

## Expressions of Interest

**Increasing productivity through genetic progress in the northern beef industry with effective extension and adoption practices.**

### MLA Donor Company co-funded initiatives

#### Summary

Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) is seeking expressions of interest (EOI) via preliminary applications from organizations (or partnerships of organizations) with the expertise to deliver extension and training aimed at increasing the adoption and optimised use of genetic resources and tools in the northern beef industry, to support cattle producers to achieve productivity gains through genetic progress. These initiatives would be co-investment with the MLA Donor Company.

#### Background

Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA), University of New England (UNE) and New South Wales Department of Primary Industries & Regional Development (NSW DPIRD) are co-owners (The Owners) of the BREEDPLAN software utilised to provide genetic evaluation services to beef cattle. BREEDPLAN is delivered by the Agricultural Business Research Institute (ABRI). MLA has also invested in research that has delivered new genetic technologies such as genomic-only herd profile and benchmarking tools.

The northern beef industry presents large opportunities to increase productivity through the increased adoption of genetic selection tools and technologies. Genetic progress, and consequently livestock productivity and profitability, can be enhanced by effective selection decisions through use of genetic and genomic tools, optimal breeding program design, and strategic phenotyping and genotyping. Due to challenging extensive systems, northern seedstock producers could benefit from customised products and services to develop high-quality strategies to maximise genetic gains.

The northern beef industry has had access to genetic technologies such as BREEDPLAN for more than 30 years and there has been evidence of increased uptake of breeding values in bull selection decisions. Industry surveys have demonstrated that there continues to be a large adoption opportunity for the use of estimated breeding values (EBVs) and to further support cattle producers to increase their engagement with, and optimize use of genetics related tools, technologies and innovations. Additionally, the size of the reference populations for various tropical breeds can increase as a result of the collection and submission of phenotypes and genotypes for more animals.

The [MLA Genetics Insights Report](#) provides valuable information to inform effective extension strategies including identifying that significant barriers to adoption among non-users of breeding values included trusting their own process, lack of knowledge and understanding, the financial and decision making benefits, and ease of use.

#### Objectives

MLA is seeking proposals for extension and adoption programs that will contribute to the objective of increasing rates of genetic improvement for both the registered and unregistered beef sectors by utilising genetic tools that are relevant to the characteristics of the commercial beef industry, particularly in northern regions.

This could be achieved through:

- Better use of BREEDPLAN which may include:
  - Increased engagement of current BREEDPLAN members with improved recording and making more genetic progress

- Adoption by non-BREEDPLAN members to submit data to BREEDPLAN, increase recording and improve use of genetic tools
- Optimized use of Breeding Values and emerging genetic tools to drive genetic gain for the purpose of improving productivity:
  - Increased uptake of best practice (Breeding program design, selection decision processes)
  - More effective data collection for BREEDPLAN analysis and decision making
  - Effective utilisation of breeding values and genetics tools within breeding programs to increase genetic gain
  - A tailored program for producers to identify and improve limiting factors to genetic progress in their herd
  - Demonstrating how producers can actively contribute to reference populations through defined phenotyping and genotyping strategies

### **Proposed activities**

The successful service provider will propose to deliver a program that will provide extensive educational opportunities and mechanisms for providing support for the use of genetic and genomic tools.

This project may also consider building the capability of livestock advisors and agents, who in turn will provide support to a wide range of seedstock and commercial producers and service providers during the project and in the longer term.

To achieve such outcomes extension programs may look to engage with, but not limited to, breed societies, commercial and seedstock beef producers, livestock advisors and agents, the processing sector, Animal Health Professionals, local Government services and industry service providers.

The program must:

- Identify the methodology and scale of engagement with producers to improve genetic progress
- Identify productivity traits of focus to include in selection strategies that will lead to improved genetic gain and ultimately increase productivity
- Demonstrate how it will increase the adoption of genetics-related products and services and ensure fit for purpose use of the tools. Genetics specific products and services include but are not limited to:
  - [MLA Genetics Hub](#)
  - [BredWell FedWell](#) workshops
  - [BreedingEDGE](#)
  - [MLA Toolbox](#)
  - [Profitable Grazing Systems](#)
  - [BREEDPLAN](#)
  - [Matesel](#)
  - [ReProBI](#)
- Consider how it will create lasting impact demonstrated as genetic gains and/or ongoing increased adoption through enhanced industry knowledge.
- Deliver a series of case studies that can be used through MLA communications for producer education
- Consider how it will incorporate Peer-to-peer producer learning
- Be delivered under an MDC co-contribution model.
- Adhere with MLA reporting and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) requirements, including milestone reports and a final report. Development of these reports and M&E deliverables must be included in the budget and project proposal.
- Measure the baseline genetic performance of participating herds through Herd profile or bull team performance.

The program can:

- Undertake a desktop analysis of current gaps in extension provided it builds on work already completed by MLA
- Be delivered over more than one financial year.
- Utilise funding from other partners (including livestock producers, other RDC's), however any funding that is matched through MDC must adhere to the MDC regulations.
- Develop new training materials or can utilise existing training programs.
- Be delivered as a collective between more than one service provider.

## Timing

MLA is looking to engage the successful party/ies to undertake this work starting April/May 2025. This must be considered in your proposed timeline of activities.

## Funding

This expression of interest is to identify opportunities for funding through the MLA Donor Company. Information and guidelines on the MLA Donor Company can be found on the [MLA website](#).

Per MLA Donor Company guidelines, applicants (individually or as a collective) will be expected to contribute 60% of the total project costs.

Project would be contracted under MLA Standard Terms available at:

<https://www.mla.com.au/about-mla/mla-agreements/>

Project concepts for all values are encouraged and value for money will be determined based on the impact the project delivers.

## Selection criteria

Selection will be based on the assessment against the following criteria:

- Experience of individual/team in the delivery of education and training materials.
- Relevant knowledge of the individual/team in extension and capability building.
- Knowledge of livestock genetics and its application within a northern beef production system
- Knowledge of the challenges to adoption and opportunities for adoption of genetics tools and services within the northern beef industry
- Value for money
- Expected impact as described by stakeholder engagement, expected change in usage of genetics, productivity gains and broader industry benefit.
- Ability to deliver on all components of the project scope

## Confidentiality

By submitting an EOI, the applicant will disclose information in the preliminary application form to MLA's employees, agents, contractors and advisors, for the purposes of this tender process and any legal or MLA policy requirement. Applicants must identify any information that they consider should be protected as confidential information and provide reasons for this.

## Expressions of Interest

Please submit an EOI using the preliminary application form or contact MLA to discuss your project concept prior to submitting an EOI.

All EOIs are to be submitted by **28 March 2025** to:

Sarah Strachan – [sstrachan@mla.com.au](mailto:sstrachan@mla.com.au)

## Further information

**Sarah Strachan**

**Group Manager – Adoption & Commercial Services**

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