They could participate on the working group and have some input into the day

The key way in which sponsorship value could be increased would be by offering sponsors opportunities to be on the program, which could however impact on producer satisfaction with the activity (independent information is highly valued). A balance is required to maintain an event that both producers and sponsors value.

No organisations who completed the survey believed that RMU had exhausted its potential - the majority believed that the current annual format is desirable.

5 Discussion

5.1 Meeting project objectives

5.1.1 Coordinated development and implementation of 2 pasture technical updates per annum in Tasmania. Location is to be one in the northern midlands, north east or north west and one on King Island, providing broad coverage enabling access by as many producers as possible.

Objective achieved - 6 events delivered, 2 per year. Refer to Table 1.

5.1.2 A minimum of 50 producers are to have participated at each of the Pasture Update each year (goal over 3 years of 150 producers minimum)

Objective achieved – 873 producers attended the 6 events, with 745 at Red Meat Updates and 128 at the three Pasture Updates events. Refer to Table 1.

5.1.3 MLA research output will be presented at each of the Updates related to increasing pasture production and converting pasture into product.

Objective achieved – Refer to Tables 3 and 4.

5.1.4 Partnerships will be formulated with regional producer networks and other organisations to support the development and delivery of the updates.

Objective achieved – refer to section 4.2.

5.1.5 Annual reporting of monitoring and evaluation results that demonstrate shifts in knowledge, skills and confidence and where appropriate, practice change and participant's reflections on direction and research needs around the topics presented.

Objective achieved – However, all events were primarily awareness raising activities (although King Island and Flinders Island were more targeted, as discussed in section 4.1.3), so true shifts in skills and knowledge were not expected, only increases in information/knowledge. The events however were able to promote other activities which do support skill development and practice change. Refer to section 4.1.3.

5.2 Practical implications for industry

There is a strong need in the Tasmanian red meat industry for a regular update on industry research and extension, which also highlights to producers the opportunities for improvement and the pathways available to build the capacity required to implement change. This is indicated both by the level of support by producers for the event (230-300 attendees each year) and also through the sponsors' survey results.

The format of Red Meat Updates enables attendees to tailor the day to meet their needs. Many livestock producers in Tasmania have multi-enterprise businesses and do not have the time to attend events based around each of those enterprises. There are also many

common pasture and business related principles that extend across enterprises and do not need to be replicated at multiple events. Bringing red meat together is an efficient means of delivering extension activities to overcome this issue.

There are currently a number of MLA funded programs operating in Tasmania that have an awareness raising component in their contracts; including various research projects, producer research sites, pasture updates and market majority extension programs. There is an opportunity to gain great efficiencies across these programs by having an overarching event, such as Red Meat Updates, which can

- achieve the **awareness** raising requirements for each program;
- show the **connections** between the programs (improve the cohesiveness of the links between MLA investments);
- highlight **research outputs**;
- **context** the importance of research outputs
- remind the producers of the **tools and resources** MLA has developed;
- showcase **what is possible** (stretch targets) and motivate producers to want to improve;
- highlight examples of **what producers are doing** to work towards achieving these stretch targets; and
- **signpost** activities and programs producers can get involved in to enable them to build knowledge, skills and make meaningful on-farm practice change.

There is enormous benefit to both producers that are time poor and funding bodies that have finite resources, to have a single platform such as red Meat Updates to achieve awareness raising requirements that have real impact and cohesiveness across red meat enterprises and MLA's investment portfolios.

5.3 Unanswered questions and additional research

It is difficult to obtain information that is meaningful about research gaps and needs at such events. Producers are focussed on hearing about research and extension that has been completed and are not able to clearly articulate future needs.

Additionally, the information obtained may be biased towards topics that were covered during the session and may also tend to be operationally orientated. For meaningful information to be collated on industry research needs a targeted forum would be most appropriate.

5.4 Draft extension messages

The major extension message for a Pasture Updates type activity is that there is an ongoing need for a forum to update farmers on the key driver of profit – pasture utilisation – and advances associated with research efforts in this area. Additionally, incorporating processing and red meat production issues at the same forum is an effective engagement strategy.

Red Meat Updates has clearly demonstrated that there is an opportunity to greatly increase the value from a broadscale extension event by broadening the scope of the event, and encouraging producers to further explore pathways to increase their knowledge and skill development, resulting in embedded practice change.

A key extension learning from Red Meat Updates has been the power of producer speakers to reinforce the key messages and learnings presented by research or “expert” speakers. In particular the Virtual Farm Tour was a very powerful delivery mechanism – this medium of video could be employed to greater effect for extension programs. Ensuring an event ‘theme’ with clear messages and consistency between presentations is also critical.

To ensure continued interest in the event, it is essential to have a really high quality, high impact program that is relevant to producers. The benefit of having producers actively engaged on the working group can not be underestimated. Finally, the ‘updates’ format with short sharp presentations are effective for this type of event and were consistently popular with attendees.

5.5 Success and improvements

The success of the event is most evident in the continued high number of participants, which from a producer point of view, increased each year. The feedback around content and delivery of the day was very positive and producers saw great benefit in the day. Additionally sponsors also rated the event very highly. The event is now clearly on the industry calendar in Tasmania.

There is potential for improvement. The scope of the information delivered could be further increased. MLA could incorporate marketing activities, future overviews from the Managing Director or other key executive level staff. The event could be better structured to improve its effectiveness as a ‘feeder’ activity to encourage producers to seek further opportunities to improve their skills. It could feature more MLA tools and resources and R&D results – this information will be more readily received when delivered by producers who are already using the tools or information in their business.

The event is now in a position where it has a proven track record and loyal sponsors, and maintaining the momentum for the event will be critical to enabling it to continue in its current form, which there is strong support for amongst both sponsors and MLA levy payers.

Whilst the content and format of Red Meat Updates has been proven, the current financing arrangement is not sustainable. There is clear demand by MLA levy payers in Tasmania for this event, however the reality is that for the past three years, whilst there has been good industry sponsorship, the event has been underwritten by Macquarie Franklin at considerable expense. For Red Meat Updates to continue, an increased investment by MLA is required.

6 Conclusions/recommendations

6.1 Future R and D

The Pasture Updates activity is not a suitable forum to engage producers in determining future research and development needs. There may be some ability to determine the issues that are most challenging for industry or to look at the need for follow on R&D work based on what is presented at Pasture Updates.

It is recommended that MLA run separate activities to review the R&D needs of the various state or agriclimate zones, and that Pasture Updates be limited to presenting completed MLA-supported R&D information.

It is also recommended that Pasture Updates be seen as an awareness activity to promote the results of research undertaken by MLA. There should not be an expectation that Pasture Updates will result in practice change. Pasture Updates could be broadened to include sessions that promote participation in skill development activities following on from the event, however its role in signposting pathways to achieve these is likely to be more effective and enable producers to choose the options that are most relevant for them.

6.2 Practical application of insights

Incorporating Pasture Updates into Red Meat Updates was a very successful model for Tasmania. It is recommended that MLA consider a broader delivery platform that incorporates pastures, animal production issues and marketing activities undertaken by MLA. This may only be applicable to Tasmania, which is characterised by multi-enterprise businesses and a relatively small number of producers, and industry stakeholders, or it may be relevant for other regions or states.

6.3 Development and adoption activities

There is the potential to significantly value-add to Pasture Updates. There is a need for MLA to recognise Pasture Updates as part of the RD&E continuum, and to link the R&D activities promoted through Pasture Updates to learning activities that would have a higher chance of skill development and as a result, practice change.

Essentially Pasture Updates events are aimed at promoting MLA's R&D activities in the pasture area. With the inclusion of animal production research activities, and then a link to other tools and activities supported or developed by MLA (extension and adoption activities) there is the potential for it to fill a much more critical role in the process of practice change.

7 Key messages

- Producer speakers/champions are very effective at reinforcing the messages and potential for adoption of MLA funded research and tools.
- Well-connected, leading producers are extremely valuable contributors to working groups for industry events – both in developing program content and attracting sponsors.
- There are significant efficiencies to be gained by delivering a large red meat industry-wide event, for both attendees and deliverers/funders/sponsors.
- There are significant opportunities to broaden MLA's reach with producers and industry through a Red Meat Updates style event, and to provide clear pathways to upskilling for producers.

8 Appendix

8.1 Summary of evaluation

8.1.1 Red Meat Updates 2015

Q1. What is your role in the red meat industry?

	Total	%
Producer (owner)	65	67%
Producer (staff)	7	7%
Financial institution	3	3%
Agribusiness	10	10%
Researcher	0	0%
Public sector extension	3	3%
Private advisor	4	4%
Reseller	0	0%
NRM Group	0	0%
Other	5	5%
Didn't answer	0	0%
	97	

Q2. Producer statistics

	Total
No. of responses to this Q	69
Area (ha)	78637
Adult breeders (cattle)	10743
Steers	7514
Adult sheep (wool)	72350
Adult ewes (prime lambs)	103460
Prime lambs sold	138860
Sheep sold for live export	8100
Didn't answer (%)	29%

Q3. Are you an MLA member?

	Total
No. of responses to this Q	69
Yes	58
No	6
No, and want to be a member	5
Didn't answer (%)	29%

Q4a. How did you hear about the event?

	Total	%
Email	72	74%
Word of mouth	9	9%
MLA website / magazine	1	1%
Flier handed out at another event	3	3%
Phone call	1	1%
Newspaper	3	3%
Other	4	4%
Didn't answer	4	4%
	97	

Q4b. How far did you travel to attend this event?

	Total
No. of responses to this Q	37
0-50 km	13
50-100 km	7
100-150 km	4
150-200km	4
>200 km	9
Didn't answer (%)	62%

Q5. Top rated presentations for CONTENT
(based on selecting 'top 5')

	Total
Feed vs lamb quality-D Mason	21
Animal health – Paul Nilon	29
Case study – Tim Parsons	18
10 business commands – J Roche	38
Liver fluke – Bruce Jackson	19
Case study – Rob Terry	20
Grazing profit drivers – J Roche	37
High performance pasture – W Nichol	24
Irrigated legumes – Jason Lynch	33
Case study – Frank Archer	48
MLA feed demand calc. – C Allan	9
Perennial pasture mgnt-B Doonan	23
Pasture variety trial – C Allan	4
Case study – Josie Archer	13
Welcome Address: MLA– Richard Norton	32
Keynote: evidence based decision-R Roche	38
Supply chain discussion panel	18
Virtual farm tour of Greenvale – R Tole	58

Q6. Top rated presentations for RELEVANCE

(based on selecting 'top 5')

	Total
Feed vs lamb quality-D Mason	20
Animal health – Paul Nilon	28
Case study – Tim Parsons	10
10 business commands – J Roche	32
Liver fluke – Bruce Jackson	14
Case study – Rob Terry	12
Grazing profit drivers – J Roche	42
High performance pasture – W Nichol	22
Irrigated legumes – Jason Lynch	32
Case study – Frank Archer	44
MLA feed demand calc. – C Allan	13
Perennial pasture mgnt-B Doonan	22
Pasture variety trial – C Allan	5
Case study – Josie Archer	10
Welcome Address: MLA– Richard Norton	23
Keynote: evidence based decision-R Roche	26
Supply chain discussion panel	16
Virtual farm tour of Greenvale – R Tole	46

Q7. Overall, how would you rate the content of RMU?

	Total	%
Excellent	52	54%
Very good	37	38%
Good	6	6%
Fair	0	0%
Poor	0	0%
Didn't answer	2	2%
	97	

Q8. Did the format of the event work well?

	Total	%
Yes	90	93%
No	3	3%
Didn't answer	4	4%
	97	

Q9. Do you plan to make any changes to your business as a result of the event?

	Total	%
Yes	65	67%
No	19	20%
N/A	2	2%
Didn't answer	11	11%
	97	

Q10. Suggestions for future research

	Total	%
Relevant answer	3	3%
Irrelevant answer*	16	16%
Didn't answer	78	80%
	97	

* indicates an answer that is not relevant to this questions
- ie does not specify pasture &/or grazing research suggestions

Planned changes to businesses specified*	Total
Improve pasture management (including measuring pasture growth, feed budgeting, stocking rates, grazing management)	20
Increase production & stocking rates	4
Better planning (including team meetings)	2
Renovate pastures	2
Business benchmarking	2
Use more of the MLA management tools	1
Calculate cost of production	1
Grow more legumes	1
Improve business management	1
Better record keeping	1

* note some respondents nominated more than one practice change, some did not specify the change they planned to make - all changes specified are counted in this table

8.1.2 Pasture Updates (Cressy) 2015

Q1. What is your role in the red meat industry?

	Total	%
Producer (owner)	8	47%
Producer (staff)	2	12%
Financial institution	0	0%
Agribusiness	2	12%
Researcher	1	6%
Public sector extension	1	6%
Private advisor	0	0%
Reseller	1	6%
NRM Group	0	0%
Other	2	12%
Didn't answer	0	0%
	17	

Q2. Producer statistics

	Total
No. of responses to this Q	9
Area (ha)	5637
Adult breeders (cattle)	910
Steers	420
Adult sheep (wool)	0
Adult ewes (prime lambs)	9580
Prime lambs sold	13180
Sheep sold for live export	0
Didn't answer (%)	47%

Q3. Are you an MLA member?

	Total
No. of responses to this Q	9
Yes	9
No	0
No, and want to be a member	0
Didn't answer (%)	47%

Q4a. How did you hear about the event?

	Total	%
Email	14	82%
Word of mouth	0	0%
MLA website / magazine	1	6%
Flier handed out at another event	0	0%
Phone call	0	0%
Newspaper	1	6%
Other	0	0%
Didn't answer	1	6%
	17	

Q4b. How far did you travel to attend this event?

	Total
No. of responses to this Q	6
0-50 km	4
50-100 km	
100-150 km	1
150-200km	
>200 km	
Didn't answer (%)	35%

Q5. Top rated presentations for CONTENT
(based on selecting 'top 5')

Using research to impact productivity	Total	%
Excellent	2	12%
Very Good	4	24%
Good	9	53%
Fair	2	12%
Poor	0	0%
Didn't answer	0	0%
	17	

Importance of research to farm prod.	Total	%
Excellent	2	12%
Very Good	7	41%
Good	7	41%
Fair	1	6%
Poor	0	0%
Didn't answer	0	0%
	17	

Grazing Trial (Brian Field)	Total	%
Excellent	3	18%
Very Good	7	41%
Good	5	29%
Fair	0	0%
Poor	1	6%
Didn't answer	1	6%
	17	

Pasture Variety Trial Network (Tony E)	Total	%
Excellent	2	12%
Very Good	5	29%
Good	7	41%
Fair	2	12%
Poor	0	0%
Didn't answer	1	6%
	17	

Irrigated Fodder (Rowan Smith and G)	Total	%
Excellent	3	18%
Very Good	5	29%
Good	7	41%
Fair	1	6%
Poor	0	0%
Didn't answer	1	6%
	17	

Q6. Top rated presentations for RELEVANCE
(based on selecting 'top 5')

Using research to impact productivity	Total	%
Excellent	1	6%
Very Good	5	29%
Good	8	47%
Fair	2	12%
Poor	0	0%
Didn't answer	1	6%
	17	

Importance of research to farm prod.	Total	%
Excellent	1	6%
Very Good	7	41%
Good	7	41%
Fair	1	6%
Poor	0	0%
Didn't answer	1	6%
	17	

Grazing Trial (Brian Field)	Total	%
Excellent	4	24%
Very Good	5	29%
Good	5	29%
Fair	1	6%
Poor	0	0%
Didn't answer	2	12%
	17	

Pasture Variety Trial Network (Tony B)	Total	%
Excellent	3	18%
Very Good	7	41%
Good	4	24%
Fair	0	0%
Poor	1	6%
Didn't answer	2	12%
	17	

Irrigated Fodder (Rowan Smith and G)	Total	%
Excellent	6	35%
Very Good	6	35%
Good	4	24%
Fair	0	0%
Poor	0	0%
Didn't answer	1	6%
	17	

Q7. Overall, how would you rate the content of RMU?

	Total	%
Excellent	2	12%
Very good	7	41%
Good	6	35%
Fair	0	0%
Poor	1	6%
Didn't answer	1	6%
	17	

Q8. Did the format of the event work well?

	Total	%
Yes	17	100%
No	0	0%
Didn't answer	0	0%
	17	

Q9. Do you plan to make any changes to your business a result of the event?

	Total	%
Yes	8	47%
No	3	18%
N/A	1	6%
Didn't answer	5	29%
	17	

Planned changes to businesses specified*	Total
Agronomy packages for pastures	1
Pasture improvement	1
Not specified	6

* note some respondents indicated they would make practice change but did not specify the change they planned to make.

Q10. Suggestions for future research

	Total	%
Relevant answer	1	6%
Irrelevant answer*	1	6%
Didn't answer	15	88%
	17	

* Indicates an answer that is not relevant to this questions - ie does not specify pasture &/or grazing research suggestions

Suggestions for future research
Variety selection is high hanging fruit, need to focus on low hanging fruit which is grazing management, fertility and irrigation in that order.