

Making More From Sheep



It's ewe time!

Forums Evaluation Report 2017 – 2019

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2 Background

This report provides a summary of the monitoring and evaluation responses provided by forum attendees at 23 *It's ewe time!* forums held across Australia in 2017-19. It should be read in conjunction with the final report on these activities, "L.MMS.1801 Its ewe time! Final Report".

3 Forum Location and Attendance

A total of 23 *It's ewe time!* forums were held nationally, in all mainland states, over the period August 2017 to April 2019. Table 1 shows the location and format of each forum, and the number of attendees and Fig. 1 shows attendance numbers across the forum series.

Table 1: Date, location, forum type, attendance numbers and number completing M&E evaluation

| Date | Location | Type of forum | Approx. number of attendees | M&E evaluations received | Completion rate (%) |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 2 August 2017 | Ceduna, SA | Half day – 4 speakers | 26 | 18 | 69% |
| 3 August 2017 | Kimba, SA | Half day – 4 speakers | 28 | 25 | 89% |
| 4 August 2017 | Cummins, SA | Half day – 4 speakers | 53 | 47 | 89% |
| 15 August 2017 | Wagga Wagga, NSW | Full day – 8 speakers | 58 | 53 | 91% |
| 22 August 2017 | Esperance, WA | Full day – 8 speakers | 29 | 18 | 62% |
| 24 August 2017 | Northam, WA | Full day – 8 speakers | 54 | 38 | 70% |
| 31 August 2017 | Hamilton, Vic | Full day – 8 speakers | 100 | 79 | 79% |
| 24 July 2018 | Cooma, NSW | Half day – 5 speakers | 39 | 32 | 82% |
| 25 July 2018 | Gunning, NSW | Half day – 5 speakers | 34 | 32 | 94% |
| 26 July 2018 | Cowra, NSW | Half day – 5 speakers | 61 | 51 | 84% |
| 14 August 2018 | Dubbo, NSW | Half day – 5 speakers | 39 | 31 | 79% |
| 15 August 2018 | Walgett, NSW | Half day – 5 speakers | 34 | 27 | 79% |
| 16 August 2018 | Dirranbandi, QLD | Half day – 5 speakers | 44 | 36 | 82% |
| 21 August 2018 | Longreach, QLD | Half day – 4 speakers | 45 | 39 | 87% |
| 22 August 2018 | Tambo, QLD | Half day – 4 speakers | 26 | 21 | 81% |
| 23 August 2018 | Mitchell, QLD | Half day – 4 speakers | 16 | 16 | 100% |
| 26 February 2019 | Birchip, Vic | Half day – 5 speakers | 33 | 33 | 100% |
| 27 February 2019 | Deniliquin, NSW | Half day – 5 speakers | 62 | 56 | 90% |
| 28 February 2019 | Benalla, Vic | Half day – 5 speakers | 50 | 44 | 88% |
| 26 March 2019 | Jamestown, SA | Half day – 5 speakers | 93 | 87 | 94% |

| | | | | | |
|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| 27 March 2019 | Karoonda, SA | Half day – 5 speakers | 42 | 36 | 86% |
| 28 March 2019 | Naracoorte, SA | Half day – 5 speakers | 74 | 59 | 80% |
| 2 April 2019 | Armidale, NSW | Half day – 6 speakers | 73 | 67 | 92% |
| TOTAL | | | 1113 | 945 | 85% |

The average attendance number per event over the three years was 48, with the highest attendance 100 at a full-day forum in Hamilton in August 2017. Hamilton is a major regional centre and located in a significant sheep region. The lowest number was 16 at a half-day forum at Mitchell in August 2018. The sheep and wool industry around Mitchell is less established, but has the potential to expand.

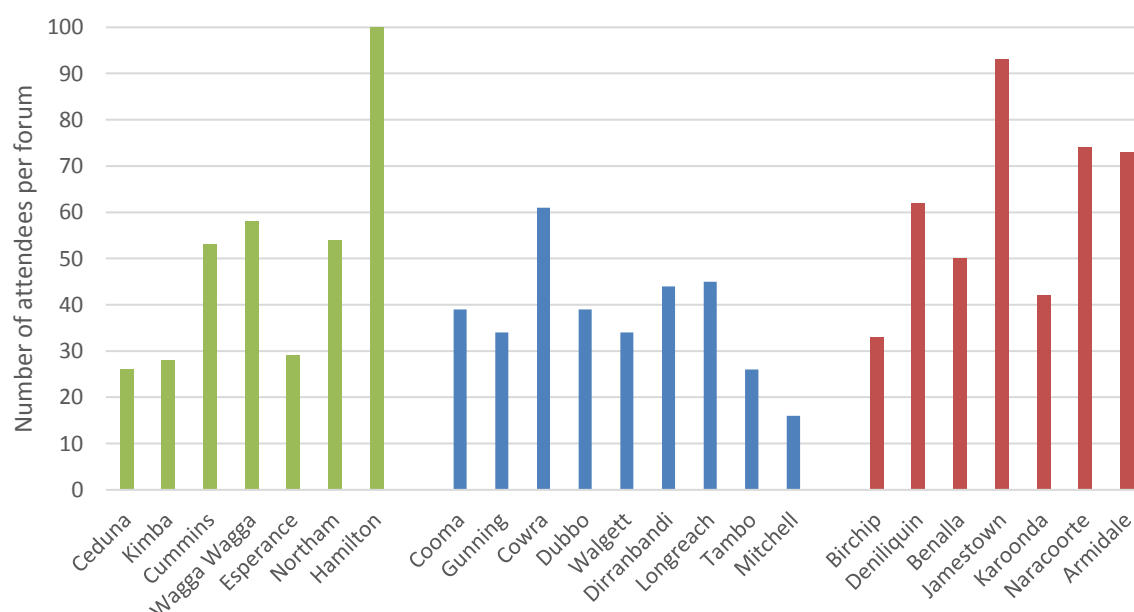


Fig. 1: Number of attendees per forum for the three years 2017-2019.

4 Attendee Business Details

4.1 Business type

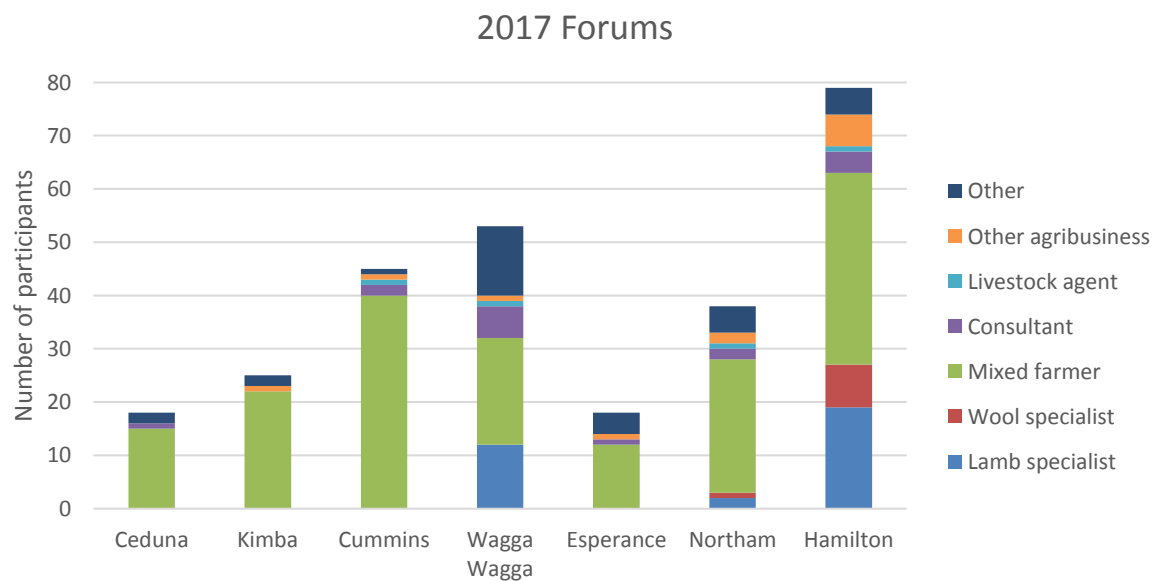


Fig. 2: Business type by forum in 2017

The majority of participants at all forums were mixed farmers, although there were a significant number of lamb specialist producers at both Wagga Wagga and Hamilton. Also of note was the number of attendees in the 'other' category at Wagga Wagga. The forum, held at Charles Sturt University, attracted a number of university students and staff, as well as a contingent from the local TAFE college.

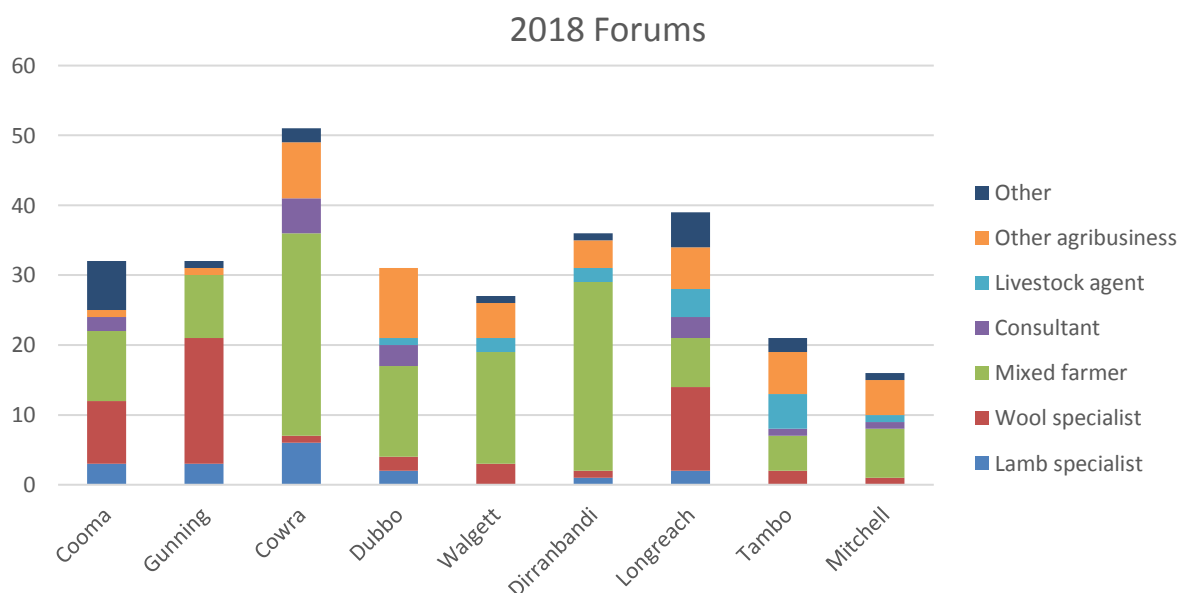


Fig. 3: Business type by forum in 2018

Mixed farmers made up the highest proportion of attendees at Cowra, Dubbo, Walgett and Dirranbandi, where these producers would have had cropping enterprises as well as running sheep. Gunning attracted a significant number of wool specialist producers, as did Longreach and to a lesser

extent Cooma. There were a significant number of livestock agents particularly at the Longreach and Tambo forums, which was as a result of support from Elders. Attendees in the 'other' category at Cooma and Longreach included students, government employees and finance industry members.

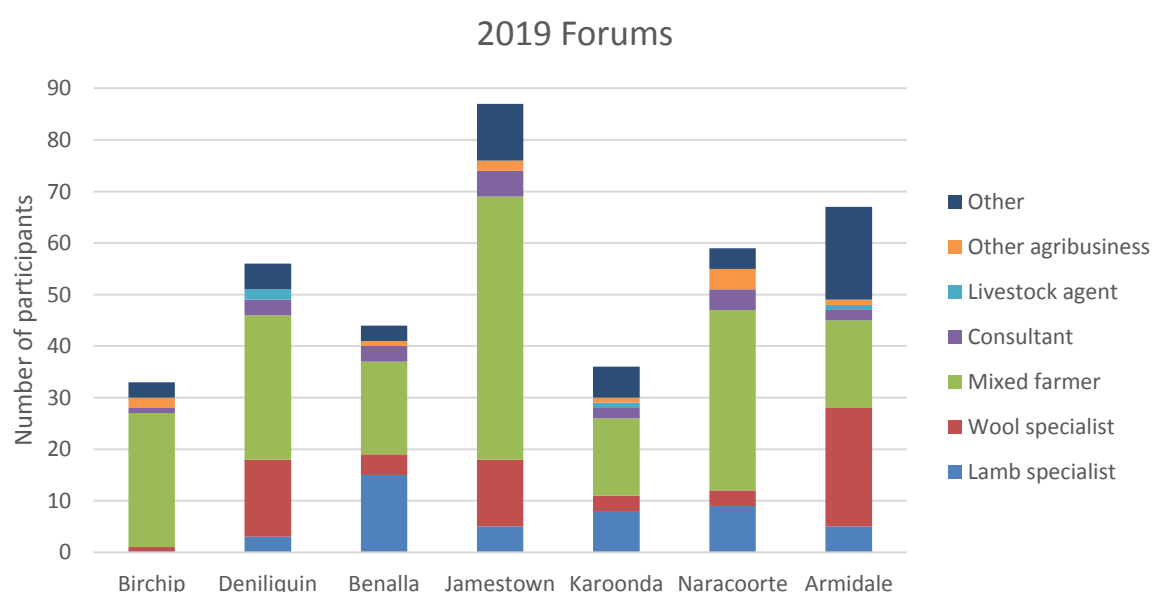


Fig. 4: Business type by forum in 2019

Mixed farmers were the predominant attendee type for all 2019 forums, although at Armidale they were outnumbered by the number of specialist wool producers and at Benalla there were a significant number of specialist lamb producers. At both Armidale and Jamestown there were a significant number of attendees in the 'other' category. At both locations, but particularly in Armidale, many of these were university students and MLA employees.

4.2 Age bracket

Age of participants - 2017 & 2018 forums

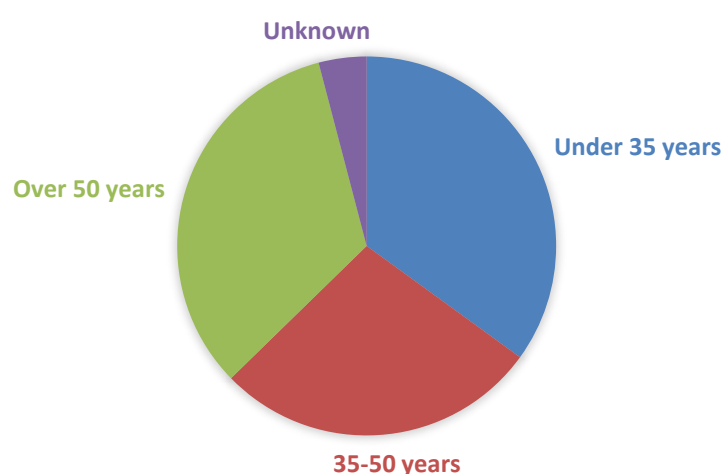


Fig. 5: Age bracket of all forum participants in 2017 and 2018 combined

There was a good spread of age groups attending the forums. This data was not collected for the 2019 forums.

4.3 Area Managed

4.3.1 Average area managed per producer per forum

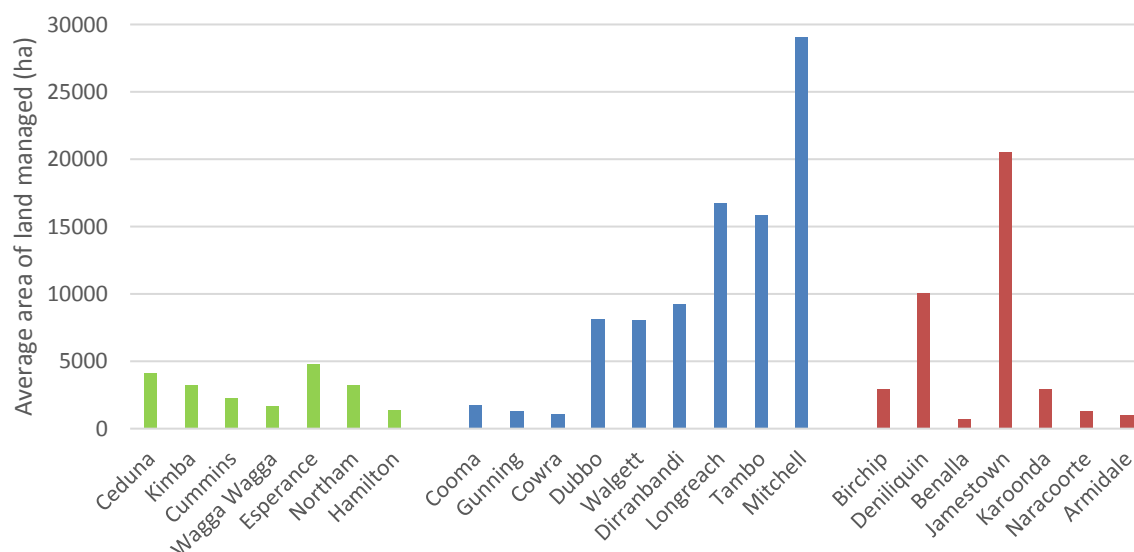


Fig. 6: Average area (ha) of land managed per producer attending each forum

This graph illustrates the extreme differences in enterprises across Australia in the different regions the forums visited. Not surprisingly, the average area managed per producer was greater at the more pastoral locations, with the average area managed by producer participants at Mitchell being 29000ha. At the Mitchell forum, only eight participants supplied an area managed, and three of these appeared to be from the same business with an area managed of approximately 50000ha. (The average figures do not include those who's response was zero hectares managed.) The smallest average area managed by participants was at Benalla where it was just 720ha.

The average area for Jamestown participants was significantly inflated by three producers who managed land areas greater than 100000ha, with the highest being 809000ha. With these three figures removed, the average area reduces to 2130ha.

4.3.2 Total area per forum

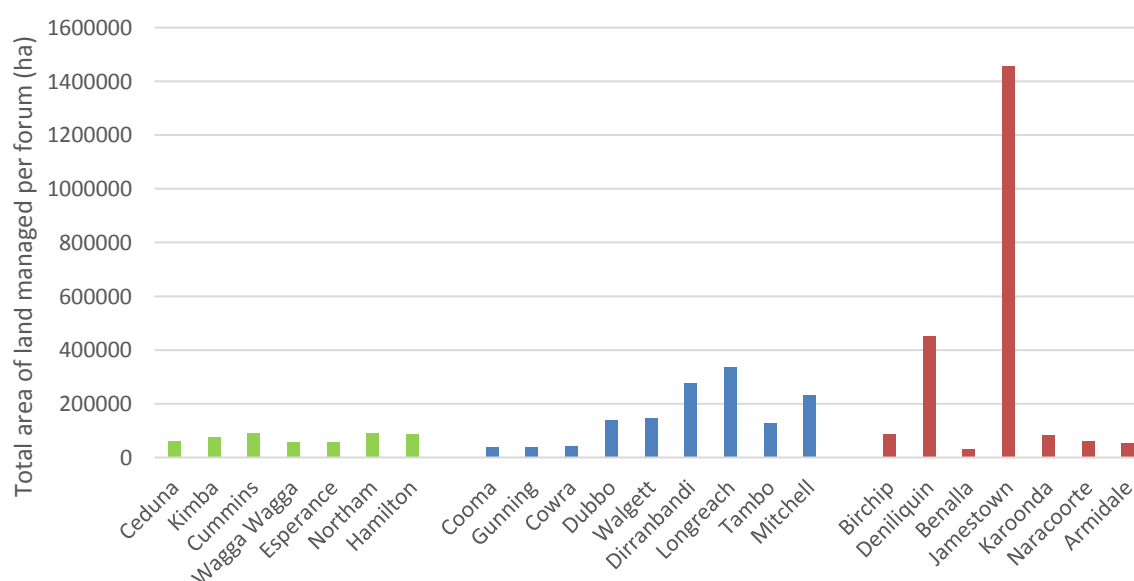


Fig. 7: Total area (ha) managed by all forum attendees.

The total area managed by all forum participants for each forum is shown in Fig. 7. The Jamestown figure was the highest as a result of the large number of forum participants, the second highest number of attendees of all forums, along with several attendees managing very large areas (see discussion in 4.3.1).

4.4 Number of breeding ewes

4.4.1 Average number per producer per forum

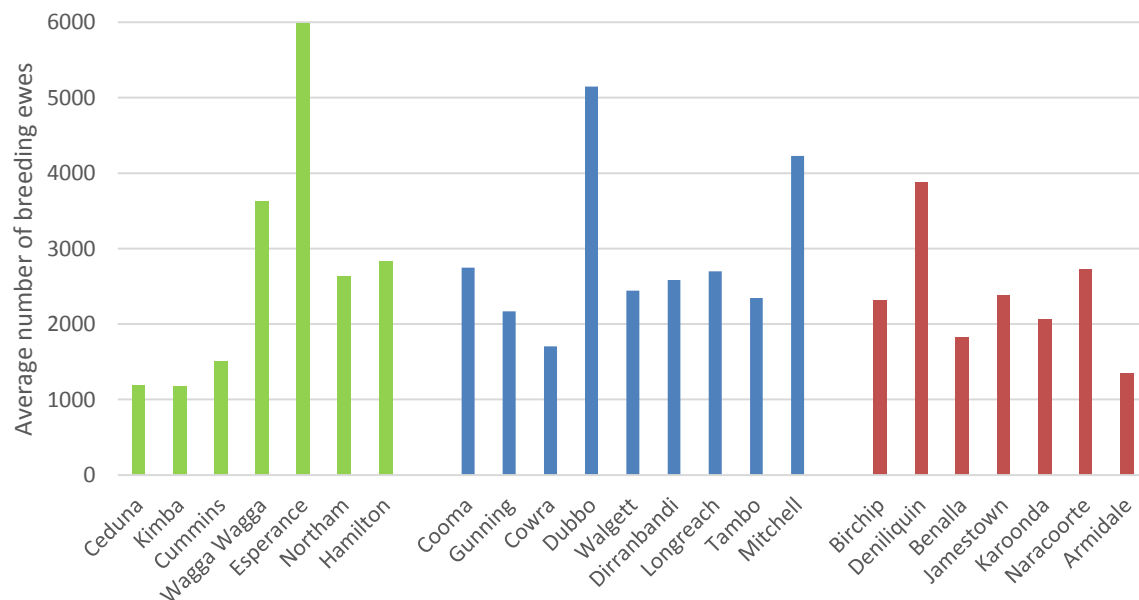


Fig. 8: Average number of breeding ewes per forum participant running sheep

The average number of breeding ewes per producer figure presented here is the average for all producers nominating a number of ewes. Those who responded with zero are not included in the average. There was a relatively small number of producers (11) at the Esperance forum who indicated that they had breeding ewes, with two of these having ewe numbers of 20000 or more.

Likewise, the average at Dubbo was significantly influenced by one producer who ran 66000 ewes, with only 17 producers indicating they ran breeding ewes. Without this producer, the average breeding ewe flock size at Dubbo was 1427.

4.4.2 Total number of ewes per forum

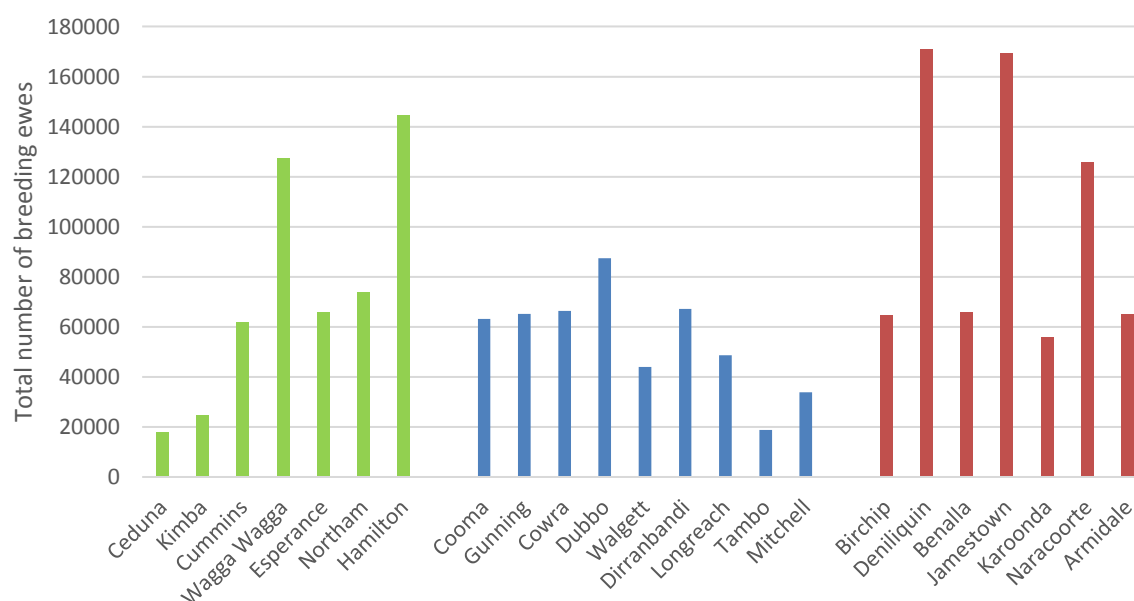


Fig. 9: Total number of ewes managed by all forum participants

The total size of the breeding flocks represented at each forum was heavily influenced by the total number of participants, but Jamestown and Deniliquin both also had individuals with significant size flocks, namely 23000 and 20000 at Deniliquin and two producers with 40000 breeding ewes each at Jamestown.

4.5 Number of prime lambs produced annually

4.5.1 Average number per producer per forum

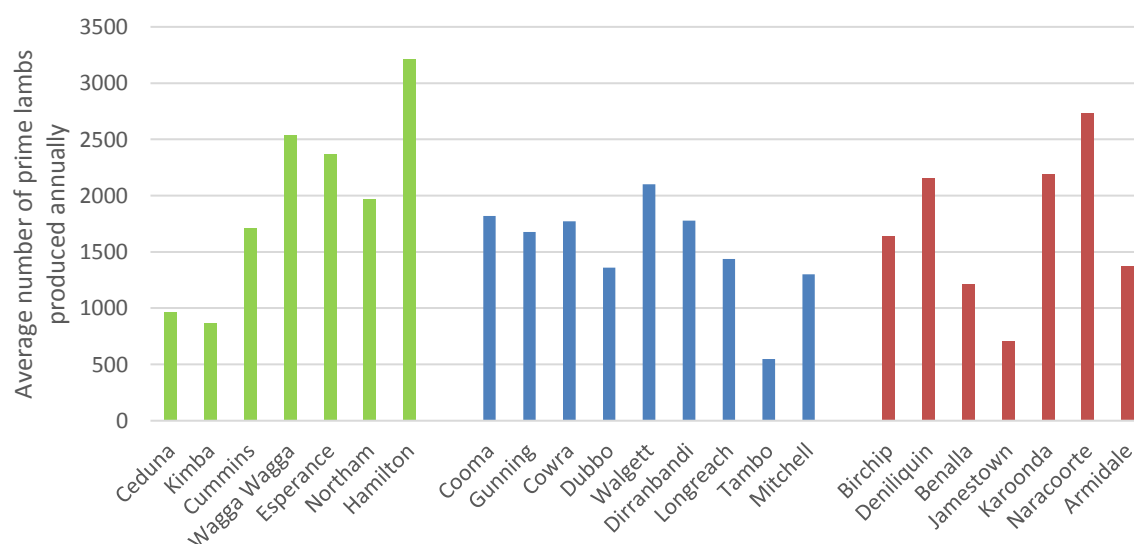


Fig. 10: Average number of prime lambs turned off annually by those attendees running prime lambs

The Hamilton, Naracoorte and Wagga Wagga regions are renown prime lamb producing areas so it is no surprise that participants here turned off the most lambs per producer. At both Esperance and Deniliquin only 40% of respondents produced prime lambs but of these there were some large producers. The Walgett number may be a little inflated as here there were two producers who

reported that they produced 5000 prime lambs annually from 2500 breeding ewes (one off 3600 ha) and one who was recorded as producing 8300 lambs from 3300 ewes.

The Jamestown number is surprisingly low, perhaps reflecting the number of dedicated wool producers and mixed farmers in the audience.

4.5.2 Total number of lambs per forum

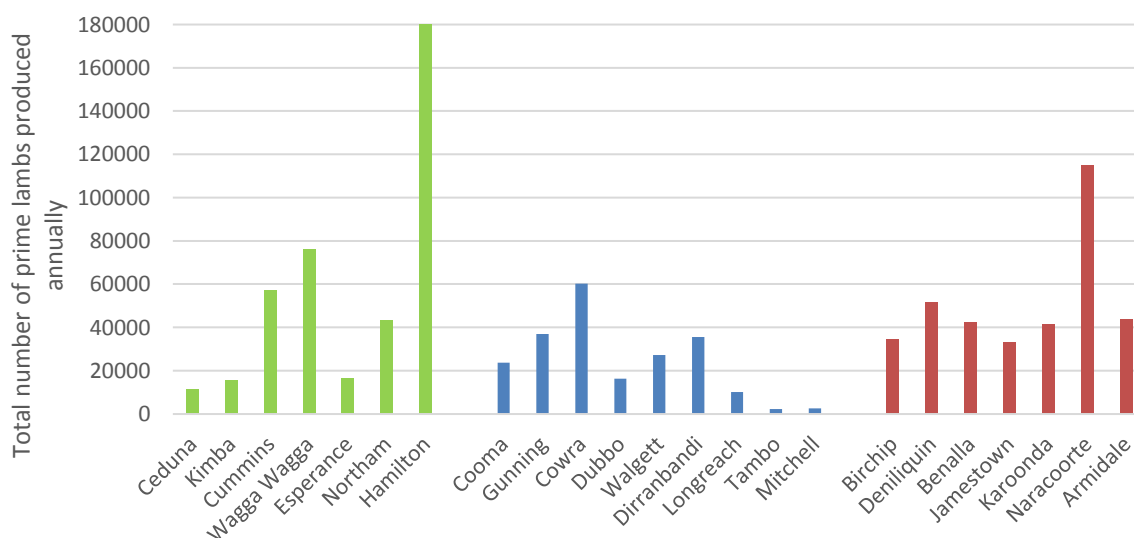


Fig. 11: Total number of prime lambs produced annually per forum

These numbers reflect the primary enterprises at each location. Hamilton and Naracoorte were both well attended forums in high rainfall prime lamb producing regions, whereas Longreach, Tambo and Mitchell are pastoral locations where wool is the key enterprise.

4.6 Number of bales of wool produced annually

4.6.1 Average number of bales per producer per forum

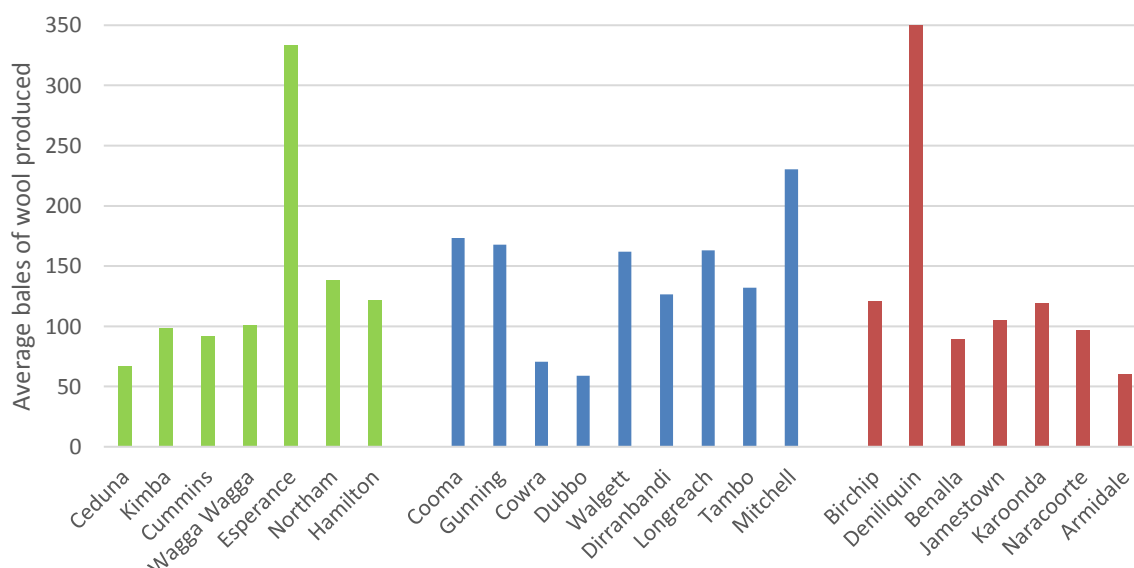


Fig. 12: Average number of bales of wool produced per producer shearing any sheep

The average number of bales per producer reflect the size of enterprises at different locations as well as the reliance on wool as the key commodity. Both the Esperance and Deniliquin figures are

heavily influenced by a couple of large numbers. At Esperance there were two large flocks (out of a total of ten wool producers) that reported producing 1100 bales of wool each. At Deniliquin there were two producers that reported producing 3000 bales of wool, which seems unlikely particularly given that one of these said that they only ran 5000 ewes. Without these two figures, the average for Deniliquin would be 210 bales per producer.

4.6.2 Total number of bales per forum

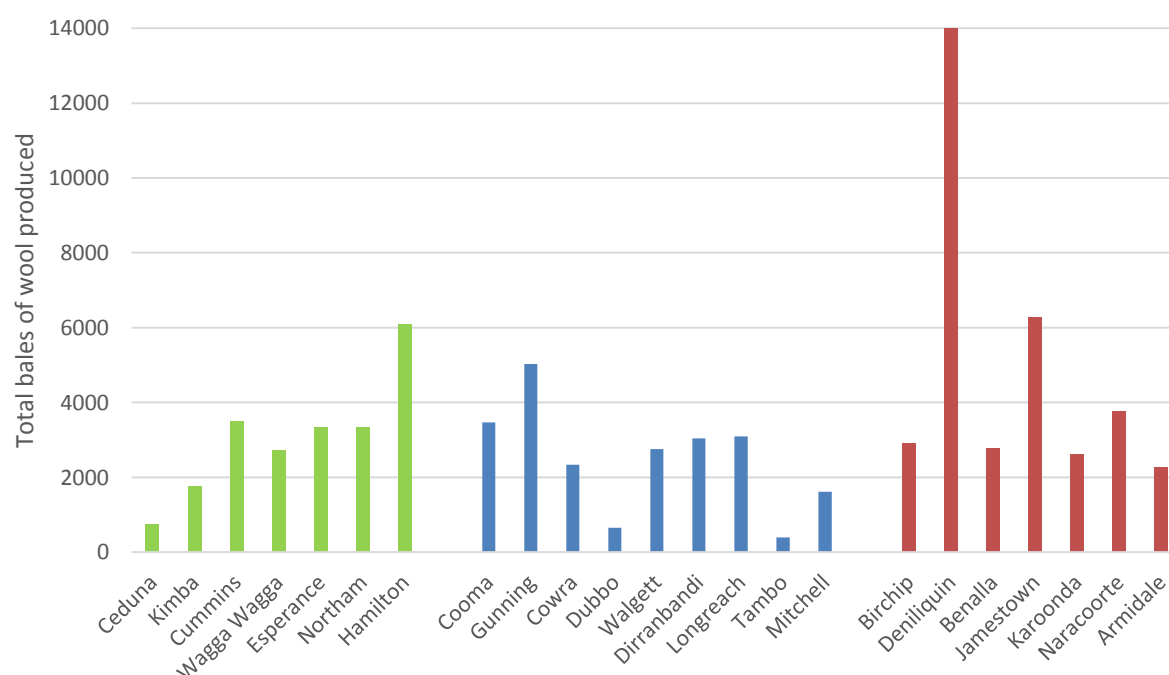


Fig. 13: Total bales of wool produced annually per forum

The reported total number of bales produced annually across all 23 forums was 34571. The average completion rate of evaluations forms was 85%.

The Deniliquin number is inflated by two producers nominating that they produce 3000 bales of wool per year - see the discussion in 4.6.1 above. Without these two figures, the Deniliquin total would be approximately 8000 bales.

The Dubbo number is quite low. At this forum there were at least five producers who indicated that they ran breeding ewes but did not produce any wool. It is hard to believe that these would all be shedding sheep producers.

5 Forum Promotion

Attendees were asked to indicate how they heard about the forum. More than one response per person was possible. Results are presented per forum for the larger full day forums and by forum series for the forums that were run as a series. Numbers shown are the number of attendees nominating that option as their source of information.

Particularly for the 2017 and 2019 forums, MLA was a key source of information. This would have come from both a targeted email campaign as well as targeted Facebook posts.

5.1 Ceduna – Kimba - Cummins

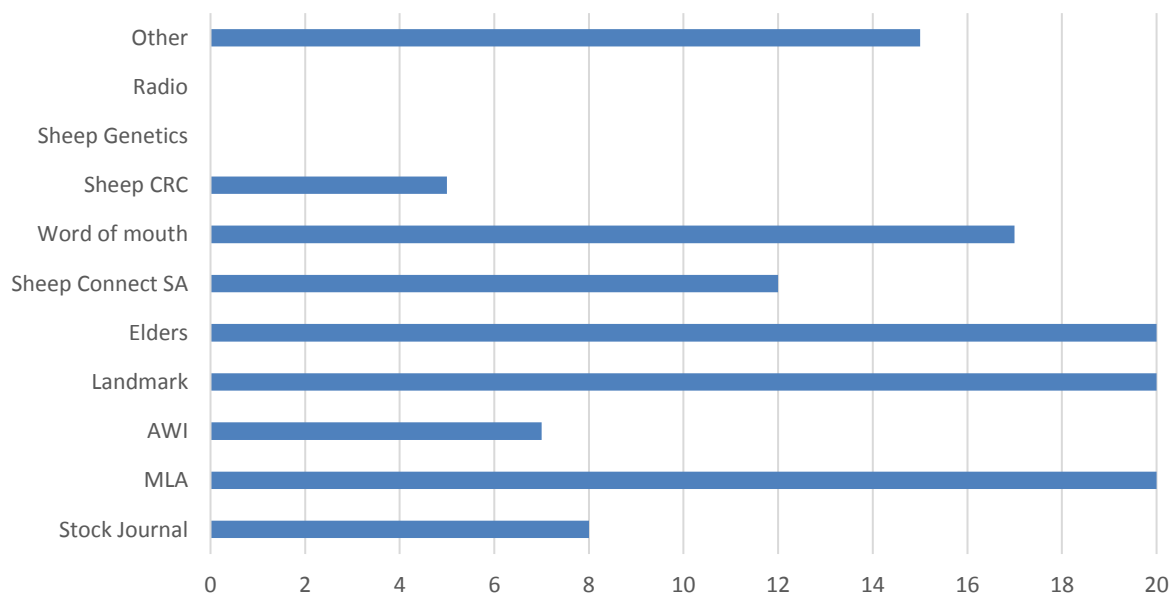


Fig. 14: How attendees at Ceduna, Kimba and Cummins forums heard about the forum

This result reflects the level of engagement that was able to be achieved with the local agency branches. Nearly all of those nominating Landmark attended the Kimba forum and nearly all who nominated Elders were at Cummins. A number of local Elders staff attended the Cummins forum.

Others here included Facebook, email, Twitter, SARDI (South Australian Research and Development Institute) and EPARF (Eyre Peninsula Agricultural Research Foundation).

5.2 Wagga Wagga

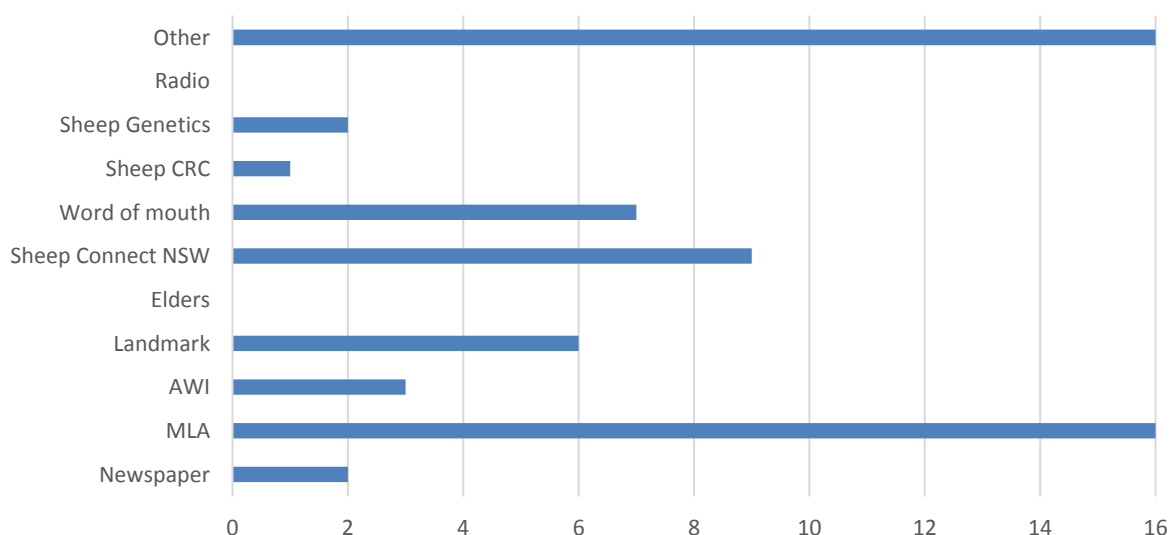


Fig. 15: How attendees at the Wagga Wagga forum heard about the forum

There was quite a short lead time for promotion of this forum. MLA was again a key source of information about the forum. The other category includes Facebook, LLS (Local Land Services), CSU (Charles Sturt University) and TAFE.

5.3 Esperance – Northam

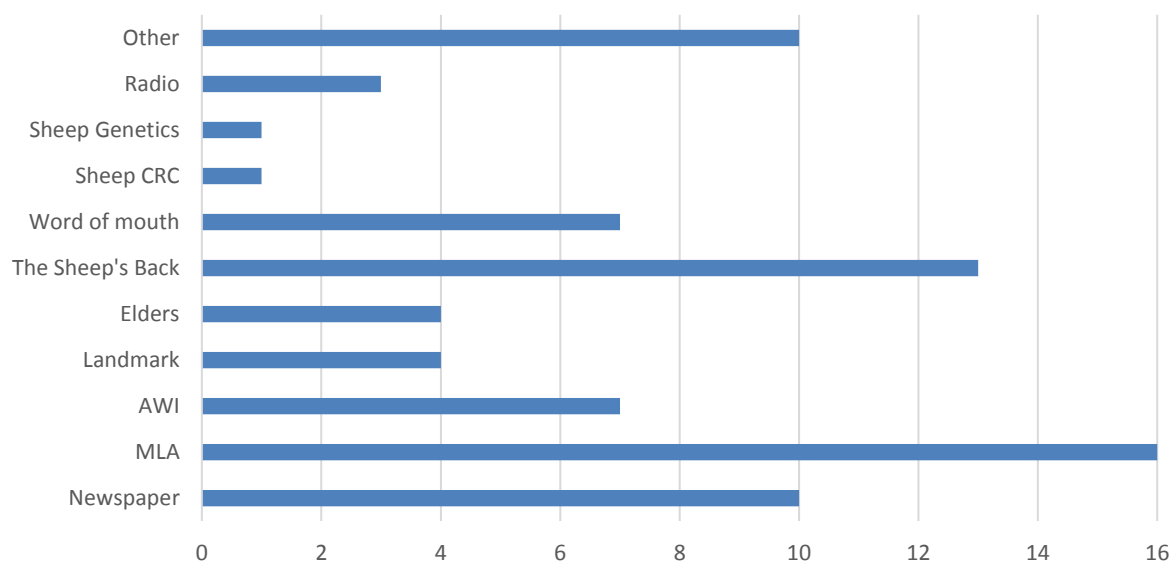


Fig. 16: How attendees at Esperance and Northam forums heard about the forum

Others here included ASHEEP, Facebook and WA Farmers. At Esperance, 40% of responders said they heard about the forum through ASHEEP. Nearly all of the newspaper responses were for the Northam forum and this is one of few forums where newspaper advertising was a key source of information for participants.

5.4 Hamilton

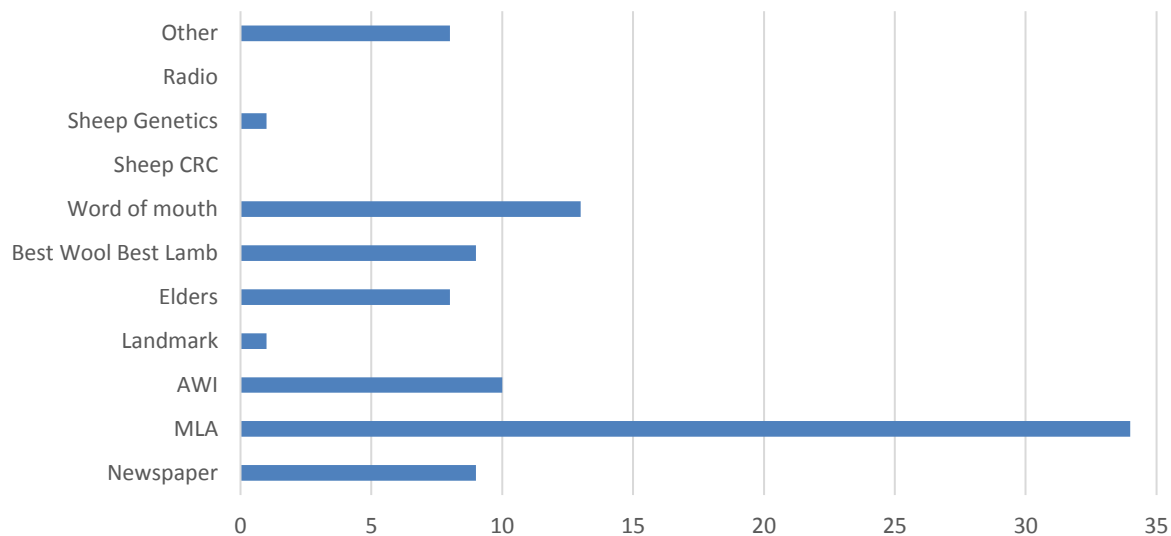


Fig. 17: How attendees at the Hamilton forum heard about the forum

MLA was clearly the most important source of information here. Other includes Facebook and Sheep Central. Newspaper advertising also had some impact here.

5.5 Cooma – Gunning – Cowra

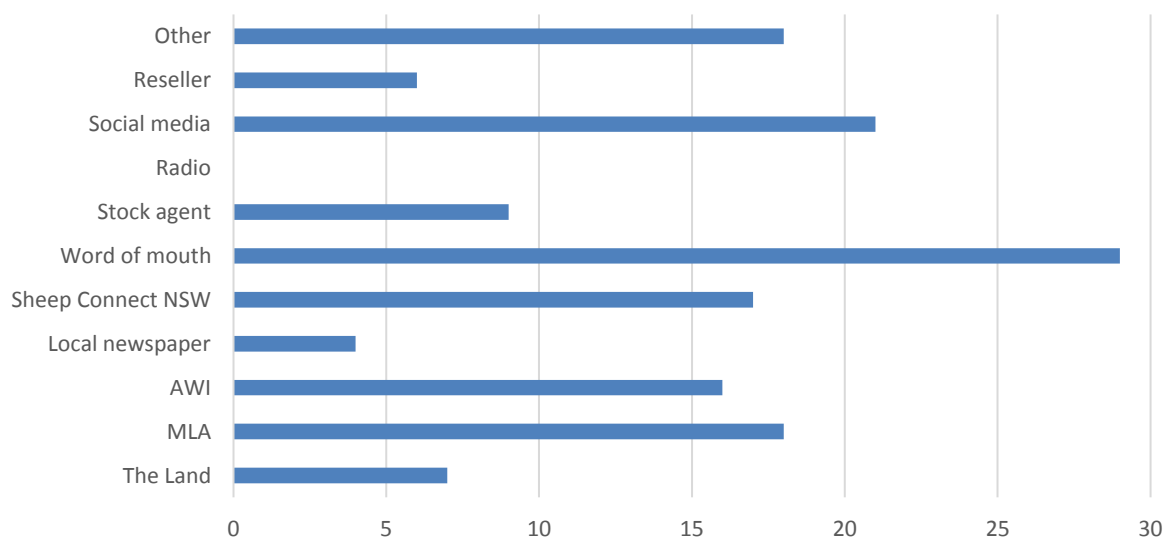


Fig. 18: How attendees at Cooma, Gunning and Cowra forums heard about the forum

These are clearly well connected communities as ‘word of mouth’ was easily the most common way of hearing about the forum and this response was spread evenly across all three locations. Other included Local Land Services, particularly at Gunning.

5.6 Dubbo – Walgett – Dirranbandi

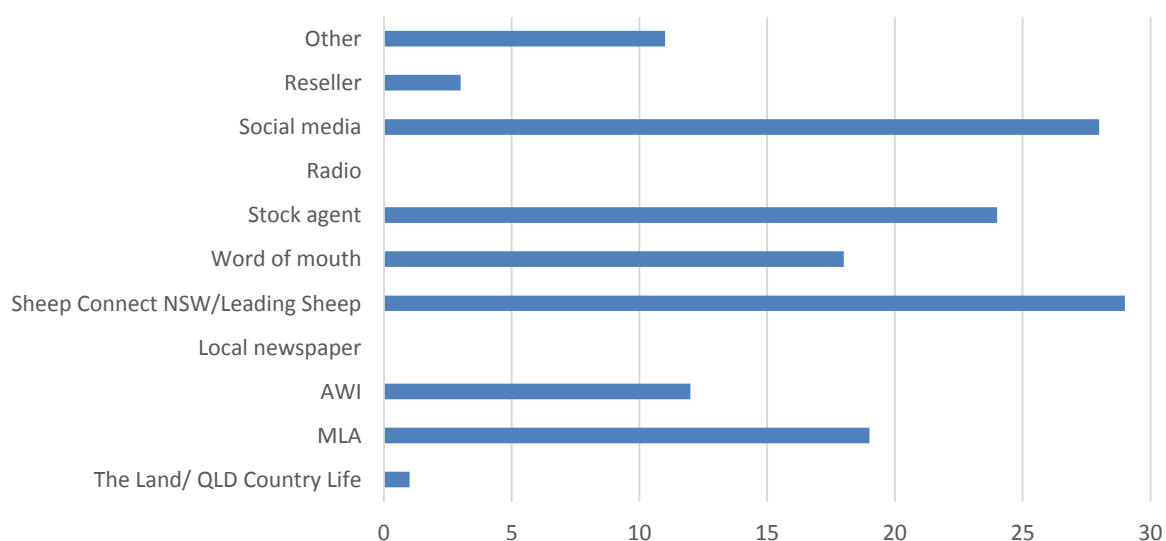


Fig. 19: How attendees at Dubbo, Walgett and Dirranbandi forums heard about the forum

Sheep Connect NSW was a key source of information at Dubbo with about one third of respondents nominating this, but it barely rated a mention at Walgett. Stock agent was the most common response at Walgett, where Elders locally was very proactive in promoting the event. Leading Sheep was nominated by about one third of attendees at Dirranbandi as their source of information. Stock agent also nominated by a significant number of Dirranbandi attendees, where Elders was also very supportive.

5.7 Longreach – Tambo – Mitchell

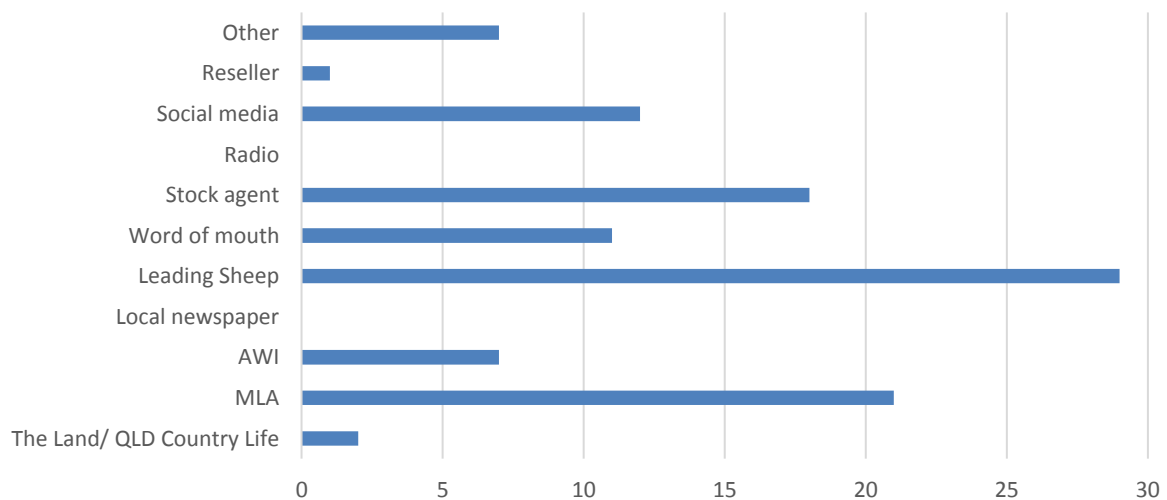


Fig. 20: How attendees at Longreach, Tambo and Mitchell forums heard about the forum

Leading Sheep was the leading source of information for these events, in particular at Longreach where over half of the respondents nominated this as where they heard about the event. Stock agents were also nominated by a significant number of attendees for these Queensland forums. In particular Elders, who were at the time working with MLA on a producer engagement project, were instrumental in getting producers along to the forums, especially at Tambo where they were responsible for over 40% of attendees hearing about the event.

5.8 Birchip – Deniliquin – Benalla

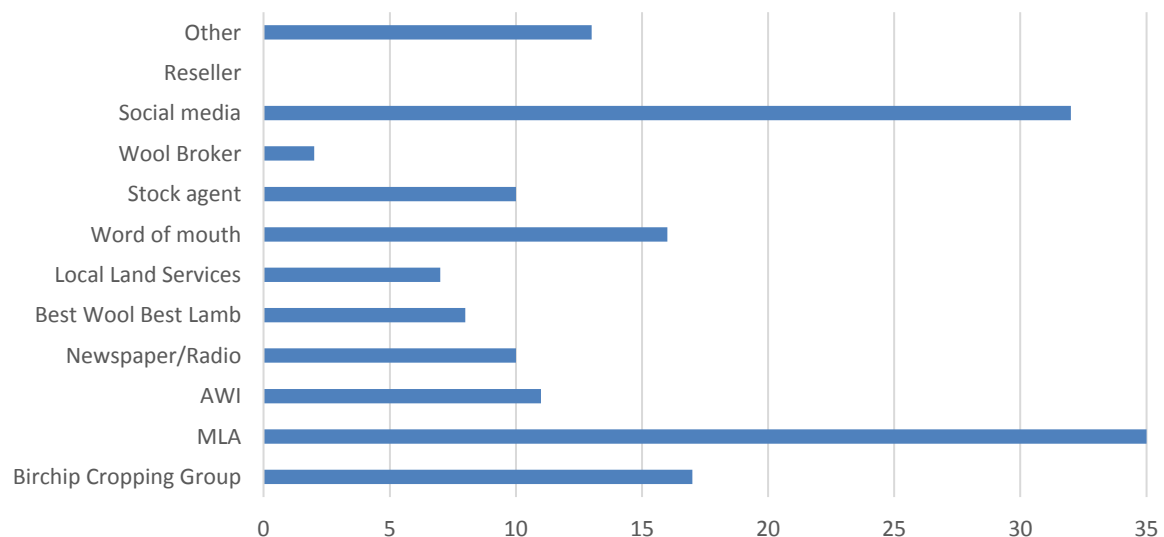


Fig. 21: How attendees at Birchip, Deniliquin and Benalla forums heard about the forum

MLA and social media were the most common ways that attendees heard about this series of forums. Much of the social media activity was likely generated by MLA and AWI, but may have also been generated by individuals, BWBL network, farming systems groups, stock agents and others. Birchip Cropping Group (BCG) was the key source of information for the Birchip forum with at least 50% of attendees at this forum nominating BCG as their source of information. BCG were engaged as a supporting partner for this forum series.

5.9 Jamestown – Karoonda – Naracoorte

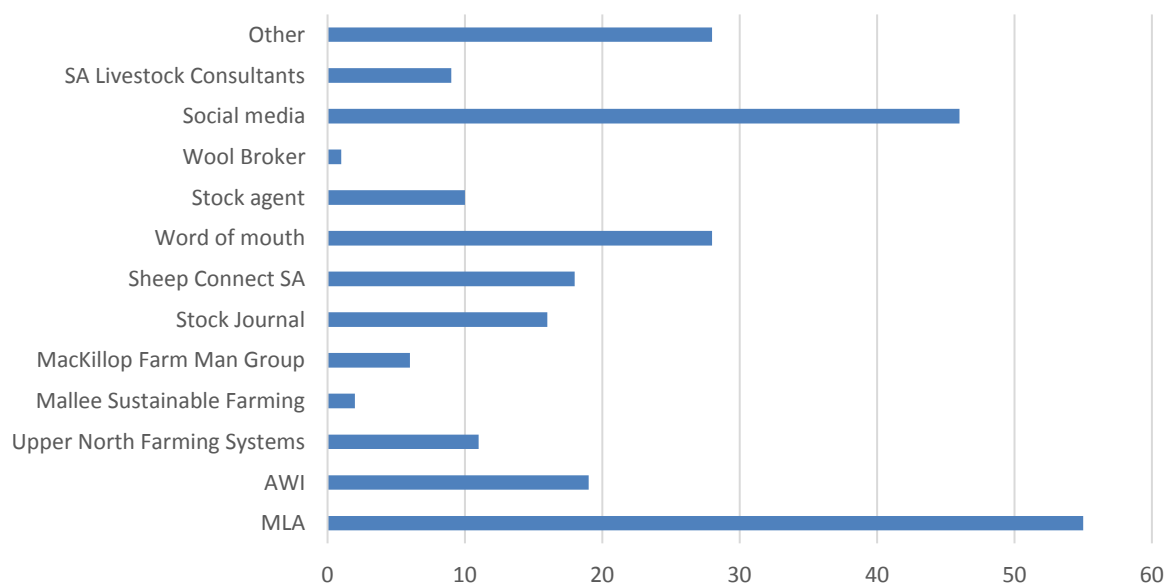


Fig. 22: How attendees at Jamestown, Karoonda and Naracoorte forums heard about the forum

MLA and social media were again the most common sources of information. The impact of the three farming systems groups is diluted as each was only relevant for an individual forum. All three groups were engaged as supporting partners for this forum series.

5.10 Armidale

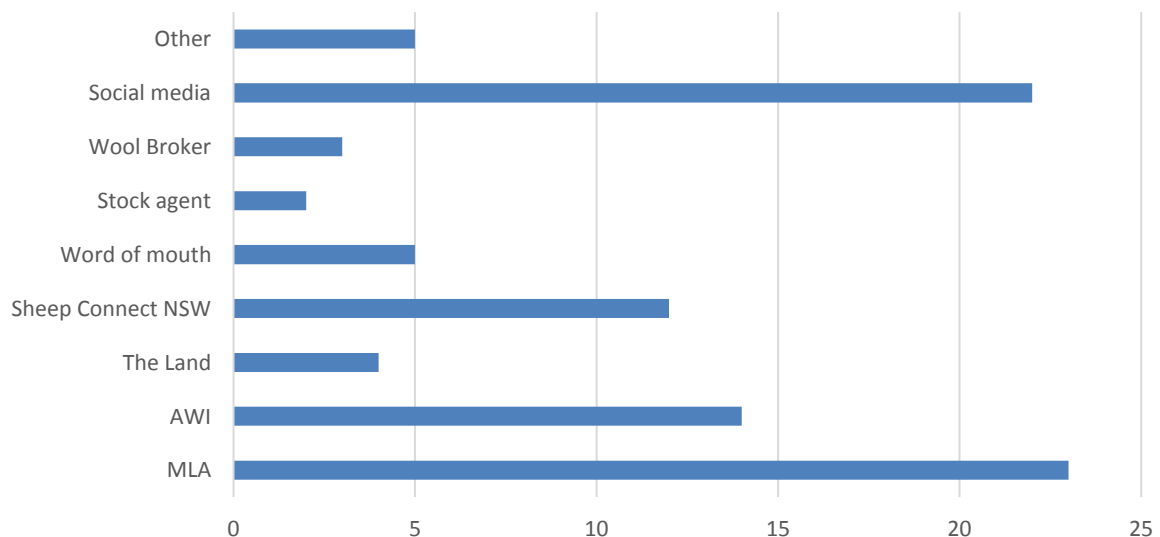


Fig. 23: How attendees at the Armidale forum heard about the forum

MLA was again a popular source of information about this forum, along with social media, much of which was likely generated by MLA.

6 Event Evaluation

6.1 Satisfaction with event

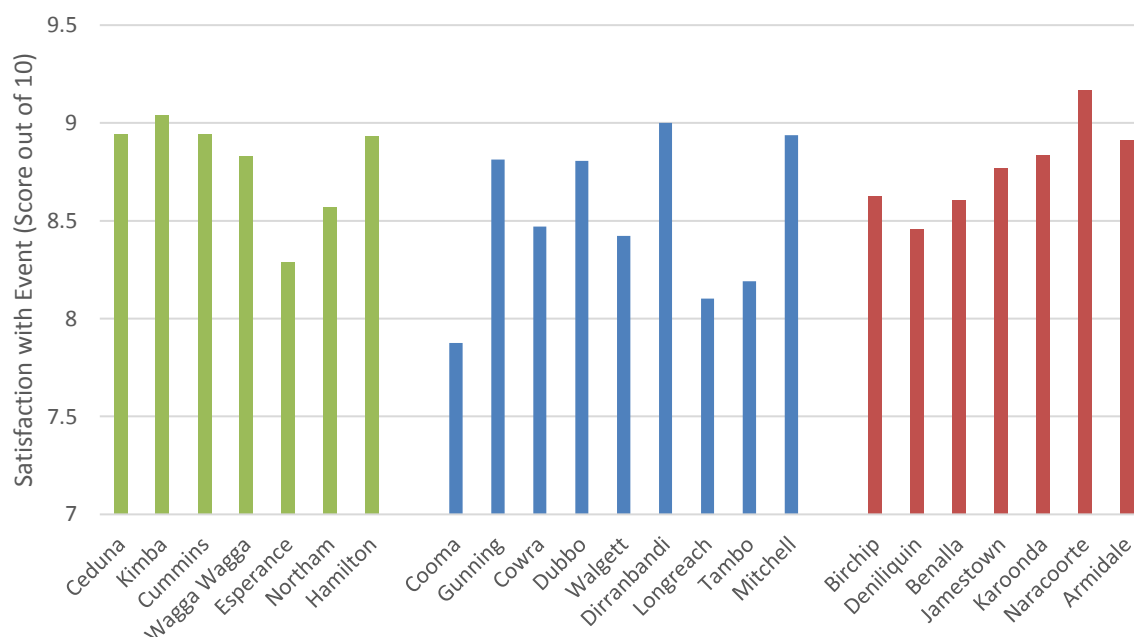


Fig. 24: Average satisfaction scores out of 10 for all events

Participants were asked to rate out of 10 how satisfied they were with the event overall, where 1 was negative and 10 was positive.

The Cooma event scored the lowest satisfaction level. Closer examination of the individual responses shows that there were a number of 5 out of 10 scores, but also just as many 10 out of 10 scores. Most of those scoring 5-6 for overall satisfaction did not offer any suggestions for improvement but did indicate that they had either learnt something new, intended to seek further information and/or planned to make changes as a result of attending.

The Longreach forum scored the next lowest satisfaction level. Here there were less extremes in the data with only a couple of 10 out of 10 scores along with a couple of 5-6 scores. These low scores came from a consultant, a lamb specialist and a wool specialist, and all were polarised on the value of individual speakers, rating some individual speakers as 10 out of 10 and other as 4-5 out of 10.

With a total response number of only 21 at the Tambo forum, the overall satisfaction score was reduced by just one 'mixed farmer' who scored a 5 out of 10, and who clearly struggled to find value in the event, giving two of the four speakers very low scores and saying that they were looking for more content on crossbred sheep.

The Naracoorte forum scored the highest satisfaction rating and here all scores were between 8 and 10 out of 10, aside from one score of 7 from a lamb specialist who said they found the information presented '*far too basic*'.

6.2 Increase in understanding or skills

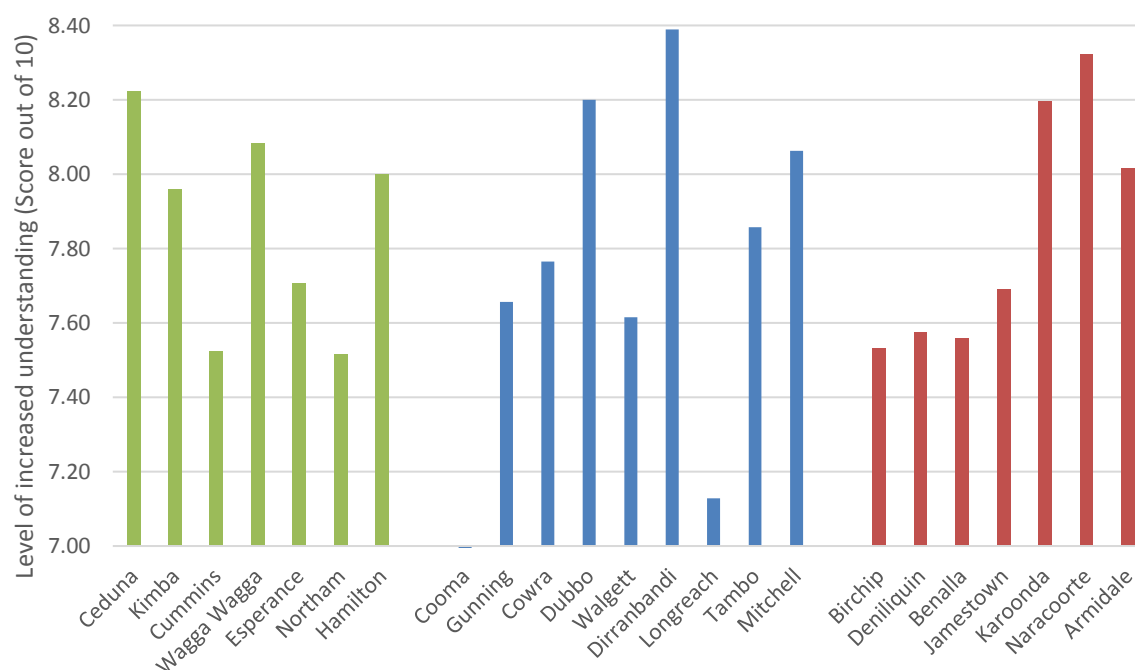


Fig. 25: Average score out of 10 for increase in understanding and skills per forum

Participants were asked to rate out of 10, where 1 is very little and 10 is a lot, how much they felt they had increased their understanding and/or skills about the topics covered at the forum. This can be a difficult question for attendees to answer. Someone may record a low score if they feel they were familiar with most of the content already, but still record that they learnt something new on the day. The Longreach forum averaged the lowest for this question, with a number of attendees scoring 3-6. However, a number of these respondents still noted that they learnt something new, mostly from the content delivered here by Hamish Chandler on the importance of sire selection.

The highest scoring forum for this measure was Dirranbandi, possibly reflecting a number in the audience who were new or returning to the industry. Nutritional management of ewes and lambs and weaner management were particularly noted by those who scored 9-10 on this question.

6.3 Confidence to improve sheep enterprise

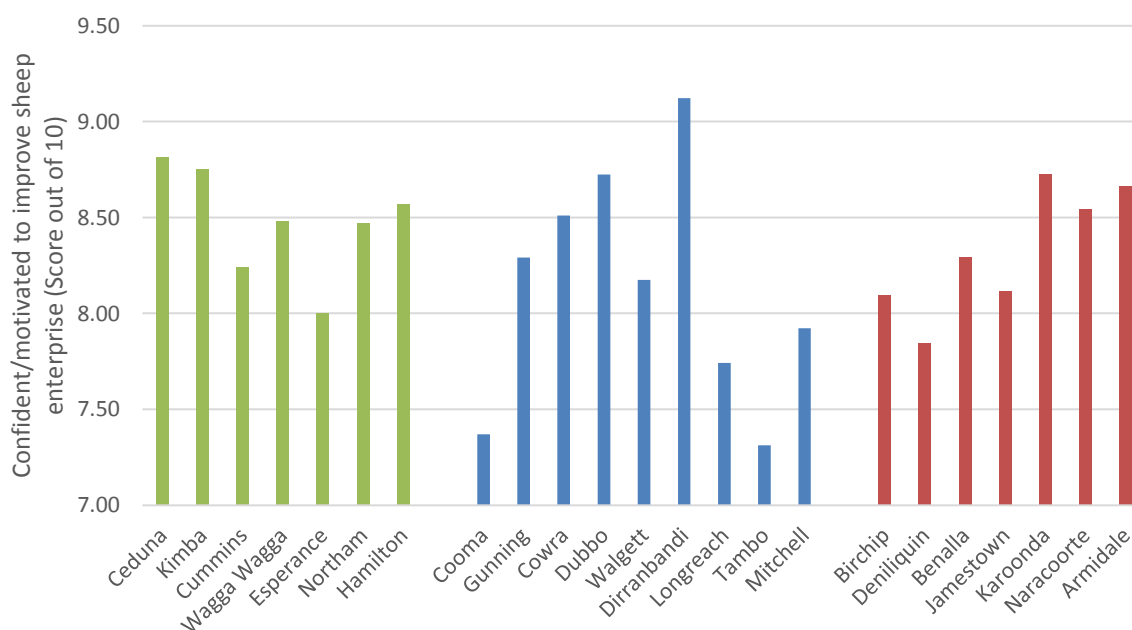


Fig. 26: Average confidence and motivation (score out of 10) to improve sheep enterprise

Participants were asked to rate how confident and motivated they felt to improve their sheep enterprise as a result of attending the forum, with a score of 1 being no more motivated and 10 highly motivated.

The Dirranbandi forum had the highest average rating on this measure. This was a very good forum with a great feeling in the room on the day and a very engaged audience including a great range of demographics based on age, distance travelled and experience in the industry. At the time, the region was struggling with particularly dry conditions and many felt the information delivered was very timely in terms of the decision making required. This was also the third forum in a three forum series, and so the presenters had had the opportunity to polish and link their presentations.

This question was not relevant for those forum attendees who did not have their own flock. The Tambo forum scored the lowest on this measure but this was quite a small forum with a large proportion of service providers (refer 4.1 Business type). Only 16 out of 26 attendees completed this question and one score of 2 had a significant impact on the average. Without this value the average response was 7.7. The other notably low result was from the Cooma forum, which is a little harder to explain other than to observe that Cooma had the lowest overall satisfaction rating of all 23 forums.

7 Session Evaluation

7.1 Ceduna – Kimba – Cummins

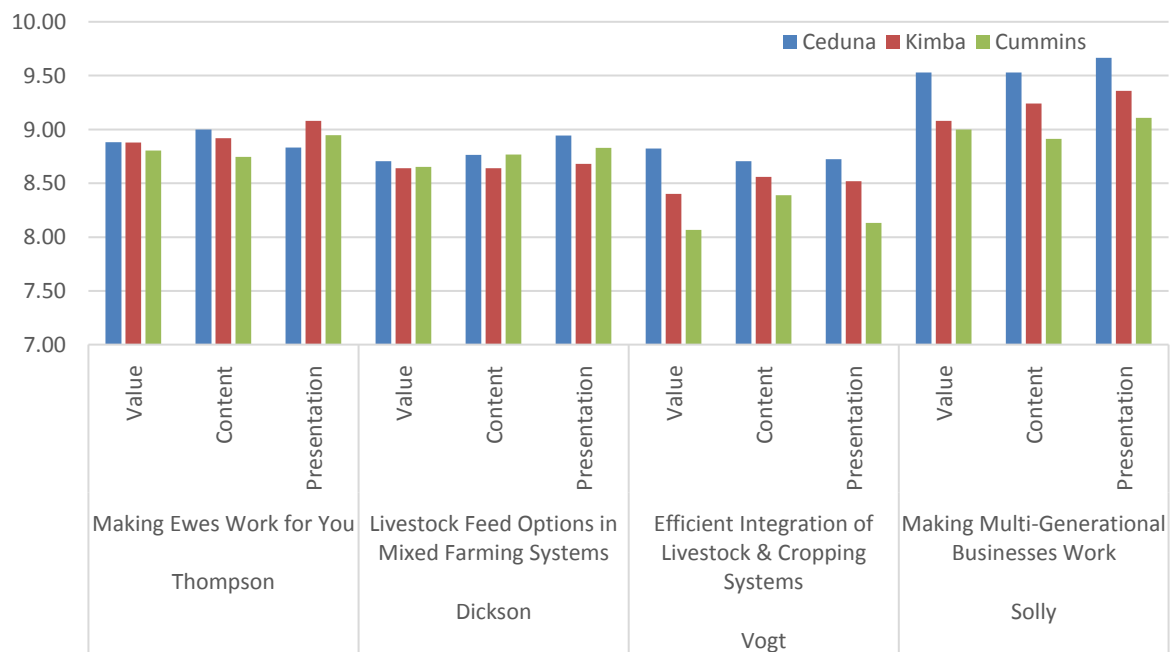


Fig. 27: Average scores out of 10 for value, content and quality of each presentation at Ceduna, Kimba and Cummins

This was the only forum series where the topic of succession planning and working across generations was included on the program but it was clearly very well received, with the highest score at all locations for value, content and presentation. This high score is a combination of the quality of the presenter and also the interest in and relevance of the topic.

7.2 Wagga Wagga

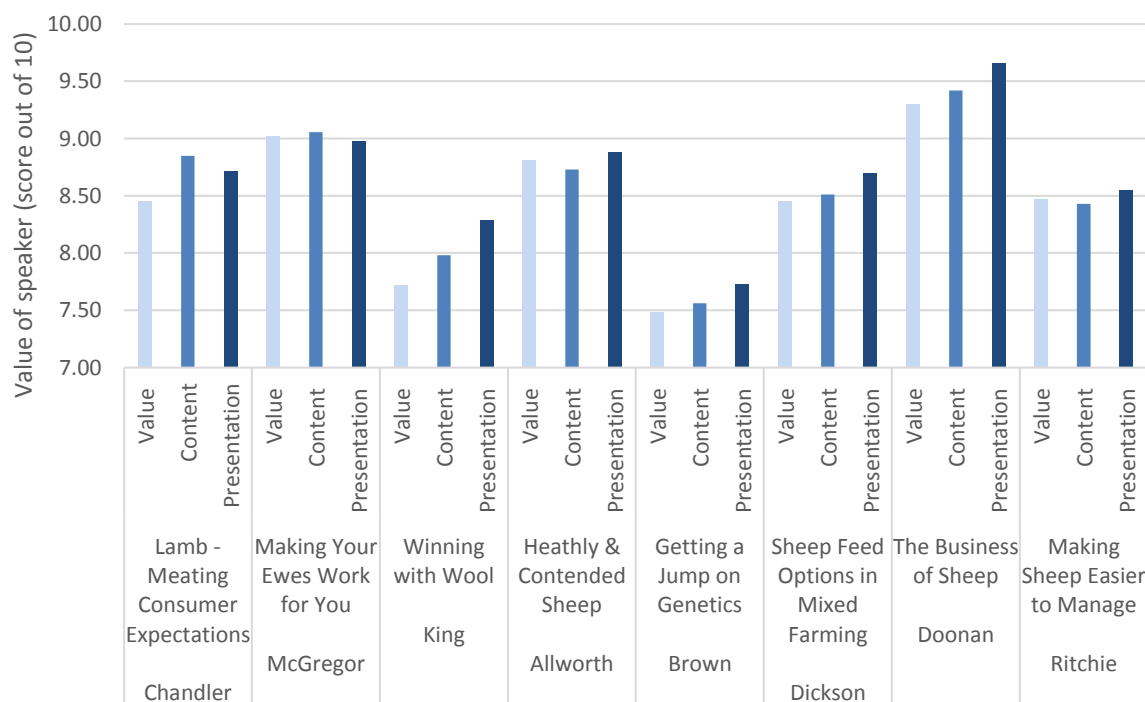


Fig. 28: Average scores out of 10 for value, content and quality of each presentation at Wagga Wagga

7.3 Esperance – Northam

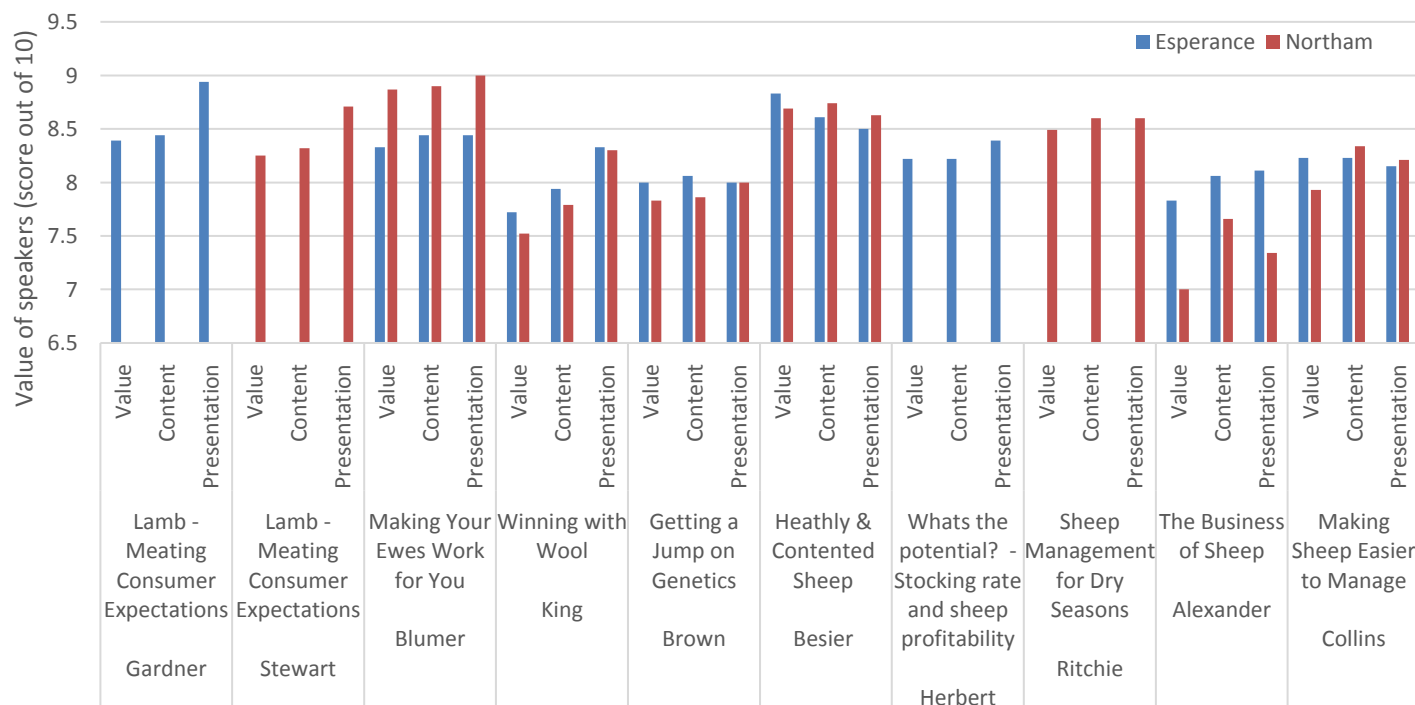


Fig. 29: Average scores out of 10 for value, content and quality of each presentation at Esperance and Northam

7.4 Hamilton

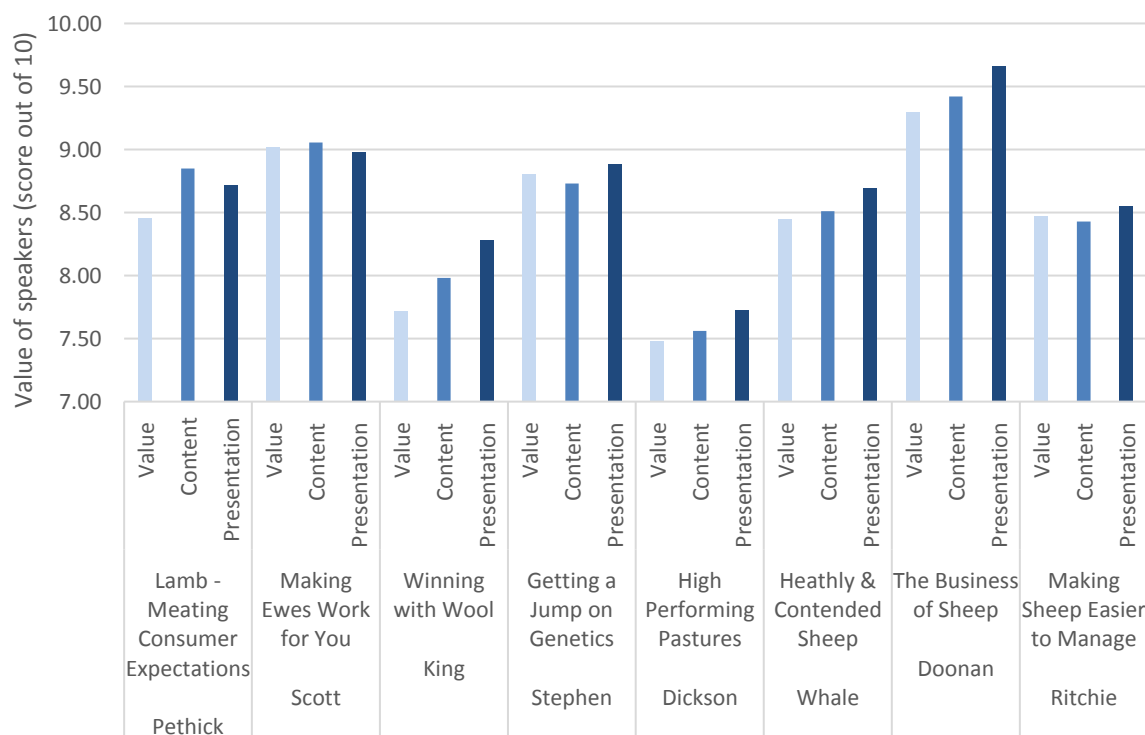


Fig. 30: Average scores out of 10 for value, content and quality of each presentation at Hamilton

7.5 Cooma – Gunning – Cowra

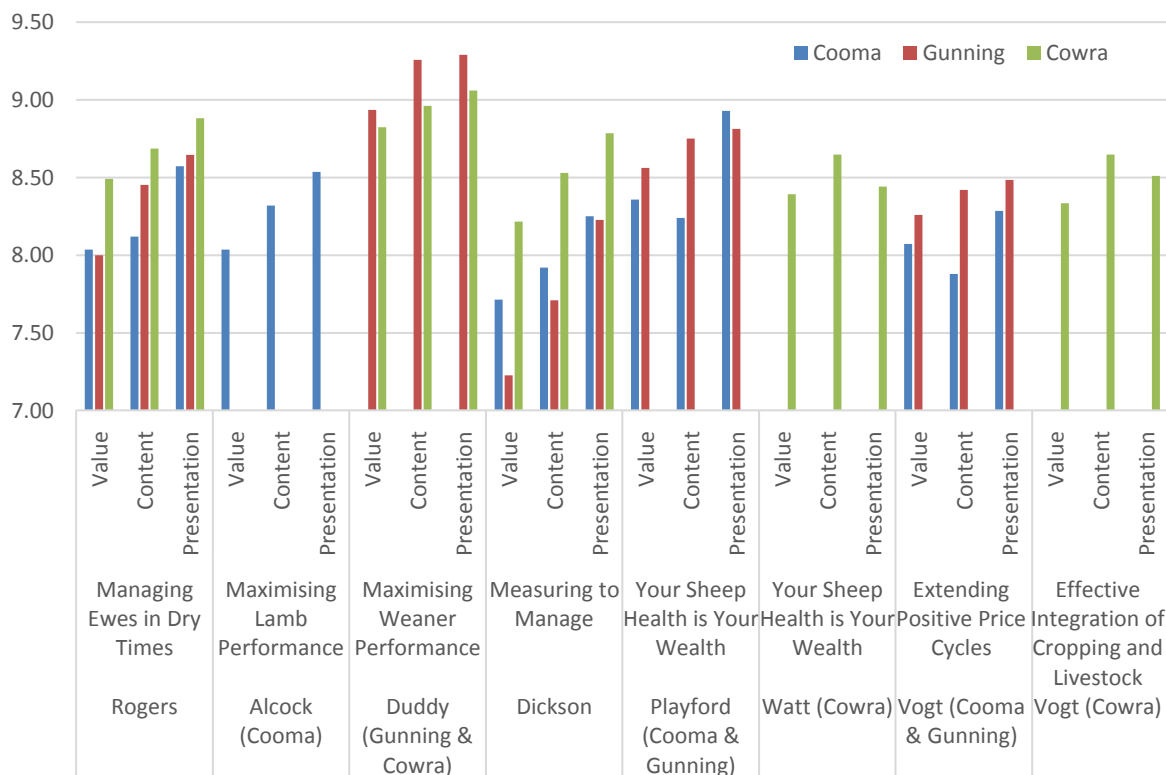


Fig. 31: Average scores out of 10 for value, content and quality of each presentation at Cooma, Gunning and Cowra

7.6 Dubbo – Walgett – Dirranbandi

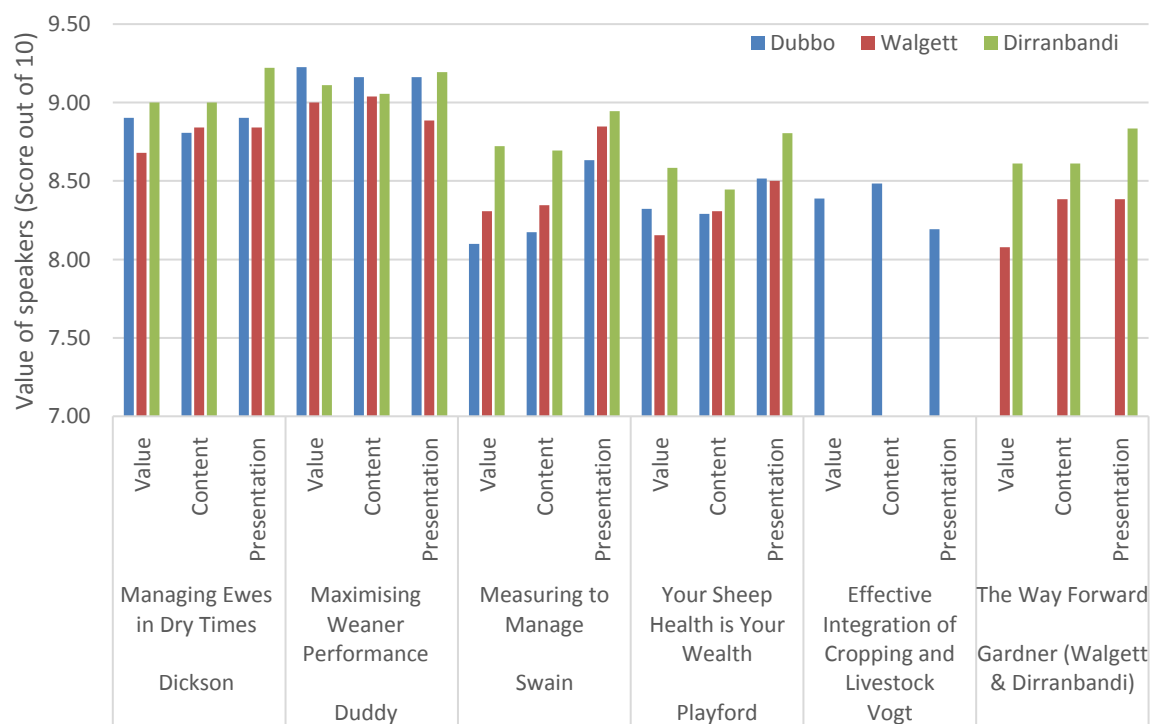


Fig. 32: Average scores out of 10 for value, content and quality of each presentation at Dubbo, Walgett and Dirranbandi

Geoff Duddy's presentations consistently scored particularly well in both this forum series as well as in the previous series at Gunning and Cowra.

7.7 Longreach – Tambo – Mitchell

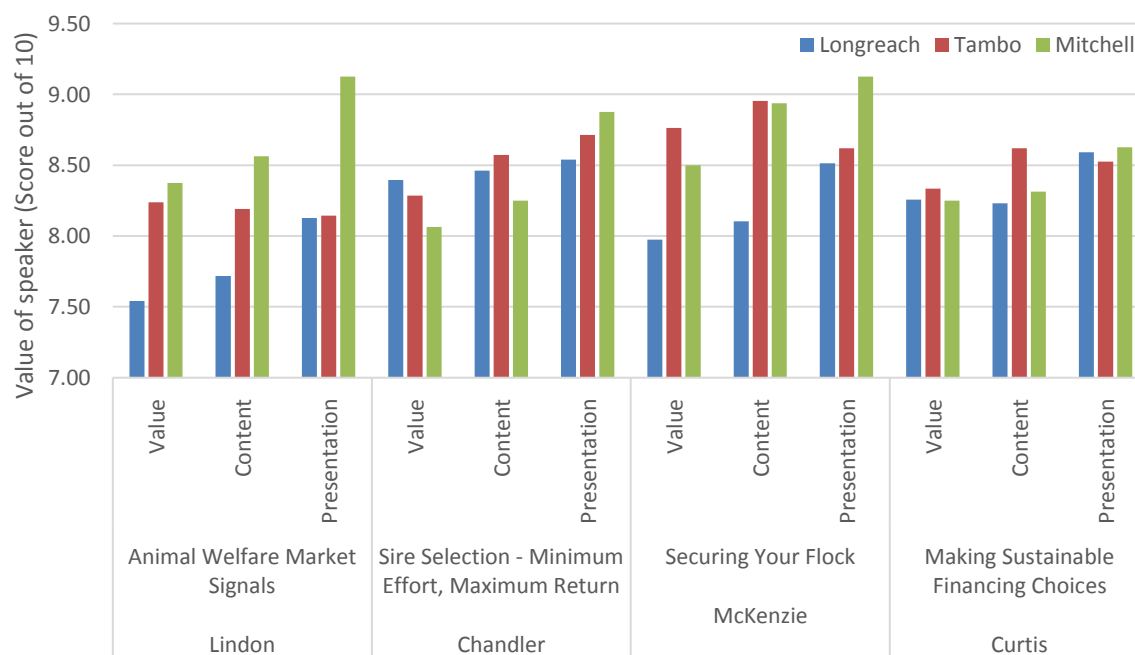


Fig. 33: Average scores out of 10 for value, content and quality of each presentation at Longreach, Tambo and Mitchell

7.8 Birchip – Deniliquin – Benalla

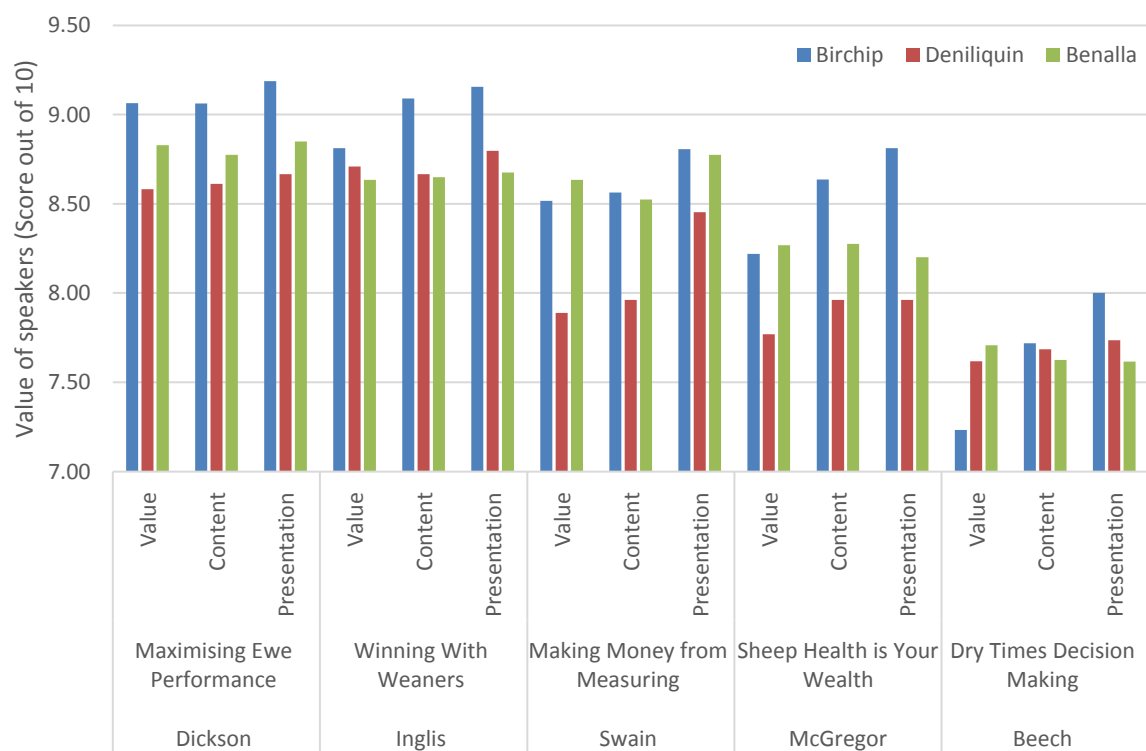


Fig. 34: Average scores out of 10 for value, content and quality of each presentation Birchip, Deniliquin and Benalla

7.9 Jamestown – Karoonda – Naracoorte

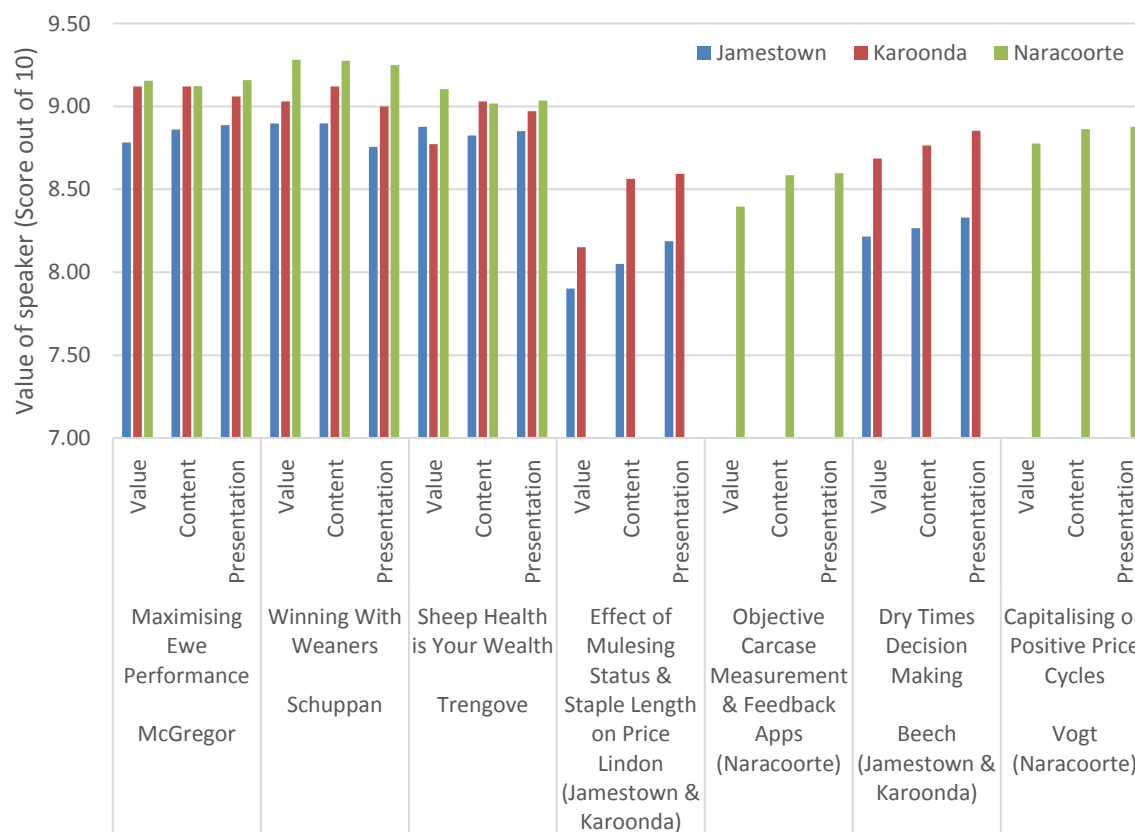


Fig. 35: Average scores out of 10 for value, content and quality of each presentation at Jamestown, Karoonda and Naracoorte

7.10 Armidale

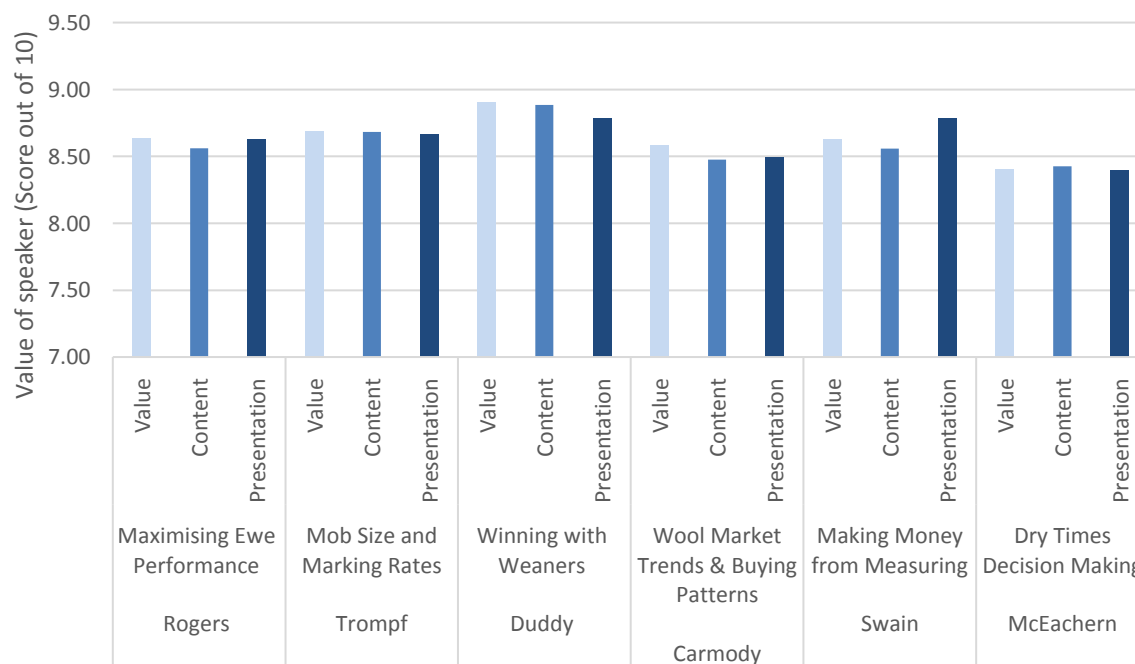


Fig. 36: Average scores out of 10 for value, content and quality of each presentation at Armidale

8 Intent to make change

Even though considered an awareness raising activity by the funding Corporations, in fact many producers attending these forums indicated that they intend to implement change in their business as a result of attending the forum. The percentages expressed in this section are the percentage of all forum participants, and would be much higher if expressed as a percentage of the producers attending.

8.1 Ceduna – Kimba – Cummins

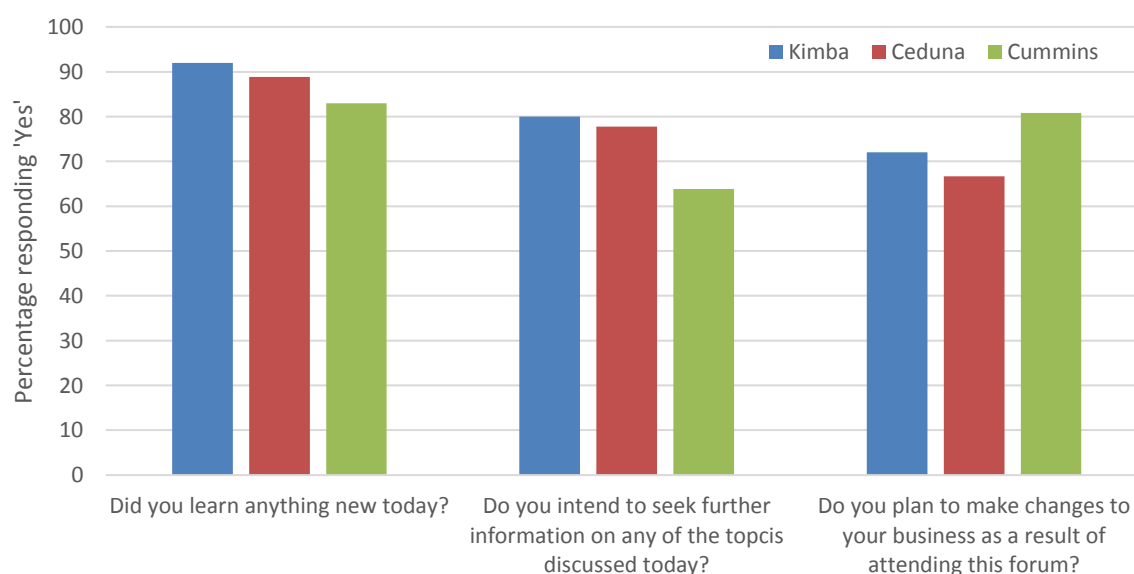


Fig. 37: Percentage of attendees at Ceduna, Kimba and Cummins who learnt something new, intend to seek further information and intend to make change

Almost all participants at the Cummins forum who indicated that they had learnt something new, also said that they would implement a change as a result of attending the forum. Cummins attendees were less inclined to seek further information and more inclined to implement change.

There were four presentations in this forum series in August 2017 and they addressed the topics of: Making Ewes Work for You; Sheep Feed Options in Mixed Farming Systems; Efficient Integration of Livestock & Cropping Systems; and Making Multi-Generational Businesses Work.

8.1.1 Learn anything new

At all three locations many participants indicated that they had learnt the value of scanning ewes for multiples rather than just wet/dry; also the value of condition scoring ewes pre-mating and pre-lambing; lambing in smaller mobs; and managing ewe nutrition, in particular the feed requirements of twin bearing ewes. A number also commented they had learnt the value of communication and managing relationships in businesses, including *'family is everything'*; *'how to be a boss and a leader'* *'keep mind active'*; *'don't be complacent – keep finger on pulse'*. Others had learnt about containment areas, benchmarking, profit drivers and enterprise conflict.

8.1.2 Seek further information

There were three key areas where most attendees indicated they would seek further information; confinement feeding, supplementary feeding and feed budgeting; succession planning; and pregnancy scanning. Life Time Ewe Management was also mentioned by a number of people and a couple of participants mentioned benchmarking was an area where they would seek further information. One participant nominated they would look at the *'key areas to focus on to work*

toward being a top 20 producer' and another took on Ken Solly's message of managing relationships and looking after yourself to say they would 'research holiday destinations'.

8.1.3 Plan to make changes

Overwhelmingly the most mentioned change that people planned to make related to pregnancy scanning ewes, either to start doing it or to start scanning for multiples. Related to this was the often mentioned intention to improve ewe management generally, including condition scoring, preferential management of twin bearers and shorter joining periods.

Ken Solly's presentation also generated a lot of interest and intention to change. Suggested actions included; 'define everyone's role on the farm', 'more family meetings', 'have more time off', 'sort out family', 'balance work:life ratio', 'give next generation an opportunity to be involved in the business', 'have more work meetings', 'try to include staff more', and 'more communication in the business'. Other areas for change mentioned were weaner management and business planning including 'benchmarking – find out if I am top 20% and if not work out how to get there', 'better planning and timing of operations' and 'make enterprises more simple to allow better effectiveness'.

8.2 Wagga Wagga

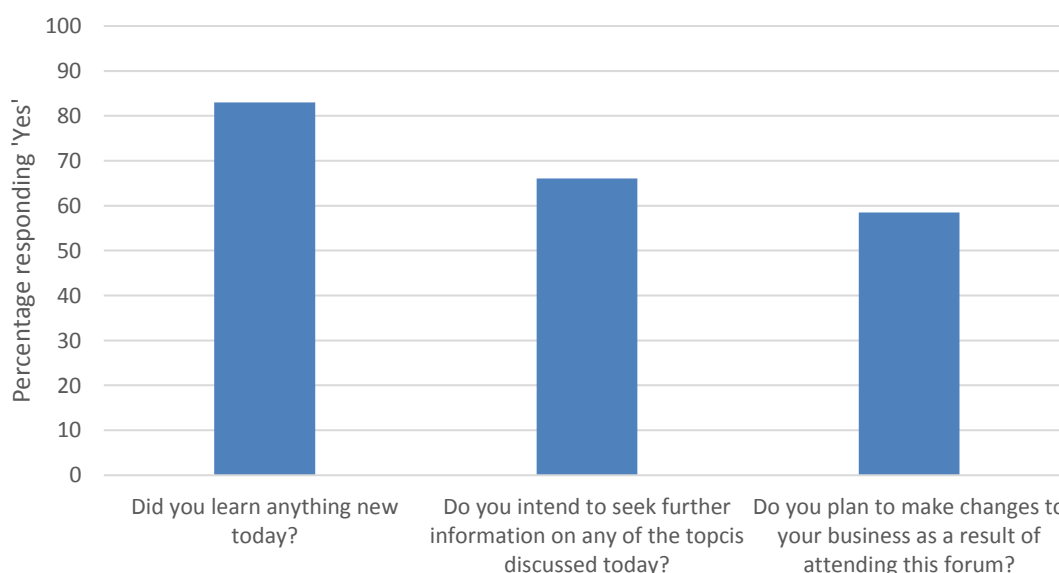


Fig. 38: Percentage of attendees at Wagga Wagga who learnt something new, intend to seek further information and intend to make change

8.2.1 Learn anything new

With eight different speakers on the program, it shouldn't have been difficult for everyone to learn something new, but only 83% of respondents indicated that they did. However, a further 9% gave no response to this question.

Ewe management was the most often cited area where attendees learnt something new including; pregnancy scanning (including early/late scanning), separating twin bearing ewes, 'measuring ewe production as kg/year', value of smaller mob size, and 'we need to do the ewe management course'. The next most often mentioned area was from the meat eating quality presentation, including: 'the drive for higher yielding prime lambs is decreasing eating quality'; consumer expectations; meat eating quality and the value of intramuscular fat; carcase yield grids.

Other topics mentioned included: drench resistance; *Campylobacter* vaccination; and issues with fast fashion.

8.2.2 Seek further information

Two thirds of attendees indicated that they would seek further information on topics discussed at the forum. Topics most commonly mentioned were inspired by the genetics presentation and included genetic improvement as well as RamSelect and ASBVs. Ewe, lamb and weaner management were often mentioned, including: *'reducing losses between scanning and weaning'*; *'temporary fencing for smaller mob sizes'*; *'weaner management to set up for lifetime'*; and condition scoring. Also mentioned were: Livestock Data Link; eating quality application at flock level; new grids for selling livestock; increasing muscle but managing IMF; worm control and drench resistance; grazing winter crops; wool products for athleisure and shorter shearing interval.

8.2.3 Plan to make changes

The most often mentioned planned changes related to ewe and lamb management including: *'scan more and split ewes into singles and twinners'*; *'possibly scan for triplets'*; *'early/late scanning'*; *'use temporary fencing to reduce paddock size and mob size at lambing'*; *'monitor lamb mortality more closely to identify cause of death'*; *'wean earlier'*; *'condition score at weaning'*. Other changes mentioned involved improved nutrition management including: more timely feeding; *'measuring feed on offer more often'*; *'grow more fodder cereals for winter feed shortage'*.

Attendees also planned to fine tune their drenching programs, consider sheep meat eating quality traits, more planning, more investment in fertiliser and yards, more education for farm labour, and develop a biosecurity plan.

8.3 Esperance – Northam

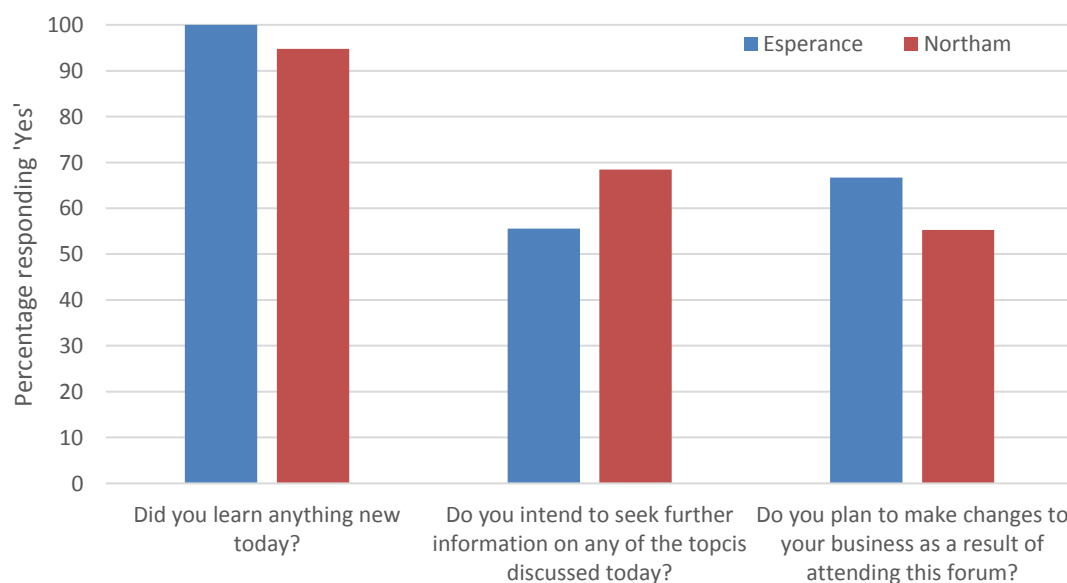


Fig. 39: Percentage of attendees at Esperance and Northam who learnt something new, intend to seek further information and intend to make change

8.3.1 Learn anything new

These forums delivered an outstanding result with 100% of Esperance respondents and 95% at Northam saying that they had learnt something new. Not surprisingly, the list of learnings is very long and covers a large range of topics. Sheep health issues including parasite management and drench resistance information, were some of the more commonly mentioned topics with some

specific examples including: *'lambs don't make up weight loss from worms'; 'ewes lose their resistance to worms for a 2-week period post lambing'; 'don't drench lambs on marking table'; '6-week old lambs scouring almost always means Coccidiosis'*. A few people talked about ewe management strategies including condition scoring, shorter joining periods and weaning early, plus specifically: *'must preg scan for multiples'; 'wean earlier to keep condition up on ewes for next year'*.

Attendees talked about learning about the cost:benefit of Eid and using ASBVs and genomics. There was also quite a bit of mention of increased understanding of *'carcase weight and consumer demands as people increase wealth', 'carcase feedback to growers', 'different types of fat related to meat industry'* and *'Lean Meat Yield'*.

Although the 'The Business of Sheep' topic was not rated as highly as other presentations, especially at Northam, there were several audience members who specifically singled this presentation out as being excellent and people talked about learning about financing options and *'alternative business models for expanding the sheep enterprise'* and *'ways youth can break into today's industry without capital'*.

8.3.2 Seek further information

Between a half and two thirds of the audience at these forums indicated that they would seek further information including: *'stocking rate as a driver of profitability - will read Ashley's report'*; genetics and ASBVs; handling equipment and technology including Eid; the apps and websites discussed; *'sheep management for dry seasons'*; worm management in ewes; twin management; pain relief; LDL; *'seeking alternative financing without 50% deposit'*.

8.3.3 Plan to make changes

Two thirds of Esperance producers and over half of Northam producers indicated that they would make a change to their business as a result of attending the forum. The most often mentioned change was scanning for multiples: *'I have been preg scanning. Will look into testing for twins now'*. Other changes mentioned related to ewe management included: wean earlier; shorter joining period; *'condition score ewes at key times'*; *'better management of twin bearing ewes'*; *'increase focus on ewes'*; *'feed ewes for next year's mating'*; *'use smaller paddocks for lambing'*; do Life Time Ewe Management course.

Also popular at Esperance was to look more closely at stocking rates. Several people said they would analyse all of their records and a couple said that they would look at alternative business models.

8.4 Hamilton

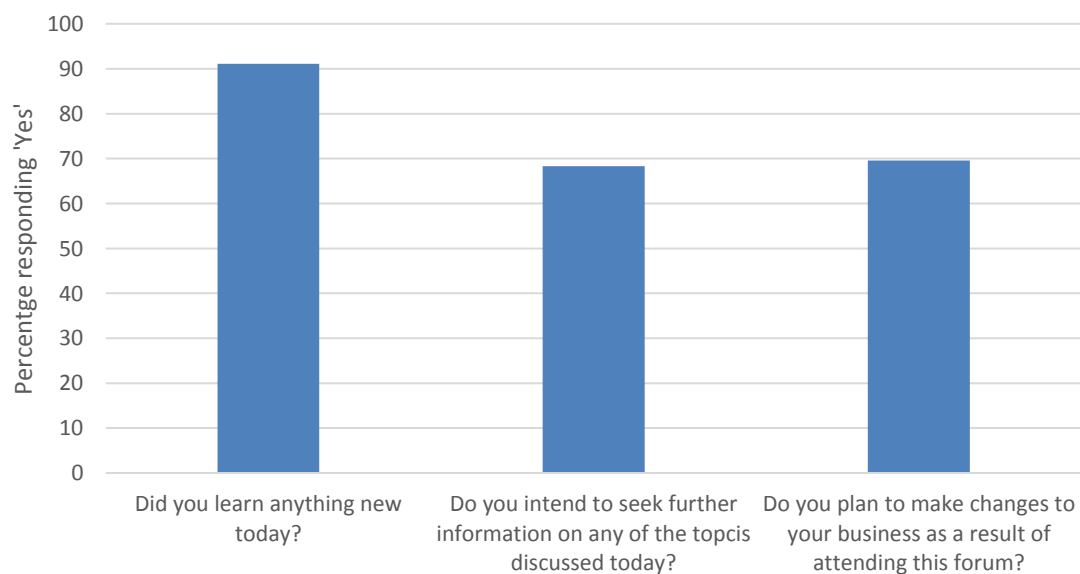


Fig. 40: Percentage of attendees at Hamilton who learnt something new, intend to seek further information and intend to make change

8.4.1 Learn anything new

There were eight speakers on the program at Hamilton and so plenty of scope to learn something new, resulting in 91% of attendees indicating that they had learnt something. Not surprisingly they nominated a great range of topics. Ewe and lamb management was particularly high on the list including importance of condition scoring, lambing density and weighing lambs: *'weighing lambs at birth will indicate whether you have the right nutrition during pregnancy'*; *'wean lambs at 13 weeks after imprint feeding'*. Pasture management rated many mentions including: *'the importance of feed quality and quantity'*; *'feed budgeting'*; *'pasture during weaning is very important'*; *'how to monitor feed'*; *'check pasture height against boot'*; *'pasture needed for lambing ewes in kilograms'*.

Sheep health matters were also mentioned by a number of attendees including parasite management, drench rotations and timing of egg counts: *'check worms when poo is hard'*. A number picked up on the issues related to tail length: *'tail length on lambs/ewes contributing to arthritis & rate of prolapse'*; *'tail length of ewes affects vaginal tears & prolapses'*.

A couple of people commented on the cost of genomic testing: *'sheep genomic testing is more available than I thought'*; *'cost of DNA Flock Profiling'*. Other topics listed included the importance of managing intramuscular fat; *'biodegradability of wool'*; *'health benefits of wool clothing & odour resistance'*.

Business related topics listed included: value of benchmarking; looking at KPI's; *'working on the business not just in the business'*; *'benchmarking my business model to the top 5-10%'*. And in an reference to Basil Doonan's presentation, one attendee said they had learnt *'it's difficult to herd cats'*!

8.4.2 Seek further information

Two thirds of people indicated that they would seek further information on topics covered. The most common area was in ewe and lamb management including condition scoring; lamb survival; paddock size; LTEM and Bred Well Fed Well. The next most common area was genetics related

including: genomic testing; flock profiling; *'practical on-farm use of ASBV's'*; *'review breeding objectives'*.

Other topics for further research included pasture management and nutrition; high performing pastures and summer pasture options; feed budgets; worming plans; pain relief; benchmarking; KPIs; and market trends.

8.4.3 Plan to make changes

70 percent of attendees planned to make a change to their business as a result of attending this forum. Most responses related to ewe and feed management including: reduce size of paddocks and mobs; *'maybe shift lambing to make better use of available feed'*; importance of condition score; scanning ewes; *'weighing a sample of lambs at birth'*; *'focus more on nutrition and feed on offer'*; feed tests and feed budgets; *'work on better winter feed growth'*; pasture improvement and increasing stocking rate; *'more pasture measurements in the paddocks'*; *'complementary feeding weaners'*; *'containment areas'*; *'adding feedlot facilities'*.

Other areas to rate a mention included: *'do more worm egg counts'*; *'develop a drenching plan'*; *'drench resistance test'*; *'relook at breeding objectives'*; *'DNA flock profiling'*; *'RamSelect app'*; *'ask about abattoir feedback'*; *'invest in infrastructure'*; *'get some professional advice'*; *'investigate high performing farms'*; *'benchmarking'*. One person said *'too many to mention'*.

8.5 Cooma – Gunning – Cowra

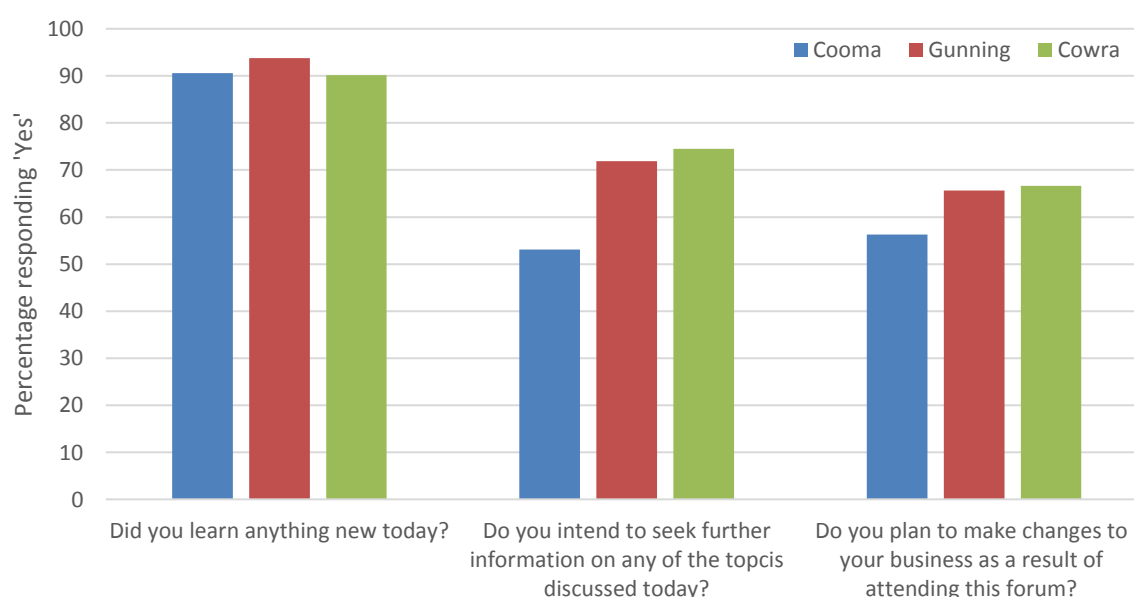


Fig. 41: Percentage of attendees at Cooma, Gunning and Cowra who learnt something new, intend to seek further information and intend to make change

8.5.1 Learn anything new

90% or more of attendees at each of these three forums said that they learned something new. The complete list is enormous, particularly for Gunning and Cowra. The learnings at Cooma are quite different to the other two locations. Here several people mentioned creep feeding techniques and also *'what the different types of worms are and how they affect performance'* and the *'effect worms have on feed intake'*. One attendee referenced several presentations by nominating *'the importance of testing to understand flock better, eg. preg testing, feed testing, worm testing'*.

At Gunning and Cowra there was a lot of learning about ewe and weaner management including: *'importance of weaner and ewe performance and how crucial it is to the overall enterprise'; 'the value of scanning'; 'feed requirements of singles vs multiple lambers'; 'birth weight vs survival graph'; 'wet-dry at lamb marking'; '1/3 ewes account for 3/4 lamb losses'; 'more lambs are born early in the morning and to feed in the afternoon'; 'wean at 14 weeks from first lamb'; 'recommended weaning weight of 45% Standard Reference Weight'.*

There was some learning in sheep health particularly in parasite control and drench use: *'how to use long acting drench properly'; 'worm life cycles'; 'leaving some ewes undrenched can help with reducing resistance'*. A number of people mentioned that they had new *'info on EIDs and ways to consider and implement'*.

The business topics resulted in a lot of learning including: *'four key profit drivers of successful enterprises'; 'how much money you can make by changing little things that will save you time'; 'ROI is essential when allocating capital'; 'using a ramp 3 times a day gives 97% ROI'; 'profitability of enterprises not correlated with scale or price received'; 'to get to the top 20% of enterprises need to focus on drivers other than just production/ ewe'; 'make set plan for seeding & provide 25% of extra time to allow for breakdowns etc'; 'keep it simple'.*

8.5.2 Seek further information

Only around 50% of Cooma forum attendees were interested in seeking out further information on forum topics, whereas three quarters of the Gunning and Cowra attendees said they would. The most common topics, particularly at Cowra and Cooma, related to feeding, including: *'managing ewes in dry times'; 'feeding ewes/lambs'; 'feeding lambs at weaning'; 'feed lotting'; 'feed quality and feedlot vs pasture options'*. Cooma attendees were particularly interested in specialist forages/pastures and creep feeding.

There was interest at all three forums in parasitology and worm burdens/lifecycles including long acting drenches, drench resistance and refugia. Cowra attendees in particular, were interested to learn more about the *'implementation of Eid technology'* and *'precision management'*.

There was some interest at all forums in learning more on the business topics including: *'advice on reducing overheads & being in the top 20%'; 'working out where my business sits in the top 20% or more'; 'profit drivers'*. Quite a number at Gunning and Cowra said they would seek more information about everything.

8.5.3 Plan to make changes

Two thirds of participants at Gunning and Cowra said that they planned to make a change to their business as a result of attending the forum, but Cooma participants were less likely to with 56% saying they would make a change.

By far the vast majority of changes that attendees nominated related to ewe management with many highlighting a change to better management of twin bearing ewes: *'better management of ewes in dry times'; 'increase twinnings ration - draft twinnings & lighter ewes to better pasture'; 'wet-dry ewes at marking'; 'split ewes up into smaller groups and depending on whether single/twin/triplets'; 'scanning ewes'; 'maintain ewes at CS3'; 'feed lambing ewes with more care to nutrition needs'; 'change when I lamb and how I supplement feed'; 'shorter joining periods'; 'feed earlier in lamb cycle especially first joining'; 'preg scan all ewes'.*

A couple of people highlighted a focus on better weaner management including *'creep feeders if needed'* and a number said they would pay more attention to animal health including *'worm test regularly'*, resistance testing and the use of long acting drenches.

A number of people, particularly at Cowra, indicated that they would; *'measure more so know where going and what doing'*; adopt *'better data records'*; and *'cut down on passengers'*. A couple of people at Cooma were also keen to *'cull poor performers'*.

The business discussion also prompted a number of planned changes including: *'reviewing financial performance at EOFY to benchmark year on year'*; *'more financial analysis of business'*; *'simplification of processes'*; *'get external help/advice'*; *'analysing cost of production more'*; *'relook at budgets & areas to increase margins'*; *'re-assess priorities'*; *'focus on efficiency'*; *'set time management plan'*.

8.6 Dubbo – Walgett – Dirranbandi

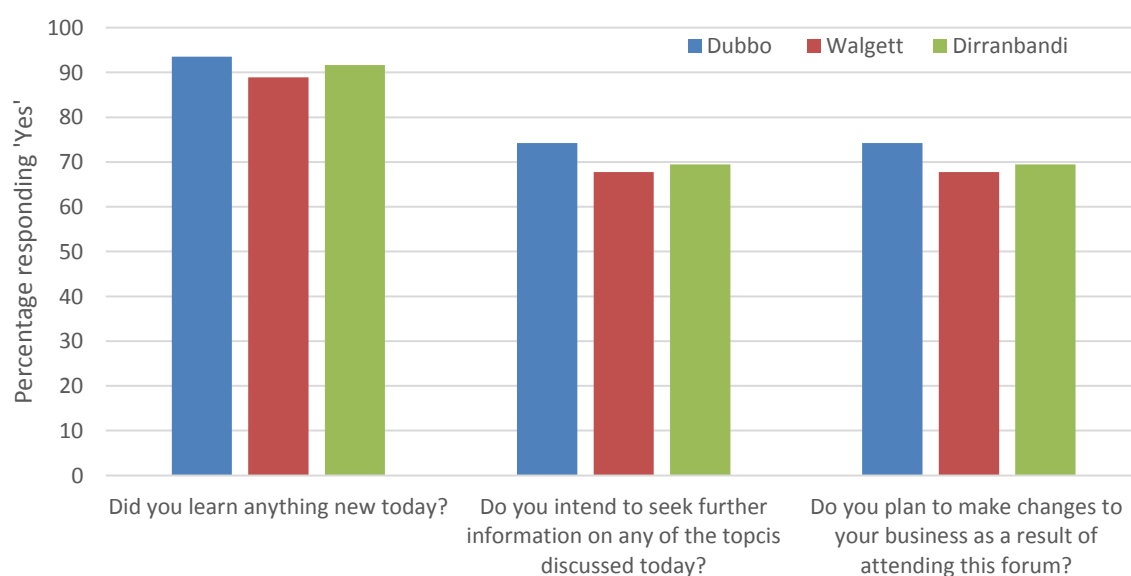


Fig. 42: Percentage of attendees at Dubbo, Walgett and Dirranbandi who learnt something new, intend to seek further information and intend to make change

8.6.1 Learn anything new

At all three forums close to 90% or more of attendees indicated that they had learnt something new. The most often cited area for learning was nutrition and feeding, in particular at Dirranbandi where over half of respondents said they had learnt more about nutritional requirements, particularly of lambing ewes and the management of feeding during dry times. Increased understanding of the opportunities for creep feeding, confinement feeding, feed lotting and production feeding were also mentioned.

A number of respondents had picked up specific practices for improved ewe and weaner management, including a number who had learnt about wet/drying ewes at lamb marking and fat scoring ewes at weaning, as well as such details as *'good to have toys for the weaners to play with'* and *'can wean lambs down to 15kg'*.

A number of people indicated they had learnt more about stock measurement practices and that *'measuring to manage is not necessarily high tech and expensive'*. There were also learnings in the area of sheep health including *'importance of booster vaccinations'* and how to check ram health.

Simon Vogt's presentation at Dubbo prompted a number of learnings including: *'target 30% of turnover as profit - before interest & tax'*; *'ratios for top performing livestock enterprises'*; *'value of benchmarking'*; *'top 20% key drivers'*; *'differences in top 20% and average 20% of businesses'*; *'knowing your own weaknesses so you can fix them'*; *'simplify not complicate'*.

A number of people, again mainly at Dirranbandi, recorded that they had learnt *'too much to write down'* and *'a lot of little things'*.

8.6.2 Seek further information

Between two thirds and three quarters of respondents indicated that they would seek further information on topics discussed at the forum, with several saying they would follow up on all topics. Of particular interest, especially at Walgett and Dirranbandi was sheep nutrition, including feedlotting and confinement feeding. Improved weaning practices were the next most often cited area where people would seek further information. Several people mentioned they would seek more information on the integration of livestock and cropping topic. Also mentioned were Eid and data management, setting goals and targets and succession planning.

8.6.3 Plan to make changes

At least two thirds of respondents at each location indicated that they planned to make a change to their business as a result of attending the forum. The list of planned changes was extensive, with many related to ewe and weaner management including: *'wet/dry at marking'*; *'will scan ewes for singles & multiples next year - we already scan for wet or dry'*; imprint feeding before weaning; gadgets/play things for weaners; *'feed more'*; *'more focus on feeding correctly'*; *'act on animal requirements rather than calendar activities'*; *'have a specific breeding objective'*. There were also a number of changes mooted that related to measuring to manage and business management including *'measuring more things to manage and achieve goals eg. weaner weights'*; *'understand data better'*; *'get some benchmarking done'*; *'use of management accounting rather than tax accounting'*; *'reduce complexity'*; *'simplify business structure'*; *'analyse key drivers & monitor progress'*; *'clear goal setting'*; *'employ a consultant to get better direction with our business'*.

8.7 Longreach – Tambo – Mitchell

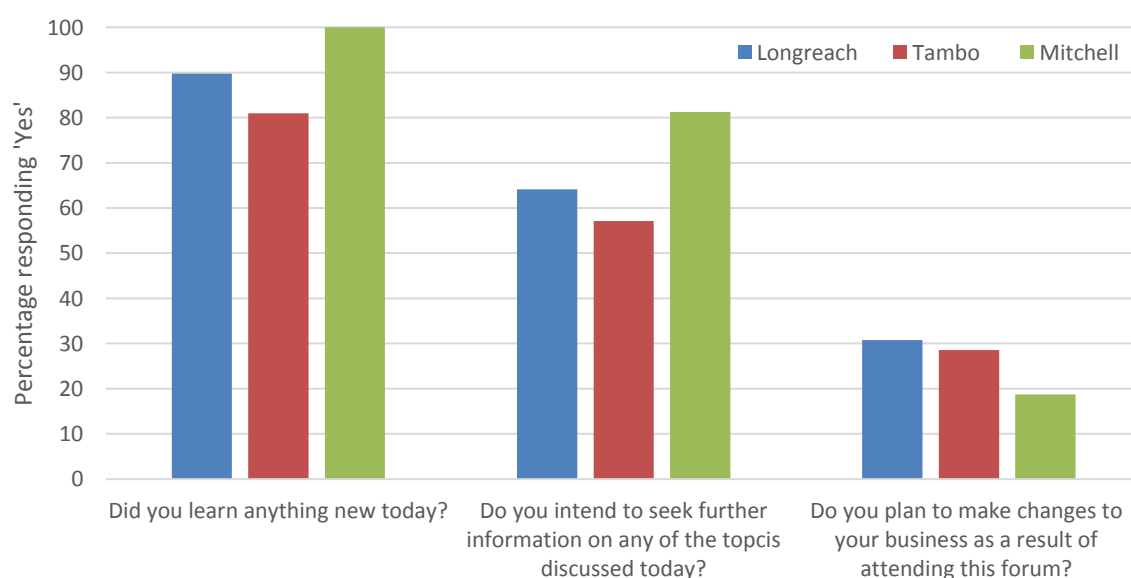


Fig. 43: Percentage of attendees at Longreach, Tambo and Mitchell who learnt something new, intend to seek further information and intend to make change

8.7.1 Learn anything new

100% of Mitchell forum attendees indicated that they had learnt something new, while 90% at Longreach learnt something. The percentage was lower at Tambo, where two thirds of the audience were service providers (livestock agents, consultants, other agribusiness), a number of whom had also attended the Longreach forum.

The topics most often nominated as new learning related to the genetics presentation including; genetics and ASBVs, RamSelect, importance of sire selection & monitoring of sire performance, sire selection tools, genomics place in genetic improvement. Also nominated by a number of people was *'the costs of differing finance options'* and understanding how to prepare financially for a restocking event.

Attendees nominated a number of sheep health topics where they felt that had learnt something including; *'checking rams' balls'*; *'lamb mortality - list of observations to make in the paddock that will assist in the diagnostics'*; *'brucellosis and how to screen for it'*; *'importance of scanning ewes'*; *'post mortem signs of pregnancy toxemia & dead lambs'* and *'importance of scanning in relation to lamb survival'*.

Many also noted learnings from Geoff Lindon's presentation including; *'different pain relief products'*; *'price incentives surrounding wool declarations & mulesing'*; *'impact of using/filling in NWD forms to achieve slight premium for 'no mules' & 'pain relief''*; *'when a wool clip is able to be declared non-mulesed'*. One Longreach attendee just said *'heaps – I have two pages of notes'*.

8.7.2 Seek further information

The most often cited topic that attendees nominated they would seek further information on was sire selection and the use of ASBVs. Sheep health, including brucellosis assessment, pregnancy toxemia, Campylobacter and worm tests, and financial choices were also nominated by several attendees. Other topics that rated a mention, mostly by individuals included; influence of breeding for non-mulesing on profit, non-mulesing case studies and premiums, flock DNA testing, biosecurity planning, livestock schedule for financing and grants and funding for the next generation.

8.7.3 Plan to make changes

The percentage of attendees who indicated that they planned to make a change to their business as a result of attending the forums was relatively low – between 20 and 30 percent for these three forums, whereas, for just about all of the other *It's ewe time!* forums held, the percentage was more like 60-70% planning to implement change. This is most likely a reflection of the relative number of service providers or other non-producers that were at these forums, plus that there were only four presentations. The proportion of producers in attendance was 54% at Longreach, 33% at Tambo and 50% at Mitchell.

Of those planning to make changes, the most often cited change related to making better ram buying decisions and using ASBVs in ram selections. Several said they would consider scanning ewes for twins. A couple indicated they would have their rams brucellosis tested, while another planned to implement a pre-joining ram check. Other potential changes mentioned included: *'start using Buccalgesic pain relief'*; *'look at the NWD in more detail'*; *'implement further selection to move to a non-mulesing flock'*; and *'look at finance comparisons'*.

8.8 Birchip – Deniliquin – Benalla

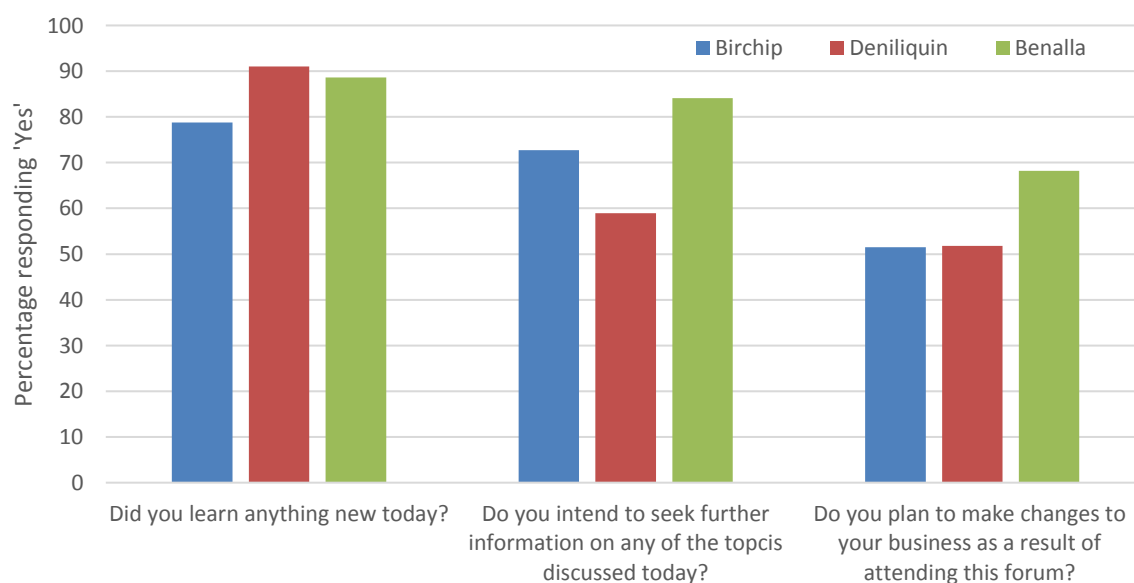


Fig. 44: Percentage of attendees at Birchip, Deniliquin and Benalla who learnt something new, intend to seek further information and intend to make change

8.8.1 Learn anything new

Surprisingly, despite virtually all of those in attendance at the Birchip forum being mixed farmers rather than specialist sheep producers, a greater proportion of attendees at Deniliquin and Benalla felt that they had learnt something new compared to Birchip.

A lot of the learning related to ewe and weaner management and feeding with some quite specific insights such as: *'takes 5.5MJ to make 1ltr of milk'*; *'muscle cell formation determined in early to mid-pregnancy'*; *'need to move emphasis to detecting dry/single/twins'*; *'importance of weaner management for life time production'*; *'weaners need fresh water every day'*; *'effect of 9-month weaner weight on life time production'*; *'importance of rumen development for the lifetime of an animal'*; *'better understanding of feeding requirements of the ewe during reproductive cycle'*; *'at weaning draft ewes fat/thin and feed to bring the thin ewes to CS3'*. More general learning in this area included: *'feeding ewes for condition score'*; the value of feed; feeding for production over maintenance; feeding rates of twin bearing ewes; better ways to manage feeding; feeding and rumen size; value of earlier weaning; wean at 14 weeks; *'costs vs returns from feeding ewes'*.

Other topics listed by attendees included: decisions in dry times; the need for an animal health plan; *'DNA testing is a good tool to get a feel for where your flock sits'*; importance of measuring; *'measuring and recording traits to make positive progress'*; which measurements to concentrate on; individual stock management.

And in a dig at one of the presenters, one Deniliquin attendee noted they had learned that *'other people invest in new gear and never get around to setting it up'!*

8.8.2 Seek further information

The Benalla audience in particular was keen to seek further information. A lot of it revolved around feeding strategies including: *'feeding to manage foetal growth and progeny potential'*; *'nutrition requirements pre and post lambing'*; *'comparison between irrigating pasture and buying feed'*; *'barley vs pellets'*; *'cost of feeding'*; *'drought feeding strategies'*; *'protein and mineral requirements*

of ewes during pregnancy'; 'feedlot calculator'; 'feedlotting'; 'supplement feeding of pregnant ewes'; 'feed budgets'; 'stock containment areas'.

Weaner management in general was of particular interest including time of weaning, importance of ewe lamb management and weaning into yards. The Making Money from Measuring topic generated a lot of interest with a number of people saying they would seek more information around it's practical implementation.

People were also interested to glean more information on the sheep health topic including: *'preventions and actions to put in place to improve stock health'; 'pink eye prevention'; 'booster vax and timing'; 'Worm Boss etc'; animal health plan; drench resistance testing; 'life time effects of pneumonia'.*

8.8.3 Plan to make changes

While just half of Birchip and Deniliquin attendees said that they planned to make business changes as a result of attending the forum, two thirds of those at Benalla were planning a change based on their learnings.

Many of the planned changes related to ewe and weaner management including: *'weaning at 14 weeks'; 'weaning lambs into holding yards'; 'clean troughs daily instead of weekly'; 'keeping sheep in better condition'; 're-evaluate my feeding cost'; 'improve feeding to ewes'; 'vaccinate lambs more often'; 'more measurement of condition score and weight gains'; 'pay more attention to ewes and lambs'; 'feed early'; 'feed test'; 'earlier weaning and imprinting'; 'get water quality tested'*

A lot of the changes that people were contemplating, particularly at Deniliquin and Benalla revolved around improved planning: *'more in depth analysis of practices'; 'written management plan'; 'write a structural management calendar'; 'more targets'; 'plans need to be made in all areas - on paper not just in head'; 'make a plan to ensure correct operational timing and animal health timings'; 'benchmark figures throughout the year'; 'animal health proactive not reactive'; 'be far more proactive'; more strategic plans; 'long term planning especially with paddock selection and fodder improvement for lambing'; 'feed management budgets and GM to assess opportunity cost investment'.*

Other changes nominated included: *'shear earlier'; 'push measurable goal setting and meaningful measurements'; 'more culling of unproductive animals'; 'keeping a record/ database of measurements in nutrition and sheep traits'; 'more measuring'; EID.*

One Benalla attendee had clearly picked up a lot from the day and was planning multiple changes: *'improve biosecurity plan, address feed requirements, feed test current/ future supplies, improve sheep health plan, remain optimistic that season will improve'.*

8.9 Jamestown – Karoonda – Naracoorte

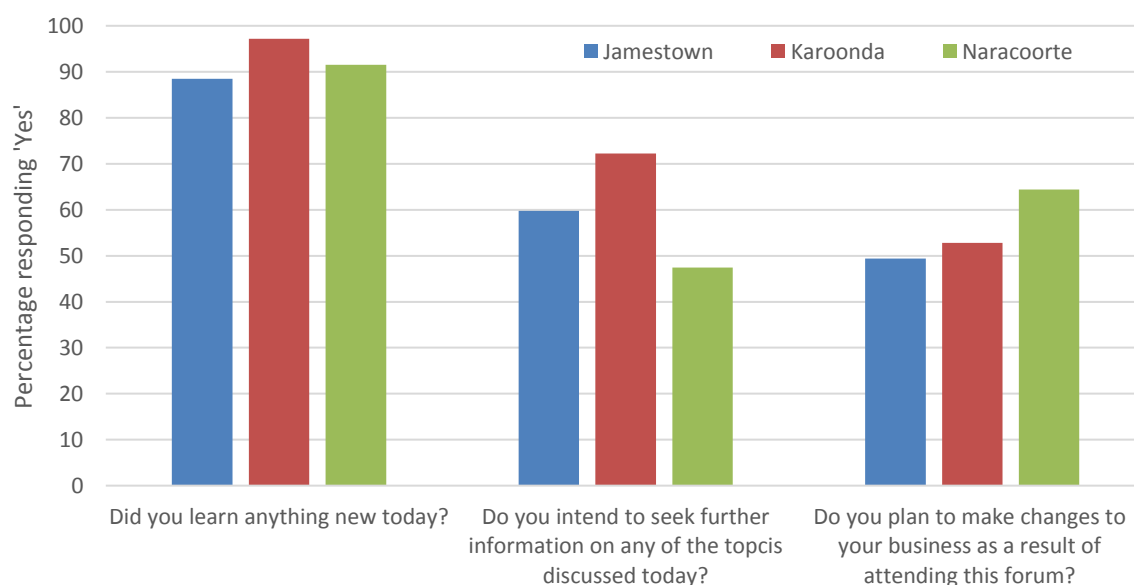


Fig. 45: Percentage of attendees at Jamestown, Karoonda and Naracoorte who learnt something new, intend to seek further information and intend to make change

90 percent or better of attendees at this forum series reported that they had learnt something new, and 50 percent or more reported that they planned to make a business change as a result of attending.

8.9.1 Learn anything new

With 90 percent or more of attendees saying they had learnt something new, the list of topics mentioned is very long. Most commonly mentioned was better weaning strategies including: having target growth rates; planning for weaning well in advance; the effect stress has on weaners and *'tagging 10 lambs to monitor growth rates'*. The value of weighing dead lambs was also mentioned often.

Particularly at Jamestown, the value of running wethers to help rebuild DSEs was mentioned by a number. There was also a lot of learning about ewe management including: *'ME needed for ewe production'*; *'learnt that ewes in lamb need a lot more nutrition than I thought'*; and optimum condition scores.

Sheep health issues also rated many mentions including: vaccination regimes; calcium requirements of sheep; pregnancy toxemia; drenching strategies. Other learnings included: mulesing and staple length discounts and premiums; *'how to declare mulesing status on the NWD'*; *'production feeding should pay'*; eating quality trends; *'conflict between LMY and IMF and eating quality'*; *'planning wealth and succession'*; *'characteristics of top 20% of producers'*.

8.9.2 Seek further information

By far the most often mentioned area where people would seek more information was weaner management, including the related topics of *'maximising lamb growth per day'* and *'weaner education- how to do it'*. Nutrition management, particularly of ewes, was also mentioned often including; confinement feeding; feed testing and the ME of feeds; feed budgeting; assessing paddock feed; *'understanding dry matter in summer pastures'*; details of feeding requirements and LTEM.

Condition scoring and sheep health were also mentioned by a number of people. The following received a couple of mentions: case studies on ceased mulesing; understanding lamb deaths; worm control; vaccination; profit drivers; benchmarking and financial analysis; and capitalising on positive price cycles. A number of people said they would seek more information on most topics.

8.9.3 Plan to make changes

The two practices that were most often mentioned by participants as likely areas for change were to start condition scoring (or to do more often than doing now) and to adopt better weaning practices. There was lots of mention of improved feeding management of ewes including; *'introduce lick feeders'*; *'aim at hitting correct ME requirements with lambing ewes'*, put ewes into containment; *'provide supplement feed to ewes'*; *'increase quality of feed giving sheep now'*; *'better feeding budget'*; *'put sheep in containment after autumn break to let pastures get away'*. Other associated practices mentioned for change by participants were: pregnancy scan for twins; do a LTEM course; introduce low stress handling; train weaners with ewes; wean at 14 weeks; monitor weight from marking to weaning; set growth targets; weigh dead lambs.

Other areas for change that were mentioned by just a couple of participants included; *'run more wethers'*; *'adjust vaccination timing'*; *'change vaccinating needle length'*; collect more data; look at NWD form; more planning and profitability assessment.

8.10 Armidale

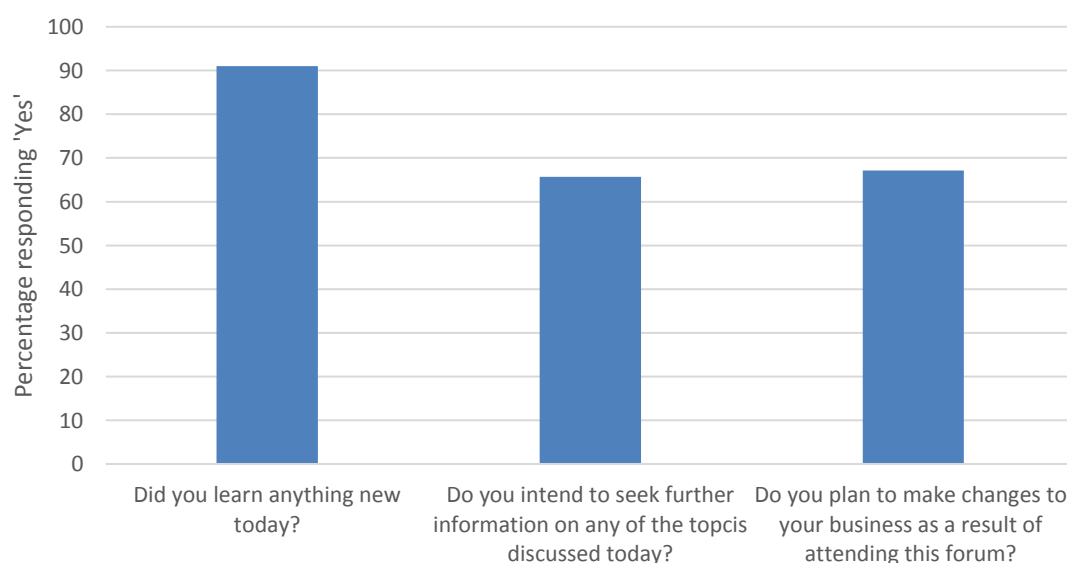


Fig. 46: Percentage of attendees at Armidale who learnt something new, intend to seek further information and intend to make change

8.10.1 Learn anything new

Over 90% of attendees at the Armidale forum said that they had learnt something new. The most frequently mentioned topic (cited by 28% of those responding yes) was the relationship between mob size and lambing percentage, which was newly released research presented by Jason Trompf. The next most frequently mentioned area was wool market trends and signals, followed by the importance of planning for the future and making hard decisions, particularly in relation to drought management. Also frequently mentioned were nutrition related topics such as the *'importance of feed testing to know we are feeding enough'*, the importance of magnesium in the diet and the use of mineral supplements in weaners. In relation to the Making Money from Measuring topic, people mentioned the *'cost of low performing animals'*, the importance of only measuring what you want

and the use of Eid. One producer also mentioned they had learned the value of pregnancy scanning ewes and one also said it was *'the best day he had spent on the top paddock'*.

8.10.2 Seek further information

Many topics were listed by participants, most commonly Eid use, data collection and individual animal management. Many also mentioned mob size at lambing, and also different feeds and their quality and cost. Also mentioned by a number of people were wool market trends and confinement feeding. Other topics listed included; feeding calculator, MLA Pasture Tool, non-mules wool contract, genetics and breeding values, vitamin and minerals for sheep, and ewe and weaner management.

8.10.3 Plan to make changes

Two thirds of attendees indicated they planned to make a change to their business as a result of attending this forum. Most often cited was the adoption of smaller mob size at lambing, with 15% of all attendees indicating they would make this change. A number of respondents indicated they would feed their sheep more, and a number said they would undertake better measurement and data collection. Several said they would review the reproductive performance of their ewes, and several said they would start to wet/dry their ewes at lamb marking. A number also talked about improving ewe management practices including; scanning for multiples, separating twin bearing ewes and increasing focus on lambing and pre-lambing management. Also mentioned was the intent to set strategic goals and management targets and also speaking to their wool broker about non-mules contracts.

One attendee was quite specific with a number of changes that they planned to make: *'order more feed; review reproductive performance of current ewes; review mineral supplements; spread out my AI ewes for lambing; add more privacy in paddocks; ask broker about non-mulesed wool and contracts'*.

9 Forum likes and improvements

It is very difficult to concisely summarise all of the feedback provided by over 1000 people at 23 separate events. Overwhelmingly the comments and feedback were very positive. There were many things that attendees appreciated about the content, format, quality of speakers and organisation, with a lot of comments along the lines of: *'Great day - well organised, very professional, well run, speakers & venue excellent, no changes required'* or *'format was excellent'* and I liked *'the variety of quality, knowledgeable expert speakers from diverse backgrounds'*. Noted below are a small example of comments provided by attendees.

9.1 Overall

Many respondents said that there was nothing that they would change about the forum and that they enjoyed and valued all aspects of it. Some specific responses to what did you like most about today's forum included: *'confidence in the room around sheep'*; *'no extra products/tools were trying to be flogged during presentations'*; *'event held locally (close to home)'*; *'best forum I have been to for concise info delivered quickly'*; *'this forum has re-charged my batteries after a very long, hot, dusty, crappy season'*; *'looking at the opportunities given the challenges we face, not the downsides'*; *'please run again as refresher, in perhaps 2-3 years'*; *'how MLA and AWI are joining forces to produce real practical education'*; *'actually came to QLD'*; *'I found the format really well planned out and content and informative speakers excellent'*; *'probably the best I've been to'*; *'best forum for years'*.

9.2 Speakers

By far the majority of comments on the quality of the speakers were positive: *'the quality of speakers was amazing'*; *'the speakers were very knowledgeable and inspirational'*; *'every speaker was informative and provided lots of places to get more information'*; *'each speaker had relatively short sessions but they all had some crossover thus reinforcing some key points'*; *'clear slides and easy to follow presentations'*; *'all speakers made themselves available for future consultation'*. A couple of people suggested that they would like to have a producer speaker: *'would be good to hear an interesting farmer present to us (Esperance)'*.

The main negative feedback in relation to the speakers was that at times their presentations felt rushed: *'Extra time, felt a bit rushed at times' (Gunning)*; *'A bit more time, some presentations were rushed' (Ceduna)*; *'Longer day so each speaker doesn't seem rushed' (Cowra)*; *'leave complex content slides up on screen a bit longer' (Birchip)*.

One of the challenges for event organisers is to get speakers to understand the importance of and accept the challenge of fitting their presentation into the available time. When the presenter doesn't do a good job of this, it leaves the audience thinking that they have missed out on something and the speaker has been forced to rush and should have had more time. If the speaker fits the content to the time available well then it doesn't occur to the audience that they have missed anything.

One service provider felt that there should have been *'more reference to skill development - where to get it (in books but some people may not read books)'*.

9.3 Content

Attendees were by and large very happy with the content delivered, the quality of it and how the presentations linked together. There were several suggestions at different venues that there may have been value in having a specific nutrition session, as well as a number of suggestions that a producer speaker could have been included on the program.

Some of the things that people liked about the content were: *'key profit driver focus'*; *'uniform advice and opinions'*; *'strong relevance of all content to sheep production'*; *'the flow of the presentations/ how all the talks tied together'*; *'it provided relevant practical information with relevant examples, not just a session preaching "best practice"'*; *'range of topics - a bit for now (managing current drought situation) & later (strategy/ whole of business)'*.

9.4 Organisation and Format

While there were a handful of people who said they would have preferred a full day event rather than a half day, by far the majority sentiment was that attendees liked the half day format where it was used: *'only half day which is more manageable than full day'*; *'half day - each person didn't bang on for too long - didn't fall asleep'*; *'concise presentations meant I could stay focused and also doesn't take up a whole day'*. Other things that people liked about the format included: *'speakers kept to time'*; *'short, sharp presentations not overloaded on data and info'*; *'kept on time'*; *'time bound presentations'*; *'audio visuals were excellent'*; *'forum booklet with room to write notes in'*; *'the "take home messages" in the booklets'*; *'lunch time talks with growers and speakers'*.

Areas for improvement that people suggested included: *'break out groups with client examples from consultants'*; *'more pre-printed notes'*; *'more use of 'clikas' eg. Who here is still mulesing?'*; *'too many different topics – not enough depth' (Wagga)*; *'wrap by 3.00pm' (Wagga)*; *'a bit more time for*

each presenter' (Longreach); 'plain paper in booklets, not glossy to make note taking easier'; 'less speakers, brain fried by last few sessions' (Hamilton); 'have more of these events'.

9.5 Venue and Catering

The majority of the 23 venues worked well and generally the catering was outstanding. However, there were a few issues: at Dubbo the location was excellent but the catering was a little light on: 'There was not enough morning tea for everyone to have something to eat' (Dubbo). At Dirranbandi there were more attendees than anticipated and the group only just fitted in the room: 'Dirranbandi forum was a bit cosy', and the catering was very light on. The Longreach venue was excellent but the air-conditioning was initially set very low: 'Far out it was cold in the room'. The Tambo venue would have been perfect on a warm day but on one of the coldest winter's morning the district had experienced, it was freezing indoors. The Benalla venue was a disappointment, particularly as on a warm summer's day it was necessary to have the air-conditioning running which was very loud: 'Wouldn't have it at this venue again, room is too big and echoy for farmers with crap hearing'. At Jamestown the attendance was also much higher than expected, with a lot of last minute registrations. As a result, the room was overcrowded and there was only one toilet for over 100 people. The ceiling was too low to lift the screen up high enough for the number of people: 'Need larger venue with more toilets and higher screen'.

10 Interest in more information on MLA & AWI programs

This question was only included in the evaluation for the 2019 forums. The question asked was "Would you like more information on any of the following AWI or MLA programs/workshops?"

10.1 Birchip – Deniliquin - Benalla

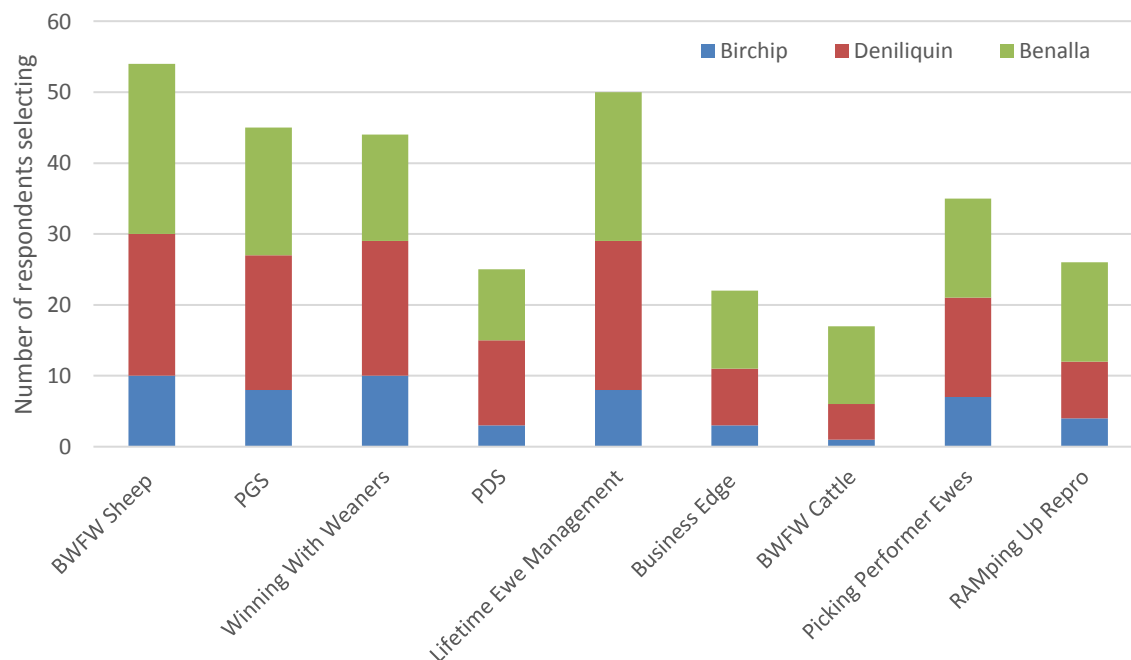


Fig. 47: Interest in MLA and AWI programs at Birchip, Deniliquin and Benalla

10.2 Jamestown – Karoonda – Naracoorte

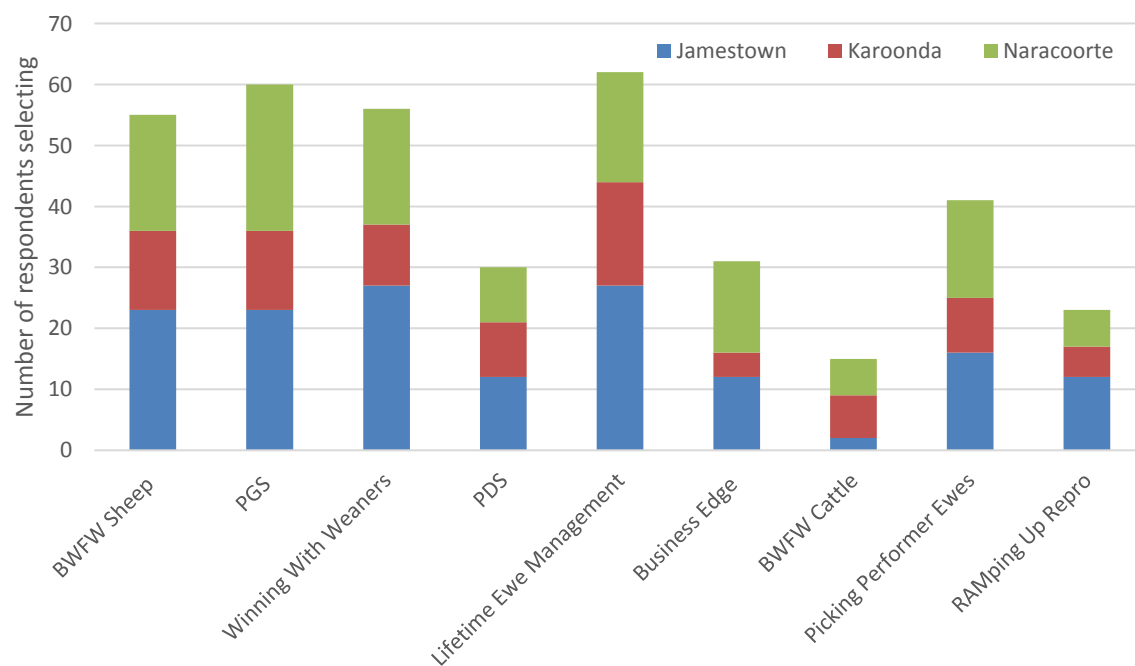


Fig. 48: Interest in MLA and AWI programs at Jamestown, Karoonda and Naracoorte

10.3 Armidale

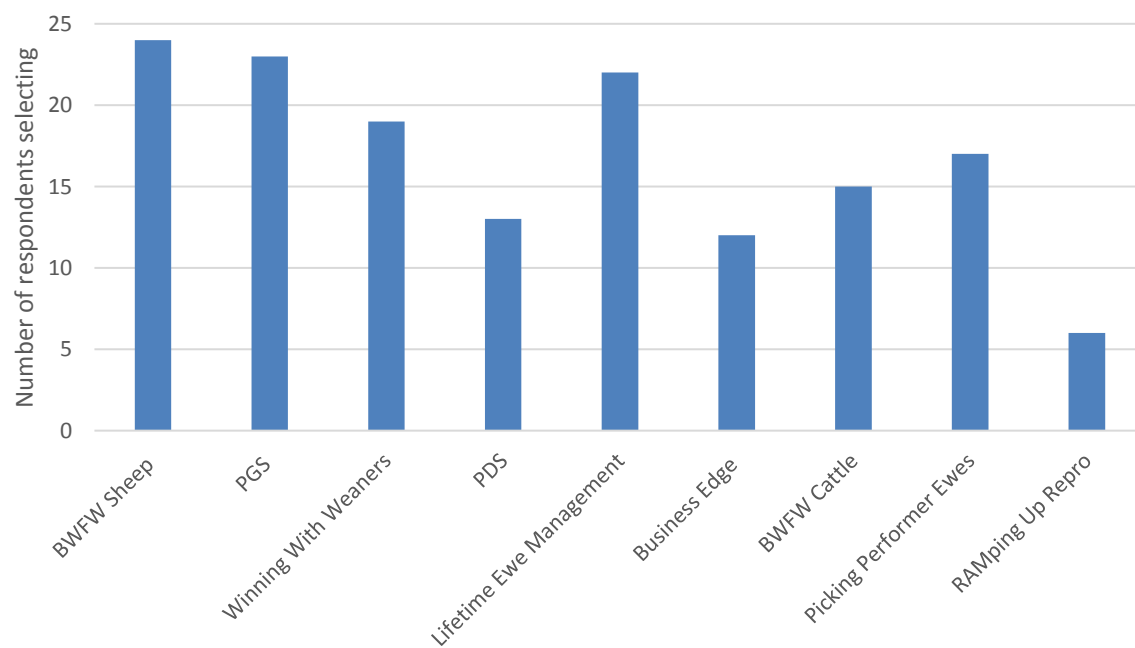


Fig. 49: Interest in MLA and AWI programs at Armidale