



final report

Project code: E.INF.1307

Prepared by: Tim Pepper
Grassland Society of Southern Australia

Date published: 1 December 2015

PUBLISHED BY
Meat and Livestock Australia Limited
Locked Bag 991
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059

Pasture Updates southern Australia grasslands

Meat & Livestock Australia acknowledges the matching funds provided by the Australian Government to support the research and development detailed in this publication.

This publication is published by Meat & Livestock Australia Limited ABN 39 081 678 364 (MLA). Care is taken to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this publication. However MLA cannot accept responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of the information or opinions contained in the publication. You should make your own enquiries before making decisions concerning your interests. Reproduction in whole or in part of this publication is prohibited without prior written consent of MLA.

Executive Summary

Over the last 3 years the Grassland Society of Southern Australia (GSSA) has performed 18 Pasture Updates across Victoria and South Australia. These Updates were designed to inform producers of relevant research and project outcomes and communicate opportunities that are possible if new technology, pasture renewal & associated tools are adopted on farm. There was also the chance for proactive and profitable producers to share their enterprise stories and increase uptake and skill change.

Primarily these updates were conducted by local GSSA branches across both states. This ensured that the content of each update was relevant to the local area providing greater benefit & value for local producers.

Where possible and practical the GSSA partnered with local farming or industry groups like PPS, BIGG, SENRM, etc. This process improved the focus of the agenda and added to the success of these Updates. Each Update agenda was also reviewed and approved by the MLA, with guidance on research or project work that could enhance the outcome.

The updates were held throughout the year in different locations which enabled a broader range of topics and local issues/challenges to be addressed.

The locations were;

- Harrow, Western Vic
- Meredith, Central Vic
- Winchelsea, Western Vic
- Bairnsdale, Gippsland
- Naracoorte, SE SA
- Clare, Mid North SA
- Ararat, Western Vic
- Culcairn, Riverina (Nth Vic)
- Bairnsdale, Gippsland
- Shelford, Central Vic
- Bordertown, SE SA
- Stawell, Western Vic
- Adelaide, SA
- Coleraine, Western Vic
- Howlong, Northern Vic
- Nuriootpa, Mid North SA
- Baynton, Central Vic
- Lucindale, SE SA

Over the 3 year period of the project 977 people attended the 16 Pasture Updates.

From the evaluation form information 76% of the respondents were Producers or staff of Producer's. Researcher's, Agronomists, Private Consultants and Public Sector Extension staff made up a further 20% of the attendance.

One of the major objectives of the project was to achieve shifts in knowledge and skills, the feedback following the Updates has shown a strong trend indicating both knowledge and skills were enhanced.. Some of that respondent's feedback:

- 65% of respondents indicated they would implement changes as a result of the information or skills they learned at the Pasture Update they attended
- 87% rated the Pasture Update content as being "good" or better
- 83% of the audience were MLA Members
- 78% of respondents indicated they would like future Pasture Updates

This series of Pasture Updates appears to have been successful and reached the objectives set. From both GSSA and attendee's feedback there is plenty of scope for further development of the Pasture Update project to further inform and enhance pasture-based red meat production.

The Pasture Update concept is appealing to GSSA given we are a primary producer society focused on grassland agriculture and have been heavily involved in pasture improvement for red meat production for over 50 years.

Table of Contents

1	Background	6
1.1	Purpose and description	6
1.1.1	Purpose	6
1.1.2	Description.....	6
2	Projective objectives.....	6
2.1	By 30 November 2015 have delivered to MLA:	6
2.1.1	Coordinated the development and implementation of 6 pasture technical updates per annum in Victoria (n=4pa) and South Australia (n=2pa). Locations are to be varied across the State providing broad coverage enabling access by as many producers as possible.	6
2.1.2	Updates in SA are to be 1 in the south east, 1 in another region, with actual locations within these regions to be agreed between MLA and GSSA in a reasonable and timely manner.	6
2.1.3	300 producers to have participated at the Pasture Updates each year (goal over 3 years of 900 producers)	6
2.1.4	Presented MLA research output at each of the Updates relating to increasing pasture production and converting pasture into product.	6
2.1.5	Partner with regional producer networks and other organisations to support the development and delivery of the updates.	7
2.1.6	Annual reporting of monitoring an 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.....	7
3	Methodology.....	7
3.1	Pasture Update process.....	7
4	Results	8
4.1	Mix of attendee's	8
4.1.1	The profession of the Pasture update attendee's	8
4.2	Spread of Updates	8
4.2.1	Regional mix of Pasture Updates.....	8
4.3	Enterprise change	9
4.3.1	How many attendee's indicated change?	9
4.4	Rating of content	9
4.4.1	How did attendee's rate Update content	9

4.5	Effective marketing channels	10
4.5.1	How did you find out about the Update	10
4.6	MLA Members.....	10
5	Discussion	11
5.1	Area's identified for change on farm by attendee's	11
5.2	Performance against project objectives	12
6	Conclusions/recommendations	13
6.1	Pasture Update project	13
6.1.1	Conclusions	13
6.2	Pasture Updates Future	13
6.2.1	Where to next?	13
7	Key messages	14
7.1	Successful Pasture Update program, but more to do.....	14
8	Appendix.....	15
8.1	Locations and attendance	15
8.1.1	Chart of location and attendance numbers.....	15

1 Background

1.1 Purpose and description

1.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the project was to deliver a series of 6 pasture updates annually across the area covered by the membership of the Grassland Society of Southern Australia – Victoria and South Australia. The Pasture Updates were designed to raise awareness of research from MLA as well as provide information to attendees which could easily be related to their local region and conditions.

The purpose of a Pasture Update is to:

- Raise the awareness of research output from MLA and partner projects, ‘national’ pasture investments that are relevant regionally and locally, as well as regional R&D.
- Communicate the opportunities that may be provided with improved pasture technologies, and signpost participants to additional information and associated tools.
- Showcase producers who have made changes on-farm (via visit or speaker)
- Based on MLA’s existing M&E processes, assess:
 - Shifts in knowledge, skills and confidence and where appropriate, practice change
 - Participant’s reflections on direction and research needs around the topics presented

1.1.2 Description

Delivery of past technical information and commitment of industry engagement in pasture related issues are ad-hoc and fragmented both locally and nationally. Pasture updates, targeting livestock producers and advisors will deliver regionally relevant research output and signpost to relevant learning/information opportunities.

2 Projective objectives

2.1 By 30 November 2015 have delivered to MLA:

- 2.1.1 Coordinated the development and implementation of 6 pasture technical updates per annum in Victoria (n=4pa) and South Australia (n=2pa). Locations are to be varied across the State providing broad coverage enabling access by as many producers as possible.
- 2.1.2 Updates in SA are to be 1 in the south east, 1 in another region, with actual locations within these regions to be agreed between MLA and GSSA in a reasonable and timely manner.
- 2.1.3 300 producers to have participated at the Pasture Updates each year (goal over 3 years of 900 producers)
- 2.1.4 Presented MLA research output at each of the Updates relating to increasing pasture production and converting pasture into product.

- 2.1.5 Partner with regional producer networks and other organisations to support the development and delivery of the updates.
- 2.1.6 Annual reporting of monitoring an 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.

3 Methodology

3.1 Pasture Update process

The Grassland Society of Southern Australia (GSSA) was focussed on delivering Updates that both met the requirements of MLA and provided value to producers in the area each update was delivered. The first 4 Updates were organised by the GSSA central committee to ensure delivery in the allocated time, later Updates delivered by the GSSA during this agreement period had the involvement of local GSSA Branches or partner organisations.

The GSSA has 8 branches across Victoria and South Australia,

- Albury – Wodonga
- Central Ranges
- Central West
- East Gippsland
- Gippsland
- Limestone Coast
- Tasmania
- Western District

The network of branches give the GSSA a focus on activity that has relevance and benefit to local producers in each branch area. This in turn helped Update agenda's cover topics important to local producers.

For the time local branches became involved in the Updates, an organising committee was formed for each update that consisted of the GSSA Secretary & President and 3-4 members of the branch hosting that particular Update.

Once a committee was formed, a theme, speakers & draft agenda was put together and forwarded to MLA for input and suggestions. Once this was settled on and approved by MLA the Update was organised.

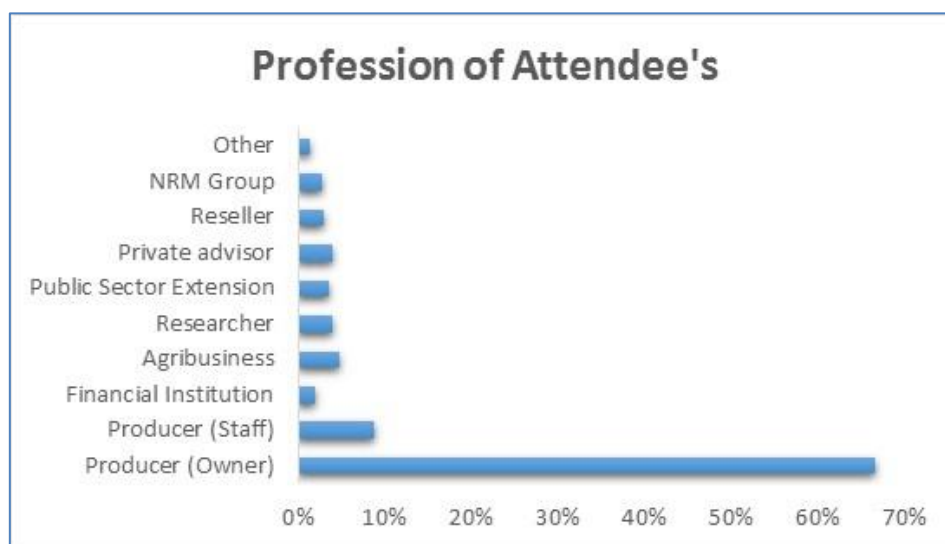
At each update participants were asked to complete the evaluation form provided to GSSA by MLA. This information was used to form the Milestone reports and is reported in the Results section below.

4 Results

4.1 Mix of attendee's

4.1.1 The profession of the Pasture update attendee's

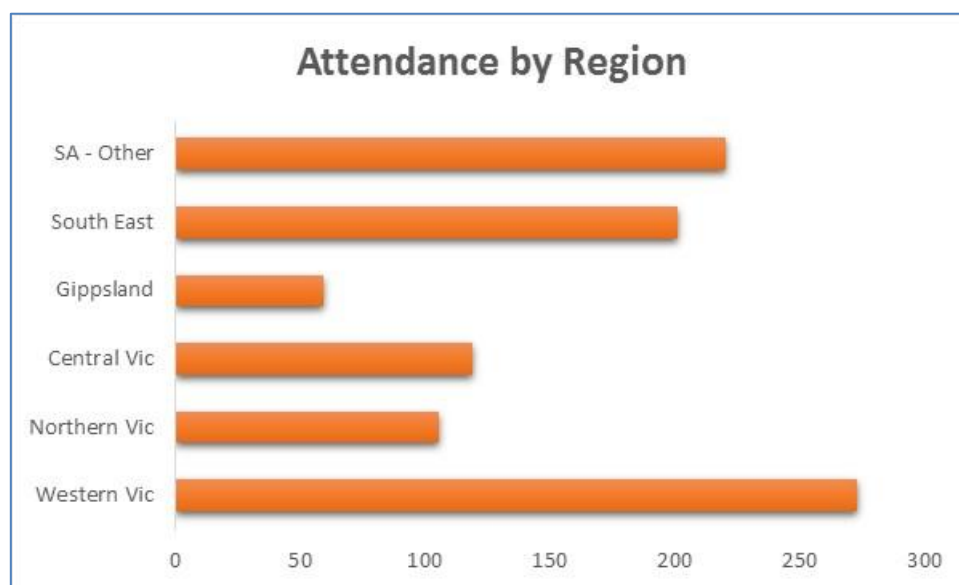
977 people attended the 16 Updates of the 3 years of this project. Producers were the primary audience at the Updates. Although it was good to see interest from primary advice & research professionals like Agronomist's, Advisor's, Government extension and Research staff. The numbers below reflect the Audience not including speakers.



4.2 Spread of Updates

4.2.1 Regional mix of Pasture Updates

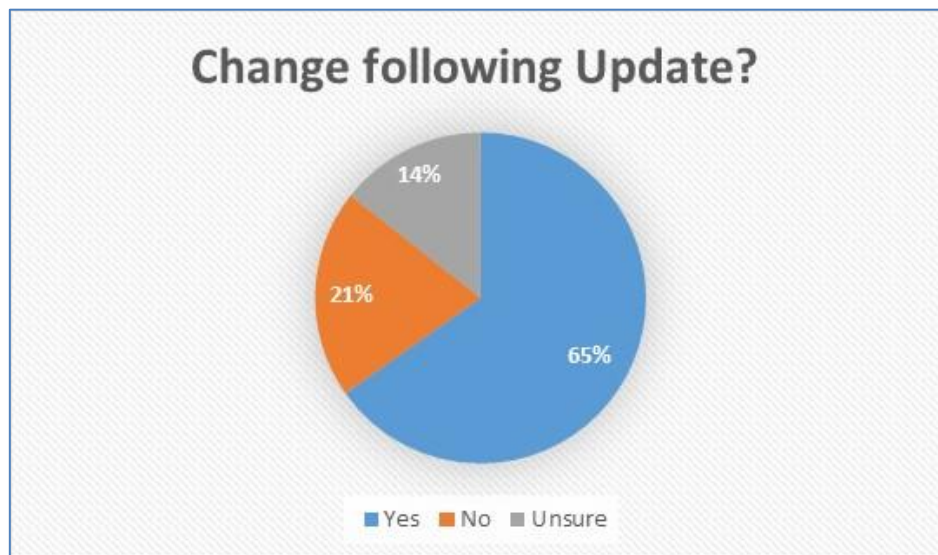
Pasture updates were held across two states over the last few years. The graph below indicates the regional spread of the Updates. A complete list of the where each Update was held and the number attended is in the Appendix.



4.3 Enterprise change

4.3.1 How many attendees indicated change?

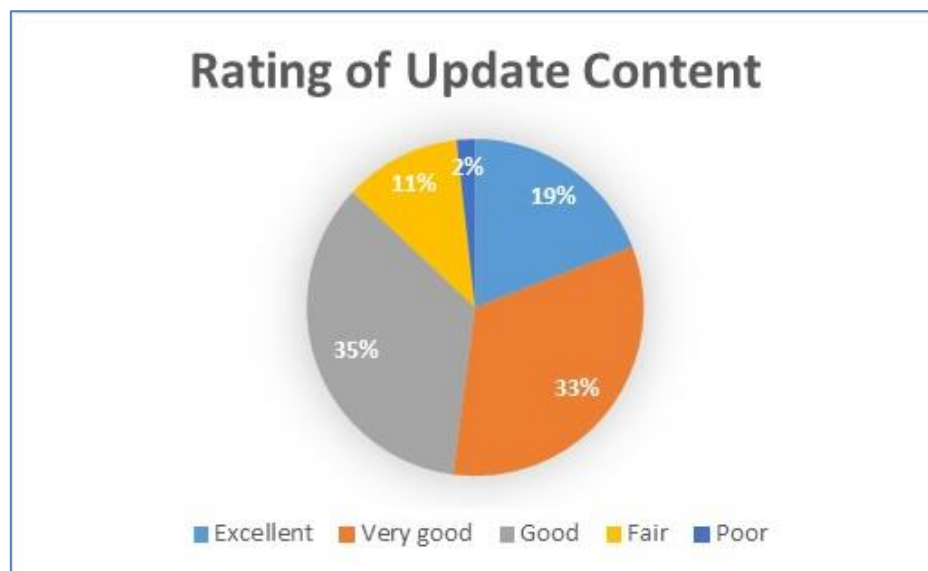
The chart below indicates the percentage of attendee's that indicated they would implement change on their or their client's property as a result of the Pasture Update they attended.



4.4 Rating of content

4.4.1 How did attendee's rate Update content

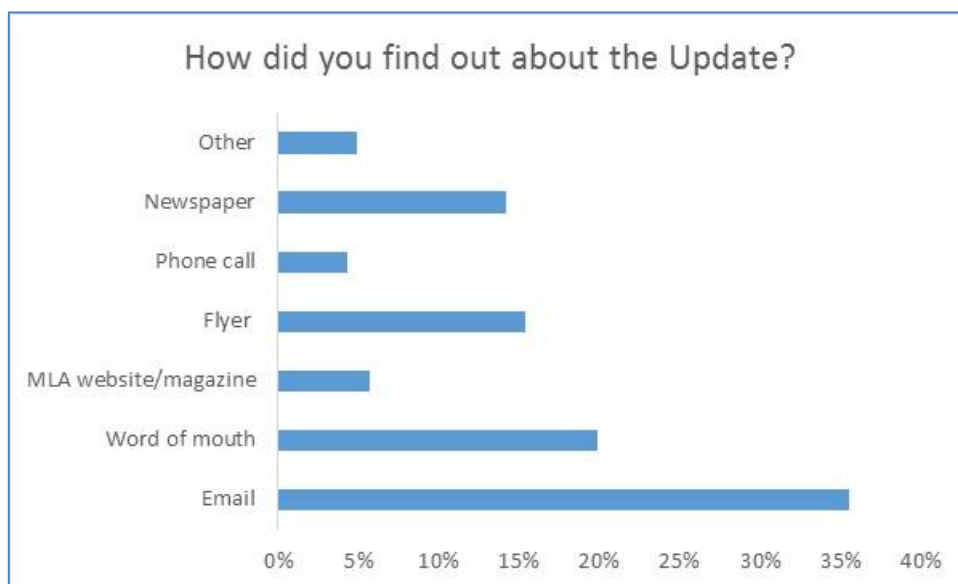
The rating of the content was consistently high for the Pasture updates. The overall rating of 19% "excellent" suggests the content at each update had an appropriate focus.



4.5 Effective marketing channels

4.5.1 How did you find out about the Update

How the attendee found out about the Update was tracked via the evaluation forms. This does provide some good insight into the best mediums to use in the future and where more focus could be directed.



4.6 MLA Members

The number of people that indicated they were Members or otherwise of MLA.



All of the charts and graphs above were collated from the evaluation forms completed at the conclusion of each Pasture update.

5 Discussion

5.1 Area's identified for change on farm by attendee's

Below is a collation of some of the feedback on changes that attendee's planned to implement on their farms after attending an update

Management	Tools	Pasture	Livestock
Better focus grazing management and using PA to assist this involvement in disease surveillance	Use the MLA calculating tools to better plan. getting on MLA website and using tools	Better pasture disease surveillance Use of GT phalaris for new pasture	Revisit parasite control Greater focus on parasite management
Follow smart farm of UNE.	On farm pasture measuring cages to get data on growth rates	More phalaris planting	worm control treatment
Rest for grass, start rotating more	EM survey	Better focus on Pasture species selection	Parasite control & monitoring
Sow more pasture	Soil mapping	Rotationally graze phalaris	More frequent monitoring of worms
Aluminium at depth management information was helpful	Mineral testing of plants & animals	Deep soil testing before phalaris establishment	Better knowledge of how to implement parasite control
Refer to EM data already collected	Determine stock selling points better	Higher seeding rate Annual Rye	Review drench procedure for stock
Brassica into pre joining ewe lamb rotation	Graze cereals	Seed species selection for more specific production needs	Not use injectable on preg ewes
Grazing management; brassica	Review business plan	Increase Lucerne %	Develop sheep parasite strategies
Totally re-look at our Lucerne management	Consider grazing barley crop during early phases	Increase Lucerne ha's ; rotations	Do a resistance test on lambs at weaning
Manage grazing with confidence - sow more Lucerne	Use Sheep worm check	More measurement of pasture nutrition, ROI	Worm management/testing regime
More feed budgets and financial analysis	Look for variable rate for spreader contractor	Grow more plantain	Bloat management for cattle on Lucerne
Reinforce current practices. Good to hear from experts the evidence and current advances	Look at the MLA tools and the species and sowing rate for fast feed	Better selection of phalaris pasture species	Grass feedlot to avoid dark cutting
Picked up good ideas for future extension activities	Clover disease identification	Use more phalaris GT	monitor adult sheep during winter for worms

5.2 Performance against project objectives

Listed below are the Project objectives with the GSSA performance of each listed below each objective.

- Coordinated the development and implementation of 6 pasture technical updates per annum in Victoria (n=4pa) and South Australia (n=2pa). Locations are to be varied across the State providing broad coverage enabling access by as many producers as possible.
 - Objective met. 12 Victorian Pasture Updates & 6 South Australian Pasture Updates delivered
- Updates in SA are to be 1 in the south east, 1 in another region, with actual locations within these regions to be agreed between MLA and GSSA in a reasonable and timely manner.
 - Objective met.
 - South East Updates; Naracoorte ('13), Bordertown ('14), Lucindale ('15).
 - Other Regions; Clare ('13), Adelaide ('14), Nuriootpa ('15)
- 300 producers to have participated at the Pasture Updates each year (goal over 3 years of 900 producers)
 - Objective exceeded. 977 producers attended the 16 Updates
- Presented MLA research output at each of the Updates relating to increasing pasture production and converting pasture into product.
 - Objective met (exceeded). Each update had at least one MLA research outcome presented. In most cases 2 were presented.
- Partner with regional producer networks and other organisations to support the development and delivery of the updates.
 - Objective met. GSSA partnered with a number of grower, industry and government organisations to deliver the Pasture Updates. This was not always necessary or possible but was encouraged by GSSA.
 - Groups/organisations partnered with were;
 - PPS (Ararat & Stawell)
 - BIGG (Nuriootpa)
 - SENRM (Bordertown & Lucindale)
 - DEDJTR (Bairnsdale & Baynton)
- 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 met. All 6 milestone reports have been submitted and accepted. This final report completes the reporting requirement.

6 Conclusions/recommendations

6.1 Pasture Update project

6.1.1 Conclusions

From the attendance and feedback of the Pasture Update project the need and interest in this type of pasture information is very strong. The high rating for the content of the Updates suggests that the combined GSSA & MLA Updates agenda approval process is delivering quality information and research. We also note the producer feedback on future topics/focus of Pasture updates, this provides a good starting point for the further development of Pasture Updates.

The GSSA was very pleased that 67% or 651 of the attendee's completed the feedback forms. Of these 65% of respondents indicated they would make change on their or their client's farms following the Update they attended. Although this number could be higher, it indicates that the focus on implementation of research outcomes and sharing of producer experience has resonated with many of the attendee's.

The period in which these updates was held was environmentally challenging across much of the GSSA area with lower than average rainfall in many areas and 2 out the three spring's cutting out early. These seasonal challenges required producer's to adjust plans and develop alternative management strategies.

The local & timely nature of the Pasture Updates process that the GSSA conducted allowed topics, research and actual producer experience in these areas to be delivered to producers when they needed it most. Some examples of how the Updates were developed to meet local needs are;

- Culcairn Update – spring 2014. Sheep feed lotting focus to address the issues raised by a very poor finish to the season.
- Stawell & Coleraine – autumn 2015. Both had presentations on managing stock transition from containment feeding to green pasture.
- Baynton & Lucindale – spring 2015. Both Updates had presentations on how to create quick feed on summer rain and how to improve utilisation of spring growth (crop & pasture).

There were many other locally relevant and timely topics addressed during the 3 years.

6.2 Pasture Updates Future

6.2.1 Where to next?

The GSSA is very interested in the continuation of the Pasture Update process. The strong results from the last 3 years show that there is both a need and desire at grower level to be informed of the latest research, management practices and producer success stories and gain insights on how these can be incorporated on their properties.

We believe that we can build further on the integrated approach of the most recent 4 or 5 updates delivered. Key aspects of the approach is a good combination of technical information (research or best-practice management) and activities focussed on skill

development (use of tools, hands on demonstrations, workshop activities etc...) A good example of this was the Howlong pasture update earlier this spring, this had a number of technical presentations in the morning and then a sowing demonstration with 4 different seed drills covering set up and seed placement review, followed by a Lucerne FOO exercise undertaken in plots at various growth stages.

This is the type of Update we would like to put on going forward with a combination of indoor presentations and outdoor activities. A number of Branches have put forward potential Pasture Updates for 2016 which will deliver this type of outcome. The input of the MLA to finalise the agenda is very beneficial to add research & other project information and ensure each update has the correct focus.

We have been able to complete the current project based on the funding provided. If the Pasture Updates are to continue this level of funding would be required to deliver them.

7 Key messages

7.1 Successful Pasture Update program, but more to do....

The Pasture Update program has successfully delivered to over 900 producers, advisers and pasture agronomists.

It has been a very useful method of delivering MLA funded research outcomes, sharing successful enterprise stories as well as practical demonstration of new methods, research and processes focussed on red meat enterprise sustainability & improvement.

The 18 Pasture Updates covered a large range of topics focussed on improving red meat production, profit and sustainability. Involvement from GSSA branches and partner organisations at the local level ensured relevant and timely content for participants.

The GSSA looks forward to continuing its partnership with MLA in the delivery of Pasture Updates into the future. As an organisation we believe we've learned a lot about how to deliver successful Pasture Updates during the past 3 years. The evolution of our so-called integrated approach over the past 12-24 months has been a very positive step forward in our event planning, format and delivery processes. That said we are confident there is further capacity to enhance Pasture Update outcomes in the future and belief we have the skills to bring this about.

8 Appendix

8.1 Locations and attendance

8.1.1 Chart of location and attendance numbers

Year	State	Location	Topic	Attendees
2013	VIC	Harrow	Shear Growth - Meating the Demand	62
	VIC	Meredith	Shear Growth - Meating the Demand	37
	VIC	Winchelsea	Shear Growth - Meating the Demand	35
	VIC	Bairnsdale	Shear Growth – Meating the Demand	38
	SA	Naracoorte	Shear Growth - Meating the Demand	78
	SA	Clare	Shear Growth - Meating the Demand	42
			2013 Total	292
2014	VIC	Ararat		69
	VIC	Culcairn	Fast Feed for Winter	53
	VIC	Bairnsdale	Perennial Pasture Systems suited to the East Gippsland Environment	21
	VIC	Shelford	Productivity gains with summer fodder crops and plantain	26
	SA	Bordertown	Making the most of what we've got	87
	SA	Adelaide, Lambex	Busting Ruminant nutrition myths	128
			2014 Total	384
2015	VIC	Stawell	Fast Food - Filling the feed gaps after a tough season	63
	VIC	Coleraine	Growing winter feed	44
	VIC	Howlong	Lucerne	52
	VIC	Baynton	Fuelling Efficiency – Fertilizer, Fodder and Farm system	56
	SA	Nuriootpa	Making \$ and sense from pastures and your farm business	50
	SA	Lucindale	There's money in dust!	35
			2015 Total	301
			Totals	977