

# final report

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## **Producer Demonstration Sites – National Coordinator**

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## **Abstract**

This Final Report provides an overview of the role of the PDS National Coordinator, including the programs' outputs and outcomes, over the period December 2014 to December 2017. The report covers details of changes made to the PDS program, provides a summary of all PDS projects (both existing and new) and provides an assessment of performance against the projects objectives.

## Executive summary

MLA's Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) program aims to provide a participatory learning opportunity for groups of producers to shorten the time lag between research and development and on-farm adoption. It operates nationally covering the northern beef and southern lamb, sheepmeat and beef industries.

The role of National Coordinator (NC) commenced in December 2014 and concluded in December 2017. This Final Report details activities of the National Coordinator and the Program itself over the period.

Key aspects of the PDS program over the 3 years include:

- The PDS program has been reconfigured in several ways, especially in relation to Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER)
- The majority of existing projects (at December 2014) have been successfully completed
- 3 new Open Calls for projects have been conducted resulting in 22 new projects commencing
- One further Open Call has just commenced
- Opportunities for communicating outcomes have been sought, although this is an area where further focus is needed
- The 8 completed projects involved 23 demonstration sites, 34 core producers and over 1,000 other producers (observer) who were exposed to the results
- There are currently 22 ongoing projects under the control of the PDS National Coordinator. They involve 153 demonstration sites, 252 core producers and an anticipated 2,000 (observer) producers expected to be directly exposed to the results of the demonstrations.
- There is also one extended PDS program run by the Victorian Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDTJR). This program entails 8 PDS separate projects in Victoria and is part of the National Coordinators responsibilities.

There are a series of recommendations included as part of this Final Report. They include:

- The PDS Program should continue
- Future open calls should be managed carefully to ensure management resources are adequate
- The Extended PDS project operated by DEDTJR should be continued
- There should be ongoing encouragement to improve the quality of applications and reports
- The pre-project training in MER and Communication plans should be continued
- A review should be undertaken to make PDS projects more accessible / appealing to northern beef producers
- Further focus should be placed on enhancing the communication of project outcomes across the PDS network, and to red meat levy payers generally.
- There should be greater focus on the timeliness of receipt of milestone reports
- The PDS program has been predominately input and output orientated to date. More focus on outcomes is required.

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## 1 Background

MLA's Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) program aims to provide a participatory learning opportunity for groups of producers to demonstrate best practice and locally develop or demonstrate MLA research and development outputs in a regional and commercially relevant context that leads to improved profitability and sustainability outcomes. The program aims to shorten the time lag between research and development and on-farm adoption. The program operates nationally covering the northern beef and southern lamb, sheepmeat and beef industries.

A resource within the program is that of National PDS Coordinator. The National Coordinator's role is to drive the development and implementation of the PDS model and coordinate the PDS network to ensure that program outcomes are delivered to industry efficiently.

## 2 Project objectives

The key objectives of the National PDS Coordinator were:

- Drive the development and implementation of the national beef and sheepmeat producer demonstration site (PDS) program.
- Implement a monitoring and evaluation program, consistent with MLA's framework, to monitor and report producer knowledge, skills and confidence change and practice change.
- Scope the operation and implementation of a PDS network to share learnings, extend key learnings to industry and extend the reach of PDS outcomes beyond the immediate sites.
- Professionally and efficiently co-ordinate PDS projects (existing and future) to ensure outcomes are delivered to industry.
- Engage with other MLA producer demonstration and network programs such as producer Research Sites, Making More from Sheep, More Beef from Pastures and Future Beef.
- Identify opportunities to actively promote the PDS program and its offer to red meat producers throughout Australia.
- Assist groups with potential PDS project ideas to develop the project and ensure the technical basis and producer ownership is sound.
- Make recommendations to the MLA project evaluation committee on the potential value of project applications.
- Maintain regular communication with the PDS contract organisations to monitor and track project performance and identify potential issues that may impact the achievement of project milestones and objectives.
- Regularly consult with each site facilitator / producer on progress and issues and conduct annual teleconference progress reviews.
- Review PDS milestone reports and make recommendations to the MLA Project Manager. Follow up outstanding milestone reports.
- Consolidate all PDS communication plans, results and key messages and on a regular basis and advise MLA communications and extension managers of upcoming events, activities and communication opportunities
- Communicate monthly with the MLA Project Manager on the progress and issues associated with the PDS projects and the program.

### 3 Methodology

The PDS project is managed by a senior MLA Manager supported by an independent consultant as the National Coordinator.

At the commencement of the National Coordinators role in December 2014 there were 10 PDS projects operating along with an extended PDS program (8 separate projects) managed by the Victorian Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR). A similar project run by the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries was completed in 2014.

The objectives of the National PDS Coordinator are listed in section 2 and in essence summarise the methodology of project 1501.

### 4 Results

#### 4.1 Changes to the PDS program

Over the course of the 3 year project, the structure of the PDS program has been significantly altered.

Firstly, it is now a requirement that the demonstration topic of all PDS proposals must align with MLA (and subsequently MLA's regional producer research advisory committees) research, development and adoption priorities. For northern projects at least, contact with NABRAC is also required. This helps to ensure that PDS projects support the broader RD&A portfolio of MLA.

Secondly, the focus on monitoring and evaluation and communication has been significantly increased. For example it is now a requirement that the first milestone for all PDS projects involves

- Acceptance of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER) Plan; and
- Acceptance of a Communication Plan.

For both these plans, templates have been prepared to facilitate consistent and comprehensive documents. In the case of the MER plan, it is based on a modified Bennett's Hierarchy and was put together with the assistance of Jeff Coutts and Gordon Stone from QualDATA. A range of other templates (skills audit questionnaires pre and post project, narratives and case study guidelines etc.) have been developed. In addition, prior to projects commencing, a representative of each PDS project is asked to attend a MER and Communication training day in Sydney.

Other changes to the Program include:

- Revision of the preliminary and full application forms
- Concentration on ensuring projects have clear and concise objectives (written in a SMART form)
- Development of MER spreadsheets for projects and the program overall (note: these are still under development).

In addition to the above changes, open calls for new projects were undertaken at the following times:

- Late 2015;
- Late 2016;
- Early 2017; and

- Late 2017.

The open call process spans across approximately 3 months and includes:

- Announcement and request for preliminary applications
- Receipt of preliminary applications
- Preliminary applications assessed against selection criteria by the National Coordinator and a Panel of MLA senior personnel
- Selection of proposals that are asked to submit a full application
- Receipt of full applications
- Full applications assessed against selection criteria by the National Coordinator and a Panel of MLA senior personnel
- Selection of full applications for contracting (new PDS projects)
- Revision of full applications
- Contracting.

## 4.2 Summary of PDS projects

Over the last 3 years, the number of PDS projects operating is listed below:

- |                     |                                    |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| • Existing projects | 11 (8 now completed and 3 ongoing) |
| • Open Call 1       | 6                                  |
| • Open Call 2       | 6                                  |
| • Open Call 3       | 10                                 |
| • Open Call 4       | <u>TBA</u>                         |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>33</b>                          |

Of the 33 projects operating over the period, 25 remain active as at December 2017, with a further tranche of projects to come from Open Call 4.

The following table provides a summary of all PDS projects that have been funded over the last 3 years:

Project number	Project Title & focus	Project Manager	Number of Core Producers	Number of Observer producers (estimated or actual)	Number of Demo Sites	Status
<b>Existing PDS projects in 2015</b>						
E.PDS.1301	Enhanced Producer Demonstration Site (EPDS) Program	Martin Dunstan, DEDTJR Victoria	276	1200+	46	<b>Project extension sought</b> This program involved 8 individual PDS projects across Victoria. It directly engaged 276 enterprises, 9 service providers and 11 producer groups in the demonstration sites. Broader extension activities engaged more than 1,271 producers and 110 service providers
B.NBP.0808	Does single shot vaccination of calves and weaners for clostridial disease reduce the risk of mortality in northern NT beef herds?	Jodie Ward and Kieren McCosker, NT Department of Primary Industry and Resources. NT	10	Unspecified	10	<b>Ongoing</b> See title of project. The preliminary results suggest that providing one vaccination only at the time of dehorning/castration is not effective at preventing mortality under extensive conditions. <b>Project managed by Jane Wightman</b>
E.PDS.1305	A guide to fertilisers and soil treatments for beef and sheepmeat production systems	Lewis Kahn, Agricultural Information & Monitoring Services NSW	1	Unspecified	5	<b>Completed and Final Report submitted.</b> Summarises the findings of 5 recent fertiliser trials. With P limiting soils, soil treatments to provide P (which also generally provide S) are most effective (i.e. first limiting) for increasing pasture production. Under these conditions, microbial products, plant growth or microbial foods or less limiting major or trace elements did not increase pasture production



E.PDS.1306	Grazing Systems to Improve Profit	Chris Mirams, Burgoinee Creek Landcare Group Victoria	20+	300 attended field days	1	<b>Completed and Final report submitted.</b> Adoption of best practice to enhance production performance. As a result of this project, each and every member of the core group has moved from autumn to spring calving, adopted some form of rotational grazing, regularly take soil tests and apply variable rates of fertilizer to achieve critical nutrient values
E.PDS.1401	Pedigree Competition and Walk-Over-Weighing	Tom Silcock and Elders Victoria Sire Evaluation Group Victoria	8	250 by newsletter, 80 at field day	1	<b>Completed and Final report submitted.</b> Compared three methods of dam pedigree identification of lambs (Tag at birth, DNA parentage test and 'Pedigree Matchmaker' analysis) in a large commercial merino flock using electronic tags. The project also assessed the effectiveness of an in paddock 'walk over weighing' (WOW) monitoring system
E.PDS.1404	Improving MSA Compliance on King Island	Peter Ball, TIAR Tasmania	NA	NA	7	<b>This project was discontinued.</b> Identify the cause of dark-cutters on King Island. The objectives were beyond the capacity of this project to identify the cause of the high incidence of dark cutting on King Island.
E.PDS.1405	The Creation of ASHEEP Flock QA	ASHEEP, Esperance WA	NA	110	2	<b>Completed and Final report submitted.</b> Quantify the presence of OJD in the Esperance region and identify if a self-regulated QA scheme could work. Using a combination of abattoir surveillance but most importantly PFC testing, ASHEEP identified the existence of OJD in the area and developed a recommendation for vaccination. Those that tested positive during this program will

						be assisted by the Independent Vet Monitor (resourced by ASHEEP Flock QA).
E.PDS.1411	Profiting from individual animal economic measures	Mark Gardner, Vanguard Business Services NSW	NA	200	2	<b>Completed and Final report submitted.</b> Quantify the economic impact from collecting and using individual animal economic performance data for hogget replacement selection in two sheep flocks in Central West NSW
E.PDS.1503	Binalong's Alternative Fertilizer Pasture Trial	Fiona Leech and Donna Reid (Binalong Landcare) NSW	3	140  650 at other events	3	<b>Completed and Final report submitted.</b> Compare the performance of a range of well-known and alternative fertilisers. Single superphosphate was reliably shown to be the most cost effective product however some of the alternative fertilizers trialled were comparable in some years of the study. There were also some products which were ineffective and hence costly to use
E.PDS.1504	Border Leicester rams into action	Lynton Arney (Inverbrackie Stud) and David Kleemann (SARDI) SA	2	25	8 initially, 2 at the end	<b>Completed and Final report submitted.</b> Determine the impact of treating young rams with melatonin. Treatment of young BL rams increased pregnancy rate in year two but not in year one. Litter size was not significantly increased by melatonin treatment of young BL rams. A higher proportion of ewes became pregnant earlier for the melatonin treated rams.
E.PDS.1505	Rejuvenating established Leucaena pastures in Western Darling Downs through	Chinchilla Landcare Group Inc Queensland	6	20	6	<b>Ongoing?</b> Determine if targeted fertiliser application can rejuvenate existing Leucaena pastures <b>Project managed by Jane Wightman</b>

	targeted fertiliser application					
<b>Open Call 1</b>						
E.PDS.1601	Demonstration of diet to influence lamb sex-ratio	Dr Edward Clayton (NSW DPI) and Dale Stringer (Holbrook Landcare Network) NSW	8	20	11	<b>Ongoing</b> Determine whether results achieved during a research trial (achieving greater than 10% more male lambs than females by feeding ewes omega 3 fatty acids at joining), can be replicated in a range of commercial sheep enterprises over 3 years. (Note: this is not strictly a PDS as it has a higher budget and is jointly funded by AWI and MLA)
E.PDS.1602	New England WormBoss	Deb Maxwell, UNE NSW	7	100	7	<b>Ongoing</b> Demonstrate the efficacy and financial benefits from implementing the WormBoss worm control program to sheep producers in the New England region and more broadly in the high summer rainfall areas.
E.PDS.1603	Barossa Improved Grazing Group	Georgie Keynes, BIGG SA	7	100+	3 major, 17 minor	<b>Ongoing</b> Demonstrate the productive and economic performance of a range of pasture types to improve annual feed production, total grazing days and feed quality in a variable climate on at least 15 sheep and/or cattle properties.
E.PDS.1604	Seed Free Lamb	Felicity Turner, Mackillop Farm Management Group	8	40	3	<b>Ongoing</b> Demonstrate and assess the potential of cereal and forage varieties sown into established pastures or new pastures to provide a balanced but improved fodder on which to finish seed free

		SA				lambs due to reduced grass-seed set in the paddock.
E.PDS.1605	Maximising pasture production and utilisation for best practice lamb finishing under irrigation	Leanne Sherriff, Macquarie Franklin Tasmania	11	300	2 or 3	<b>Ongoing</b> Identify practical, economic solutions to demonstrate best practice grazing of irrigated pastures under centre pivot irrigators which increase pasture production (pasture utilisation) by up to 30% for prime lamb enterprises.
E.PDS.1606	Integrated control of Chilean Needle Grass	Lewis Kahn, Agricultural Information & Monitoring Services NSW	10	80	6	<b>Ongoing</b> Demonstrate and compare 3 control options to reduce Chilean Needle Grass plants or seeding panicles leading to an increase in pasture growth (kg DM/ ha/day) and production efficiency (kg live weight/ha) with increased gross margins over the current situation.
<b>Open Call 2</b>						
E.PDS.1701	Finishing Systems for the Future?	Nancy Spoljaric, Monaro Farming Systems CMC Incorporated NSW	6	55	6	<b>Ongoing</b> Demonstrate the actual profitability of 6 different “finishing pasture systems” in sheep meat production enterprises on the Monaro as compared with traditional store lamb and weaner production, as well as identify the most profitable “pasture type” for finishing in these farm systems.
E.PDS.1702	Integrating dual purpose crops and eID into mixed farming systems	Dr Christine Kershaw, Stirlings to Coast Farmers Inc. WA	12	198	4	<b>Ongoing</b> Identify and quantify productivity and profitability gains on livestock and mixed enterprise farming businesses through adoption of EID technology and dual purpose crops in sheep enterprises in WA.

E.PDS.1703	Real time Biomass Imaging & the FOO App for Improved Feed Budgeting	Tracey Hodgkins, Southern Dirt Incorporated WA	10	50	5	<b>Ongoing</b> Demonstrate the ease and effectiveness of real-time biomass assessment using a hand-held imaging device and the FOO App on at least 5 WA farms. Comparisons will be of the outcomes of feed budgeting and grazing management using the Greenseeker and the FOO App compared to the standard district practice of set-stocking or low-intensity rotational grazing.
E.PDS.1704	Improved pastoral feedbase management	Mark Gardner, Vanguard Business Services NSW	10	10	10	<b>Ongoing</b> Demonstrate on 10 properties that the weaning percentage of sheep enterprises can be improved by testing feed quality of the pastoral feedbase, identifying periods of nutritional deficit and developing and implementing profitable strategic supplementation options
E.PDS.1705	Advantages of Pasture Manipulation	Ed Riggall and The Moore Catchment Council WA	13	70	3	<b>Ongoing</b> Implement and demonstrate the clear advantages of pasture manipulation (e.g. spray topped) on the quantity and quality of FOO available for sheep and the impact on farm profitability.
E.PDS.1706	Good clover, Bad clover	Charlie Crozier, Mackillop Farm Management Group SA	12	100	12	<b>Ongoing</b> In the South East and Kangaroo Island regions of South Australia, upskill producers in oestrogenic clover identification and coach them to apply practices that decrease or eliminate the impacts of the 'bad' clovers and therefore improve conception rate, marking rate and farm profitability.

<b>Open Call 3</b>						
E.PDS.1708	High Production Annual Forage in Perennial Systems	Rob Shea, Perennial Pasture System Inc,, Victoria	10	50	12	<b>Ongoing</b> Demonstrate the value of optimal high production annual forage in perennial grazing systems on 12 member farms and demonstrate the impact that the improved pasture production has on lamb production systems.
E.PDS.1709	Tamar Pasture Improvement Demonstration Project	Greg Lundstrom, Tamar NRM Inc Tasmania	16	40	3	<b>Ongoing</b> Demonstrate in Northern Tasmania that new pasture species/cultivars and associated grazing management practices can increase the profitability of the red meat supply chain by at least 10%. This will include training producers in monitoring techniques and data collection
E.PDS.1710	Managing Crop Grazing	Ed Riggall and The Facey Group Inc WA	21	300	4	<b>Ongoing</b> Demonstrate the impact that grazing crops has on sheep management in southern WA in regards to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing condition score of ewes</li> <li>• Increasing Feed on Offer (FOO) through deferment of pastures during period of crop grazing.</li> <li>• Minimal impact on harvest yield</li> </ul>
E.PDS.1711	Improving heifer productivity by integrating FTAI into commercial cow enterprises	SWANS Veterinary Services & ASHEEP WA	20	150	20	<b>Ongoing</b> Demonstrate on properties in southern WA that tighter joining periods via adoption of FTAI and the use of genetically superior sires can reduce dystocia in maiden heifers and reduce the empty rate in short mated heifers in this and the subsequent joining

E.PDS.1712	Improve Winter Feed Availability	Phil Cranney, Local Land Services, Mandurama NSW	20	20	5	<b>Ongoing</b> Demonstrate and assess the ability of Gibberellic acid, Gibberellic acid combined with Easy N, Molybdenum, and Alsoca granular inoculant to increase late Autumn and Winter feed availability and potential stocking rate by 20% in central NSW
E.PDS.1713	Temporary fencing for improved twin lamb survival	Steve Cotton and Willaura BestWool / BestLamb Group Victoria	5	16	4	<b>Ongoing</b> Demonstrate a 10% improvement in twin lamb marking rate by reducing mob sizes through the use of temporary fencing during lambing on mixed sheep/cropping properties in Western Victoria
E.PDS.1714	Chaff Carts as Sheep Management Tools	Ed Riggall and Gillamii Centre Inc WA	10	120	4	<b>Ongoing</b> Demonstrate the cost / benefit of how chaff carts can benefit sheep enterprises by increasing sheep condition and reducing supplementary feed costs, improving overall farm productivity and profitability.
E.PDS.1801	Improved reproductive efficiency of cattle in the northern pastoral zone of SA.	Anne Collins and Outback Lakes Producers Association Inc SA	6	3	3	<b>Soon to commence</b> To benchmark reproductive performance in the northern pastoral zone of South Australia and demonstrate that keeping individual records on breeders and managing accordingly can increase reproductive efficiency and therefore productivity
E.PDS.1802	Impact of spring active dung beetles on pasture growth rates	Cherie White (LLS) and Riverina Highlands	20	40	5	<b>Soon to commence</b> Demonstrate if spring active dung beetles persist and thrive in the Riverina Highlands of NSW, recycling dung and improving pasture dry matter production by up to 30% in spring

		Landcare Network NSW				
E.PDS.18??	Grazing crops to increase farm profitability	Veronika Crouch, Corrigin Farm Improvement Group	10	60	4	<b>Being contracted</b> Demonstrate that crops can be grazed to increase liveweight gain and condition scores of merino ewes relative to current forage options; with the crop to be harvested for grain later in that year with .
<b>Total - DEDTJR Project</b>			<b>276</b>	<b>1,200+</b>	<b>46</b>	
<b>Total PDS Completed</b>			<b>34</b>	<b>1,025</b>	<b>23</b>	
<b>Total PDS Ongoing under NC</b>			<b>252</b>	<b>1,922</b>	<b>153</b>	

The 33 PDS projects operating over the period have involved approximately:

- 220 demonstration sites;
- 562 producers directly involved in or overseeing projects; and
- 4,000 (estimated in plans) producers being made aware of preliminary or final results

The level of KASA change and practice change arising from these projects will be reported on over the next period as such measures were introduced for new projects (from Open Call 1), none of which have been completed yet.



### 4.3 Reconciliation against project objectives

The following achievements have been made against the Objectives established for the National Coordinator project.

Objective	Achievement / Status
1. Drive the development and implementation of the national beef and sheepmeat producer demonstration site (PDS) program.	<b>Achieved</b> as evidenced by completion of existing PDS projects and the conduct of 4 Open Calls
2. Implement a monitoring and evaluation program, consistent with MLA's framework, to monitor and report producer knowledge, skills and confidence change and practice change.	<b>Achieved</b>
3. Scope the operation and implementation of a PDS network to share learnings, extend key learnings to industry and extend the reach of PDS outcomes beyond the immediate sites.	<b>Partially achieved</b> – we have made good progress is getting PDS projects to focus far more on their own communication. However, we have not been successful in getting PDS' to communicate across the network (although the MER and Communication training day has been useful in that regard)
4. Professionally and efficiently co-ordinate PDS projects (existing and future) to ensure outcomes are delivered to industry	<b>Achieved</b> , although broader communication across red meat producers needs to be further delivered
5. Engage with other MLA producer demonstration and network programs such as producer Research Sites, Making More from Sheep, More Beef from Pastures and Future Beef.	<b>Partially achieved</b> – there has been good engagement at the PDS project selection level but limited contact with existing MLA network programs. In part this has been due to only a small number of projects completing with interesting results. Exceptions are projects 1301, 1306, 1401 and 1503.
6. Identify opportunities to actively promote the PDS program and its offer to red meat producers throughout Australia.	<b>Achieved</b> – see Open Call comments above
7. Assist groups with potential PDS project ideas to develop the project and ensure the technical basis and producer ownership is sound.	<b>Achieved</b> , although the quality of applications can sometimes be disappointing

8. Make recommendations to the MLA project evaluation committee on the potential value of project applications.	<b>Achieved.</b> All Preliminary and Final Applications are scored against selection criteria and results submitted
9. Maintain regular communication with the PDS contract organisations to monitor and track project performance and identify potential issues that may impact the achievement of project milestones and objectives.	<b>Achieved</b> , especially around Milestone Report time
10. Regularly consult with each site facilitator / producer on progress and issues and conduct annual teleconference progress reviews.	<b>Achieved</b> – see point 9. Also all recent contracts have Go / No Go teleconferences scheduled approximately yearly
11. Review PDS milestone reports and make recommendations to the MLA Project Manager. Follow up outstanding milestone reports.	<b>Achieved</b> , although it is acknowledged that the timing for receipt of milestone reports from PDS projects needs to improve substantially. Moves have been made to address this
12. Consolidate all PDS communication plans, results and key messages and on a regular basis and advise MLA communications and extension managers of upcoming events, activities and communication opportunities	<b>Partially achieved.</b> This has been getting better in recent projects where project teams are communicating with MLA Comms Team to publicise (often) preliminary results or upcoming events. There is a need to bolster communications, especially via updating the MLA website with current information about past and current projects, contact details and primary focus.
13. Communicate monthly with the MLA Project Manager on the progress and issues associated with the PDS projects and the program.	<b>Achieved</b> , although the MLA Project Manager will be better placed to advise

## 5 Discussion

Over the last 3 years the PDS project has progressed reasonably well, although there are areas where further improvement is required.

From a positive perspective:

- The structure and processes of the PDS program has been significantly enhanced especially:
  - Alignment with MLA RD&E priorities;
  - Focus on clear project objectives;
  - Enhanced MER plan and implementation;
  - Enhanced communication plans; and
  - Revised application forms
- Three open calls were held for new projects and a fourth is underway

- There is a lot of interest in, and activity by, the PDS program with a total of 33 PDS projects operating over the period. Of these:
  - 25 remain active;
  - 7 have been completed and final reports issued; and
  - 1 was discontinued
- The 33 PDS projects have involved approximately:
  - 220 demonstration sites;
  - 562 producers directly involved in or overseeing projects; and
  - 4,000 producers (est.) being made aware of preliminary or final results.

Despite these positive results, there are a number of areas that can be further improved including:

- Ongoing improvement in the quality of the applications (especially in relation to SMART objectives and MER) and milestone reports.
- Continue the pre-project training in MER and communication.
- Make PDS projects more accessible / appealing to northern beef producers.
- Enhance the communication of project outcomes across the PDS network and to red meat levy payers generally.
- Timeliness of receipt of milestone reports from PDS projects needs to improve considerably.
- There is a need to bolster communications, especially to the broader red meat levy paying audience. This can in part be enhanced by updating the MLA website with current information about past and current projects, contact details and the primary focus / outcomes of the projects.
- Success of the program has largely been determined by inputs and outputs. Greater focus on outcomes is required. The very important level of KASA change and practice change arising from PDS projects will need to be reported on over the next period as such measures were introduced for new projects (from Open Call 1), none of which have been completed yet.

## 6 Conclusions/recommendations

Based on the experience of the last three years as reported within this Final Report, the key recommendations suggested by the PDS National Coordinator are:

- The PDS Program should continue
- Once the 'current' open call has been successfully completed, future open calls should be based on 'spaces' being available as a result of other projects concluding, so that management resources are not spread too thinly across projects
- The Extended PDS project operated by DEDTJR should be continued
- There should be ongoing encouragement to improve the quality of the applications (especially in relation to SMART objectives and MER) and milestone reports
- The pre-project training in MER and Communication plans should be continued
- A review should be undertaken and new processes agreed to make PDS projects more accessible / appealing to northern beef producers
- Further focus should be placed on enhancing the communication of project outcomes across the PDS network, and to red meat levy payers generally. This should include updating the MLA website with current information about past and current projects, contact details and the primary focus of the project and key findings

- There should be greater focus on the timeliness of receipt of milestone reports
- The PDS program has been too input and output orientated. More focus on outcomes is required. It is anticipated that this can be achieved as the level of KASA and practice change arising from PDS projects will be reported on over the next 3 year period as such measures have been introduced for new projects commenced since 2015.