

final report

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PDS Remote Water Management (Roma Region) - Supplementary Report

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Executive summary

Approximately \$3,000 was unspent in the course of the MLA funded project B.NBP.0505 to develop Producer Demonstration Sites (PDS) on Remote Water Management Technologies in the Roma Region. Due to the success of the first two field days these funds have been utilised to run an additional two field days in central New South Wales and central Queensland to further increase the adoption of technologies to reduce production costs by improving efficiencies in vehicle and labour utilisation for the grazing industry. An additional \$3,000 was provided by Observant to cover salary to organise and run the field days. The format of the field days did not change and the focus of each field day was about the benefits of utilising the technology.

This report is a brief supplementary report of the field day program, presentation summaries and field day evaluations for the two additional field days.

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1 Field days

Field days were held at “Glencoe” north of Mendooran, and “Birrong”, east of Springsure, to inform local producers of first hand experiences and benefits of using remote water management technology. The field days included presentations by:

- technology experts
- local beef producers
- equipment suppliers.

The main objective of the field days was to have producers talk about the reasoning behind adopting this technology, any difficulties with installation, operation or equipment reliability, and the financial or other benefits experienced through using this technology.

Advertising for the field days was through flyers distributed in the region, media releases, paid advertising in the Western Magazine and the bush telegraph by the producer hosting the day telephoning his neighbours.

1.1 Glencoe

A field day was held at “Glencoe” on 29 September 2011 with 19 attending the event. This included 14 beef producers and representatives from RaboBank (1), Outwest Pumps & Irrigation (1), Observant (1), and DEEDI (2).

The format of the field day included:

1. An introduction and presentation by Les Zeller (DEEDI) about the review of remote management technologies in 2006 and the objectives and outcomes of the PDS project.
2. Presentations by Norton Crane and Eric Harvey (producers) describing what led them to invest in a telemetry monitoring system, any issues relating to installation and operation of their telemetry systems and the benefits that they have experienced by investing and using this equipment.
3. A video presentation of Richard Golding (producer) talking about the water management telemetry system he shares with three neighbours. This video also covered his experiences relating to issues and benefits of installing this equipment.
4. Mike Morris (Outwest Pumps & Irrigation – equipment supplier in the Dubbo region) spoke about his past experiences with telemetry. Mike also demonstrated the software in real time controlling and monitoring a system.
5. Eric Harvey gave a presentation for Mark Gardener from Vanguard Business Services on return on investment.
6. Les Zeller reviewed the morning talks, highlighting the benefits and facilitating a questions and answers session.

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Table 1. Questions and answers as Feedback from “Glencoe” field day

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Question 1. | Has the field day been of value to your business. If so, how? |
| Responses | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes. Cross flow of ideas. 2. Yes. 3. Yes, very interesting, look at new technology. 4. Yes. Technology to save you time and money. 5. Yes, save time and money and improved lifestyle. 6. Yes. Time and labour saving. 7. Yes, interesting new ideas and showing applications. 8. Yes, saving time. 9. Yes. I am a technical representative for Observant remote monitoring. 10. Yes. Feedback from existing users of equipment, questions raised from potential users. |
| Question 2. | Has the day influenced your decision to change aspects of your business? |
| Responses | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes. Further efficiency gains. 2. Yes. 3. Yes. 4. Yes, to make use of new technology. 5. Yes, just confirmed it. 6. Yes, would like to install water monitoring points. 7. Yes. New technology to improve efficiency and reduce costs. 8. Yes, install some water point monitoring. 9. Yes. 10. Yes. Technology is here to stay, don't sit back, act now. |
| Question 3. | What were some of the most interesting things you learnt? |
| Responses | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More technology coming on-line. 2. How we could use new technology. 3. Simplicity of Observant system. 4. The value of collecting data. 5. The range of information that can be collected. 6. Water management and technology available. 7. Use of remote monitoring technology. 8. The cost of going down that track. 9. Land holders understanding and requirements (wish list). 10. The portability of some of the recording equipment. |
| Question 4. | Are there some conclusions you have drawn from what you have seen and heard? |
| Responses | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. - 2. It brought out some of my inefficiencies. 3. Low cost entry. 4. To get out of the paradigm and experience completely new ideas. 5. Will only become better in time. 6. Technology more affordable than we thought. 7. Have shown use of remote monitoring. 8. That the data that you collect is only any good if you use it for some reason. 9. - 10. The cost savings will outway the initial costs in the long run, sooner than one thinks. |
| Question 5. | Please provide an overall comment about the field day. |
| Responses | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enjoyable day. Thanks to Norton for hosting. 2. Very good, INFORMATIVE. 3. Excellent, informative which most people could put to some use. 4. A good value day. There should be more of them. 5. Just a great day. 6. Interesting speakers on farm management and labour saving devices. |

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Very informative use of new technology. 8. Very interesting – something I'll look into further. 9. Great day. Learnt quite a bit from the speakers and people I've met. 10. A broad spectrum and knowledge of all speakers and presenters to answer all relevant questions; Well done. |
|--|--|

1.2 Birrong

A field day was held at “Birrong” on 13 October 2011 with 12 attending the event. This included 6 beef producers and representatives from CQ Pumps & Irrigation (1) and DEEDI (4) and a work experience student. The rollup was disappointing considering 25 had indicated that they would attend.

The format of the field day included:

1. An introduction and presentation by Les Zeller (DEEDI) about the review of remote management technologies in 2006 and the objectives and outcomes of the PDS project.
2. Presentations by Ross Rolf and Kent Morris (producers) describing what led them to invest in a telemetry monitoring system, any issues relating to installation and operation of their telemetry systems and the benefits that they have experienced by investing and using this equipment.
3. A video presentation of Richard Golding (producer) talking about the water management telemetry system he shares with three neighbours. This video also covered his experiences relating to issues and benefits of installing this equipment.
4. Paul McGavin (CQ Pumps & Irrigation – equipment supplier in the Emerald region) spoke about his past experiences with telemetry.
5. Les Zeller gave a presentation about the PDS project showing an economic analysis including data on the return on investment for each site. He then reviewed the morning talks, highlighting the benefits and facilitating a questions and answers session.

Table 2. Questions and answers as Feedback from “Birrong” field day

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|-------------|---|
| Question 1. | Has the field day been of value to your business. If so, how? |
| Responses | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, help me know more on the subject. 2. Yes, more information and understanding of the system. 3. Yes. 4. Yes, I now know a lot more about telemetry systems and how they can benefit my operation. 5. Yes. Showed me how I can possibly reduce costs through technology. |
| Question 2. | Has the day influenced your decision to change aspects of your business? |
| Responses | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NA. 2. Yes. 3. Yes. Work for DEEDI but now more confident of the feasibility of the technology for this part of the world. 4. Yes, cost benefits look good, need to work out my own figures. 5. It will certainly be something I will look at more closely. |
| Question 3. | What were some of the most interesting things you learnt? |
| Responses | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The cost and savings. The accuracy of the systems. 2. Hearing people's stories about how it works and PDS's. 3. Reliability, none of the producers had any concerns. 4. How others are using these systems and the benefits they've seen. 5. The cost benefit analysis from the PDS. |
| Question 4. | Are there some conclusions you have drawn from what you have seen and heard? |
| Responses | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is doable and worth it. 2. - 3. Probably worth investing for some people in this area. |

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. This technology is improving all the time and is well worth looking into.5. It works well and is saving producers \$. |
| Question 5. | Please provide an overall comment about the field day. |
| Responses | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Good information provided.2. Good information and hearing Ross, Kent and Paul was invaluable.3. Very good.4. Great day, good location, good food and good information.5. Very informative. |

2 Conclusion

The organisation and running these field days raised a couple of issues that were not identified previously.

- One issue identified was the value of advertisements' in the rural press. For the field day at Glencoe an advertisement was taken out in the Western Magazine resulting in only one of the 14 producers (7%) attending in response to this advertisement while also only one producer had heard anything through the radio media. The most effective promotion for the day resulted from the host producer contacting neighbours and friends.
- Another issue was the level of technical knowledge the resellers have of the equipment. This knowledge varied considerably and is a factor if adoption of this technology is to increase.
- Finally, a broader communication strategy that targets producers and beef extension officers and others in advisory roles would help increase the awareness of this technology's benefits, particularly to vehicle and labour savings. There are opportunities in the near future to promote the outcomes of this work on the new FutureBeef website, targeted at beef producers in Northern Australia (currently under development), and through beef e-bulletins and media activities. These activities would help further promote the benefits of this technology in improving sustainability for rural industries.

A total of 20 producers attended these two field days with 50% of feedback indicating an interest in adopting this technology in the future.