

2018 Annual Report



Ag Ex has had a very productive year supporting the needs of the grower group network across southern Australia.

A key highlight of the year has been Ag Ex's response to the review of the National Landcare Program (NLP), and subsequent response to the NLP 2. Ag Ex convened a workshop involving 38 representatives of grower groups, NRM and government agencies to workshop a collaborative approach to NLP2 Smarter Farms and the Regional Partnerships programs. Subsequently, Ag Ex lead a collaborative bid with SANTFA and the CSIRO in the Sustainable Farming Partnerships program involving 10 grower groups from across south eastern Australia in a project submission titled *"Australia Warm and Cool Season Mixed Cover Cropping for Sustainable Farming Systems in south eastern Australia"*.

Ag Ex has also been working closely with the Ag Bureau of SA to develop a response to PIRSA's *"Modern Extension Framework"*. The development of this strategy was in direct response to discussions held at the 2017 Chairs Forum and follow up with PIRSA CEO, Scott Ashby.

Ag Ex has wound up three important collaborative projects this year, the NLP funded "Increasing the effectiveness of extending sustainable agriculture research by farming systems groups" involving representatives from 12 grower groups from across Australia; the GRDC funded "Pathways to Grains & NRM" project involving NRM regions and grower groups across SA, Victoria and NSW; and the GRDC funded "Grain & Graze Three" project.

Ag Ex was fortunate to secure a Regions SA (PIRSA) project this year to develop a business plan for the establishment of an automatic weather station network across the Mid North to provide accurate meteorological information on inversions, thus being able to provide accurate information to farmers on safe conditions for pesticide application. The success of the project has led to further funding over the next two years to establish a Mid North network of 40 automatic weather stations.

Ag Ex has also secured a number of smaller projects that will assist grower groups in 2018/19, including a GRDC funded project on the extension of knowledge and resources to manage risk and improve whole farm profit through integration of cropping and livestock enterprises; a review of the Federation University Online Farm Trial web site by five grower groups to provide information on improving the user experience with the site; and a national MLA project on expanding the understanding and spread of dung beetles in farming systems involving four grower groups in SA.

Ag Ex continues its very effective partnership with the Northern & Yorke (N&Y) NRM Board. Ag Ex has hosted the N&Y Regional Landcare Facilitator position for the past 8 years, and will continue to host the Regional Agricultural Landcare Facilitator position in the new NLP2 Regional Partnerships program for the next 4 years. Ag Ex also participates in the N&Y Region Conservation Action Planning group representing the agricultural sector.

Ag Ex supported four SA grower group delegates to attend the “Growing Expectations” National Grower Group Summit hosted by WA’s Grower Group Alliance in Perth last August. It presented opportunities for regional and local economies through farming group networks. An outcome of the Summit has been an approach the Commonwealth government to seek support for the development of a national extension strategy for broadacre agriculture and to support the capacity building of those in the network to deliver more effective outcomes for Australian Government investments.

Ag Ex continued to liaise with, network and represent grower groups in a range of other capacities over the past year, including supporting the formation of the WoTL group and their Thriving Women’s conference; sharing a site at the YP Field Days with GPSA; meeting with the SAGIT board to discuss the grower group network; supporting the GPSA / LSSA Growing SA conference with a display; and supporting the State Landcare Conference held in Clare.

Ag Ex has strategies in place to engage more effectively with the livestock sector through its association with Sheep Connect SA and developing relationships with MLA and AWI. Ag Ex has also indicated its commitment to the development of the Farming Smarter CRC being led by the University of New England. Ag Ex is negotiating a governance training course for grower group committee and board members. The one day training course will be presented by Mellor Ollsen toward the middle of 2018.

Ag Ex continues to be active on its web site and social media platforms as well as getting the bi monthly e-news and diary dates out on time.

A big thankyou to Trent, Kerry, Michael and the Ag Ex committee for contributing to another successful year for the Ag Excellence Alliance.

Mark Stanley

Executive Officer – Strategy, Relationships and Planning.