

# Final report

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## Leadership Team Member – Profitable Grazing Systems

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## **Abstract**

The PGS Leadership Group has been appointed to support the roll out of MLA's Profitable Grazing Systems (PGS) extension platform. The PGS platform is based on following a supported learning model for extension and adoption. Supported learning goes beyond the delivery of technical information and supports producers with building skill and capability to implement beneficial practice change. The PGS Leadership Group involves consultants, advisors, and extension professionals that have experience across conventional and supported learning extension formats.

The PGS Leadership Group is in place to support the transformational change that the shift from traditional extension to supported learning requires. Supported learning involves the delivery of a series of coaching sessions that support skill development following the delivery of the theory or technical information. The coaching sessions provide practice and repetition in key skill development areas and the goal is to objectively increase capability and measure this through skills audits.

## **Executive summary**

### **Background**

Members of the PGS Leadership Group are responsible for Championing the MLA PGS program. The role includes prompting skill development as a means of improving business performance, differentiating between learning activities and expected outcomes, promoting delivery, mentoring young deliverers delivering and providing feedback to the state coordinators on proposed project content and delivery methods.

Members to the group meet regularly with the MLA project manager and state coordinators to discuss successes challenges, targets, and strategies.

### **Objectives**

To promote the delivery of PGS activities, ensure product quality and to support new deliverers. The leadership team is responsible for recruiting support for a supported learning approach to skill development and the impact of skill development on business performance.

The group are expected to defend the need for skill development and to clearly articulate the futility of trying to increase skills simply by lecturing to producers. There is also a responsibility to tell producers that skill development takes time, persistence, and practice. More specifically a message of management capability being a real limitation to business performance.

### **Methodology**

The methodology involved members of the PGS Leadership Team:

- Making themselves available as mentors for emerging PGS deliverers/trainers
- Identifying opportunities to develop or contribute to feeder activities that encourage producers to engage with PGS supported learning packages in their region
- Being a positive advocate for the PGS platform and supported learning packages amongst industry peers, colleagues, and consulting networks
- Direct delivery of SLPs encouraged
- Reviewing new SLPs relevant to areas of technical expertise with state coordinators

### **Results/key findings**

The project has evolved to become one of the highest returning areas of MLA investment. A language now exists that clearly defines the areas of learning including awareness, feeder, skill development and practice change. Where in the past proportional activities were held to encourage producers to undertake skill development without any clear pathway this is not clearly articulated and promoted.

There has been a recognition that the major limitation to product development and delivery is the number of private providers, trainers, and coaches. MLA has developed off the shelf products and invested in the training and development of advisors.

## **Future research and recommendations**

I would recommend a very strong focus on the project outcomes. There has been too much focus on the administrative issues to program has had. The runs are now on the board, and it is necessary to focus on how to improve the program rather than whether it should exist.

The feedback from producers is outstanding and it is one of the few adoption programs that can clearly demonstrate improvement in skill. It would be great if however, MLA had a program like that in the dairy industry (Farm Monitor Program) that measures farm performance (physical and financial) over time and by geographic region. Linking those figures to the skill level of managers would present an ongoing and compelling case for skill development and investment in programs like PGS.

The monitoring and evaluation process is still too onerous and far greater than that required by other adoption programs.

Continued case studies appearing in Feedback and the like are fantastic to promote not only the project and its activities, but the positive outcomes associated with training and skill development.

The critics of the project need to be silenced with the hard data. Going forward the advisory group and project management team must be familiar with not only the M and E data, but how it is calculated and relates to other investments in adoption projects. It would be fantastic if data was also available on adoption projects from other industries.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Executive summary.....	3
1. Milestone description.....	6
2. Project objectives .....	6
2.1 Overarching Project Objectives .....	6
2.2 Leadership Team Objectives .....	6
3. Methodology .....	7
4. Results - Success in meeting the milestone & objectives .....	8
4.1. Progress against Approved Workplan (November 2020 – August 2021).....	8
4.2. Progress towards meeting objectives.....	10
5. Discussion (optional) .....	11
6. Conclusions/recommendations .....	13
6.1 Recommendations .....	13
6.2 Conclusions .....	13

## 1. Milestone description

This report acts as an annual report to fulfill the requirements of milestone 5 in the L.PGS.2009 Profitable Grazing Systems Leadership Team Member project. The report includes an outline of progress against the November 2020 workplan (November 2020 – August 2021).

## 2. Project objectives

### 2.1 Overarching Project Objectives

The overarching objective of the PGS program is to encourage and support red meat producers to improve their management skills, to increase profit. The program objectives to be completed by 2022 are:

1. To increase the average profitability of participating red meat producers by 2.5% ROAM by improving their skills and capability.
2. A commercial model which involves user pays for the private good component of the activity (generally the delivery), with MLA contributing a maximum of 30% of the delivery cost of supported learning projects.
3. 5,000 producers attend feeder activities with 10 -15% of them going on to participate in a supported learning program.
4. 2,900 producers participate in supported learning programs to increase their skills and knowledge:
  - a. 2150 producers increase their skills and knowledge above a skills audit score of 75% (competent);
  - b. 50 deliverers have increased capability to a point where they can deliver effective high quality supported learning programs;
  - c. Increase the average confidence rating of participating producers to use key skill sets or do key tasks to greater than 8/10;
  - d. At least 70% of participating producers have made practice changes underpinned by a change in skills.

### 2.2 Leadership Team Objectives

The key role of the leadership team is to provide support to the national and state coordinators in delivering their roles and mentor deliverers to build their capacity. Core principles of the role:

1. Deliver feeder and recruitment activities on behalf of delivery network deliverers (these will be arranged by the state & national coordinators)
2. Support state or national coordinators in reviewing supported learning projects developed by MLA or deliverers, as required
3. Deliver supported learning projects under the proposed adoption program banner (minimum of one per year)
4. Provide support to the PGS national coordinator by providing feedback and recommendations for overarching program improvement and individual supported learning project progress
5. Act as a champion for PGS
6. Support good governance of PGS

### **3. Methodology**

A workplan was developed based on:

1. The administrative requirements of the position including attending Leadership meetings and reporting. In addition to this several advocacy activities have been undertaken with potential deliverers and organisations.
2. Delivering several PGS activities including on average 2 Pasture Principles programs annually
3. Mentoring and supporting other PGS deliverers including junior staff within Pinion. On average 1 junior deliverer a year
4. Support role for the state and national coordinator of the program. While the state role has been quite robust there have been a significant number of coordinators from within MLA.

## 4. Results - Success in meeting the milestone & objectives

### 4.1. Progress against Approved Workplan (November 2020 – August 2021)

Table 1. Workplan

The results of activity to date are laid out in the Workplan below.

Task	Timeframe	Due date	Progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Completed</li> <li>● On-track</li> <li>● Not due</li> <li>● Overdue</li> </ul>	Details
<b>Project Feedback</b>				
Workplan submitted		15/9/2021	✓ Completed	Approved
Complete SCBG pasture principles		30/11/22	✓ Completed	Contract variation granted due to COVID and now complete with just M and E to submit
Complete Holbrook pasture principles		31/3/2022	● On-track	Final session due in July
Milestone 8		15/8/2021	✓ Completed	
Draft final report submitted to MLA for review		1/5/2022	● Overdue	
Final report reviewed and approved by MLA		1/6/2022	● On-track	
<b>PGS LT team communication activities</b> ( <i>phone hook-ups, face to face meetings, etc.</i> )				



PGS leadership face to face and video conferences			✓ <b>Completed</b>	Contribute as requested
<b>SLP deliverer promotion, recruitment &amp; mentoring</b> ( <i>tasks associated with recruiting potential SLP deliverers</i> )				
Recruit for Hamilton Pasture Principles		31/12/2021	✓ <b>Completed</b>	
Deliver Pasture Principles Hamilton		1/3/2023	• <b>On-track</b>	Due to commence in July 2022
Mentoring		31/12/2021	✓ <b>Completed</b>	Look at options for a Dairy Beef PGS Training 2 x PGS deliverers internally
<b>SLP assessment</b> ( <i>SLPs under development / being assessed</i> )				
Feedback on potential new SLPs and OTS MLA versions			✓ <b>Completed</b>	On going
<b>SLP recruitment</b> ( <i>to be completed for each SLP being recruited for – includes recruitment plan, feeder activities, other communications etc.</i> )				
Continuing to work on options for delivery of Pasture Principles			✓ <b>Completed</b>	Delivering a second PP for Holbrook and one in Hamilton. Assisting with mentoring for the Northwest Tasmania group
<b>M&amp;E activities</b> ( <i>approvals for M&amp;E materials, data due from deliverers, producer interviews, submission of data sets to National Coordinator, providing feedback to deliverers, etc.</i> )				
Ongoing feedback in M and E				The new App is really good. The amount of data collected is still onerous.

## 4.2. Progress towards meeting objectives

Table 2. Key Performance Indicators

Area of Participation	Number	Comment (nature of work done and outcomes achieved)
Support Coordination team/deliverers to recruit producers and deliverers	1	The development of the off-the-shelf SLPs and associated delivery support has meant that activities in this area has been restricted to Pinions. I have been involved in a number of conversations about promotional activities. I have been involved in promoting the Building Better Breeders SLP and Bredwell fedwell as a feeder.
Support State Coordinators to review SLPs	3	The State coordinators have not requested any help in this area.
Mentor Deliverers in development and delivery of SLPs	3	I am working with 3 deliverers. These are all Pinion employees. Recently there have been requests to co-deliver PP and this is being discussed internally
Developing/Delivering SLPs	3	In addition to co-delivering as a monitoring activity I have 2 new PP Pasture Principles SLPs.
PGS coordination team advisory activities	2	I have attended the last Leadership team meetings and have been working with. I am working with Lyndon Kubeil to coordinate the Hamilton group.
Representation/Awareness	4	Presentation about PGS at the northern Phosphorus PGS Presentation at Livestock Advisor Essentials Presentation and discussion at the LAE mentoring workshop.

## 5. Discussion

**Table 3. Discussion Points**

Question	Discussion
<p><b>1. Support and capacity development for service providers</b></p> <p>a. Based on your exposure to SLPs submitted to PGS, provide comment on the level of service provider capacity (particularly in terms of ability to develop SLPs in line with PGS guidelines).</p> <p>b. Give an overview of the nature (type, timing) of support you have had the opportunity to provide to service providers.</p>	<p>a. There is definitely a lot more support in the delivery space for the SLPs. This has in a large part been due to the OTS activities and the associated train the trainer activities</p>
<p><b>2. Coordination team support</b></p> <p>a. Describe how you have engaged and collaborated with coordination team members and comment on how effective this has been?</p> <p>b. Can you suggest ways to enhance the support provided to SCs/NC?</p>	<p>a. Participated in the MLA eating quality awards and was able to promote PGS</p> <p>b. I have coordinated with Peter Schuster and Lyndon Kubeil and the experience has been positive</p>
<p><b>3. Development and review of SLPs</b></p> <p>a. In what capacity have you participated in the development of SLPs (your own and those of your mentees)?</p> <p>b. Describe your experience to date in terms of the SLP review process including common mistakes/issues encountered.</p> <p>c. Comment on your experience working with State Coordinators through the SLP review/approval process.</p>	<p>With the program maturing and a lot of experience in the state coordinator team this has been unnecessary.</p>
<p><b>4. Communication and promotion</b></p> <p>a. Comment on the quality, availability and effectiveness of the guidelines and materials/tools used for promoting the project</p> <p>b. Give an overview of the activities/initiatives you have engaged in to promote the</p>	<p>a. Excellent, and promotion is starting in earnest now.</p> <p>b. The project is getting traction and more importantly recognition.</p> <p>c. I think there is a need for case studies from producer, deliverer, state coordinator and MLA about the project and what its objective is. The recently completed YouTube promotion for</p>

<p>project (including producer/deliverer) recruitment activities</p> <p>c. Do you have any suggestions of other methods that may be effective for promoting the project?</p>	<p>Pasture Principles was fantastic. A YouTube presentation for the other SLPs would be great.</p>
<p><b>5. Program advisory services and governance</b></p> <p>a. Describe how you have engaged with MLA and the coordination team to enhance the effectiveness of the program</p> <p>b. Describe your input to and provide feedback on the M&amp;E process</p>	<p>a. There are no issues with governance. I support the move to reduce the overhead cost of administration now that the program is through the embedding stage.</p>

## **6. Conclusions/recommendations**

### **6.1 Conclusions**

It has been fantastic to see the program move to a stable delivery environment and to get some solid runs on the board. With PGS achieving the highest return on investment amongst MLA adoption projects the focus can now move away from validating the approach to increasing the number of participants.

It was a shame that so many teething problems were experienced early on and that a group of prominent consultants chose to undermine the project as a result. Many of those consultants rely heavily of subsidised project work and I suspect the object of PGS to move to a sustainable, user-pays approach was threatening.

Despite the challenges the program has achieved significant returns and the number of training activities and deliverers has increased. The next phase of the program looks very exciting.

### **6.2 Recommendations**

I would recommend a very strong focus on the project outcomes. There has been too much focus on the administrative issues to program has had. The runs are now on the board, and it is necessary to focus on how to improve the program rather than whether it should exist.

The feedback from producers is outstanding and it is one of the few adoption programs that can clearly demonstrate improvement is skill.

It would be great if MLA had a program like that in the dairy industry (Farm Monitor Program) that measures farm performance over time and by geographic region. Linking those figures to the skill level of managers would present an ongoing and compelling case for skill development.

The monitoring and evaluation process is still too onerous and far greater than that required by other adoption programs.

Continued case studies appearing in Feedback and the like are fantastic to promote not only the project and its activities, but the positive outcomes associated with training and skill development.

MLA must maintain the delivery quality and be prepared to accept the criticism of not enough delivery happening that goes along with this. At the same time great strides have been made in increasing deliverer numbers and developing early career advisors through the likes of Livestock Advisor Essentials and Livestock Advisor Updates. It is recommended that MLA maintain a strong commitment to deliverers (and future deliverers) as this is a significant threat to the future of the project and skill development activities.

The critics of the project need to be silenced with the hard data. Going forward the advisory group and project management team must be familiar with not only the M and E data, but how it is calculated and relates to other investments in adoption projects. It would be fantastic if data was also available on adoption projects form other industries.

Consideration should be given to renaming the program to distance the project from the development phase.