

# final report

Project code: L.ADV.1801  
Prepared by: Meg Bell  
Coleraine Livestock Consulting  
Date published: 22 August 2017

PUBLISHED BY  
Meat and Livestock Australia Limited  
Locked Bag 1961  
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059

## South Australian Livestock Advisor Update

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**

The South Australian Livestock Consultants' Livestock Advisor Update was held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 2017 at the SARDI plant research lecture theatre at the University of Adelaide's Waite Campus, from 8:30am-5:30pm.

The update aimed to provide livestock consultants, advisors, technical sales representatives, veterinarians and agribusiness consultants with the latest research and programs from MLA, AWI and the Sheep CRC, as well as from various farming systems groups.

The program was split into 4 sessions, with each session a mix of 45 minute presentations on technical, in depth topic, and short, 5 minute summaries from farming systems groups in Southern Australia.

Overall, respondents indicated that they gained benefit from attending the update in terms of technical learning, but mostly in terms of networking opportunities. It was indicated that an update like this should be held annually, and that respondents would be willing to travel greater distances if they perceived the topics and speakers to be of high value to them. The day could have been improved by having fewer sessions but making them more in depth, and increasing the time available to network. It was also noted that there could be more time for questions and interaction between the audience and the speakers, as it was felt that there was a lot of value in being able to talk directly to the speakers that were specialists in their fields.

The technical update was found to be both achievable and desired, and should be instituted annually for all those in the livestock advisory sector.

## Table of contents

|          |   |           |
|----------|---|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Background.....</b>                        | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Project objectives.....</b>                | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Methodology .....</b>                      | <b>5</b>  |
| 3.1      | SALC Livestock Advisor Update - Program.....  | 5         |
| 3.2      | SALC Livestock Advisor Update Evaluation..... | 6         |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Results.....</b>                           | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Conclusions/recommendations .....</b>      | <b>22</b> |

## 1 Background

The South Australian Livestock Consultants (SALC) group is an organisation of independent livestock consultants based in South Australia. SALC held a technical update specifically aimed at livestock advisors based in southern Australia, to update advisors on research, development and extension outcomes from MLA, AWI, Sheep CRC, the South Australian Sheep Blueprint (SASIB) and the University of Adelaide that targeted specifically at an advisor level. The technical update was held in Adelaide on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2017 and attendees were targeted by invitation only. Specialist speakers from MLA, AWI, Sheep CRC, SASIB and the University of Adelaide were targeted to present new and relevant information specifically to the attendees. The information obtained by the advisors were then used to provide advice to producers through the advisor's normal methods (e.g. one-on-one consultation, focus groups and/or workshops).

Currently, livestock advisors must independently search for information that has come out of research, development and extension conducted by MLA, AWI, the Sheep CRC, SASIB and the University of Adelaide. This can involve many hours of reading, interpretation and communication with researchers or extension specialists. A livestock advisor technical update would allow such information to be communicated directly from researchers and/or extension specialists to the livestock advisors, saving time on both ends, and also allowing further communication and discussion of the information. The information that is communicated to livestock advisors can then be interpreted and tailored specifically to their clients, providing maximum benefit to everyone. The technical advisor update will provide a forum where information can be communicated efficiently to a large number of advisors, with ample opportunity for discussion and collaboration. The forum will improve the flow of information from MLA, AWI, the Sheep CRC, SASIB and the University of Adelaide to producers, and will also provide a path for information flow from the producer level back up.

The livestock advisor update links directly to all four pillars of the Meat Industry Strategic Plan; consumer and community support, market growth and diversification, supply chain efficiency and integrity, and productivity and profitability in red meat and livestock enterprises. The advisors that will be targeted to attend the update have high skill levels in each of the pillar areas, and contribute to the red meat industry by providing advice and assistance in these areas.

## 2 Project objectives

The objective of the event was to update all attendees on current research, development and extension programs being carried out by MLA, AWI, the Sheep CRC and the SASIB. The desired outcome of the project was for all attendees to be brought up-to-date with the latest research and programs from all of the organisations. This was measured by a survey after the advisor update and shared with the stakeholders.

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 SALC Livestock Advisor Update - Program

The program was split into 4 sessions, with each session a mix of 45 minute presentations on technical, in depth topics, and short 5 minute summaries from farming systems groups in Southern Australia. The program was as follows:

| Speaker                                 | Organisation                            | Topic  | Presentation length (minutes) |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------|
| Session one                             |   |  |                               |
| Meg Bell                                | Coleraine Livestock Consulting/SALC     | Welcome  | 10                            |
| Lu Hogan                                | Sheep CRC                               | New DNA flock profiler, ram select plus app, AskBill app                     | 45                            |
| Caris Jones                             | MLA                                     | Genomic technology and advancements in genetics                              | 45                            |
| Tiff Bennett                            | Mackillop Farm Management Group         | Project and activity summary   | 5                             |
| Tiff Bennett                            | Mid South East Irrigators               | Project and activity summary   | 5                             |
| Nick McBride                            | Grassland Society of Southern Australia | Project and activity summary   | 5                             |
| Session two                             |   |  |                               |
| Geoff Lindon                            | AWi                                     | Recent developments in breech strike research, development and extension     | 45                            |
| Geoff Lindon (filling in for Neil Judd) | AWi                                     | New producer engagement programs   | 45                            |
| Georgie Keynes and Brett Nietschke      | Barossa Improved Grazing Group          | Project and activity summary   | 10                            |
| Session three                           |   |  |                               |
| Kristy Howard                           | Inspiring Excellence                    | The consultants' dilemma- working in the business vs working on the business | 60                            |
| Steve Lee                               | SA Sheep and Cattle Industry Blueprints | Project and activity summary   | 15                            |
| Session four                            |   |  |                               |
| Andrew Thompson                         | Murdoch University                      | Lifetime Maternals- project update and future plans                          | 45                            |
| Lisa Miller                             | Southern Farming Systems                | Producer Research Sites- overview of recent results and conclusions          | 45                            |

|                    |   |   |    |
|--------------------|---|---|----|
| Lisa Miller        | Southern Farming Systems                        | Project and activity summary  | 5  |
| Amy Williams       | Fleurieu Forward Farming                        | Project and activity summary  | 5  |
| Jessica Crettenden | Eyre Peninsula Agricultural Research Foundation | Project and activity summary  | 5  |
| Sally Martin       | Sally Martin Consulting                         | Stimulating Private Sector Extension in Australian agriculture to increase returns from R & D- information and feedback session | 20 |
| Meg Bell           | Coleraine Livestock Consulting/SALC             | Farewell  | 10 |

### 3.2 SALC Livestock Advisor Update Evaluation

Online surveys were sent to all 55 attendees. The survey questions were as follows:

Question 1: Please tell us about yourself

Question 2: How did you hear about the SALC Livestock Advisor Update?

Question 3: How would you describe the business that you work in?

Question 4: How would you describe your role within your business?

Question 5: In an effort to approximate the impact and reach of our attendees, please indicate the combined number of ewes that are under your direct consultancy.

Question 6: In an effort to approximate the impact and reach of our attendees, please indicate the combined number of cows that are under your direct consultancy.

Question 7: Please rate each session out of 10 for content and presentation

Question 9: Which speakers are you likely to follow up with for further information?

Question 10: Please indicate the extent to which you feel that you have learned something for the first time today.

Question 11: What topics and/or speakers would you like to hear about/from at future events?

Question 12: Do you see a benefit in the networking opportunities that the update provided? Please explain your answer.

Question 13: What do you think the value for the RDCs involved in the update (MLA, AWI, Sheep CRC) has been?

Question 14: What do you think the value for SALC in hosting the update has been?

Question 15: Who do you think should be responsible for the organisation and co-ordination of an update like this?

Question 16: Would you attend another update like this in the future?

Question 17: How far would you be prepared to travel (based on the update) to future updates?

Question 18: How much would you be prepared to pay (based on this update) to take part in future updates?

Question 19: Which month/s of the year are more suitable for you to attend an advisor update?

Question 20: How often would you like an advisor update like this to occur?

Question 21: Overall, how satisfied were you with the SALC Livestock Advisor Update?

Question 22: Permissions

Question 23: Any other comments?

## **4 Results**

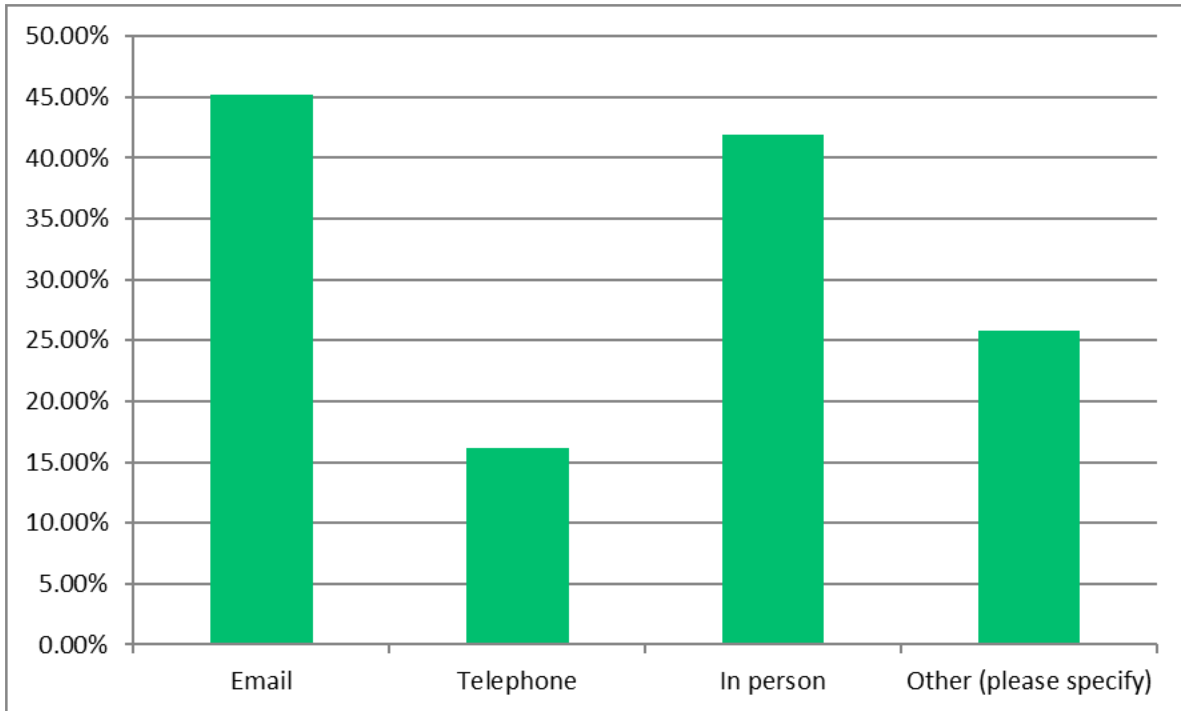
Online surveys were sent to all 55 attendees, and 31 surveys were completed. The following is a summary of the survey results.

### **Question 1: Please tell us about yourself**

The majority of the respondents answered this question.

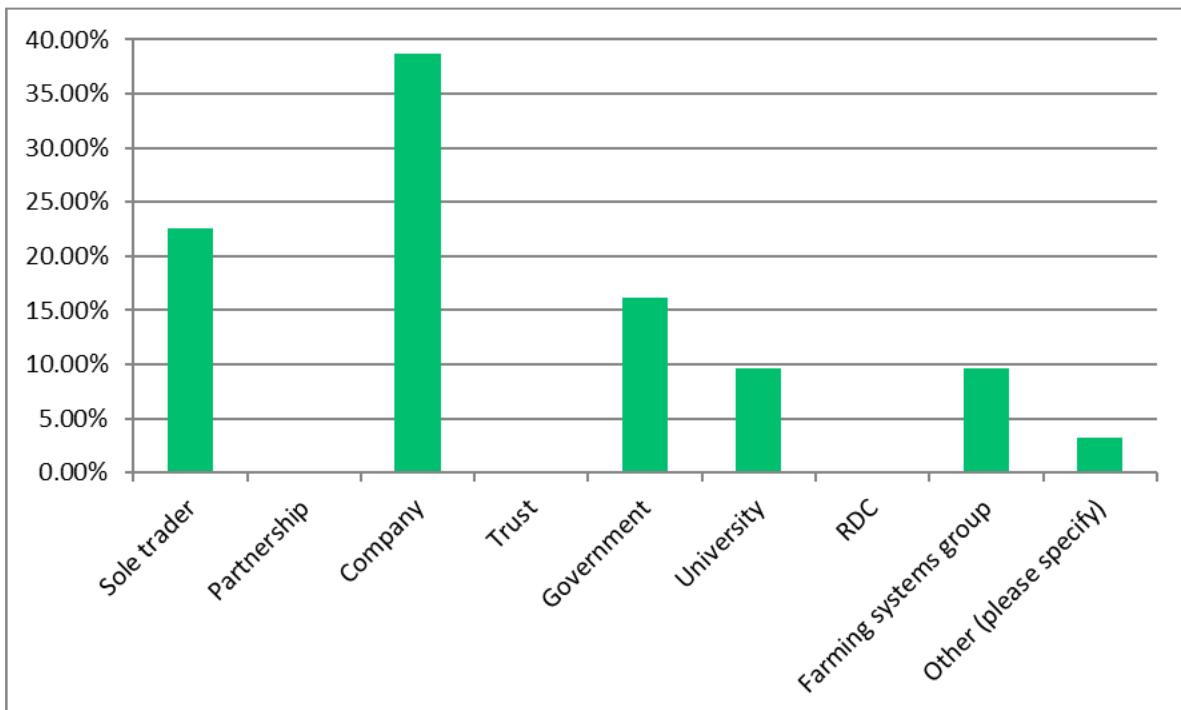
### **Question 2: How did you hear about the SALC Livestock Advisor Update?**

45% of respondents heard about the update via email, 42% in person, 16% via telephone, and 26% answered other. 'Other' answers consisted of those that could have been categorised as via email or in person.



**Question 3: How would you describe the business that you work in?**

The majority of respondents (38%) work in a company, followed by 23% who work in a sole trader business. Government, university and farming systems groups. ‘Other’ answers consisted of those that could have been categorised as a company.

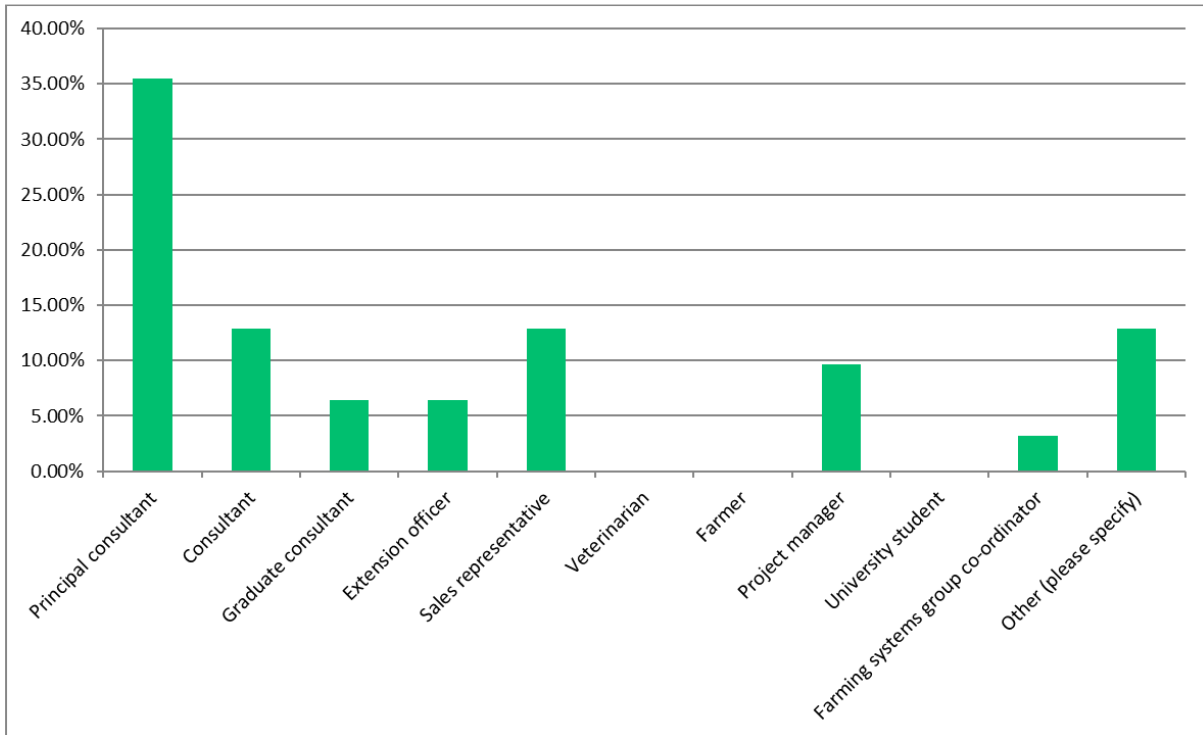


**Question 4: How would you describe your role within your business?**

The majority of respondents (35%) were principal consultants, followed by consultants and sales representatives (both 13%). The ‘other’ category consisted of director/service providers, technical

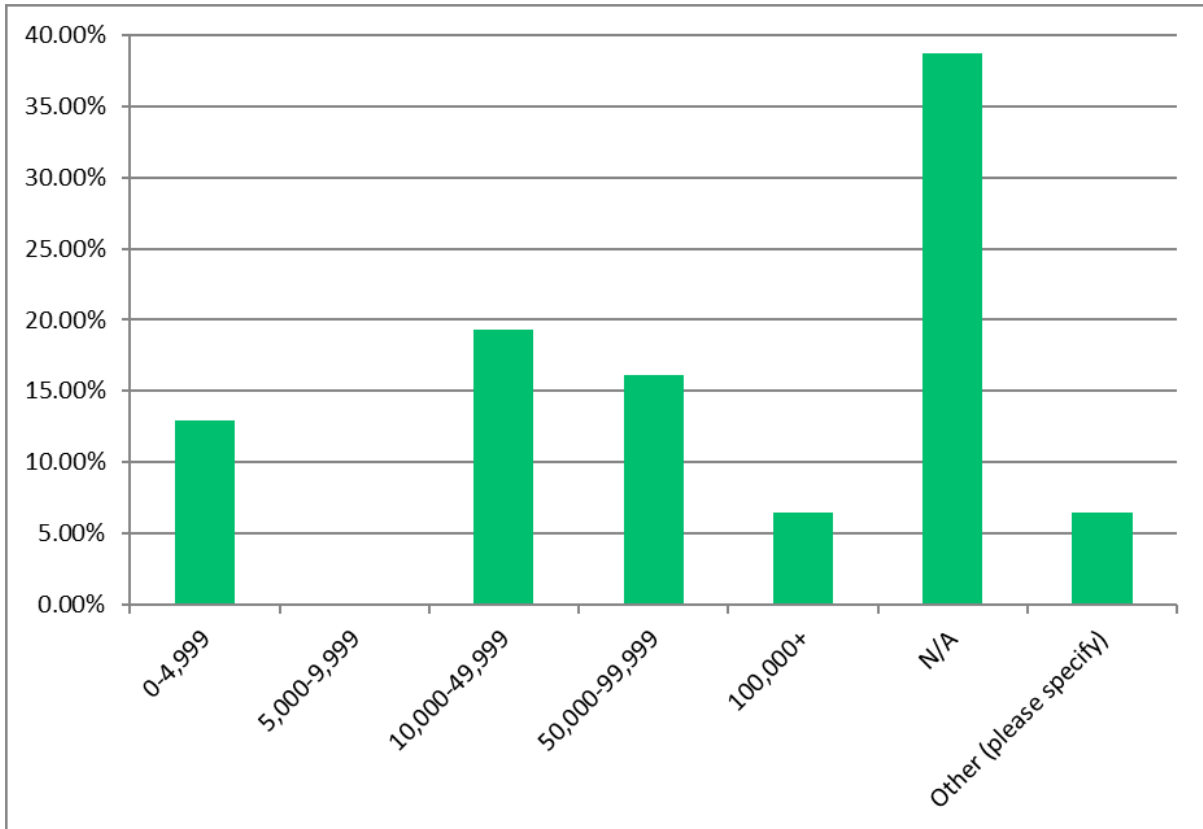


facilitators, researchers, and agronomy and animal health linked with sales. There was a wide cross section of the advisory industry represented. There is room in the future to better target veterinarians and to involve university students, especially those that are in their final year of study and are looking at entering into a consultancy career.



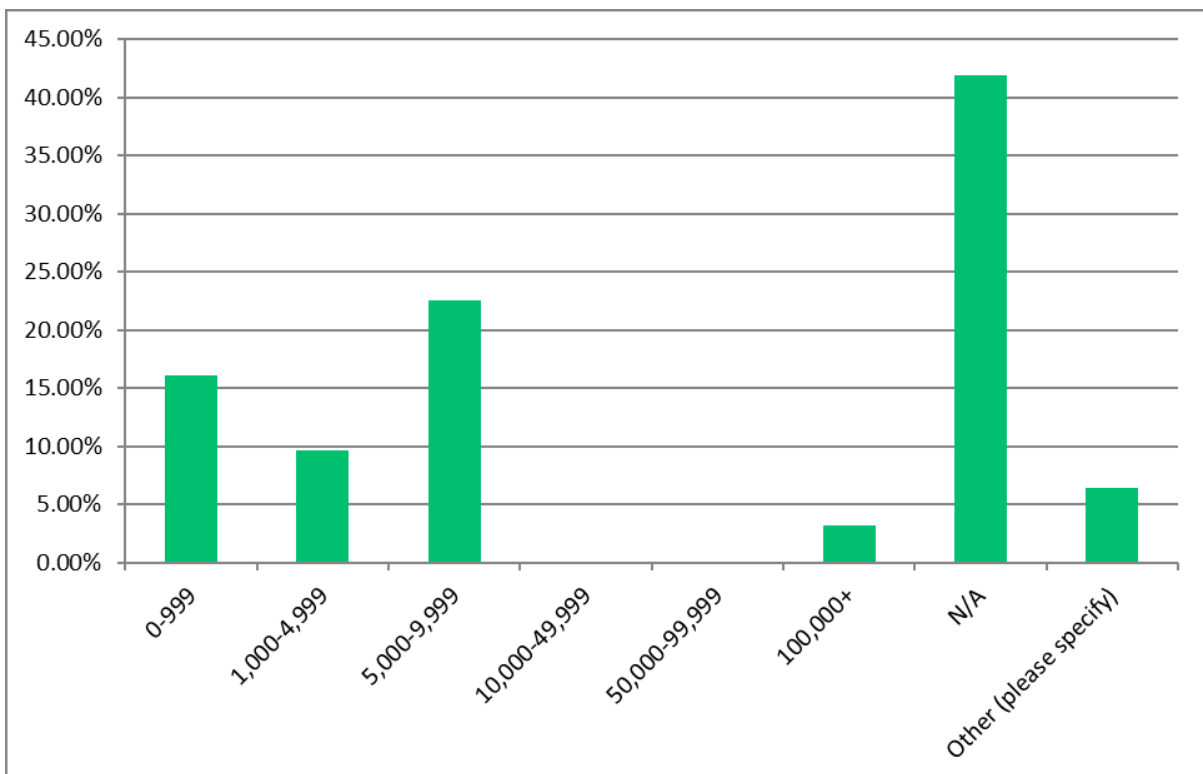
**Question 5: In an effort to approximate the impact and reach of our attendees, please indicate the combined number of ewes that are under your direct consultancy.**

The majority (39%) of respondents did not find this question applicable. This question could have been excluded from the survey.



**Question 6: In an effort to approximate the impact and reach of our attendees, please indicate the combined number of cows that are under your direct consultancy.**

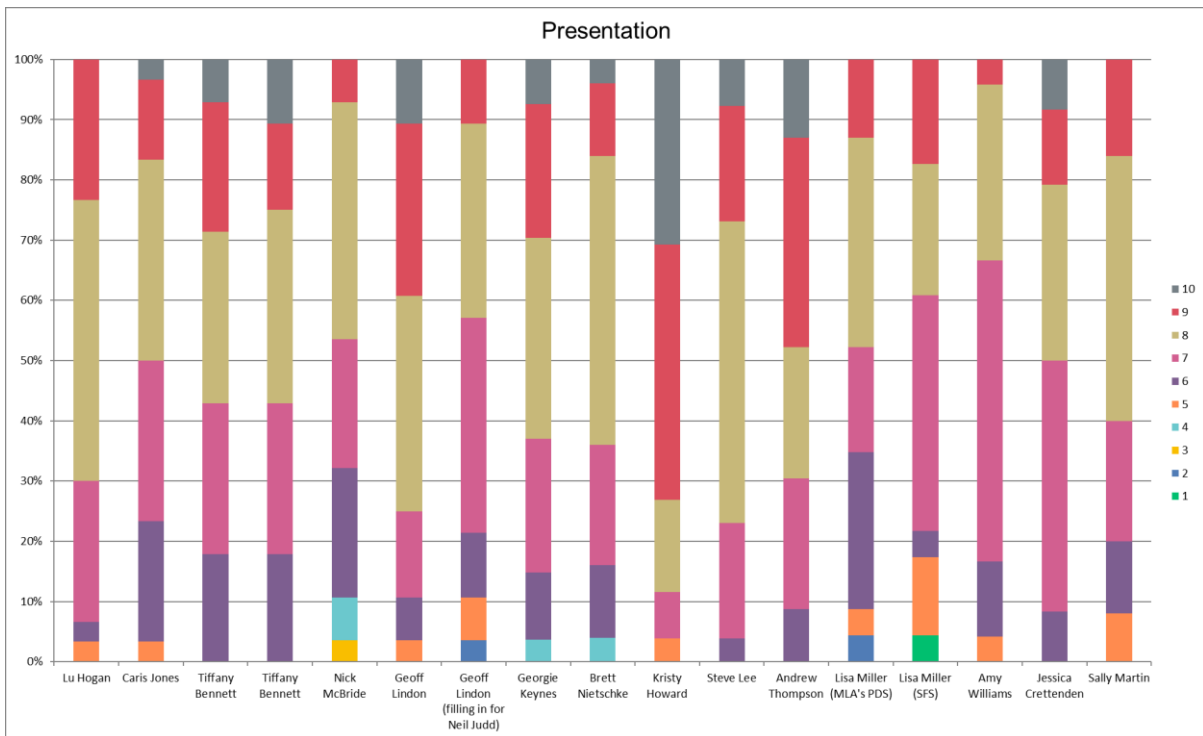
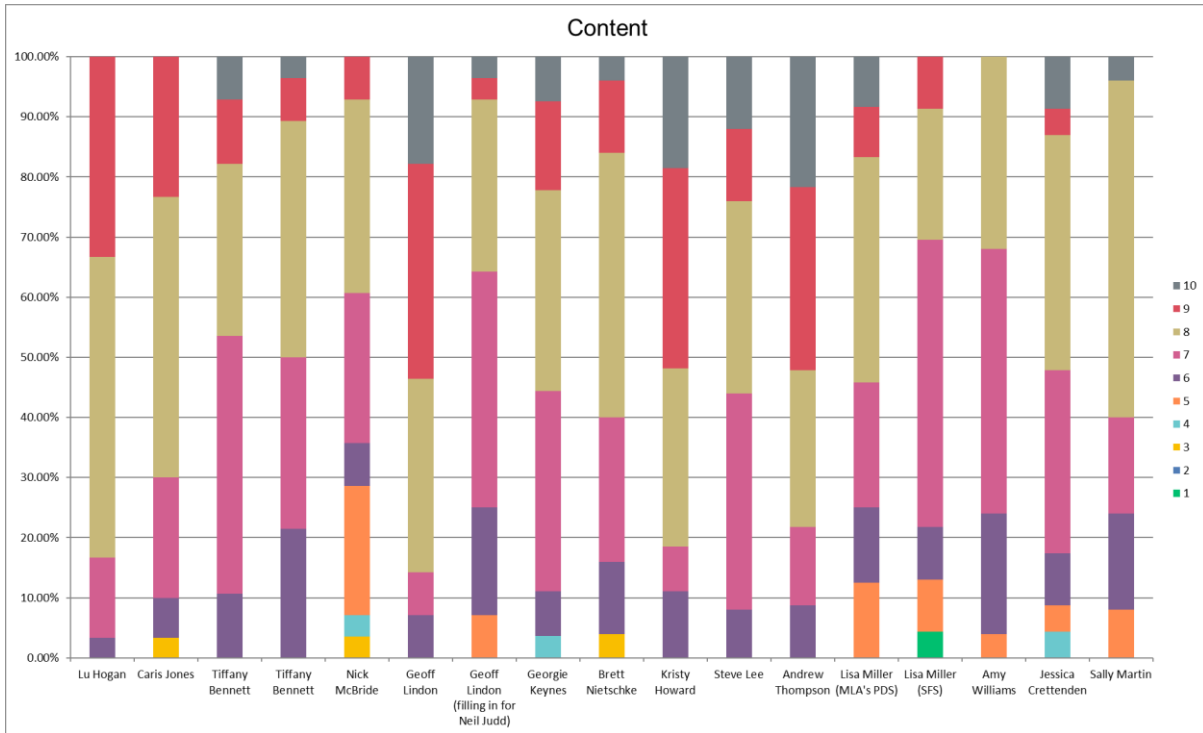
The majority (42%) of respondents did not find this question applicable. This question could have been excluded from the survey.



**Question 7: Please rate each session out of 10 for content and presentation.**

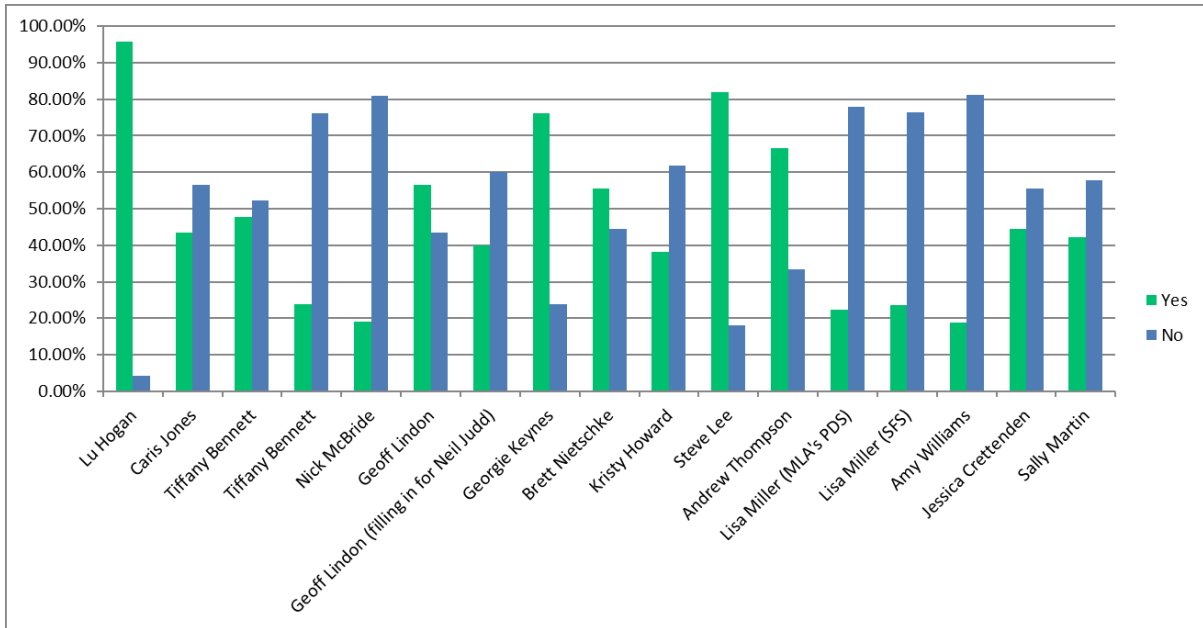
All speakers scored over 6.7/10 with the overall average score being 7.6/10. There is room for improvement in the selection of speakers and the content they cover. The table and figures below detail each speaker's score and how those scores were distributed.

|   | Average score out of 10 |              |
|---|-------------------------|--------------|
|   | Content                 | Presentation |
| Lu Hogan                                | 8.1                     | 7.8          |
| Caris Jones                             | 7.7                     | 7.4          |
| Tiff Bennett                            | 7.6                     | 7.8          |
| Tiff Bennett                            | 7.4                     | 7.8          |
| Nick McBride                            | 6.7                     | 7            |
| Geoff Lindon                            | 8.5                     | 8.1          |
| Geoff Lindon (filling in for Neil Judd) | 7.1                     | 7.1          |
| Georgie Keynes                          | 7.7                     | 7.8          |
| Brett Nietschke                         | 7.5                     | 7.6          |
| Kristy Howard                           | 8.4                     | 8.8          |
| Steve Lee                               | 7.8                     | 8.1          |
| Andrew Thompson                         | 8.4                     | 8.2          |
| Lisa Miller                             | 7.4                     | 7            |
| Lisa Miller                             | 6.9                     | 7            |
| Amy Williams                            | 7                       | 7.2          |
| Jessica Crettenden                      | 7.4                     | 7.7          |
| Sally Martin                            | 7.4                     | 7.5          |



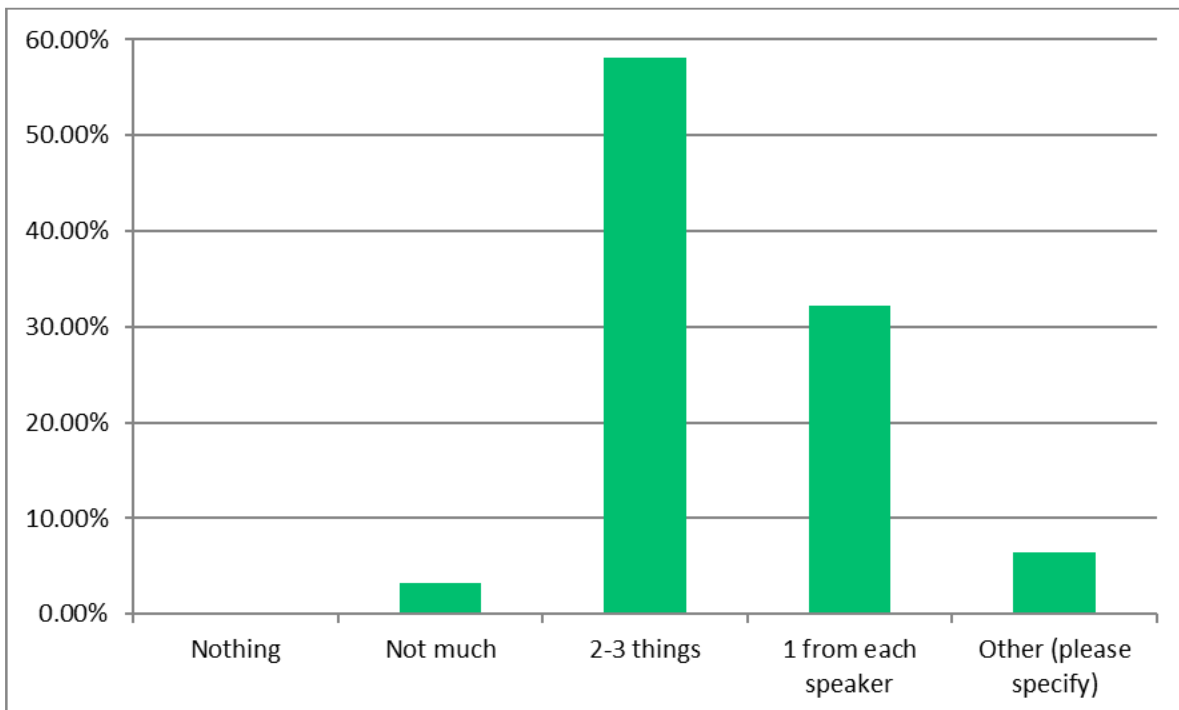
**Question 9: Which speakers are you likely to follow up with for further information?**

48% of respondents were likely to follow up with the speakers for further information. This response could be used to indicate which presentations the respondents found most interesting, and could inform choices for speakers and topics for further updates. The figure below shows which speakers the respondents were more likely to follow up with.



**Question 10: Please indicate the extent to which you feel that you have learned something for the first time today.**

The majority of respondents (58%) indicated that they learned at least 2-3 things at the update, with 32% of respondents indicating that they learned one thing from each speaker. The 'other' category could be summarised and redistributed into the 2-3 things category.



**Question 11: What topics and/or speakers would you like to hear about/from at future events?**

Following is a list of topics/speakers as suggested by the respondents that they would like to hear from or about at future events:

## Speakers

- Stephen Lee
- Andrew Thompson
- Kristy Howard
- Cam Nicholson

## Topics

- Genomics, genetics (sheep and cattle).
- Reproductive diseases in sheep and cattle.
- Pastures
- Animal health
- New technology, information, research etc before farmers (i.e. exclusive to and aimed at consultants).
- More rangelands content.
- Good consultants – how they do it.
- Technical and business topics.
- New remote sensing technologies – current and blue sky.
- Virtual fencing, producers trying early adoption technologies, new cutting edge practical information.
- Beef reproductive efficiency topics.
- Totally different topics and speakers – it must be new and fresh.
- New adoption/extension methods and how effective they are.
- Better ways to do evaluation.
- Current research results.
- Would be good to have a session from MLA/AWI providing an update on current projects in progress or recently completed for awareness.
- Fewer topics in depth from researchers.
- Cattle technical information.
- Information on business management.
- Industry issues and how we can overcome them as consultants.
- Less extension information.
- Flock profiling, more 'other' breed input.
- More cattle content.
- Innovations and other apps that can help producers link and apply.
- Industry blueprints, what relevant research is currently happening.

**Question 12: Do you see a benefit in the networking opportunities that the update provided?  
Please explain your answer.**

In general, the respondents felt that the networking benefit was large, and they enjoyed meeting new people and re-connecting with other contacts. It was also suggested that more time be given to network (i.e. longer breaks in between sessions). Following is a list of the responses from all respondents.

- Great networking opportunities. Major reason for attendance.

- Always a good opportunity as people with an interest in livestock need to get together.
- Great forum to catch up with SA consultants.
- Met lots of new people – not enough time for networking.
- It was the first time I was able to speak to a number of KOL's in the same venue.
- Met several new people.
- Lots of benefits – understanding who is in the field and their skills for future engagement.
- Excellent networking opportunity. Good to know what other people are doing and how to collaborate.
- It was good to connect with people I know and meet new people.
- It was good to make contacts to follow up information with.
- Good opportunity to meet other industry stakeholders and get the interaction with SALC.
- A great platform to bring together consultants, researchers, key producers, key industry bodies, that normally wouldn't all be together in the one place. It was a great forum for all of these individuals to ask questions, and great for the audience to gain the benefit of hearing the answers.
- Absolutely – especially with the other producer groups, great to see what they are involved with and the issues they are facing.
- Too right! Great to catch up with a range of people who are not part of SALC; re-establish general connections as well as exploring joint opportunities. Good to know who to go to on some technical issues.
- Networking was one of the major benefits of the update. Possibly a session in future just for networking (would need to be a bit structured in small groups). The speed 'dating' at the dinner was excellent – not everyone got to do this if they didn't come to the dinner.
- Yes- dinner was great essential – pity more didn't come. Time at rego, and breaks is good quick catch-up.
- Yes – dinner was a great was to connect with others – lunch needed to be longer to allow more time to catch up. It is also worthwhile having discussions between speakers so that we can debrief and process the information gained i.e. what is the one thing we got from the session... etc.
- Yes! Great was to meet faces from all over the state.
- Absolutely, important for continuing to build networks.
- Yes- useful to catch up with people and meet some new faces.
- There is always a benefit in networking. Re-connecting with people you haven't seen for ages, sharing information & learning. It's great to be able to help other out if you have knowledge they don't that they can use too.
- Yes- both with interstate people e.g. Armidale and with students.
- Yes, good to keep contact with the industry members.
- Very much so. A lot of the projects that fill out my days as a graduate consultant are projects that are run/developed by many consultants that were in that room that day. Was good to put a face to the name and have more in-depth conversation regarding these projects.

### Question 13: What do you think the value for the RDCs involved in the update (MLA, AWI, Sheep CRC) has been?

This question led to some confusion in the respondents, and could be excluded from future surveys. In general, respondents thought that there was value for MLA, AWI and the Sheep CRC in being involved in the update. Following is a list of the responses from all respondents.

- If you're going to get funding to run the event from them, you have no choice but to have them speak/attend.
- Important as the need to interface with industry & highlight what is happening.
- Great
- Good values but I think the content on the day could have been improved. Mainly more dynamic speakers.
- Important to be aware of where industry is heading and current research and developments.
- Yes, was good to be informed with what if in the research 'pipeline'.
- \$5-6,000.
- Very important, should be involved in the update as need to communicate with the advisors that are dealing with the farmers more. Need a better pathway of communication and updates than currently.
- NA
- Opportunity to promote their programs, new research. Be Train the Trainer.
- Good, however not to dominate the agenda.
- Better awareness of SALC.
- It gave them the opportunity to provide an update to a wider audience, and engage questions/discussions for a wider understanding.
- I would like more info about things I can actually be involved with (like the Sheep CRC info), and programs I can use for our local producers.
- Some of them have definite goals re consultant engagement and education. Helps us to be more aware of what they are doing.
- Increased support and extension from consultants.
- Seeing the collaboration between research, extension and producers and the 'way forward' for investment.
- Huge – it was very cheap for them to be in front of 50 advisers with a large footprint. It's a pity some Program Managers were not in attendance to hear, observe and be available to consultants.
- To ensure their research projects and plans are known by more people in the industry i.e. I need to find out what I don't know – that is what these types of updates provide and give me people to follow up with afterwards... it's all about getting better adoption of publicly funded RD&E.
- High, Greater understanding and awareness that can then be spread to the producer network.
- Direct connection to advisors. Feedback from advisors.
- People active in the livestock advisory sector being much more aware of key messages from R&D (co)funded by the RDCs.
- Great networking for them.



- It is great value to have industry bodies involved, this is where the producers' levies go that they love complaining about, it is good to be able to share relevant info with producers direct from these sources rather than just from the glossy brochures they send out.
- Extremely valuable and more meaningful than just looking on a web site.
- High value – good for finding out new things and keeping up to date with current research etc.

**Question 14: What do you think the value for SALC in hosting the update has been?**

In general, respondents that there was a high value for SALC in hosting the update, especially in the areas of networking and promotion for the organisation. There were also some comments on the value of the industry working together and the event involving a cross section of the industry.

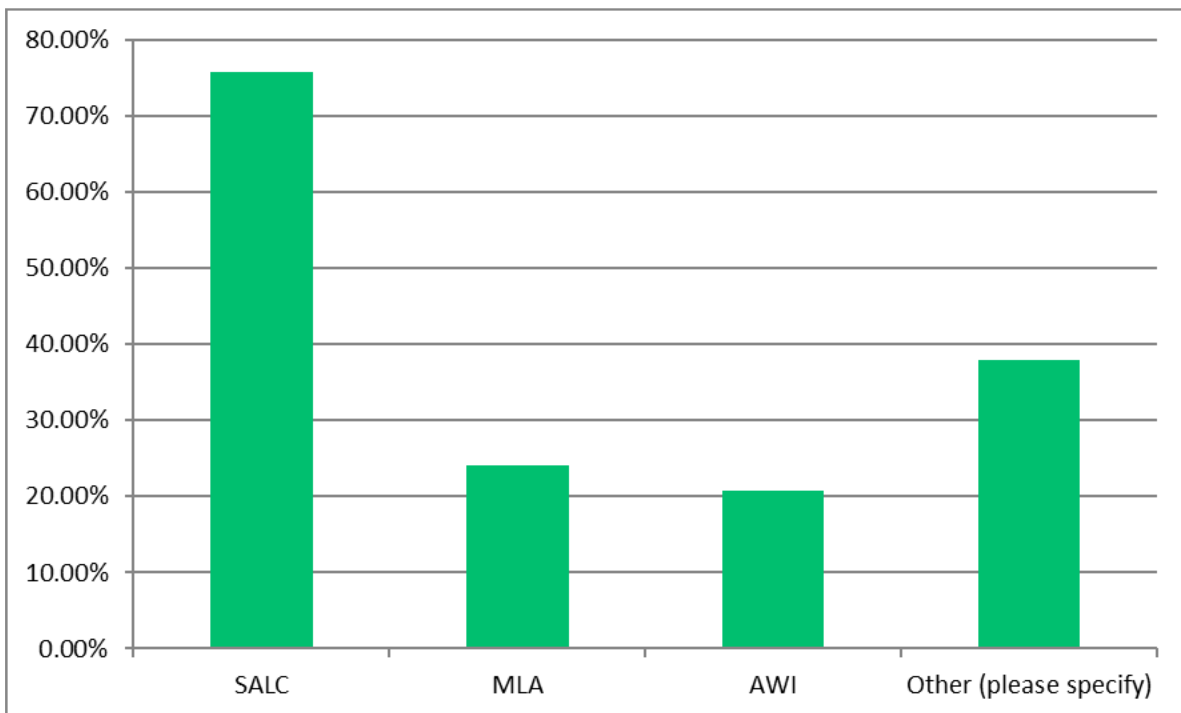
Following is a list of the responses from all respondents.

- Exposure to wider audience; new members; existing member's new info and networking.
- Valuable opportunity to advertise our existence and what we do.
- Networking and information update.
- Profile building hence the interest from potential new members. Personal development for all, especially Meg.
- Fantastic event and congrats to Meg and co.
- Engaging broader network of attendees.
- High value.
- Would be multiple benefits and value depending on what opportunities arise.
- Hopefully networks and understanding different regions, advisors and grower groups and how we can better work together.
- Made it happen, kept it focussed, offered knowledge update that doesn't happen for livestock consultants.
- Recognition across the industry with potential opportunities for the group & individual businesses.
- It was a good event.
- It has attached a brilliant, worthy event to their brand.
- Very valuable – this is an important network for our rural producers and showing a combined presence demonstrates this.
- Positive profile for us as an organisation (was mentioned a number of times).
- Improved awareness and credibility as an industry group.
- The SA livestock consultants have opened up their network wider as a result of the update and hopefully gained recognition as being instigative in demonstrating to the RDC's the needs of the private sector.
- Huge – 35 people know who they are and what they do for both themselves and the industry. They are increasing the profile of consultancy.
- Professional development for consultants and networking to explore opportunities to work together. Great was to promote SALC as an organisation (how do I join being from Vic?)
- Awareness and respect from the industry.
- Build awareness of group.
- Awareness of SALC, grow the membership, offer value to existing members.
- 10/10

- Huge value. I want more, I want to be more involved. No one knows everything, getting a heap of consultants / advisors together and learning from more experienced consultants is fantastic.
- Increase our public profile
- High Exposure

**Question 15: Who do you think should be responsible for the organisation and co-ordination of an update like this?**

The majority of respondents (76%) indicated that SALC should be responsible for the organisation and co-ordination of an update like this. The 'other' category included responses that suggested that a combination of all organisations should be responsible for the event. It was also noted that respondents indicated that consultants should run the event, with RDC support.

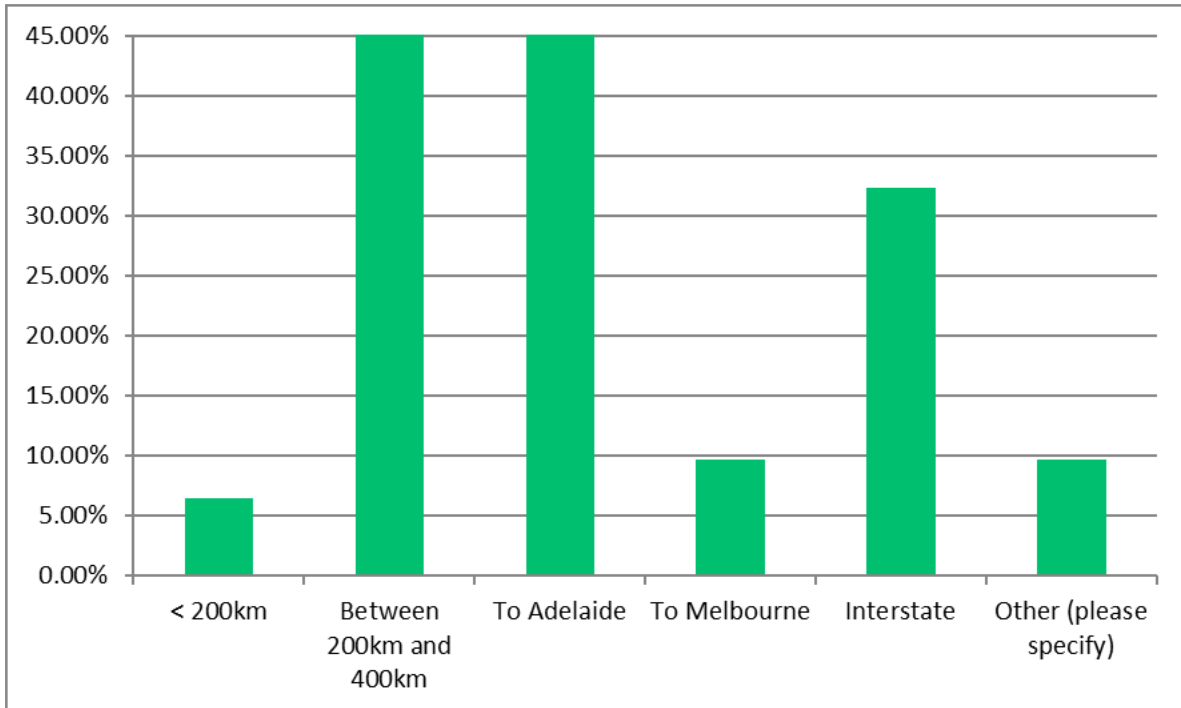


**Question 16: Would you attend another update like this in the future?**

100% of respondents answered yes to this questions

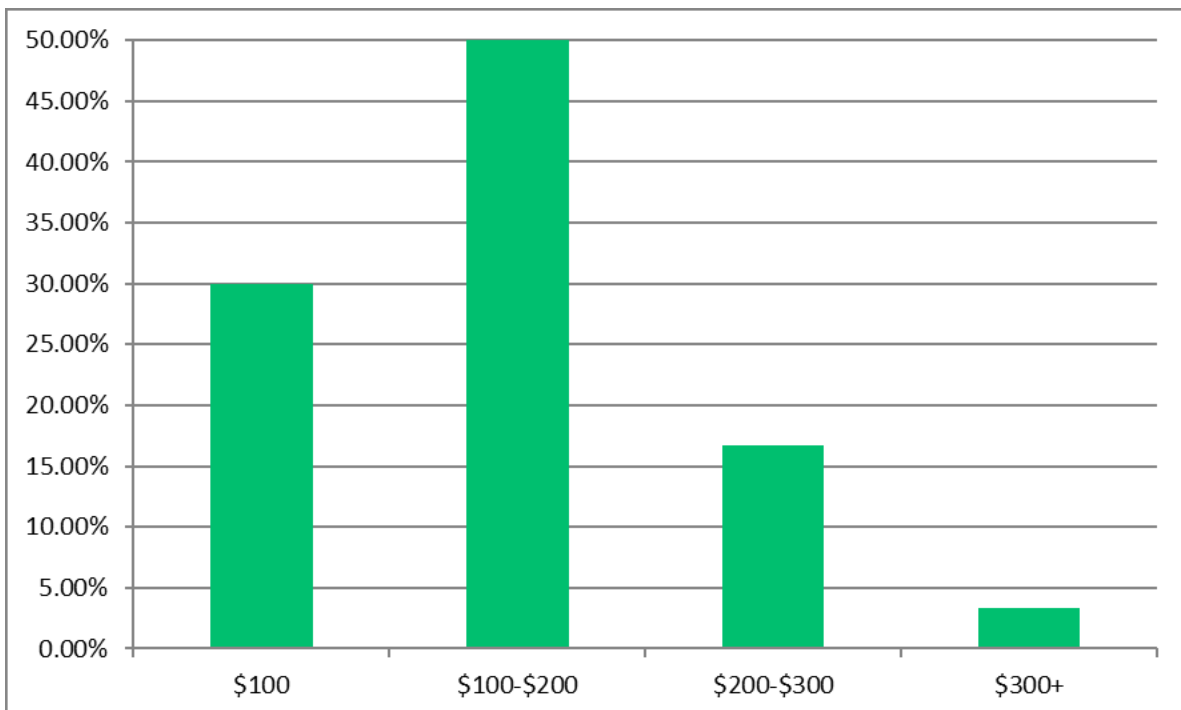
**Question 17: How far would you be prepared to travel (based on the update) to future updates?**

The majority of respondents (45%) were prepared to travel either between 200 and 400km, and/or to Adelaide. 32% were also willing to travel interstate. The 'other' category included comments that their attendance would depend on the value that the individual though they would gain from the speakers and topics to be covered – i.e. the higher the perceived value, the further they would travel.



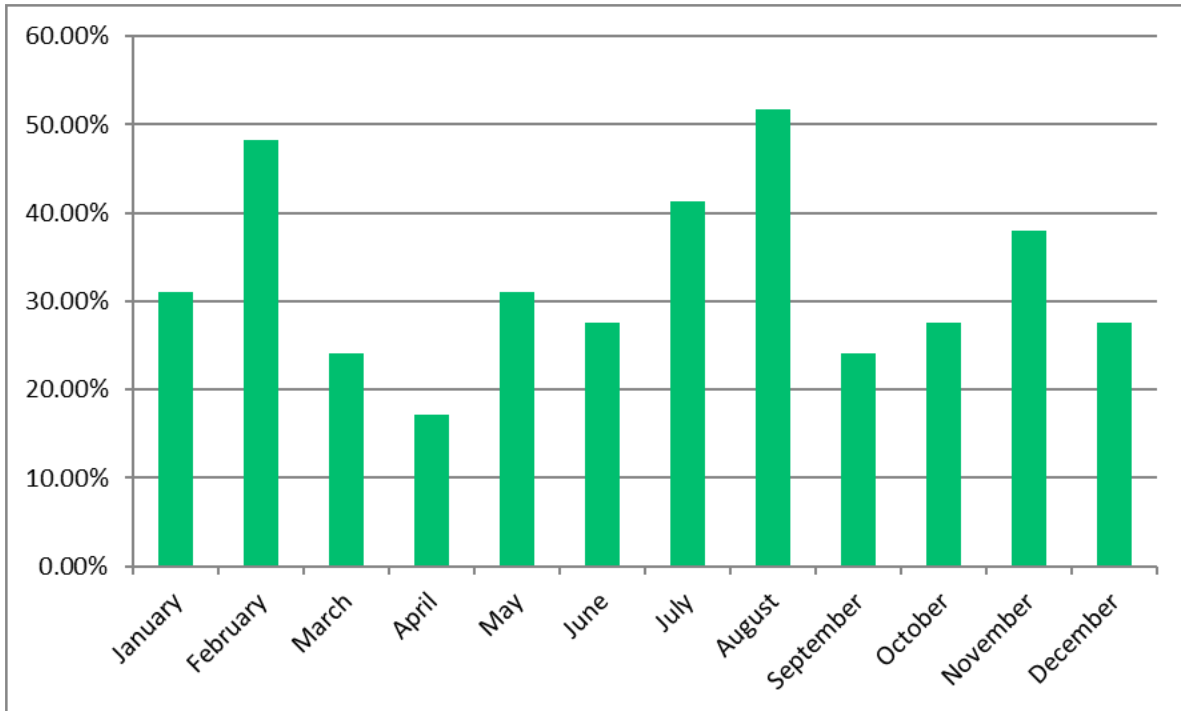
**Question 18: How much would you be prepared to pay (based on this update) to take part in future updates?**

The majority of respondents (50%) were willing to pay between \$100 and \$200 to attend an update like this in the future.



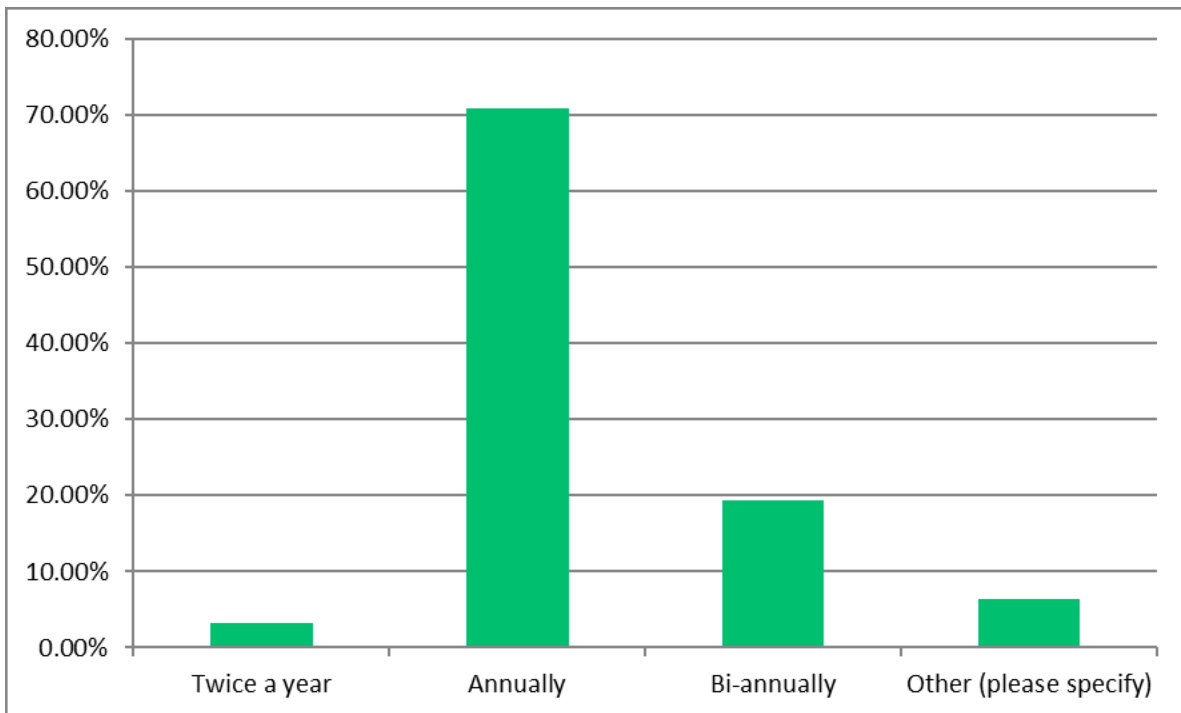
**Question 19: Which month/s of the year are more suitable for you to attend an advisor update?**

Respondents indicated that the most suitable months for an update were August, February, July and November.



**Question 20: How often would you like an advisor update like this to occur?**

The majority of respondents (71%) indicated that they would like an update like this to occur annually.

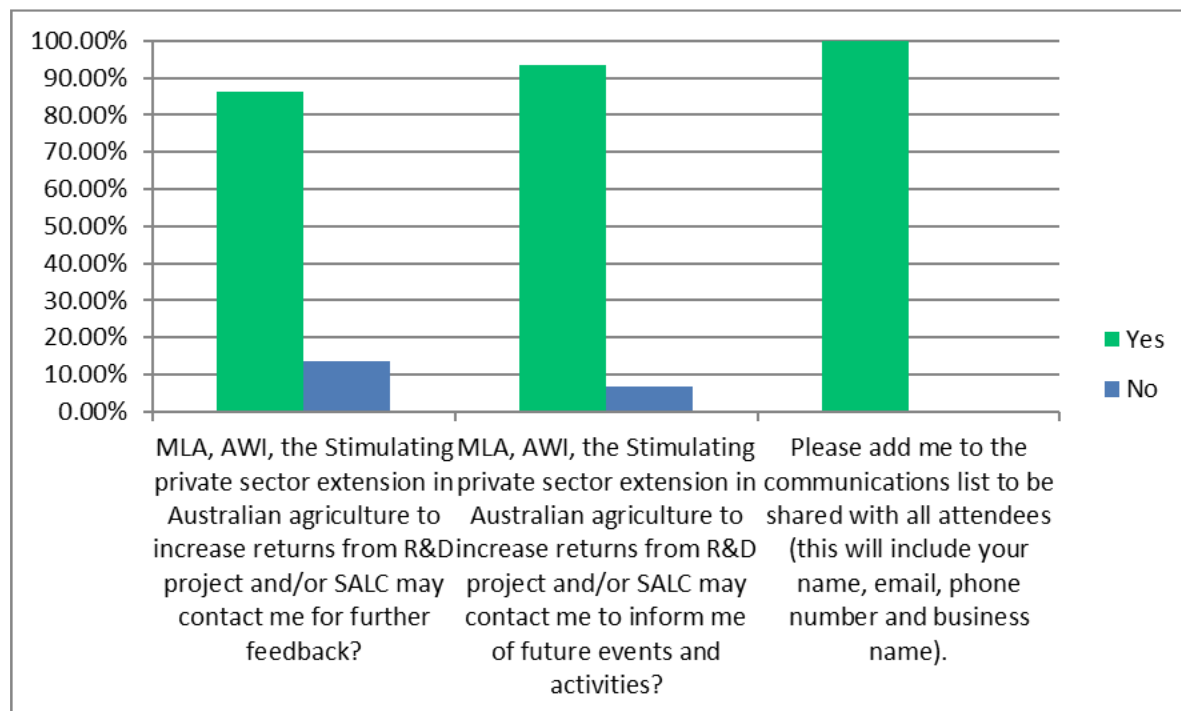


**Question 21: Overall, how satisfied were you with the SALC Livestock Advisor Update?**

The overall satisfaction rating for the update was 83%.

### Question 22: Permissions

All respondents wished for their details to be added to a communication list, to be shared amongst attendees. A majority of respondents were willing to have MLA, AWI, stimulating private sector extension in Australian agriculture to increase returns from R&D project and SALC contact them for further feedback and to inform them of any future events and activities.



### Question 23: Any other comments?

Respondents were given the chance to comment on any other aspects of the update; these are detailed below:

- Needed to have this evaluation to complete straight after the event. Is a nice way of doing it but too much lag time and for me came at a time when I was really busy, so has dragged out further. Can't even remember half the speakers now, so not confident on the quality of my feedback.
- The problems with the PowerPoints displaying incorrectly was a major glitch and should have been sorted before the event. Venue was good. Catering was excessive!! Networking opportunities were limited – could have had longer breaks. Need to be firm with keeping people on time. The Kristy Howard session didn't really work for me – perhaps I chose the wrong group! Having farm groups there and getting them to present worked well. Great job Meg.
- Look forward to attending next year's event.
- GOOD JOB SALC, need AWI and MLA to take the initiative to organise something similar to this annually (equivalent to the GRDC updates, could even hold them in the same week so some presenters can cross-over).
- Thanks for the opportunity for grower groups to give a snapshot of our activities.
- Probably need to do evaluation on the day. Day was perhaps a bit long.

- Well done Meg.
- Well done SALC on holding such a great informative event.
- Congratulations to Meg Bell for pulling this together, coordinating the day, and all your work behind the scenes!
- Meg- well done. We've seen you all grow in experience & confidence. Hopefully you feel the "inn0kind" is worth it!
- The event if good for the professionalism of consultants/advisers.
- Great event – we need these nationally and we need a VLC!
- Thanks meg and SALC.
- I think some of the question boxes above needed more than one choice to click. Survey a little long to gain max feedback.
- I really appreciated attending the day. Although I am not an independent advisor, I have intentions to be in the future. I see the content as being relevant & useful for customers I service now & into the future. It was very well run. Thank you.
- Well worthwhile. Next time maybe work with CSU and/or southern NSW consultants.

## 5 Conclusions/recommendations

Overall, respondents indicated that they gained benefit from attending the update in terms of technical learning, but mostly in terms of networking opportunities. It was indicated that an update like this should be held annually, and that respondents would be willing to travel greater distances if they perceived the topics and speakers to be of high value to them. The day could have been improved by having fewer sessions but making them more in depth, and increasing the time available to network. It was also noted that there could be more time for questions and interaction between the audience and the speakers, as it was felt that there was a lot of value in being able to talk directly to the speakers that were specialists in their fields.

The technical update was found to be both achievable and desired, and should be instituted annually for all those in the livestock advisory sector.