

finalreport

Project code: B.MBP.0127
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Date published: February 2014
ISBN: 9780958582575

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

Tasmania 2010-2013 More Beef from Pastures Program State Coordinator

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

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Abstract

This report describes the operation and achievements of the More Beef from Pastures program within Tasmania for the 2010-13 contract period. The engagement of producers and the knowledge, skill and change adoption outcomes of that engagement are indicated. The project achieved its substantive KPI's delivering value to producers with activities and outcomes in the areas of feed-base management, herd management and meeting market specifications. Where improvement is required mechanisms to achieve this are discussed and recommendations suggested.

Executive Summary

In the 2010-13 contract period the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) coordinated the delivery of MLA More Beef from Pastures (MBfP) in Tasmania.

65 events were delivered to over 1,400 producers in which the program brand, and the farm system principles and procedures of the MBfP producer manual were presented to participants. Data from 57 events was collated in the project monitoring and evaluation. Not all events were compliant as a result of nil or insufficient evaluation data.

Engagement KPI's for three event categories defined by outcome intent (A=awareness, B=knowledge and skill change, and C=practice change) were exceeded by between 162% and 259%.

Evaluation indicated that mean participant satisfaction with events and perception of value to their business was respectively 8.64 and 8.43. This indicates that the activities delivered were of sufficient quality and design to meet the program needs.

Evaluation return as described by form completion and return did not meet the KPI's. Physical return rate of evaluation forms for category B and C events did however reach 64% and 74% compared to the KPI of 80%. Return rate suffered attrition from both incomplete return and incomplete data in those returned. Improvement in evaluation return rate is required and discussed.

Improvement in knowledge and skill was consistent with the majority of states and as a result of exceeding engagement KPI's, the quantum of practice change indication was nominally achieved.

Value was delivered primarily in the areas of feed-base management, herd management and meeting market specifications, working with a broad range of agribusiness and producer groups. Multiple engagements assisted change indication, highlighting the value that group activity can realise. A total of 337 intended change and 94 change indications were recorded in evaluation data.

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1 Background

More Beef from Pastures is MLA's key majority market program servicing the grass-fed beef industry of Southern Australia. Launched in 2004, the program was developed from a decision support perspective drawing on the principles of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point processes. Researchers and key producers identified key points of impact on production, profit and sustainability, and the information and knowledge required at those points to take positive action. These actions were aligned with key decision areas across the beef business.

This determination of important steps and information formed the basis of the More Beef from Pastures producers' manual. A series of eight support modules was developed as a key resource for producers seeking to identify and implement improvement in their beef businesses. The manual format incorporated overarching principles, supporting procedures that enact the principles and tools and information to assist successful and appropriate implementation of action.

Awareness of this resource and the principles it promoted was a key objective in the first phases of the program.

Progressively greater intent has subsequently been applied to the achievement and determination of on-farm practice change as a key program objective. The 2010 to 2013 phase of the program has been characterised by increased attention to the definition of targets and determination of outcomes. In taking this approach the program has sought to identify where investment is most appropriately made and what value that investment has yielded.

This approach has meant More Beef from Pastures and its sister program Making More from Sheep have led an industry initiative to more thoroughly collect information that both supports the value proposition for this industry investment and seeks to identify how improvement in the delivery of can be made.

A key focus area for Tasmania has been improvement in the effective management of the feed-base to generate increase livestock production whilst profitably meeting market specifications. This has been identified both locally and nationally as a program imperative. The Tasmanian environment presents both challenges and opportunities for increases in pasture growth, and utilisation that can lead to a greater realisation of the grass-fed opportunities being increasingly recognised by beef processors.

A desire for increased business thinking in decision making has also guided the delivery of technical information. Increased focus on business management and development has been much harder to deliver, whilst the inherent value of such activity is recognised.

2 Project Objectives

The 2010-2013 phase of More Beef from Pastures has sought to capitalise on the awareness of the program and of the opportunities that increased pasture growth and utilisation can offer.

Specifically the program has sought to deliver producer engagement that facilitates an increase in average feed-base utilisation of 10% (from an estimated 2009 level of 35%) across the target producer demographic of Southern Australia, by 2015. This goal is articulated in program imperatives and manual modules that address increasing kg/ha and weaner throughput, whilst meeting market specifications.

MLA modelling has indicated that this would yield an ultimate benefit:cost ratio of 4.4:1. Activities

that establish a pathway to achieving this goal have been the focus of the 2010 – 2013 contract. Specific key performance indicators (KPI's) for Tasmania are outlined below in table 1.

Table 1. State key performance indicators and producer segmentation

CATEGORY	IMPERATIVE	PRODUCER ENGAGEMENT			
		BY HERD SIZE (% OF TOTAL CATTLE SALES)			TOTAL (100%)
		100 – 400 head (67%)	400 – 1600 head (29%)	1600 – 5000+ head (4%)	
AWARENESS (A)	Maintaining broad industry awareness (50% of southern beef producers)	275	120	15	410
KASA (B)	Building knowledge, skills and confidence (30% producers engaged in A)	60	60	5	125
PRACTICE CHANGE (C)	Supporting adoption and practice change (50% of producers engaged in B)	20	40	5	65

These engagement KPI's have guided the direction of activity in conjunction with a business plan developed for the contract period.

As indicated in table 1 engagement targets were identified by herd size and the activity type, as categorised by learning intent. Categories of A,B and C activity were described by respective intents of awareness, knowledge and skill increase and practice change. An explicit program target has been to engage with larger commercial businesses where change can potentially have most significant economic impact and to facilitate a progression of program awareness to identifiable change adoption.

In delivering activity to meet these KPI's the program has also had a goal of engaging and working with the private sector.

Integral to the program has been the implementation of more effective and rigorous monitoring and evaluation process. This phase of the program aimed to develop and implement such a monitoring and evaluation process. Additionally goals for the achievement of evaluation responses and outcomes were identified.

The evaluation objective for category A activities was the achievement of feedback sheets from at least 60% of participants in this category. In category B and C activities the evaluation objective was to conduct and record knowledge and skill audits with at least 80 % of participants, and additionally for C category participants to record implementation of practice change.

The collection, collation and reporting of this evaluation data in a standardised format represented a key program objective.

3 Methodology

The coordination and implementation of the project required that a series of steps be undertaken. These included the development of a business plan to guide activity development, development and implementation of the evaluation processes, regular reporting to MLA, engagement with delivery partners, and activity delivery and evaluation itself. Contributions to the rural press and to MLA publications were also used to support program objectives.

A business plan was developed to cover the contract period and map out the achievement of the identified KPI's. The key technical areas addressed in the business plan were related to management of the feed-base in terms of pasture growth, grazing management, managing feed supply and demand, kg per ha beef turn-off and cost of production. These issues were deemed to have the most significant potential impact within Tasmanian beef production systems. These same issues had been earlier identified in 2009 as priorities in the Tasmanian Red Meat Targets program in which MLA, University of Tasmania (UTAS) and Department of Primary Industries, Parks Water and Environment (DPIPWE) had collaborated.

Improved business understanding and decision making was also regarded as important area for activity development. However activities were largely limited to cost of production in recognition of the difficulties posed for engagement in this arena, at least initially.

This plan set the scene for the scope of activities presented in the 2010-2013 contract. A desire to include a greater scope of the issues covered in the MBfP manual and to respond to changing industry requirements, also prompted inclusion of activities related to herd health, breeding and meeting market specifications. This facilitated engagement with additional industry expertise and research outcomes and addressed issues specific to the change in supply chain requirements on King Island, as necessitated by the closure of the King Island JBS abattoir.

Initially activities were designed to engage primarily where willing producers capable of improvement had identified interest in participating with the program. This ethos also characterised the engagement with agribusiness.

An agribusiness workshop was delivered as a first engagement point with private enterprises and potential delivers. From this some working relationships were fostered and these were expanded upon through the coordinators network and a willingness to collaborate and partner with other agents involved in group learning. Expertise from private consultants, agronomists, researchers and seed companies was engaged to expand the delivery capacity. Producer Advocate Fred Perry and other local producer champions were used as co deliverers, hosts and case studies. NRM facilitators were also engaged as conduits for activity development.

This collage of expertise was used as an informal delivery network. The Tasmanian agricultural delivery sector does not currently support a wide range of consultants participating in local group training or individual coaching in the red meat sector. Individual consultancy, most commonly of a financial nature has been the norm, supported by expertise from production agronomists aligned with merchandising agencies. As a consequence TIA undertook the core role of delivery, engaging with private businesses and other agencies to facilitate relevant activity and the experts to deliver it.

Despite the absence of an autonomous network of delivers either organising their own events or contracted to do so by the program, private industry was engaged at numerous delivery points.

This has recently included co-delivery with Roberts Ltd, PGG Wrightson, Heritage Seeds, Seed Force, Tas Global seeds, Impact Fertilisers, Incitec Pivot, Pfizer, Scottsdale Veterinary Service, ServeAg, JBS, McKinnon Project and Macquarie Franklin.

Other organisations engaged in collaborative activity have included NRM North and NRM South (working with facilitators in the Derwent Valley, Northern Tasmania, Huon Valley and Flinders Island), Tamar NRM, the Grasslands Society of Southern Australia, Flinders Island Council, Westpac, Tasmanian State Government (Department of Primary Industries Parks Water and Environment), Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (Meat Council), Sheep Connect Tasmania, Making More from Sheep, Dunlop Park Stud, King Island Beef Producers Group and Flinders Island Productivity Group.

Delivery has been undertaken with the agents of the above collaborating organisations and also using the services of Fred Perry (Producer Advocate), Stephen Lee (University of Adelaide, Beef CRC), Rod Manning (Private consultant), Nic Kentish (Low Stress Stock handling), Greenhams, Brett Littler (NSW DPI) and Robert Herrmann (Ag Concepts, CLM).

These engagements have been effective and productive and illustrate working relationships developed across a wide range of stakeholders and groups within the Tasmanian agricultural landscape.

Many of these connections resulted from the development of personal working relationships, with co-delivery and cross promotion being the result. This partnering approach leveraged investment and delivery of the program goals, but sometimes entailed compromise, most particularly in the area of evaluation. Partnering with some organisations sometimes meant a choice between evaluations where a combined evaluation was not initially possible. However this compromise and the investment in working together has subsequently borne fruit when working with at least two of these organisations.

There have been very few other compromises required and the engagement with other deliverers has been overwhelmingly positive. Indeed on a number of occasions the monitoring and evaluation MBfP has offered has been a distinct advantage to the collaboration.

One issue that has arisen is that the value of next user engagement is currently not fully appreciated in the data collected. This is particularly pertinent to partner events where staff from the partner organisation may represent very real value to the event but present little recognised value in the statistics.

Some of the engagements with agribusiness have also led to the joint development of industry development proposals and assistance in improving industry development activities and their interpretation. These both represent investments in goodwill that are not recorded.

MBfP also worked with DPIPWE to develop and deliver Target 120, an assistance package for King Island beef producers affected by the closure of the JBS King Island abattoir. This project offers a business incentive to engage with programs like MBfP to develop business improvement strategies and actions aimed at recouping the \$120 per head cost of freight to slaughter that currently faces King Island producers.

This investment has the potential to drive engagement with MBfP and practice change.

In the absence of a network of formalised and coordinated learning groups, a strategy of repeated delivery in geographical areas where interest in the program had been expressed was used to deliver a pathway of progression through awareness, skill and knowledge acquisition and practice change. This mechanism worked best when involving producer groups but was still more

cumbersome when compared against a group enrolled in a defined learning outcome.

Some of the challenges encountered in the less tangible discussion group or productivity group approach, included inconsistent participant attendance and consequent difficulty in presenting a coherent development pathway and in securing completion of the evaluation processes.

Working with these groups repeatedly to develop relationships and themes was however still the most effective delivery strategy that could be employed bearing in mind the restricted delivery resource.

The combination of a group, a site based activity and partners in co-delivery, was a fruitful strategy. Where this was combined further with a local group coordinator, this mechanism worked even better. One limitation to this approach encountered was that sometimes stakeholder engagement meant that conservative advice against too much activity needed to be respected slowing activity deployment.

Whilst the traditional design of activity incorporating information and learning followed by shared paddock based experience and interpretation generally worked well, some of the highest attendance rates (relative to the group potential) were achieved with dinner meetings and flagship events. The challenge within these is to move beyond awareness to facilitated discussion, and the dinner meeting style events at least seemed to achieve this.

A further strategy for progressing to adoption was to more carefully define the change adoption options and design activity around them. There are however dangers in this approach as it may lead activity away from more complex systems issues, despite the merit in addressing them.

Coaching was seen as a potential solution to achieving higher practice change completion, particularly in more complex issues like grazing management. However this comes at a significant cost and requires competent consultant-coach associations to mitigate some of that cost. The program invested in a coaching pilot within MBfP, however the results of this were unclear in terms of where the engagement and fit with MBfP activity had been made. A commercial manifestation of this process has however now been applied and it may be worth reviewing how this might complement MBfP.

A more concrete asset to the MBfP program has been the producer advocates and champions that have been involved in program delivery. They remained important in the current contract, although longer term advocates are impacted to some degree by a perception of over-exposure or that their story has been told. Despite this they have continued delivery value and advisory value in defining issues and providing case studies. Tasmanian producer advocate Fred Perry has contributed to a number of activities in person but also supported activity development and independently provided program engagement through his local paper the King island Courier and local field activity.

The use of informal producer champions and hosts has also been an essential component of the program. Adopting this approach widens the pool of producer supporters engaged. The program worked with at least six local champions who were of significant support.

Gathering as a national coordinator team provided a further key element of support and program development. This was of particular value to those of the team who did not have the luxury of significant host organisation teams to work alongside. Initially considerable effort was dedicated to the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation protocols. The coordinator meeting provided invaluable insight into the state to state interpretation and operation of the evaluation processes and assisted in optimising consistency of approach.

Subsequently the process of reporting and sharing took greater prominence at coordinator meetings

in conjunction with some excellent MLA updates and results and overviews from related projects. The opportunity for stimulating development and linkage between programs that this provides should not be underestimated. The coordinator meetings also provided some more overt professional development opportunities. Sessions that stood out were discussions with business development with Rod Manning, Beef CRC outcomes with Stephen Lee, industry updates with Ben Thomas, industry situational analysis with John Francis, and social media with Matt Dwyer.

Coordinator meetings with advocates were a valuable exercise, but highlighted the need for the advocate network to evolve, to be engaged or changed. This requires a closer state by state management of advocate involvement. Advocate meetings provided an important opportunity for professional reward and recognition for these key supporters of the program and are worth continuing.

At least one joint MMfS and MBfP coordinator session was undertaken. The value of this overlap was less apparent beyond dealing with specific issues of joint concern.

Finally monitoring and evaluation clearly formed a cornerstone of the programs operation. It took some time for the operation of the evaluation process to be clarified and discussions with selected states understandably dominated this. While it was not always clear what had been agreed to, a strong and robust process resulted.

Locally the program has attempted to apply the evaluation procedures with integrity and honesty, seeking to advocate the value of the evaluation within activities and collect information wherever possible, appropriately and voluntarily, as required by ethical considerations. The information collated is verbatim and has taken considerable effort to collect. Increasing the amount of data collected is a subject for discussion.

As a coordinator-deliverer, the value of the data is very apparent from both a program and activity basis. It is worth the effort collecting it. Whether it is worth pursuing the policy of population response as opposed to sample response could be a matter for analysis subsequent to the programs completion.

4 Results

In summary the project has delivered the More Beef from Pastures brand and module messages at in excess of 65 activities over the contract period. Not all of these activities were program compliant in terms of delivering evaluations and as such not all are included in the national data collation. Reasons for non-compliance included partner events at which evaluation was independently conducted by the host organisation and larger forums and collaborations where attribution of responses to MBfP was not credible.

However data from 57 activities is included in the program monitoring and evaluation report to date. One further compliant and evaluated activity has been subsequently undertaken within the reporting period that is not included in the data collation.

As Table 2 indicates the project exceeded its engagement goals across all categories of activity by up to 259% of the KPI for category A participants and down to a lower threshold of 162% for category C participants.

Table 2. % of three year target achieved for number of participants in category A, B and C activities.

TASMANIAN ATTENDEES KPI			
	KPI	Actual	% Achieved of 3 Yr Target
Category A KPI	410	1,062	259%
Category B KPI	125	271	217%
Category C KPI	65	105	162%

Within this engagement, participation was centred on enterprises with larger herd sizes than average as indicated by the Tasmanian participation represented in Figure 1 and contrasted against the national herd demographic and national MBfP herd engagement illustrated in figure 2. The median participant herd size in Tasmanian was 500 head.

Figure 1. Herd demographic of Tasmanian participants. Median = 500 head.

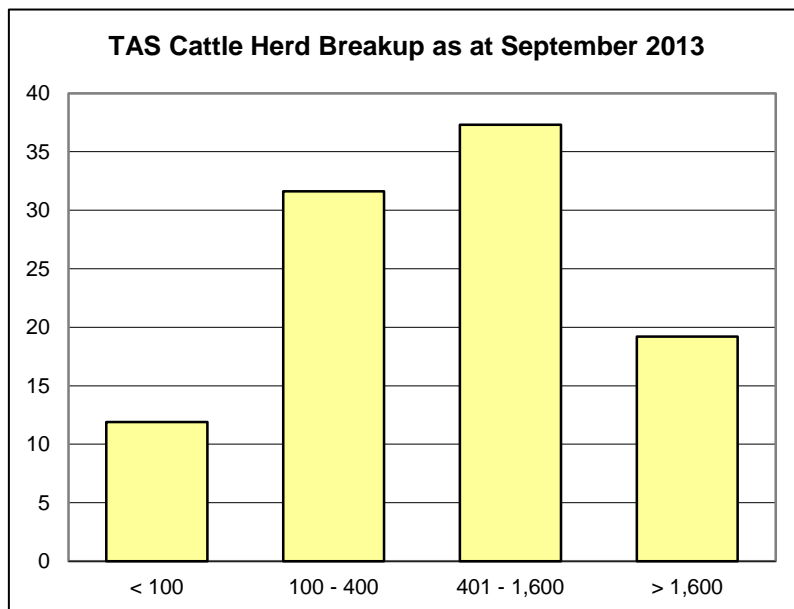
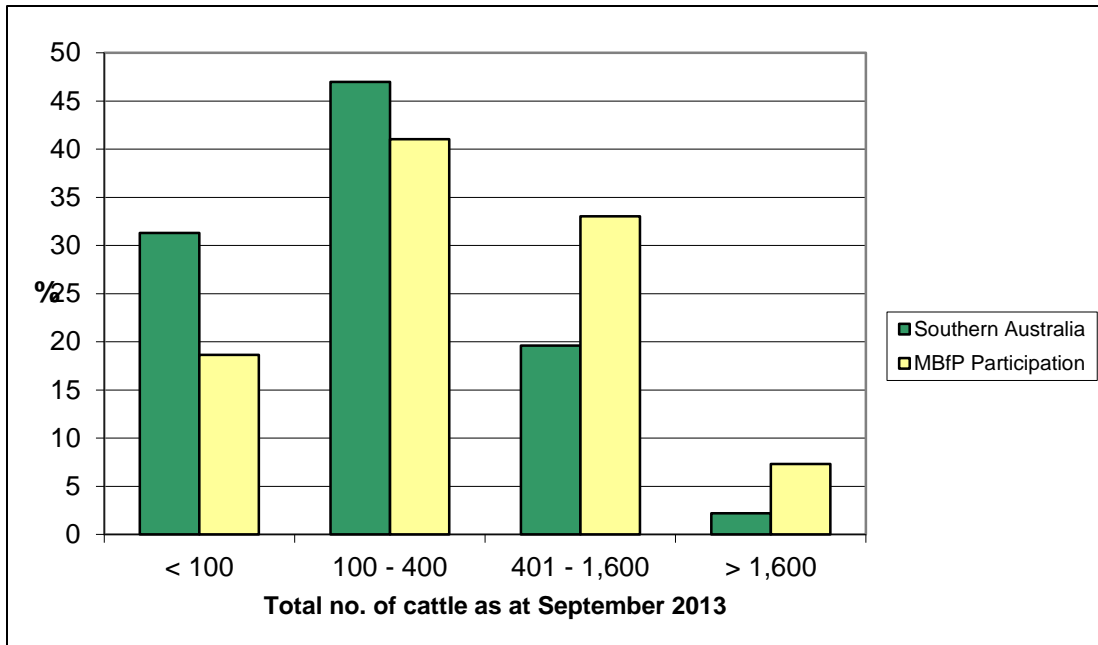


Figure 2. Herd demographic for Southern Australia and national MBfP participation.



Delivery of activity thus succeeded in achieving a significant engagement of larger commercial herds. This was reasoned as a key program target from the perspective of achieving economic impact.

Figure 3. Number of category A,B and C events by state

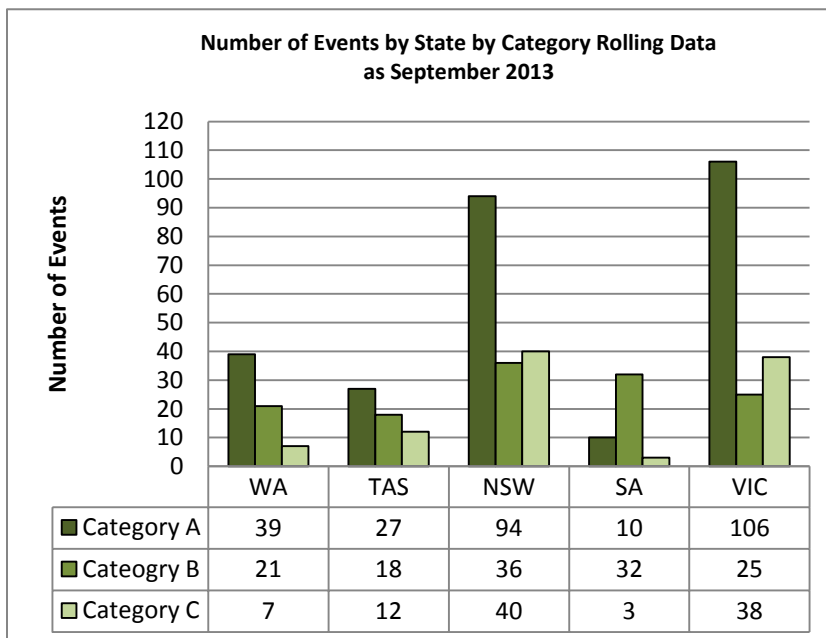
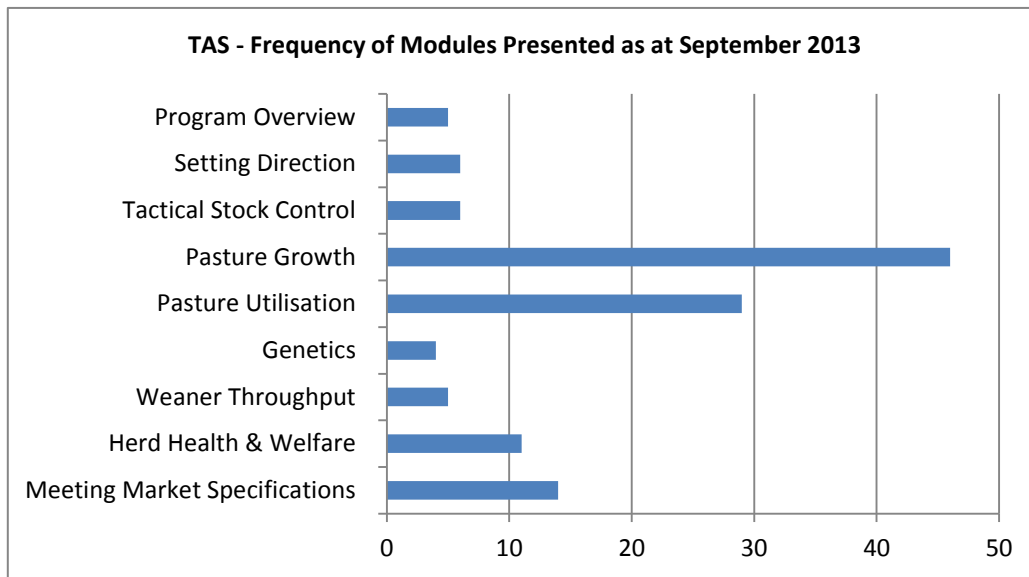


Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of activity type across the states.

As planned, module delivery focussed on feed-base related activity, supported by activities in the herd health and welfare and meeting market specifications modules. The frequency of module delivery is indicated in Figure 4. Business related activity was far more difficult to engage producers with and was only realised within delivery of the cost of production tool as a part of events and in the delivery and promotion of the Confident Livestock Marketing course.

Figure 4. Tasmanian MBfP module delivery.



The evaluation return rate from Tasmanian activities is indicated in table 3.

Table 3. Evaluation return rate as a percentage of participation across event category.

TASMANIAN RETURN RATE KPI			
	KPI	Actual	% Achieved of 3 Yr Target
Category A KPI	65%	247	36%
Category B KPI	80%	98	36%
Category C KPI	80%	42	40%

The evaluation return rate did not achieve the program KPI's and was particularly low in Tasmania. This lower than desired return rate developed from partnered events where evaluation was not compliant or conducted, from low return of distributed evaluations, and from return of incomplete evaluations.

The evaluation process was taken seriously and efforts were made to improve return rate, including developing and offering to develop combined evaluations with event partners, explaining the value of the process to the program and delivery of industry support activities in general, making the skills audit a bit of fun and rewarding participation. These efforts made some difference in the category B and C activities.

Category A events recorded a return rate of 36%. It is of note that an A style event conducted as part of the MLA pasture Updates in Tasmania achieved a comparable return rate of 30% despite free drinks and a significant prize pool, including 2 sides of lamb, to reward evaluation return.

The low % return rate recorded in Table 3 for category B and C events includes the compounding effects of low physical return rate, evaluations not included as a result of data fields not completed, and in the case of category C, practice change not indicated and described. The latter situation though does confound the evaluation return process and an outcome and might reasonably be measured separately.

The physical return of category B and C evaluation response forms was 67% and 74%, highlighting the attrition due to lack of completion. This at least confirms that efforts were taken to obtain evaluation information, but that missing information resulting from not all questions being answered, only one part of two part evaluations being completed, and a reticence to write down what changes had been implemented were very significant points of information loss. Potential improvements are addressed in the discussion.

Those evaluations that were collected however confirmed that the activities delivered in Tasmania largely met the expectations of participants and delivered value to their businesses. This information is presented in Figure 5 for satisfaction where a mean satisfaction score of 8.64 was recorded out of 10 (10 being highest). Figure 6 presents the data for value to the business with a mean score of 8.43 achieved.

Figure 5. Mean participant satisfaction score by state and event category.

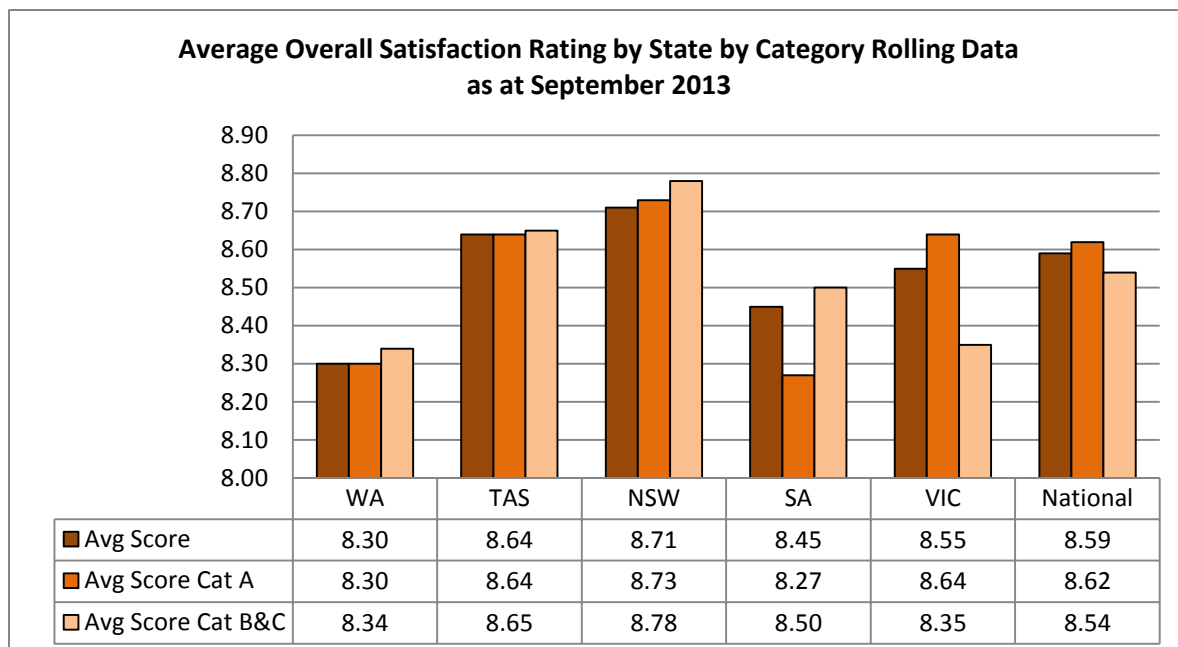
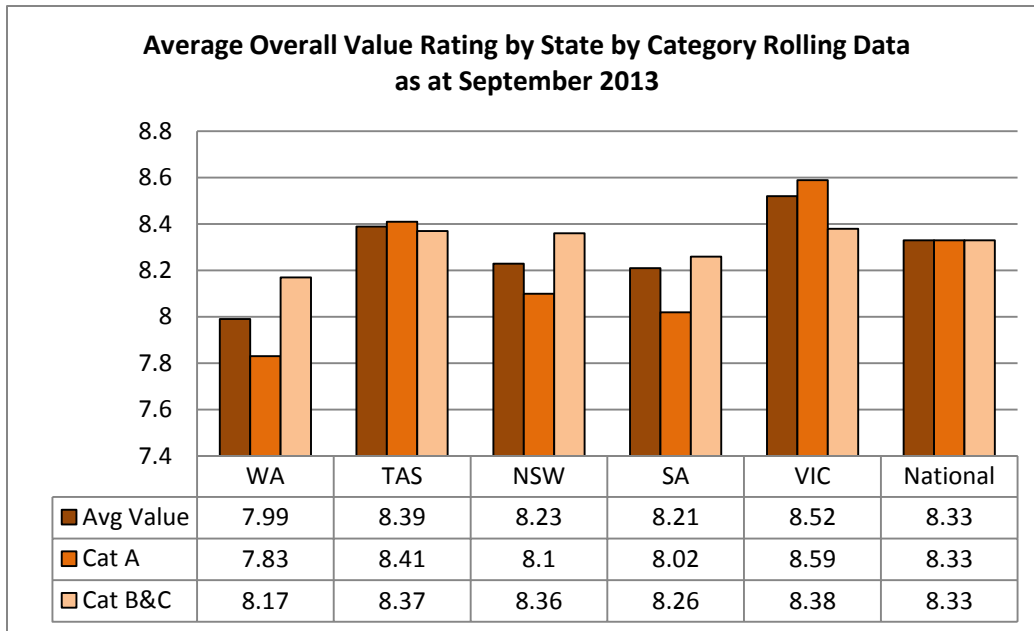


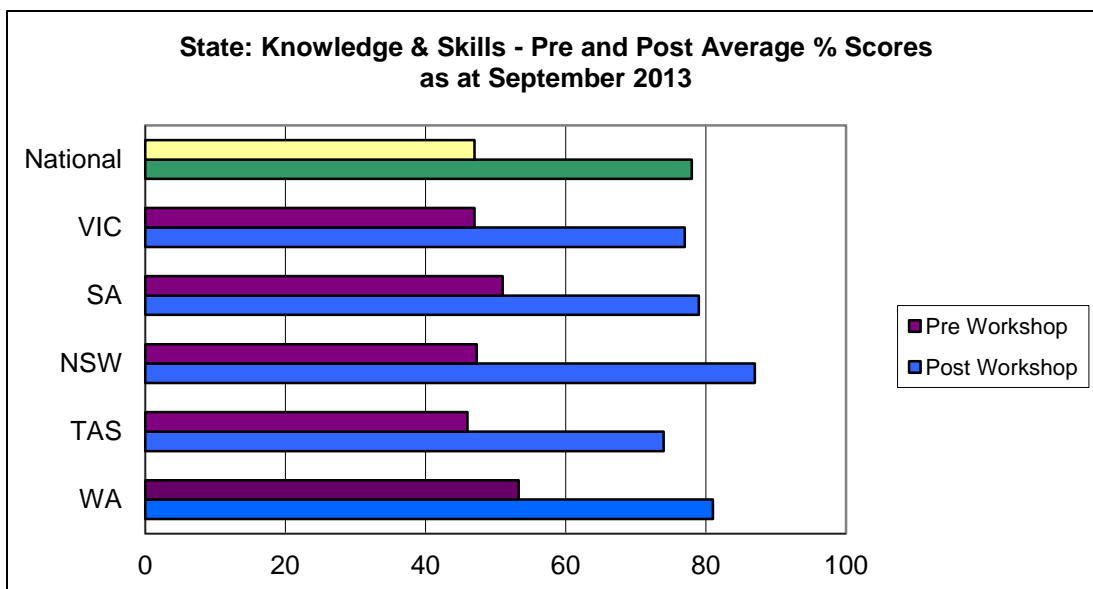
Figure 6. Mean participant value score by state and event category



Both the satisfaction and value scores are consistent with the strong results achieved across all jurisdictions in these measures.

Pre and post event knowledge and skill scores presented in Figure 7 also indicated an overwhelmingly positive impact. The improvement in score evident in the Tasmanian data was similar to that achieved in the data from Victoria, SA and WA, though lower than that achieved for NSW.

Figure 7. Mean pre and post event knowledge and skill scores by state.



Whilst the low evaluation return rate of 40% indicates a lower than desired rate of indicated change in category C participants, 65% of the target KPI was nominally achieved (i.e. 42 evaluation responses / 65 participants KPI =65%). Indications of total plan to change and implemented change were 337 and 94 respectively, providing some further positive indication of project impact.

In combination these results present a story of positive impact that substantially met the targets of the contract and established a strong foundation for meeting the overarching target increase in pasture utilisation and beef system productivity as assessed by the programs independent benefit-cost analyses.

The engagement with agribusiness and agricultural service providers in delivering these results and exposure for the program and its tools, further enhanced project value. This engagement was broadly based and focussed on working relationships with individuals. These relationships involved a variety of mechanisms for engagement including joint facilitation and co-delivery, fee for service paid for and also received, cross promotion, invited participation, hosting, and partnering at multi-deliverer events. More than 27 service providers were engaged by the program in the delivery of activity and multiples of this as participants.

An illustration of the types of activities delivered is indicated in Table 4.

Table 4. Sample Tasmanian activities

Event	Location	Deliverers	Category	Participants	Module
Low stress Refresher	Millwood Rd, King Island	LSS/TIA	C	6	7,8
Low stress Stockhandling	Reekara, King Island	LSS/TIA	C	19	7,8
Dunlop Park	Thirlstone	TIA/ Adelaide Uni	A	35	3,5,6,7,8
Beef CRC	Prospect	TIA	A	8	5,6
Fulham fire recovery	Dunalley	TIA	B	9	3
Pasture species seminar	Winnaleah	TIA	A	35	3,4
KI Beef Tour	King Island	TIA	A	13	1,3,4,6,8
Flinders Pasture Establishment	Whitemark	ServAg, TIA	#	20	3,4
Roberts Discussion Day	Riana	Roberts, TIA	B	15	1,3,4
Roberts Discussion Day	Cressy	Roberts, TIA	B	20	1,3,4
CLM	Launceston	TIA, Ag	C	9	1

		concepts			
Waterhouse discussion group	Tomahawk	TIA, Impact fert	C	13	3

* = Delivers Key: TIA = Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture; LSS = Low Stress Stockhandling; DPIPWE = Dept Primary Industries Parks Water and Environment.

= No or Non-compliant evaluation.

5 Discussion

The project achieved the activity output and outcome targets of the project. The results indicate producer engagement and a quality of delivery that met the projects KPI's.

The modules delivered were heavily weighted toward feedbase management. The business focussed activity suggested in the business plan was not fully realised. Cost of Production and Confident Livestock Marketing (CLM) were the primary mechanisms for this delivery and moving beyond awareness met engagement resistance. One full CLM course was delivered to a group of producer champions who indicated satisfaction with the course, but from whom further activity has not yet developed. Perceptions around lack of relevance and limited marketing options seemed to drive this reluctance.

That said the modules delivered were highly relevant and of undeniable impact potential.

In the absence of course-based delivery, multiple engagement across events was used to develop a path to practice change. This had a consequence of constraining the geographical distribution of spread of activity. Making use of local group coordinators where they existed was an effective means of assisting delivery. Seeking to involve informal regional coordinators from agribusiness may be a future means of building on the existing network and in regions where producer group coordinators are not evident.

In preparing future business plans, agribusiness involvement in the planning process may represent a good opportunity for increased input to activity development and delivery, and also provide a path for further engagement with MBfP tools and information more generally.

Though the course of the current contract the impact of the JBS abattoir closure on King Island, and the consequent very significant cost impost on King Island beef producers, warranted a focus in this region. King Island accounts for some 15-20% of the state's beef slaughter and economic modelling has indicated that the current cost of consignment to slaughter has on average removed enterprise profit.

It should be observed that in considering the value of the activities MBfP presents, in Tasmania, many other jurisdictions have a variety of collaborative industry development services or opportunities for the beef industry. Without MBfP support the majority of this Tasmanian activity would not have occurred or would not have connected with MBfP tools and information.

In Tasmania MBfP activity was primarily developed as a result of the direct involvement and facilitation of the coordinator and not as a consequence of activity from other concurrent programs or training activities. In essence the funding makes a significant difference to activity delivery and also currently supports the value proposition for the retention of at least some public investment in beef extension.

The MBfP project provides a reason for a diversity of service providers to connect in a constructive forum and there is some scope for this function to include also connecting the diversity of MLA funded activity within the state.

In better determining the value of the program there is clearly a need to improve the Tasmanian evaluation return rate.

This improvement in evaluation return rate could be made by further reinforcing the value of the evaluation process at an industry level and continuing to develop the culture of evaluation. Using electronic audience response devices to facilitate easier prompted data collection may help circumvent the problems associated with eliciting written responses. The capture of practice change data could also be improved with protocols for follow-up data collection, as opposed to the within activity collection used in this period.

A further area of data slippage relates to responses from agribusiness agents and next users who may not be able to directly record a compliant evaluation, but who can still represent a significant value point for the program. Standard processes for including a measure of this value are worth developing for future contracts.

There is also room to improve in terms of developing time series events that build the path of knowledge, skill, inspiration and value recognition that can lead to a practice change. Presenting courses or learning programs would be the ideal mechanism if they can be commercially delivered and producers are willing to commit and pay. This may be an area in which collaborative business planning with agribusiness can be of benefit, although it does seem that group training per se is not commercially attractive without subsidy.

Better definition of desired practice change in the activity development phase is another potential means of targeting and achieving change. A caution here however is that simple practice changes may be delivered ahead to more complex outcome needs.

It may well be that the complex and interactive feed-base messages identified as a Tasmanian priority require deconstruction, reinforcement and refinement to realise full practice change potential. Changes in grazing management, feed planning and managing legume contribution may be some such examples that really do require the next phase of the program to appear more prominently as recorded change in the evaluation data.

Renewed emphasis on advocate and champion involvement, alongside interstate collaboration across a select range of program themes, may add further depth to the change implementation already delivered.

Locally there is also new scope to better integrate TIA's herbage development program and the state government Target 120 King Island assistance package with MBfP. Both of these programs offer excellent new opportunities and resources to deliver on feed-base and business development practice change goals.

Highlights of the program were:

- Working with producer groups willing to be proactive and identify and engage with learning activities
- Working with agribusiness agents who contributed expertise and time and sought to be constructive and supportive in seeking collaboration
- The value of integrating PDS and TIA trials into learning activities.

6 Conclusion

To conclude the results presented here as collated by the MLA monitoring and evaluation show that TIA has been successful in meeting project engagement KPI's, in delivering activities of value that participants were satisfied with, and that encouraged intention to make change, implementation of change and improvement in productivity and profit (latter separately described by ongoing independent benefit cost analysis).

The project engaged with the target demographic of producers, as indicated by the median herd size of 500 head, and with other deliverers and service providers in the agribusiness sector.

Improvements to evaluation return rate are required to consolidate the rigour of the project evaluation and its value. Some improvement pathways are noted, as is the more encouraging physical return rate of evaluations in category B and C activities.

The next phase of the project is well placed to develop further feed-base change where the greatest gains seem most likely and support this with breeding herd health and meeting market specifications. The development of change in business and financial analyses remains problematic across the wider producer demographic. It's simply difficult to engage participants in these activities without the motivation of group commitment, confidence and trust that can only really be provided by dedicated group facilitation.

Engagement across more of the state may be facilitated by more inclusive approaches to project and activity planning. This should be a feature of the next phase of the project.

The current phase of the project has however set a reasoned course and progressed well along that course to meet the program goals in 2015.

7 Appendices

Appendix 1. List of Events at which More Beef from Pastures was promoted and information presented.

Event	Location	Participants	Category	Modules
Dunlop Park MBFP	Thirlstane	31	A	3,4,5,6,7,8,
Ringarooma PDS Open Day	Ringarooma	16	A	3,4,
Ringarooma towards 2000	Ringarooma	15	A	3,4
Flinders Pasture Tour	Flinders Island	6	A	3,4
Smithton Carcase feedback tour	Smithton	16	A	8
King Island Beef Group feature day	Currie	65	A	1,2,3,4,5,8,
King Island Live Animal Assessment	Currie	21	B	6,7,8
Coal River Sustainable Ag group	Cambridge	15	B	3,4,
Flinders pasture modelling	Cape Barren	16	A	1,3,4,
Ringarooma PDS farm walk	Ringarooma	12	B	3,4,
HORC pasture modelling	Plenty	6	A	3,4,
Flinders Island NRM group	Whitemark	12	A	1,
Ringarooma PDS Open Day	Ringarooma	30	A	3,4,
Springmere poppy meal site	Beaconsfield	6	B	3,
Waterhouse discussion Group	Waterhouse	12	B	3,
Ringarooma towards 2000	Ringarooma	8	B	3,
West Tamar pasture ID session	Beaconsfield	10	B	3,
Waterhouse discussion Group	Tomahawk	13	B	3,
ServAg Trial site assessment	Pipers River	2	C	4,
King Island Beef Group feature day	Currie	55	A	1,3,4,5,8,
Ringarooma PDS open day	Ringarooma	32	A	3,4,
Waterhouse discussion Group	Waterhouse	8	A	1,3,4,
Flinders Pasture site assessment	Flinders Island	5	C	3,
Flinders pasture management discussion and pasture tour	Whitemark	12	A	3,4,

Ringarooma PDS	Ringarooma	12	A	3,4,
KI Feed Planning group session	Reekara	28	A	3,
Dunlop Park Field Day	Thirlstane	30	A	2,3,4,6,7,
Tomahawk trial meeting	Tomahawk	27	B	3,
Ringarooma PDS	Ringarooma	7	B	2,3,4,
Winnaleah discussion group	Branxholm	27	A	3,4,7,
Tomahawk trial planning	Tomahawk	3	B	3,
Saltwood Pasture cropping field day	Pipers River	8	B	3,4