

Final report

Development and delivery of the Southern Rangelands Grazing Land Management course

Project code: SA Arid Lands RFQ: PAR7211

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The Grazing Land Management Course is offered as part of the From the Ground Up project, which is delivered by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board, through funding by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund.



Australian Government
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Abstract

The *Development and delivery of the Southern Rangelands Grazing Land Management course* was initiated by the SA Arid Lands Landscape board to address a need for training amongst pastoralists, landholders and land managers in the SA Arid Lands regional area.

The purpose of the project was to develop a regionally-relevant training package and deliver 11 workshops to upskill and enhance the knowledge of land managers in grazing land ecosystems, livestock production and grazing management. The course design and content were required to suit a range of participants, to cater for different learning styles and to include practical elements to help participants put strategies into place on their own properties.

MLA managed the delivery of this project, with the design and development of content by an expert Working Group and workshop delivery by established and emerging advisors.

The project successfully delivered 11 workshops, involving a total of 146 participants (122 producers) from 82 businesses representing over 22 million ha under management. Across these workshops, the average value score given by attendees was 9.1/10, satisfaction score was 9.4/10 and 92% of attendees indicated an intent to change a practice.

This program will support red meat producers and advisors into the future with information to effectively manage land and livestock, with a goal of enhancing the productivity and sustainability of pastoral businesses in the semi-arid regions of southern Australia.

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1. Background

1.1 Request for Quote

This project was developed by the SA Arid Lands Landscape board to address a need for training amongst pastoralists, landholders and land managers in the SA Arid Lands region.

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Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) submitted a tender for this project, seeing alignment between the MLA Producer Adoption strategy, specifically the strategy developed for the southern rangelands, and the objectives of this project.

MLA tendered for this project on the basis of offering:

- Access to existing training materials with a proven value to producers, that could be adapted for a southern rangelands context.
- A national network of staff and service providers spanning research, development and extension who could contribute to the project development and delivery.
- A long-standing training program that could form the basis for a new course, with a commitment to maintain the legacy of the course through technical updates and ongoing delivery into the future.

1.2 Southern Rangelands adoption

The Southern Rangelands has been identified by MLA as a region requiring additional priority and commitment in order to effectively service red meat producers. Customised projects have been developed in numerous regions to support and facilitate the adoption of practices and products that drive productivity, profitability and sustainability. Significant opportunity has been identified in expanding the reach of existing MLA adoption products into the Southern Rangelands. This requires updating of content to ensure materials are regionally relevant and contextually appropriate for Southern Rangelands producers. A key program of work where this opportunity exists is the EDGENetwork, where a range of training courses are available for the northern beef industry, but few are appropriate to be delivered in southern Australia.

In pursuing increased engagement in the Southern Rangelands, MLA Project Manager Mitch Plumbe had spoken with SA Arid Lands Landscape Board staff on numerous occasions, where mutual interests were identified in provision of capacity building and practice change programs throughout the pastoral zone of South Australia. This had led to attendance at field days within the region and ongoing dialogue with key staff to explore opportunities for collaboration.

As the primary management tool available to pastoralists, grazing management was a clear priority area to develop an appropriate course for Southern Rangelands producers. With knowledge of the existing Grazing Fundamentals and Grazing Land Management EDGE offerings in northern Australia, the opportunity to develop an equivalent product for the Southern Rangelands through the From

The Ground Up project was identified by SAAL staff. When presented with a request for quote to this effect, MLA staff developed a proposal accordingly.

1.3 EDGENetwork

MLA's EDGENetwork offers one to three-day workshops combining classroom style learning with practical activities, in which participants are supported by expert facilitators to apply concepts and new R&D to their own production system/business. The network is managed by MLA and delivered by service providers across Australia, who add value to the program through their localised understanding of the operating environment and production systems.

In tendering for this project, it was proposed that the Southern Rangelands Grazing Land Management course would be developed to be consistent with the EDGENetwork program, providing an ongoing mechanism to house the course, support content maintenance and drive national delivery beyond the life of the project.

The EDGENetwork is currently made up of six packages, comprising Business, Breeding, Nutrition, Grazing Fundamentals, Grazing Land Management (GLM) EDGE and Carbon EDGE. Whilst each package targets different areas of management, they are designed to fit together to help producers improve their whole-of-business performance.

The project involved a review of the relevant EDGE packages, particularly Grazing Fundamentals and Nutrition EDGE, and a gaps analysis to determine where specific principles or content on rangeland ecology and management should be included. Additionally, MLA engaged service providers involved in other related programs such as NSW DPI's Tactical Grazing Management, and MLA partnership projects, Rangelands Living Skin and More Beef from Pastures. The outcome of this process was the development of a fit-for-purpose program for the southern rangelands which could be housed under the EDGENetwork into the future.

2. Objectives

The purpose of this project was to design and deliver a Southern Rangelands Grazing Land Management course to benefit land managers living on pastoral properties in the SA Arid Lands (SAAL) regional area.

Specifically, this included the following objectives:

- At least 33 pastoral grazing properties to have completed the course through face-to-face workshops [Achieved].
- Each training course delivered to achieve an overall medium-high level of satisfaction [Achieved].

It also included the following deliverables:

- Southern Rangelands Grazing Land Management Course material, resources and participant handbook [Achieved].
- Online Pilot Training program run with the Board staff that informs the final content [Achieved].
- Participant evaluation survey to measure learning outcomes for each training course delivered. A final report with a summary of the evaluation outcomes is required [Achieved].

- Delivery of course content across 11 training sites throughout the SAAL region by 15 December 2023 [Achieved].
- Final report outlining an overall summary of the total of the training courses, as well as an individual summary of each of the courses delivered including evaluation by participants and, opportunities/gaps for future training and any learnings from the training [Achieved].
- Refinement of the training manual and the participant course booklet after reviewing participant feedback, in conjunction with the Board staff [Achieved].
- Final electronic version of training resource package, including the participant course booklet and the training manual, to be completed and provided to the Board staff [Achieved].

3. Methodology

This project was funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund, through the From the Ground Up project, managed and delivered by the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board (SAAL). As a deliverable within this broader project, SAAL engaged MLA to develop and deliver a one-day grazing land management course.

MLA coordinated the project, sub-contracting six technical experts to contribute under the structure of a project Working Group. Alongside MLA, these individuals were involved in developing the course outline, content and extension design, delivering the course and providing strategic and tactical advice on project delivery.

3.1 Working Group

On being awarded the project, MLA engaged industry professionals through a project Working Group. The group was selected based on Expressions of Interest, addressing the commitments and appropriate technical skills and knowledge for the project.

The six successful Working Group members, each bringing different skills and expertise, were selected and contracted in early 2023. Additional members of the working group were Liz Allen, EDGENetwork Coordinator, Harriet Bawden and Mitchell Plumbe from MLA and Andrea Tschirner from SAAL. Working Group members and roles are captured in Table 1.

Name	Organisation	Role – Technical focus
Mitchell Plumbe	Meat & Livestock Australia	Project Manager – Working Group Chair
Harriet Bawden	Meat & Livestock Australia	Project Manager – EDGENetwork
Andrea Tschirner	SA Arid Lands Landscape Board	Project Manager – From the Ground Up
Ron Hacker	Ron Hacker Rangeland Consulting Services	Technical Lead
Dionne Walsh	Range IQ	Lead Deliverer
Deb Scammell	Talking Livestock	Lead Deliverer
Tanisha Shields	Agrista	Trainee Deliverer
Jodie Resiegh	Primary Industries and Regions SA	Group Member
Trudie Atkinson	NSW Department of Primary Industries	Group Member

Table 1. Working Group members and roles

The Working Group met six times over the course of the project, with one of these occasions being limited to deliverers only in preparation for running the workshops. Meetings were run with the following purposes:

- Determine the outline, scope and 'pitch' of the course.
- Decide on the methods under which the project would run.
- Form consensus on technical queries that challenged the group.
- Coordinate group member contributions to course content, course materials and extension activities.
- Analyse and identify actions to feedback.
- Plan the delivery of workshops.

Working group meeting minutes are available in Appendix 1.

3.2 Content development

The course scope was initially outlined in the Request for Tender as a single day program including practical components and covering the technical areas of livestock nutrition, land management and grazing management.

The approach of the project team was to use existing resources as a foundation. This reduced the need for rewriting and starting a literature review from scratch. Resources with relevance to the livestock production systems of the southern rangelands were selected, providing the basis for both course structure and content.

Content updates and/or gaps were identified, and literature was subsequently identified, collated and reviewed to inform the development of new material.

Existing materials that were included in this review are:

- Grazing Fundamentals EDGE
- Grazing Land Management EDGE
- Nutrition EDGE
- BredWell FedWell
- Making More From Sheep

Sections that required specific content development for the Southern Rangelands were climate, the management of shrublands and grazing management.

Content was developed to fit into the existing course framework, with each Working Group member contributing work within their technical expertise that was collated and reviewed by the Technical Lead. Once the participant/deliverer manual was completed, this guided the development of slides and workshop activities.

A significant aspect of the course development process was the delivery of a pilot workshop to SAAL staff and stakeholders with a knowledge of the region and target audience. Feedback from this group, combined with reflections from the Working Group strongly informed the final product. The key outcomes were as follows:

- The technical manual was considered thorough and sound, with little change required.
- More practical activities were required for workshop delivery.

- Content delivered needed to be dramatically reduced.
- The target audience and associated learning outcomes were better defined. The audience was defined as younger industry participants or those with less experience and exposure to scientific rangeland management concepts. The learning outcomes were sharpened to focus on key principles and on-ground practices for rangeland management.

Subsequent updates to content, activities and delivery program were made prior to course roll out.

3.3 Course delivery

Course delivery occurred as two distinct tours in August and October 2023. These times were guided by SAAL staff with local knowledge of participant availability and competing events. The delivery schedule is outlined below.

Date	Location
15/08/23	Mungeranie
17/08/23	Lyndhurst
19/08/23	Blinman
21/8/24	Bindarah Station
22/08/23	Yunta
24/08/23	Quorn
25/08/23	Stirling North
03/10/23	Mount Eba Station
05/10/2023	Oodnadatta
07/10/2023	Coober Pedy
09/10/2023	Nonning Station

Table 2. Course delivery schedule.

Course locations were also identified by SAAL based on local interest and achieving a wide geographic spread.

Courses were co-delivered by each of the two Lead Deliverers, with the Trainee Deliverer also co-delivering three courses. Alternating delivery of the workshop sections between deliverers allowed all deliverers to become comfortable with all course material and signed off under the EDGEnetwork model to deliver in future.

3.4 Course review

Courses were reviewed primarily through the use of a formal participant evaluation form, which can be seen in Appendix 2. Course deliverers, SAAL representatives and Working Group members present at each course also provided feedback.

To review and update the course in response to evaluation forms and peer observations, two different processes were followed. In the first instance, debriefs were held following each workshop to share feedback and review evaluation forms. Wherever possible, changes and updates were made at this time in order to present the best product for the next workshop.

Where identified updates required more significant changes or research, these were addressed at the end of each workshop series. A list of these updates is provided in Appendix 3. The primary changes made to the course were the way in which practical activities and the case study property were presented.

4. Results

Evaluation data is captured for each individual workshop and provided in an excel file under Appendix 4. Collated evaluation data is provided in Table 3, below. The key course delivery KPI provided in the Request for Quote was to deliver 11 workshops. This was achieved, with a total of 146 participants attending workshops, at an average of over 13 people per workshop. These participants represented 66 pastoral businesses and a total management area of over 22 million hectares.

The overall value and satisfaction scores for the workshops were 9.1/10 and 9.4/10 respectively. An internal MLA KPI for producer adoption programs is to maintain satisfaction and value score >7.5/10, indicating that this course far exceeded that benchmark. Value scores are broken down by module in Table 5, showing a ratings difference of only 0.1/10 between each module. This is quite significant in demonstrating the relevance of all three course modules and the consistent quality of delivery.

Overall intention to implement change was measured at 92% of participants, which is also highly positive. Further insight to this figure is provided in Table 4, where the most common intended change to implement, at 64% of participants, was to assess land condition of paddocks. Beyond the areas outlined in Table 4, other areas of change identified by participants included:

- Past management strategies, photo monitoring.
- Photo points.
- Consider use photo points to monitor land condition.
- Working on decision making process.
- Review water management.
- Monitor water quality.
- Take more notice of 3P species in pastures.
- Use app for photo monitoring.
- Few more photo points around.
- Carry out land condition scores.
- Set up photo points for long term monitoring, use more surface water and less bore water where possible.

Commentary on areas of additional support identified by participants as being useful to implement changes has been captured in Section 6 of this report.

Town	Date	Participant Number total	Business total	Producer participant	Producer participant businesses	Advisor participant	Area (Ha)	Cattle	Sheep	Module value	Satisfaction score	Value rating knowledge	Value rating confidence	Intent to change %
Mungerannie	15-Aug	12	7	9	5	3	4,218,500	31,100		8.6	9.0	9.0	8.7	100
Lyndhurst	17-Aug	11	6	9	5	2	1,302,000	8,250	19,000	8.1	9.1	8.4	8.3	67
Blinman	19-Aug	8	6	5	3	1	248,300	1,730	8,900	9.6	10.0	9.7	9.2	100
Bindarra	21-Aug	12	7	12	7	0	607,499	500	58,500	9.1	9.6	9.1	9.1	90
Yunta	22-Aug	16	8	15	7	1	667,700	1,400	71,000	9.5	9.7	9.3	8.9	100
Quorn	24-Aug	22	13	19	12	1	375,920	917	45,850	9.0	9.4	9.2	9.1	79
Stirling North	25-Aug	13	8	9	5	2	1,151,470	12,102	52,000	8.4	9.0	8.6	8.8	100
Mount Eba Stn	3-Oct	16	9	15	8	1	2,482,791	38,900	30,000	9.5	9.4	9.8	8.8	100
Oodnadatta	5-Oct	9	6	8	5	1	2,022,479	38,500	1,500	8.9	9.0	9.0	8.4	88
Cooper Pedy	7-Oct	14	4	9	2	5	7,783,200	17,000		9.5	9.5	9.5	9.4	100
Nonning	9-Oct	13	8	12	7	1	1,145,800	170	84,848	9.5	9.6	9.5	9.5	92
		146	82	122	66	18	22,005,659	150,569	371,598	9.1	9.4	9.2	8.9	92

Table 3. Workshop evaluation data

Will you make any changes?	Yes %	No %	Maybe %	Already doing it %	Not applicable %
Review livestock nutritional requirements	51	0	19	22	8
Review stock numbers and feed supply around those decision dates	48	0	6	37	8
Assess the land condition of your paddocks	64	0	4	28	5
Work out safe utilisation levels and/or carrying capacity	54	0	16	23	7
Do a forage budget	43	5	38	6	9

Table 4. Summary of intended practice change

Module - Value to you	
1) Nutritional requirements for animal production	9.0
2) Grazing land ecosystems	9.1
3) Grazing management	9.1

Table 5. Participant value rating by module.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Key outcomes

The project delivered all course materials for a Southern Rangelands Grazing Land Management course, one pilot workshop and 11 workshops throughout South Australia.

Not only did the project meet, but exceeded, the project objectives for participation rates, value and satisfaction scores and intent to change.

The course supported participants to identify opportunities to enhance their business productivity, resilience and sustainability in relation to livestock and land management. By providing information alongside practical activities, participants were encouraged to consider how they could apply management concepts to their own business. Combined with the expertise of the regional service providers, workshop deliverers and peers, participants were also given an opportunity to discuss, share and learn from the experience of other livestock producers.

Additional benefits of this project included:

- New connections established between members of the Working Group, with future opportunity for collaboration between southern rangeland advisors and service providers.

- Upskilling of three deliverers to deliver the material in future.
- Discussions on key concepts and terminology to be used for consistency across southern rangeland regions.
- Collation of R&D for the southern pastoral industry, captured in one place.
- Learnings for future development of adoption, extension and other training programs (see section 5.2).

5.2 Key learnings

The process for the development of the Southern Rangelands Grazing Land Management course has been captured in Section 3. This section presents the key learnings from the process, which may be useful for any future development of extension and training programs. These learnings reflect feedback from the project team and are detailed in the Working Group minutes in Appendix 1.

Learning from the development process

- It is critical to consider the target audience and learning outcomes at the beginning of the project.
- Budget permitting, a face-to-face initial workshop would be useful for the Working Group to build relationships, establish ways of working and agree on the scope of the project.
- It may be easier to start development from scratch rather than repurpose an existing document/program.
- The Working Group model with a Lead Author/Deliverer was effective, although it relied on all participants being able to contribute and meet their commitments.
- The Lead Author plays an important role of aggregating all contributions and keeping contributors accountable.
- The Working Group Chair or Project Manager must be able to make a call on technical concepts if it is difficult to get consensus.
- Having deliverers involved in the Working Group is important – this ensures their input in the workshop design and streamlines the roll-out.

Learnings from the delivery

- Even as a one-day workshop, it is helpful to have two deliverers present, especially to be able to address individual queries during activities.
- Working with local service providers, in this case SAAL, to provide local imagery, plant samples, datasets, case studies and other relevant material, greatly enhances the value to participants.
- The structure of the workshop reinforced the value of activities for engagement, including outdoor, hands-on, “on your feet” type exercises.
- Breaking into small groups for discussion during activities helped to get people reflecting and sharing their ideas.
- Consider the “hook” upfront and use this to kick off the workshop. The Nutrition section was brought forward to be delivered before Grazing Land Management, as it was felt that the livestock side of the business might be the hook for many participants.
- Adapt the workshop and try new ideas as you go if your workshop schedule allows.

6. Future recommendations

6.1 Recommendations for course follow up

Having delivered 11 workshops across the broader SA pastoral zone, significant insight was gained on the additional needs of participants to action changes as a result of the course, as well as to support them more broadly in developing profitable and sustainable businesses. Participant feedback on support they would value in order to action changes following course attendance are as follows:

- Photo monitoring and plant ID training.
- Access to and training in satellite imagery.
- Access to information about indicator and 3P plant species for various land types to help build understanding of land condition potential when some 3P species may have been absent from a region for many years. This may include historical photo point data from state departments.
- Greater depth and detail on the content covered – a next steps course that takes the same concepts to the next level technically.
- Support to understand forage value and animal nutrition needs at a property scale.
- Calculating potential and actual carrying capacity of an area.
- Understand the implications of legislation on increasing water points in pastoral leases.

By considering these points alongside the areas of intended change identified by participants, the following suggestions can be made for future capacity building activities:

- Assessing land condition
- Plant ID and nutritional value
- How to establish and manage land condition monitoring programs
- Calculate safe utilisation levels and carrying capacity
- Interpreting satellite imagery to understand land condition and feed availability
- Supplementary feeding.

These topics could be addressed in a quite targeted fashion, such as specific workshops or webinars or be integrated into longer term supported learning programs such as the From The Ground Up project. Where the opportunity exists to engage producers in long term supported learning programs, this should always be the priority as it results in the greatest practice change outcomes.

6.2 Recommendations for future programs

It was noted by SAAL that engagement of a younger audience was of particular interest. In targeting a specific demographic, attention should be paid to the preferences and habits of that group which may differ to the broader industry. An example of this is the NSW DPI's Young Farmer Business Program, which is featured as a case study within the MLA Global Adoption Review, which can be found [online](#). Some key strategies used by this project include the following:

- Young farmers were identified as being very busy, they are often on-farm employees or work full time off-farm which limits their availability in business hours. Weekends are often taken up with sport and social functions. To tailor programs accordingly, workshops were run in the evenings on week nights.

- Young farmers are comfortable with digital communication, so utilize social media and informal text messages to provide information about upcoming events.
- By creating a casual and social environment, young farmers are more likely to attend events and actively engage once in attendance. An example may be holding event and workshops at popular local venues such as pubs and sporting clubs, that allow for a meal and drink to be shared during the workshop.

With a broader perspective of the availability of capacity building and practice change programs available to Southern Rangelands producers, there a number of opportunities to be pursued.

In keeping with the development of this grazing and land management course, there are a number of other industry endorsed short term training products available in northern and southern Australia that could be adapted to the Southern Rangelands context. These include Nutrition EDGE, Breeding EDGE and the full Grazing Land Management EDGE. Others currently available but not yet well utilised in the Southern Rangelands include Business EDGE and BredWell FedWell.

Once technical knowledge is built with participants through short term raining products, they are well positioned to move into long term supported learning programs. Programs available in this space that are either not widely accessed in the Southern Rangelands, or have limited relevant content developed include Lifetime Ewe Management, Producer Demonstration Sites and Profitable Grazing Systems. Having delivered these workshops within the broader From The Ground Up project is a great example of how a long term supported learning program can be used to facilitate practice change, beyond an individual training course.

Going forward, MLA would welcome the opportunity to partner in the development and delivery of additional adoption products in the Australian Southern Rangelands.

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1. Working group meeting minutes

7.2 Appendix 2. Participant Evaluation form



Southern rangelands grazing courses - workshop evaluation

Thanks for completing this evaluation, your feedback helps us to improve future EDGE workshops.

About you

Name: _____ Workshop location: _____

Are you a: (tick all if multi species) ☐ Beef producer ☐ Sheep producer
☐ Advisor/agent ☐ Extension officer ☐ Other (state) _____

If you are a producer, please tell us about your enterprise:

Business name: _____

Area: _____ (ha) Total number of cattle: _____ (hd)

Total number of sheep: _____ (hd)

Workshop feedback

On a scale of 1-10, please rate the program in terms of the content, delivery and relevance to you.

Scale: 1 = Poor 5 = Average 10 = Excellent.

Section	Value to you
Section 1: Nutritional requirements for animal production <i>Digestion and nutrients, diet characteristics, nutrient requirements, water, limiting nutrients, deficiencies and supplementation.</i>	/10
Section 2: Grazing land ecosystems <i>Ecosystem processes, climate and plant growth, land systems, soils, landscape function, vegetation and land condition.</i>	/10
Section 3: Grazing management <i>Managing grazing pressure, diet quality, evenness of grazing, grazing management options, forage demand and intake, carrying capacity, forage budgeting.</i>	/10
Event overall	Rating
Overall, how satisfied are you with this event?	/10
Overall, how valuable was this event in improving your knowledge of livestock nutrition and land management?	/10
Overall, how valuable was this event in improving your confidence to implement new livestock nutrition and land management practices?	/10

Your takeaways

Did you learn anything new in this workshop? If so, what did you learn? |

When you <u>return back</u> to your property, will you make any of the following changes (please tick)?	Yes	No	Maybe	Already doing it	Not applicable
Review livestock nutritional requirements					
Review stock numbers and feed demand/supply					
Assess the land condition of your paddocks					
Work out safe <u>utilisation</u> levels and/or carrying capacity					
Do a forage budget					
Other changes (please list):					

What extra information or assistance would you need to act on these plans?

What aspect of the workshop did you find the most valuable & why?

Workshop Feedback

Please provide any feedback about the overall workshop that would help us improve future events.

Please indicate the price you would be willing to pay to attend this workshop, if it was offered commercially.

☐ \$0.00 - \$300 ☐ \$300 - \$600 ☐ \$600 - \$900 ☐ \$900 - \$1200 ☐ > \$1200

MLA or SAAL may contact us by phone in the future as part of the evaluation process for this course?	☐ Yes ☐ No
Would you like to receive information regarding other extension programs that may complement what you've learnt here today?	☐ Yes ☐ No

Meat & Livestock Australia Limited ABN 39 081 678 364 ("MLA") are requesting this information from you for this workshop. We may use the information to help us to evaluate the workshop, improve our services, keeping you informed about member benefits, market news, industry information and other communications from MLA. We may also use the information for internal reporting and analysis purposes.

By providing MLA with your personal information you consent to the collection and handling of your personal information in accordance with MLA's privacy policy (<https://www.mla.com.au/general/privacy/>). You may access and correct any personal information held by MLA by contacting us at privacy@mla.com.au. Providing us with the requested information is not required by law. If you do not provide the personal information requested, MLA may not be able to provide you with other products or services. The EDGE network® concept is owned by Meat & Livestock Australia Limited.

7.3 Appendix 3. Post delivery course updates

7.4 Appendix 4. Evaluation Data