



Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Group

May 2014 Newsletter

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- Submission to the Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper Development (separate attachment)

New Director ratified by Board.

Members will recall from the December Newsletter that a then vacant “Agri-business Marketing” position had been created by the Board to ensure that we continue to fully encompass the “whole of supply chain” overview that is widely acknowledged as a great strength of the Group. We are delighted to announce that this vacancy has now been filled with Anthony Houston accepting the position. Anthony is well known across our industry and the remarkable success of his company’s “brand” penetration into the

national market provides ample evidence of his suitability for the position. Anthony's enthusiastic participation in Board meetings and related TAPG representative activities throughout this year has already confirmed the value that he is adding to Board activities.

Chairman embarks on prestigious program.

The TAPG Board is pleased to announce that the current Chairman, Jim Wilson, has been accepted into the 21st Australian Rural Leadership Course (ARLP), beginning this month. The ARLP is rural Australia's iconic leadership development program. It is a 59 day program, delivered in six sessions over 17 months. Five of these sessions take place in locations across Australia and one component takes place overseas. The nationwide group of participants is generally restricted to between 30 – 35 leaders.

The ARLP aims to produce a network of informed, capable and ethical leaders who are able to work collaboratively to advance the interests of their industries, businesses, communities and rural Australia in general.

The program works to improve the capacity of rural leaders to engage wherever a challenge is best addressed and wherever they can contribute most effectively. This may be within communities and industries, in the political arena or in team-based roles. (Actually sounds like a role description for all our Directors? – Ed. comment)

Jim has already provided exemplary leadership to our Group over the past eighteen months and it comes as no surprise that he has been selected as one of the participants in this program. It can also be seen as much needed encouragement for those working at rebuilding the Tasmanian Plantation Forestry Industry.

Jim is currently participating in the first unit of the course and is in the Kimberley region. We look forward to watching his progress throughout this unique and prestigious opportunity.

More information is available at:

<http://rural-leaders.com.au/programms/australian-rural-leadership-program-for-established-leaders>)

Caring for Country-Innovation Grants

Almost 12 months ago TAPG submitted an application for a project based on bringing previous trial work in Controlled Traffic to a commercial scale. A further adjunct to the project was the utilisation of Subsoil Manuring. (The purpose of subsoil manuring {SSM} is to rip organic material into the top of the clay layer in duplex soils in order to improve the water holding capacity of the soil together with improving the capacity for plant roots to access moisture.) Our project was concentrating on these duplex soils where they now had access to irrigation water and were being transitioned to more intensive cropping. Technical support for the project would be provided through a sub-contract, let by TAPG, engaging TIA staff and, through them, leading soil experts from the private sector.

Early in the current financial year we received notice that we had been successful and would receive a little in excess of \$1 million over two years to conduct the project.

Sadly this approval did not result in the funding being received as payment became caught up in the caretaker conventions surrounding the Federal Election. Following the election all projects were reassessed by the new government against its priorities but finally, the day before Christmas, we were advised that we had again been successful. Ministerial announcements were made in January and our steering committee began work.

As our project was based on monitoring both soil and crop outcomes over two rotations all our early work has been focussed on SSM before the underlying clay became too wet to shatter. We had intended to hire a purpose built machine from Southern Farming Systems (Victoria) but rain and mechanical delays have made this impossible for this autumn. However, we are now having our own machine modified by Dobmac in Ulverstone that will allow us to conduct a much more extensive application of the technique and its ready availability will ensure a far reaching legacy for this part of the funding on into the future. The delayed start will also have the bonus of providing us with the opportunity to more extensively engage and plan with the farmers who will form our stakeholder group. We have received assurances that our project will be granted a time extension in recognition of the delayed approval process that was beyond our control.

We look forward to reporting on the project as it unfolds over the next two years.

Photos that follow show the Victorian machine on its trailer when it was inspected recently by John McPhee (TIA) and Michael Hart (TAPG)

A short video showing the process can be viewed at:

<http://www.youtube.com>

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For further information, including requests for involvement, please contact the Executive Officer.





Board Meeting Special Guests

The most recent Board Meeting was conducted in Hobart on 30 April. This choice of venue enabled the presence of several guests who made a significant contribution to our ongoing agenda.

- Hon. Jeremy Rockliff, Deputy Premier and Minister for Agriculture and Water (amongst other portfolios).

We were delighted to secure the Minister's presence during a particularly busy time for the incoming government. He was very generous with his time and agreed with our request that he consider the ongoing nature of his representation on our Board. Members may recall that Ministerial Representation has been a long standing feature of the composition of our Board and is one element of our structure that we value highly. He also provided insight into his thinking on a range of agricultural policy issues. The Board engaged with him on these topics and the Minister appeared to appreciate the various contributions from around the table on some very difficult issues. The Board looks forward to further high order discussions into the future.

- Professor Peter Rathjen, Vice Chancellor UTAS & Professor Holger Meinke, Head of the School of Land & Food & TIA.

In response to concern expressed by several members regarding changes to the School of Agriculture, the Board had met with Holger as part of our December Board meeting. (Several non-board members also attended this part of the meeting.) At that meeting Holger explained the financial constraints experienced by UTAS and the strategies employed to maintain courses within larger, administratively efficient structures. It was suggested at the time that continuing to

build this dialogue between UTAS and the Board could be mutually beneficial. During the Board's February meeting it was resolved to seek a meeting with the Vice Chancellor with a view to establishing in his mind both the nature of the TAPG's membership and their critical interest in courses and graduates more generally.

During the Board's April meeting Directors were greatly impressed by the empathy of the VC to agriculture generally as he shared his rural upbringing combined with his passionate advocacy for UTAS and the role it needs to play in the Tasmanian Economy. He further elaborated the constraints within which Australian Universities needed to compete for students together with the status that is gained from research success that, in turn, leads to higher numbers of overseas and national students seeking enrolment. It is these cross-subsidisations and maintaining balance between them that are at the core of their administrative challenges. His clear articulation of the responsibility accepted by UTAS as the sole university serving Tasmania and the resultant impact on their decision making was reassuring.

Importantly, Directors and Guests present felt that a pathway through Holger to the VC was now very clear and would allow for more timely exchange of views/questions in the future.

For Comments of other feedback on this Newsletter please contact the Executive Officer:

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