



# final report

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## **More Beef from Pastures Annual Report Victoria 2008-2009**

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## Contents

	Page
<b>1</b>	<b>Background .....3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Project Objectives .....4</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Results and Discussion .....6</b>
3.1	Summary of activities feedback and evaluation.....6
<b>4</b>	<b>Success in Achieving Objectives.....15</b>
4.1	What has been achieved by events in your region/impact and the success in achieving objectives for the program .....15
<b>5</b>	<b>What went well but what could have been done better? 16</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Conclusions and Recommendations.....17</b>

# 1 Background

MLA's More Beef from Pastures (MBfP) is the main extension and communications program for Southern Beef. The primary aim of the program is to provide producers with knowledge and skills that will enable greater profitability, sustainability and capacity to better manage risk.

How to improve the utilisation of pasture is the centrepiece of the program and this acts as the foundation upon which other aspects of the beef enterprise are based, including:

- setting the strategic direction;
- tactical stock control;
- Pasture growth;
- pasture utilisation;
- cattle genetics;
- maximising weaner throughput;
- management of cattle health and welfare; and
- meeting market specifications.

Using a multitude of tools including the MBfP Producer's Manual, workshop training, producer seminars, and various communication channels, MBfP is designed to enable producers to engage at different levels with the programs through a flexible delivery design. Rather than be prescriptive, the program facilitates a learning process that "helps producers to help themselves".

MBfP has been positioned primarily as an awareness campaign and has very effectively directed producers to learning opportunities, information sources and services appropriate to their individual needs and location. While continuing to engage producers with the program, the focus will now also include an emphasis on producer adoption of the program's principles and application of target management practices.

The state coordinators work as part of a national team to develop material and presentations suitable for delivery to producers and intermediaries. The state coordinators ensure delivery of the MLA MBfP program activities within their state. Development of relationships with other rural industry service providers extends the capacity to do this and will allow maximal impact and benefit to the industry as a whole.

The program also has a network of producer advocates who are engaged to help deliver activities and assist to validate the principles and procedures on which the MBfP program is based. This continues to be an important feature of the activities, promotion and development of MBfP.

## 2 Project Objectives

By 30 June 2009:

As per the MBfP extension and communication plan for 2007-2009, the MBfP program will strive towards its mission to “assist southern beef producers with the capacity to change, to improve their profitability and sustainability” by influencing them to:

- Recognise the target management practices (refer to table 1 below) and MBfP principles and procedures as important for their farm business
- Be motivated and better equipped with knowledge and skills to implement the target management practices and,
- Implement into their management the target practices using the principles and procedures of the MBfP program

This will help meet the overall objective of the program:

*“Between July 2007 and July 2009, 20% of southern beef producers will have actively engaged in the More Beef from Pastures program with 70% of those engaged applying at least one target management practice using the principles and procedures from MLA More Beef from Pastures to increase profitability and manage risk.”*

The Victorian Coordinators role as per contract is as follows:

1. Deliver events and activities as defined in the State extension and communications operational plan.
2. Attend MLA MBfP national extension team meetings, and in doing so:
  - develop and quality-assure as part of the national team, MLA MBfP extension material and presentations for delivery at national and/or local forums
  - value add to national and state MBfP extension and communication activities by sharing local experience and knowledge of activities
  - share experiences working with Producer Advocates and provide innovative strategies to increase the impact of activities
  - lead the further development of extension products, including courses, and tools associated with the MLA MBfP program
3. Allocate the equivalent of 55 days of staff time to this project.
4. Provide producers with a series of varying supportive learning activities (including MLA Edgenetwork workshops, PDS projects and other MLA tools to provide multiple opportunities for building capacity across the MBfP program.
5. Use the MBfP program brand in accordance with MLA style guidelines while co-branded with state departments and other program partners..

6. Contribute to MBfP monitoring and evaluation.
7. Develop alliances with other networks such as Grain and Graze, Evergraze Beef Profit Partnership groups and Making More from Sheep to deliver MBfP program activities. Also engage local service providers and VFF where possible.
8. Manage respective Producer Advocates and ensure they are briefed on MBfP objectives, their role in the program and payment process.
9. Contribute to MLA and MBfP publications as appropriate.
10. Work in partnership with DPI Victoria to deliver planned MBfP activities, ensuring all reporting and evaluation requirements are met.

The plan in Victoria is to assist in the coordination of activities to build and maintain awareness for the MBfP program, and motivate and support producers to apply the principles of the program and change management practices. Extension activities initially planned for further building of awareness have included the Green Triangle Beef Expo, a presence at the MLA Meat Profit Day and a presence at a regional Farm and Water Expo. An existing partnership with the VFF has been consolidated, with forums across the state having been planned and/or successfully held.

Service provider activities included delivering information as part of seminars and conferences, with a particular emphasis on relating MBfP information and principles to challenging seasonal conditions, market changes and the difficulties presented by high fertiliser prices.

The Mackinnon Project has been working closely with the Victorian DPI, in the training of participants in all tools, products and activities that are part of the MBfP extension activities. This has allowed successful integration of this information into current active producer training initiatives and the combination appears to be working very effectively.

In addition to producer awareness and extension activities and service provider activities, considerable time was spent in developing and refining extension material and assisting with tool development. A series of workshops are currently being planned for small-group training of producers in the use of the Cost of Production and Feed Demand Calculators.

Details of activities completed to date are outlined below.

**Table 1: Southern Beef Target Management Practices**

No	Target
1	Calculate a forage budget on a regular basis and monitor available feed quantity and quality relative to animal requirements.

- 2 Calculate cost of production in c/kg.
- 3 Weigh cattle and monitor growth.
- 4 Use EBV's or Index values in sire selection or purchase.
- 5 Assess cows using fat and condition scoring.
- 6 Have defined pasture utilisation targets (aim to utilise a defined % of pasture growth on an annual basis.
- 7 Defined grazing management strategy (ie. Set stocking, rotational)
- 8 Develop and use a weed management plan

### 3 Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Summary of activities feedback and evaluation

During 2008-2009 numerous activities were undertaken both to producers and service providers in Victoria. The summary of activities is listed in the table below:

Table I. Producer activities

Activity	Partner	Rating	Date	Venue	Attendees	Topic	Speakers
Grasslands National Conference	Grasslands society	2	14-Aug-08	Bairnsdale	252	fertiliser pasture growth and MBFP	JWW various
Farm discussion group Benalla	Mackinnon	3	5-Sep-08	North East	9	Beef breeding, marketing FDC	JWW, N Rolls
Welcome Swallow Seminar	Mackinnon	3	22-Oct-08	Benalla	70	Meeting market specs	JWW N Rolls various
Cann River Discussion Group	Mackinnon/Private	2	3-Dec-08	Cann River	8	Pasture utilisation/Drought management	N Rolls, Lisa Warn
Stratford Discussion Group	Mackinnon/Private	2	12-Dec-08	Stratford	15	Pasture utilisation/Drought management	N rolls, Lisa Warn
Seymour AP seminar	Seymour A&P society	2	4-Apr-09	Trawool	37	MBfP, Profitability, risk analysis	JWW, others
Women in Agriculture forum	Women in Agriculture	1	1-May-09	Warrigal	250	General awareness MLA sponsor	MBfP display

## B.MBP.0104 - More Beef From Pastures Annual Report Victoria 2008-2009

University of Melbourne students	Mackinnon Project	2	5-May-09	Werribee		FDC, MBfP	JWW
Angus Australia Benalla	Angus Australia	2-3	26-Jun-09	Benalla	36	Genetics, Animal Health, Marketing	JWW, Emma Weatherley, Phil O'Toole
Angus Australia Leongatha	Angus Australia	2-3	27-Jun-09	Leongatha	34	Genetics, Animal Health, Marketing	JWW, Emma Weatherley, Phil O'Toole
Angus Australia Daylesford	Angus Australia	2-3	28-Jun-09	Daylesford	34	Genetics, Animal Health, Marketing	JWW, Emma Weatherley, DWW, D Purcell
Angus Australia Macarthur	Angus Australia	2-3	29-Jun-09	Macarthur	28	Genetics, Animal Health, Marketing	JWW, Emma Weatherley, M Bunge
Mansfield Discussion group	Private groups	3	2-Jun-09	Mansfield	18	Enterprise analysis, setting directions	JWW
King Valley Discussion group	Private groups	3	2-Jun-09	Milawa	16	Enterprise analysis, setting directions	JWW
Managing risk in livestock/cropping systems	Mackinnon	2	4-Jun-09	Werribee	63	FDC, Enterprise Analysis, Risk analysis	N Rolls, others
MBfP seminar Ensay	Mackinnon	3	5-Jun-09	Ensay	34	Fertilisers	JWW, N Rolls, DWW others
Werribee Ag	DPI/Mackinnon	3	11-Jun-09	Werribee	38	FDC, Enterprise Analysis, Beef Specs, CRC	JWW, N Rolls, D Purcell, M Crawford

**942**

In 2008-2009 a total of **1065** producers and services providers have been involved in **19** activities run by the Mackinnon Project involving MBfP. In addition, **927** producers that have been involved in **52** activities run by the Victorian DPI. This gives a total **1992** producers and services providers have been involved in **71** activities involving MBfP in Victoria in the 2008-2009 financial year.

From 2007-2009 a total of **1806** producers and services providers have been involved in **37** activities run by the Mackinnon Project involving MBfP. In addition, **1674** producers that have been involved in **90** activities run by the Victorian DPI. This gives a total **3480** producers and services providers have been involved in **127** activities involving MBfP in Victoria in the 2007-2009 period.

Since 2004 a total of **4345** producers and services providers have been involved in **77** activities run by the Mackinnon Project involving MBfP. In addition, **1674** producers that have been involved in **90** activities run by the Victorian DPI. This gives a total **6019** producers and services providers have been involved in **167** activities involving MBfP in Victoria in the 2004-2009 period.

Activities during the year have been focussed on topical issues that aligned with MBfP program objectives. Changing feedlot requirements as a result of high grain prices and lessened focus on marbling in the Japanese market that has resulted in a trend to short feed high growth rate cattle has created significant interest in cross-breeding options. Seminars held at Welcome Swallow Angus Stud at Benalla, and Newcomen Hereford Stud, Ensay covered a range of topics related to breeding decisions and meeting market specifications accordingly. Beef Specs was introduced to a Victorian audience for the first time at the Welcome Swallow Stud seminar in October.

A Mackinnon Project seminar was held in June focussing on risk management in livestock and cropping systems, with a focus on the overlap between cropping and livestock enterprises. The Feed Demand Calculator was highlighted to producers as a useful tool in strategic decision making - and the importance of the fundamentals of pasture growth and utilisation. This activity went extremely well with producers gaining significant value. The average rating of the days was 4.3.

A road show was held in May in conjunction with Angus Australia – which was very high value and provided excellent exposure for MBfP. The focus of the seminars was about genetic improvement, the use of EBV's and indexes, genetic defects, animal health and livestock marketing.

Small group discussions relating to MBfP have been incorporated wherever possible, often opportunistically through day-to-day Mackinnon Project activities such as drought forums and involvement with local farmer groups. These have provided valuable exposure for the program to motivated producers – essentially on a very individual basis – and have occurred predominantly in the North-East of Victoria and in Gippsland, as opportunities have presented.

The opportunity arose to present information at the Grassland society annual conference (specifically about fertiliser application and its importance in profitable farming systems) which gave excellent exposure for MBfP to leading producers across southern Australia..

A major activity that changed this year was running workshops in conjunction with the VFF. A total of 4 seminars had been run in financial year 07-08, with more originally planned for this financial year. However, administrative and financial challenges within VFF made this difficult to continue in 2008-2009, in addition to being conscious of wanting to gain exposure for MBfP to a range of new producers and audiences.

Producer advocates were again successfully used for about 10 events during the year and remain an integral component of the program. Media exposure was good at activities, including Weekly Times and Stock and Land and local press reporting on programs, particularly popular was stories about producer advocates.

Examples of feedback are listed in the information below:

**Welcome Swallow Angus Stud, Benalla**

Rating of day: average = 4.8

Plan to make changes to business = 79.2%.

Cattle numbers average = 658 head 12% >1500 cattle, 8% 1000-1500 cattle 24% 500-1000 cattle, 44% 100-500 cattle, 12% <100 cattle,

Feed back and comments were generally excellent.

**Newcomen Hereford Stud, Ensay**

Rating of day: average = 4.8



Plan to make changes to business = 88.9%.

Cattle numbers average = 875 head 30% >1500 cattle, 0% 1000-1500 cattle 20% 500-1000 cattle, 40% 100-500 cattle, 10% <100 cattle

Feed back and comments were generally excellent.

**Werribee Agriculture, Werribee**

Rating of day: average = 4.3

Plan to make changes to business = 79.2%

Cattle numbers average = 400 head, 5% 1000-1500 cattle 26% 500-1000 cattle, 42% 100-500 cattle, 26% <100 cattle

**Angus Australia seminars**

Rating of day: average = 4.5

Plan to make changes to business = 66.7%

Cattle numbers average = 396 head 2% >1500 cattle, 7% 1000-1500 cattle 12% 500-1000 cattle, 52% 100-500 cattle, 26% <100 cattle,

**Table 2 Service provider activities**

Activity	Partner	Rating	Date	Venue	Attendees	Topic	Speakers
Endophyte service providers symposium	Mackinnon P	3	11-Aug-08	Werribee	48	Cost of endopyhtes MBfP	international speakers leo cummins kevin
Aginsights Forum	AWI/MLA	2	3-Mar-09	Melbourne	75	opportunities FDC, beef specs presentaion	Reed JWW JWW other
					<b>123</b>		

In 2008-2009, 2 activities were run with service providers with 123 attending, the first being a symposium focusing on the impact of endophytes in perennial ryegrass on livestock productivity. A variety of speakers, including international guest covered a variety of aspects. The opportunity was taken to introduce the audience to the MBfP program. Feedback was very positive. At the AWI/MLA Ag-insights forum run in March The FDC and Beef-specs tool was presented to attendees with positive feedback.

The involvement of the Victorian DPI Beef extension team has been very positive for MBfP in Victoria. Their ongoing involvement provides considerable leverage to the exposure of MBfP activities and principles throughout the state, and is a natural fit with many of their existing producer networks and programs. The Mackinnon Project has been providing support and presentations to some of their groups where appropriate, and DPI staff have subsequently been involved with Mackinnon Project/MBfP activities where possible and beneficial to producers.

A seminar was held as a joint effort at Werribee Agriculture in June, with presentations from Mackinnon and DPI staff – covering topics such as breeding and trading decisions, and on MBfP tools including the Feed Demand Calculator and Beef Specs. DPI and Mackinnon project consultants have jointly presented at several field days including the Angus Australia seminars.

The DPI MBfP delivery plan has otherwise largely been formulated on the back of existing activities where possible. This has included an abbreviated “Train the Trainer” workshop with learning emphasis placed on the flagship tools (Tools for the time challenge) including COP calculator, FDC, Pasture growth outlook tool and some practical exercises on meeting market specifications using producer advocates.

The activities delivered by the DPI MBfP program have been leveraged off existing programs including Beefcheque and CRC Beef Profit Partnership activities and evergraze.

Table 3 DPI MBfP activities

Activity	Partner	Rating	Date	Venue	Attendees	Topic	Speakers
BPP	DPI	2	7th July 2008	Bairnsdale	10	CoP session one	Prue Bergmeier and Will English
Beef Profit Partnership Workshop	DPI	2	7/8/2008	Mallee	9	MBfP Feed Demand Calculator Weaner throughput (fat scoring and target benchmarks for a breeding herd) procedure 1	Melissa Neal
BeefCheque yr 1	DPI	2	July 14th	Flynn (between Trafalgar and Rosedale)	13	Reference to pastures section of manual	Emma Weatherly & Claire Geri
EverGraze Grazing Management workshop	DPI	1	7/23/2008	Beechworth	15	CoP Calc-session one	Kate Sargeant
NE Beef Profit Partnership	DPI/RIST	2	30th July	Benalla	15	Pasture Toolkit	Alison Desmond, Dougal Purcell and Jonathon Tocker
BeefCheque yr 1	DPI	2	July	Yarram	8	CoP Calc	Claire Geri & John Bowman
Beef Profit Partnership Workshop	VIC DPI & BEEF CRC	2	8/8/2008	Hamilton	10	6.4 Calving Histogram Calculator	Jonathon Tocker & Emma Weatherly
Breeders for Profit day 1	DPI	2	8/16/2008	Yea	17	6.4 Calving Histogram Calculator	Emma Weatherly, Alison Desmond, Greg Ferrier and Dougal Purcell
Breeders for Profit day 1	DPI	2	8/21/2008	Traralgon	15	6.4 Calving Histogram Calculator	Emma Weatherly, Claire Geri & Dougal Purcell
Breeders for Profit day 1	DPI	2	8/22/2008	Leongatha	6	6.4 Calving Histogram Calculator	Emma Weatherly, Claire Geri & Dougal Purcell
Gritjurk PBM - S1	DPI & RIST	2	8/26/2008	Gritjurk	13	Toolkit 4 Table 3 ADG for diff feeds and steer liveweights Ref to manual, Presentation of Feed Demand Calculator	Emma Weatherly and Dougal Purcell
Beefcheque Year 3	DPI & RIST	2	8/27/2008	Seymour	10		Kate Sargeant

B.MBP.0104 - More Beef From Pastures Annual Report Victoria 2008-2009

NE BPP	DPI/RIST	2	August	Tallangatta	20	CoP Calc-session two	Alison Desmond, Dougal Purcell and Jonathon Tocker
EverGraze & MBfP/MMfS Field Day- Intergrating grazing management of hill country and flatter country, and cost benefit analysis of lucerne	Vic DPI/EverGraze	2 to 3	9/5/2008	Seymour	40	Ref to manual, Presentation of Feed Demand Calculator	Kate Sargeant & Alison Desmond
Beef Profit Partnerships	Vic DPI/EverGraze	2	9/10/2008	Tallangatta Valley	15	Presentation of feed demand calculator	Kate Sargeant & Alison Desmond
EverGraze & MBfP/MMfS Field Day- Intergrating grazing management of hill country and flatter country, and cost benefit analysis of lucerne	Vic DPI/EverGraze	3 to 3	9/29/2008	Kyneton	45	Ref to manual, Presentation of Feed Demand Calculator	Kate Sargeant & Alison Desmond
Year 2 BeefCheque	DPI	2	1st August	Seymour	13	CoP	Jonathon Tocker, Kate Sargeant and Anita Morant
BeefCheque yr 1	DPI	2	?Oct	LaTrobe	12	Calving Histogram	Claire Geri & Fiona Baker
BeefCheque Year 2	DPI	2	28th August	North-East	6	CoP session one	Jonathon Tocker and Cheryl Graham
Wangaratta BeefCheque (Yr 3)	DPI	2	9/9/2008	Benalla	14	MLA CoP Calculator session 2	Purcell, Tocker (TBC), Desmond
BeefCheque Year 2	DPI Vic	2	September	Orbost	10	CoP session one	Prue Bergmeier and Will English
Breeders for Profit day 2	DPI	2	9/16/2008	Yea	17	FD Caclulator, Rainfall to Pasture Growth Outlook, MBfP Manual toolkit 5; pg 6 - adapted table, MBfP produer advocate presentation	Dougal Purcell, Emma Weatherly& David Webb-Ware
Breeders for Profit day 2	DPI	2	9/18/2008	Traralgon	7	FD Caclulator, Rainfall to Pasture Growth Outlook, MBfP Manual toolkit 5; pg 6 - adapted table	Prue Bergmeier, Dougal Purcell & Emma Weatherly,
Breeders for Profit day 2	DPI	2	9/19/2008	Leongatha	15	FD Caclulator, Rainfall to Pasture Growth Outlook, MBfP Manual toolkit 5; pg 6 - adapted table	Prue Bergmeier, Dougal Purcell and Emma Weatherly
Practical Beef Marketing Girtjurk	DPI	2	10/28/2008	Girtjurk	16	BeefSpec Calculator and the figures from NLRs in the meeting market specs module	Dougal Purcell

B.MBP.0104 - More Beef From Pastures Annual Report Victoria 2008-2009

EverGraze & MBfP/MMfS Field Day	Vic DPI/EverGraze	2 to 3	10/22/2008	Yarram	30	Ref to manual & MLA Cost of Production Calculator, Feed Demand Calculator & Rainfall to Pasture Growth Outlook tool	Kate Sargeant, Raquel Waller, Anita Morant, Prue Bergmeier and Ross Batten
EverGraze & MBfP/MMfS Field Day	Vic DPI/EverGraze	2	10/23/2008	Boolarra	30	Ref to manual & Calculator, Feed Demand Calculator &	Kate Sargeant, Raquel Waller, Anita Morant, Prue Bergmeier and Ross Batten
EverGraze field day	DPI Vic	2	9-Oct-08	Tambo Crossing	8	FD calculator + pastures segment	Kate Sargeant?/Prue Bergmeier
EverGraze Field Day	DPI Vic	1	1-Oct-08	Geona	10	Ref to manual	
EverGraze Field Day	DPI Vic	1	1-Oct-08	Marlo	15	Ref to manual	
EverGraze Field Day	DPI Vic	1	1-Oct-08	Bengworden	30	Ref to manual	
EverGraze & MBfP/MMfS Field Day- Pasture cropping, cost-benefit analysis of lucerne and a look at an alternative fertiliser trial	Vic DPI/EverGraze	2 to 3	10/16/2008	Euroa	45	Ref to manual & Feed Demand Calculator	Kate Sargeant & Alison Desmond
EverGraze field day	DPI Vic	2	30-Oct-08	Seymour	40	FDC Example & Ref to manual	Kate Sargeant?/Prue Bergmeier
EverGraze Proof Site Field Days	Vic DPI/EverGraze	1	11/25/2008	Kyneton	50	FDC Example & ref to manual	Kate Sargeant and Anita Morant
BeefCheque yr 2	DPI	2	September	Ellinbank	9	CoP	Fiona Baker, Will English and Claire Geri
BeefCheque Year 2	DPI Vic	2	September	Orbost	10	CoP session 2	Prue Bergmeier/Will English

## B.MBP.0104 - More Beef From Pastures Annual Report Victoria 2008-2009

BeefCheque yr 2	DPI	2	October	Boolarra	7	CoP session one	Fiona Baker, Will English & Claire Geri
BeefCheque yr 1	DPI	2	October	Yarram	8	Fat Scoring	Claire Geri & John Bowman
BeefCheque yr3	DPI	2	? October	Warragul	9	CoP	Fiona Baker, Will English and Claire Geri
BeefCheque Year 2	DPI	2	28th August	North-East	8	CoP session two	Jonathon Tocker and Cheryl Graham
BeefCheque yr3	DPI	2	23rd October	Warragul	9	CoP session 2	Fiona Baker, Will English and Claire Geri
Year 2 BeefCheque	DPI	2	31st October	Seymour	12	CoP	Jonathon Tocker, Kate Sargeant and Anita Morant
BeefCheque yr 3	DPI	2	July	Fish Creek	9	CoP session 2	Will English & John Bowman
BeefCheque yr 3	DPI	2	5/8/2009	Lancefield	9	CoP Yr 3 Session 1	Jonathan Tocker
Taralagon BeefCheque			3/20/2009	Tralagon	12	Value of other perrenial grasses. FDC used as demonstration on how lucerne could change supply profile of pastutres.	
Post Fire Awareness - Pasture Recvery	DPI	2	4/20/2009	Kilmore	35	MLA Pasture Ruler	Kate Sargeant
	DPI	2	21-Apr-09	Strath Creek	16	MLA Pasture Ruler	Kate Sargeant

B.MBP.0104 - More Beef From Pastures Annual Report Victoria 2008-2009

	DPI	2	28-Apr-09	Glenburn	30	MLA Pasture Ruler	Kate Sargeant
	DPI	2	4/30/2009	Buxton	30	MLA Pasture Ruler	Kate Sargeant
	DPI	2	4/4/2009	Kinglake	25	MLA Pasture Ruler	Kate Sargeant
GippslandEvergraze on Hamilton Proof Results			3/19/2009	Tralagon	50	Value of other perennial grasses. FDC used as demonstration on how lucerne could change supply profile of pastures. MLA CoP Calculator presented to the RIST Diploma Students	Kate Sargeant
Diploma	DPI	2	May/June 2009	Hamilton	10	Marketing Presentation included information on the BeefSpec program, the market indicators detailed in the Market Specifications module. Marketing Presentation included information on the BeefSpec program, the market indicators detailed in the Market Specifications module. Marketing Presentation included information on the BeefSpec program, the market indicators detailed in the Market Specifications module.	Jonathan Tocker
Angus Field Days - Marketing Presentation	DPI	2	May-09	Daylesford	Numbers counted in MacKinnon Total	Marketing Presentation included information on the BeefSpec program, the market indicators detailed in the Market Specifications module. Marketing Presentation included information on the BeefSpec program, the market indicators detailed in the Market Specifications module.	Dougal Purcell
Angus Field Days - Marketing Presentation	DPI	2	May-09	Rutherglen	Numbers counted in MacKinnon Total	Marketing Presentation included information on the BeefSpec program, the market indicators detailed in the Market Specifications module. Marketing Presentation included information on the BeefSpec program, the market indicators detailed in the Market Specifications module.	Alison Desmond
Angus Field Days - Marketing Presentation	DPI	2	May-09	Hamilton	Numbers counted in MacKinnon Total	Marketing Presentation included information on the BeefSpec program, the market indicators detailed in the Market Specifications module. Marketing Presentation included information on the BeefSpec program, the market indicators detailed in the Market Specifications module.	Maria Crawford
Angus Field Days - Marketing Presentation	DPI	2	May-09	Leongatha	Numbers counted in MacKinnon Total	Marketing Presentation included information on the BeefSpec program, the market indicators detailed in the Market Specifications module. Marketing Presentation included information on the BeefSpec program, the market indicators detailed in the Market Specifications module.	Ross Batten

A total of **927** producers have attended **52** activities about all aspects of the MBfP program during the 2008-2009 financial year. This gives a total of **1674** producers and service providers attending **90** activities since the start of DPI involvement in the MBfP program

### **Developing extension material and delivery**

Material for delivery for workshops, including case studies, has continued to be reviewed and developed as part of the state coordinator role. This is in combination with ongoing review of information in the Manual (specifically the strategic directions module) and review and development of tools. Some notable activities include:

- A major project undertaken during the year was finalising the re-writing the setting directions module.
- Articles have also been written for MBfP e-news,
- Contributing to Feedback and Prograzier

Producer advocates continue to be an outstanding asset for MBfP in Victoria, very helpful and beneficial support for the program, whilst helping spread the workload. This has been particularly important with the expansion of extension activities with the inclusion of the Victorian DPI in activities.

## **4 Success in Achieving Objectives**

### **4.1 What has been achieved by events in your region/impact and the success in achieving objectives for the program**

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Events run in 2008-2009 have been highly successful in achieving objectives. A total of **942** producers and **123** service providers attended 19 MBFP activities during the year for a total of **1065** producers and service providers have attended events in total in Victoria. In addition, the Victorian DPI conducted **52** activities of which **927** producers attended events during the year. A total of **3480** producers and service providers have attended activities in Victoria since July 2007.

This gives a grand total of **6019** producers and service providers have attended MBfP activities in Victoria. The vast majority of the events run by the Mackinnon Project have been run as MBfP activities. The majority of Victorian DPI events have been run in conjunction with other activities such as Beef cheque or BPP's that have use MBfP activities.

Based on feedback from evaluation, between 70-90% of producers have indicated they will adopt new management strategies on farm as a result of MBfP activities attended.

A continuing focus of activities has been on managing pasture and pasture utilisation, at the same time as managing risk to maximise profit. This is a key goal of the MBFP program through

motivating and supporting the uptake of MBFP principles and opportunities through use of tools and extension activities. Producer advocates have again been very useful for demonstrating real life stories to encourage the use of principles and strategies promoted in the MBFP manual. The producer forums have specifically assisted in motivating producers to adopt changes in management to their properties to increase production but also manage risk.

Part of the success of the forums has been that attendees have been mostly larger scale commercial farming businesses.

We have a list of producers to undertake training and workshop. This list has been gained from seminars, field days and expos. There has been interest from these forums for more activities related to the MBFP program, specifically COP and FDC workshops. In the later half of 2008 we intended to run a series of workshops about MBFP tools – but unfortunately this met with a disappointing response. The reason we think in two-fold, firstly poor seasonal conditions meant producers were reluctant to explore their COP and secondly, the two day format was

Some consultants are interested in been involved in some activities, though due to their busy schedules have still not progressed to delivery stage yet. Discussion with several merchandising outlets has not resulted in activities to date though more will be done in the later half of this year.

The Victorian DPI MBFP activities have been integrated into existing extension plans very successfully and have fulfil required numbers of activities and feed back has been generally very positive.

In addition to extension activities, as our role as Victorian coordinator, we have been involved in assisting a number of technical issues with the MBFP program including case studies, fine tuning tools and extension material. Considerable time has also been spent fielding queries from producers and service providers about aspects of the MBFP program too.

The rewrite of the setting directions module has been completed, though not yet launched. In addition, considerable support has been provided to upgrading the Feed Demand Calculator.

## **5 What went well but what could have been done better?**

VFF forums did not proceed as planned due to financial problem, though two are still in the pipeline this year. Several studs (Angus, Charolais, Hereford) and breed societies, Angus Australia, Hereford Australia and discussions with Charolais society) have enthusiastically become partners in the MBFP program this year that filled to gap with the delay in VFF activities.

A planned series of COP workshop was cancelled due to disappointing enrolments resulting in rescheduling and ultimately cancellation. A FDC workshop is planned in late June with a group of producers that will focus attention on modelling different pasture series (the workshop will involve 3 service providers too)

The use of sponsors has assisted in the running costs for the events including catering and venue fees. – Sometimes seminars are difficult to run with budget constraints. e.g. Rabobank, Cargills, James and Sons and others have provided important sponsorship of activities.



A broad range of activities were run during the period were generally very successful in helping to achieve the program objectives.

Field day and expo events attended with a MBfP stand whilst only achieving awareness, were useful in attracting names to undertake follow up activities that are a better fit with the MBfP objectives. However, the difficulty has been in converting these expressions of interest into attendees at future events – generally attending stands at expo type events is not high value apart from providing some exposure.

The uptake and use of MBfP within the Victorian DPI has been excellent. On a limited budget, MBfP content has been logically included in the flagship DPI programs, such as Beefcheque and BPP.

## **6 Conclusions and Recommendations**

The last financial (2008-2009) year has again been very challenging for beef producers, with ongoing poor seasonal conditions, lower commodity prices and an continued very cost inputs including fertiliser, fuel and grain. This should not be seen as an impediment for adoption, but a driving force for change to increase profitability whilst managing risk. The program has again been flexible to focus on important issues to manage the changing environment with higher input costs, but importantly enable the MBfP messages that focus on improving productivity and profitability and manage risk at the same time.

With the progression towards more on-farm adoption, the next phase of the MBfP program will be very important in consolidating the exposure and gains made over the last 2 years. The specific model that is used will depend on the success of the coaching model currently been piloted. However, planning for the next phase needs to start now to ensure the program does not lose momentum. A combination of small group “coach model” plus ongoing larger and existing workshop seminar series will be necessary to ensure more intensive practice change plus ongoing broader awareness to continue to extend the message but ensure management changes will be adopted.