

Final Report

Communication and extension for the Australian Prune Industry

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Australian Prune Industry Association Inc

Project code:

DP18000

Project:

Communication and extension for the Australian Prune Industry DP18000

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Summary

This short-term communications project was implemented in late 2018 following a disastrously poor prune crop in early 2018 significantly impacting 2018/19 levy income.

This change was significant as it followed many years in which the Australian prune industry and Government had funded industry development projects, involving the engagement of a full or part-time Industry Development Officer.

The project had the following objectives:

1. Coordinate information delivery to the Australian prune industry.
2. Increase industry understanding of the latest relevant R&D outcomes.
3. Facilitate the adoption of R&D by prune businesses.
4. Inform primary and secondary stakeholders about current issues relevant to the prune industry.

During the project duration of thirteen months, a range of project outputs were delivered. These outputs included articles prepared for four editions of *The Vine* magazine; more than 38 regular Ausprunes e-news editions prepared and circulated to prune growers and industry stakeholders; four field events and a Growers' Forum being held.

These outputs ensured that prune growers and other industry stakeholders continued to be well informed and able to make more informed business decisions. All industry stakeholders were provided with access to the latest research results and technological information through effective communication and extension strategies aimed at enhancing innovation and the adoption of R&D outputs.

Importantly, input and guidance were provided regularly by members of the Project Reference Group.

It is worth noting that APIA provided a range of these communication services during the period (July – October 2018) following cessation of the previous prune industry development project (DP15002) and prior to the signing of the DP18000 project agreement. These are detailed in the Outputs section of this report.

Keywords

Prune industry; communications; field events; Growers' Forum; *The Vine* magazine; e-news; promotion; prune processors; prune marketers; prune research; best practice management

Introduction

For many years the Australian prune industry has been involved with a range of industry development projects. APIA was contracted by Horticulture Australia Ltd (HAL) and then Hort Innovation, as the service provider to deliver these industry development services.

These previous projects included:

- DP11001 Technical Development for the Australian Prune Industry (ended 30/10/2014)
- DP14000 Technical Development for the Australian Prune Industry - Stage 2 (ended 31/10/2017)

After project DP14000 finished the investment continued in DP15002, with Hort Innovation directly contracting Mrs Ann Furner as the service provider. APIA worked closely with her until the project ended at 31 July, 2018.

As explained earlier, APIA was well positioned to take on this essential communication role and manage the communication and extension activities to be delivered through the revised project DP18000 and achieve the intended outcomes which included:

- A better informed prune industry able to make better business decisions
- Enhanced communication and sharing of technical information amongst all prune industry sectors
- Improved coordination of information and knowledge generation to benefit all industry sectors
- Increased adoption of research outcomes
- Increased understanding of the value of industry funded R&D amongst levy payers
- Improved opportunity to identify emerging issues, information gaps and thus, future R&D priorities.

APIA's strong networks within the prune industry and across other horticulture industries were useful in helping project activities to be delivered effectively.

Methodology

The following activities were undertaken in order to deliver the project outputs listed:

- **Preparation of articles for *The Vine* magazine.**

For each edition of *The Vine* (4 per year), the project activities included:

- Preparing a minimum of 2 pages per edition (this equated to a minimum of 2 articles per edition)
- Identifying topics including R&D updates on prune variety & rootstock trial, industry development information, and relevant technical information drawn from relevant domestic and international sources
- Liaising with Paula Smith (sub-contract, freelance journalist) regarding content (topics, space requirements etc) for each edition and agreeing on a simple work plan
- Liaising with the APIA Chairman, APIA Executive members and the Project Reference Group as required, regarding suggested topics for inclusion in articles for each edition
- Finalising articles in close consultation with contributors and Paula Smith, including the proofing of articles

- **Ausprunes e-news**

For each edition of the Ausprunes e-news, the project activities included:

- Preparing a minimum of 2 e-news editions per month
- Identifying topics suitable for use in an e-news including research updates, industry development information, reminders, warnings or other relevant information. The topics differed from those in *The Vine* mainly due to the time constraints associated with a quarterly publication. Information in e-news was timely and could be sent with urgency.
- Liaising with Paula Smith (freelance journalist) regarding content for each edition
- Liaising with the APIA Chairman, APIA Executive members and Project Reference Group as required, for feedback on possible topics for inclusion in an e-news
- Finalising with contributors & Paula Smith and arranging for e-news distribution

- **Grower field days/field walks**

The project activities included:

- Conducting a minimum of 3 field days or field walks for prune growers between mid-November 2018 and December 2019.
- Field co-ordinator, Yenda Producers, identifying suitable topics for prune growers by liaising with APIA Chairman, APIA Executive members and other stakeholders (including processors)
- Field co-ordinator, Yenda Producers, arranging each field day or field walk, including arranging venues, speakers, refreshments etc
- Field co-ordinator, Yenda Producers, liaising with Phil Chidgzey and Paula Smith (freelance journalist) regarding options for promoting details of the field day/field walk to prune growers
- Feedback from each field event being provided by the field co-ordinator, Yenda Producers.

- **Grower Forum**

The project activities included:

- Conducting one Grower Forum on a relevant industry development topic that will create real interest amongst prune growers and other stakeholders
- Project Reference Group provided planning input for this forum
- APIA identifying suitable topics for prune growers by liaising with APIA Chairman, APIA Executive members, other stakeholders (including processors)
- APIA arranging the Growers' Forum, including arranging venues, speakers, refreshments etc
- APIA liaising with Paula Smith (sub-contract, freelance journalist) regarding options for promoting details of the Growers' Forum to prune growers and other stakeholders
- APIA obtaining grower feedback on the Growers' Forum from the participants

- **Project Reference Group**

The project activities included:

- Establishing a Project Reference Group that provided input and guidance on work plans, as well as to monitoring the delivery of project activities and evaluating achievement of outcomes against outputs, budget and timelines.

- **Project Reporting**

The project activities included:

- Preparing project updates for relevant grower meetings including APIA Annual Conference

- **Liaison Activities**

The project activities included:

- Regular liaison with prune processors, by APIA Chair and National Secretary
- Regular liaison with Hort Innovation, to provide feedback on priority R&D and information needs, as well as referring any issues that require consideration or decision by Hort Innovation

- **Other Activities**

The project activities included:

- Preparing milestone report and final project report

Outputs

Project outputs delivered included the following:

- Articles as required for each edition of *The Vine* magazine, a hard copy and online quarterly magazine provided to all prune growers and industry stakeholders. A minimum of 2 technical articles per edition were provided.
- Regular Ausprunes e-newsletters (38 editions) were emailed to all prune growers and industry stakeholders on a regular basis. A minimum of 2 e-news editions per month were provided.
- Four grower field days or workshops were held.
- One Growers' Forum was held at a time coinciding with the APIA Annual Conference 2019.
- Project Reference Group met as required and provided input and guidance on project activities, as well as monitoring these activities.
- Project updates were provided for relevant grower meetings including the APIA Annual Conference.
- Milestone and final reports were prepared for Hort Innovation.
- APIA regularly liaised with processors and Hort Innovation.

Articles prepared for *The Vine*

2019

Jan Feb Mar 2019 edition (pages 20-23)	https://www.dropbox.com/s/b8oqzl42kgz6mlv/
Apr May Jun 2019 edition (pages 20-23)	https://www.dropbox.com/s/lv0g39o55i8gdpu/
July Aug Sep 2019 edition (pages 20-21)	https://www.dropbox.com/s/kfe0pv5c3getioo/

E-news editions

2018

ausprunes_ene news vol 7 issue 16 APIA conference <https://www.dropbox.com/s/6l556eaxgbf5z6y/>

2019

ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 1 Masterclass recipient <https://www.dropbox.com/s/omkts6ukf4vfbpi/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 2 HI Strategic Plan workshop <https://www.dropbox.com/s/1yrccwnfvjqpjwi/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 3 Churchill fellowship <https://www.dropbox.com/s/530ojxl8iteyomf/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 4 Executive & member training <https://www.dropbox.com/s/7cwud63bc3fw8eq/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 5 Hort Innovation handbook <https://www.dropbox.com/s/w73xsxn7n17ye69/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 6 Executive training <https://www.dropbox.com/s/hk6ajtwvway5qqg/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 7 Plant biosecurity <https://www.dropbox.com/s/f6pg4hksv1bk49w/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 8 Fair Work Commission <https://www.dropbox.com/s/5z831b4z3m6rtxu/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 9 Good Food Wine Show EOI <https://www.dropbox.com/s/jxrfro3egpene9a/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 10 Hort Innovation strategic plan <https://www.dropbox.com/s/q77bvko05j63tbe/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 11 Pruning demo workshop <https://www.dropbox.com/s/uimst60bxpdfxf2/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 12 Pruning demo revised location <https://www.dropbox.com/s/vpvp simqxb8cft4/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 13 Hort Innovation new strategy <https://www.dropbox.com/s/osa4xh3p5goxqai/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 14 IPA Congress 2019 <https://www.dropbox.com/s/4k78ie6cyfmc2dz/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 15 Sydney Good Food & Wine <https://www.dropbox.com/s/nos14h238e64jak/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 16 Aussie prunes in print <https://www.dropbox.com/s/sznmfhtcr9zx8wk/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 17 Hort Innovation AGM <https://www.dropbox.com/s/t6fllt9fhc68px4/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 18 Prune herbicide workshop <https://www.dropbox.com/s/fcl762hjcpp0gwy/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 19 2019 Annual Conference <https://www.dropbox.com/s/5a67p3bmqqlbz2j/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 20 Herbicide workshop <https://www.dropbox.com/s/uf067eyi3wpji55/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 21 National Renewables Expo <https://www.dropbox.com/s/t35byseb0nldlgn/>
ausprunes_ene news vol 8 issue 22 Herbicide workshop <https://www.dropbox.com/s/zme1a9bsra4u12t/>

ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 23 - Variety Evaluation Field Walk <https://www.dropbox.com/s/baq6nb10ot3t8r6/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 24 Energy optimisation pilots <https://www.dropbox.com/s/p8s3do5ppsrinxz/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 25 - Hort innovation fly research <https://www.dropbox.com/s/fr6keh5aba0wkcf/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 26 Hort industry opportunities <https://www.dropbox.com/s/aifiwa95uelljlv/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 27 - Field Walk reminder <https://www.dropbox.com/s/apnd28xsdbqix7d/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 28 Herbicide workshop <https://www.dropbox.com/s/usafvnchoduan6a/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 29 - APIA Conference update <https://www.dropbox.com/s/2bp2oaxgybd733a/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 30 - Hort Innovation update V2 <https://www.dropbox.com/s/mk6ob2liqfnbbf1/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 31 Prune-based energy bars <https://www.dropbox.com/s/mk6ob2liqfnbbf1/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 32 Brisbane Good Food Wine Show <https://www.dropbox.com/s/lajy1hvr8ynjvsh/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 33 Herbicide workshop report <https://www.dropbox.com/s/eezsthox1han0b3/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 34 Masterclass Hort Business <https://www.dropbox.com/s/cuso4q0lgzefjkt/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 35 Hort Innovation Board members <https://www.dropbox.com/s/winewlrahlfuaiz/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 36 New podcast bust myths <https://www.dropbox.com/s/nwfv1nw6cpnb0mv/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 37 Masterclass date extended <https://www.dropbox.com/s/wgzg03j0q4f4je/>
ausprunes_eneews vol 8 issue 38 APIA Changes to Office Bearers & new portfolios
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/1ugu0fvpy380llc/>

Field Events & Growers' Forum held during 2019

Pruning demonstration workshop (Thurs 6 June 2019) <https://www.dropbox.com/s/uimst60bpxpdfxf2/>

- Pruning demonstration workshop was held at Paul Carver's farm, Carver Road, Yenda.

Herbicide workshop (Weds 18 September, 2019) <https://www.dropbox.com/s/fcl762hjcpp0gwy/>

- Herbicide workshop was held at the Yenda Diggers' Club with a focus on Gramoxone and Sprayseed use.

Prune Varieties field walk (15 October, 2019) <https://www.dropbox.com/s/baq6nb10ot3t8r6/>

- A prune varieties field walk was held at the Variety Evaluation block on Peter Raccanello's property, Barracks Rd, Yenda. Growers were able to observe a range of varieties growing in the trial block and note differences in their performance early in the season.

Herbicide workshop (Tues 5 November, 2019) <https://www.dropbox.com/s/usafvnchoduan6a/>

- A workshop was held at Paul Carver's property, Yenda with a focus on the appropriate application of Gramoxone and Sprayseed in the orchard.

Growers' Forum held in conjunction with APIA Annual Conference (Tues 15 Oct 2019)

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/e0uoh6eorvhour/>

- A growers' forum was held at the Zecca Restaurant where a range of guest speakers participated, including John Wilkie, Principal Horticulturist, Horticulture & Forestry Science Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Queensland, a specialist in subtropical/tropical tree crop productivity. Other speakers included Michael Bartholomew, CEO of Sabrands & Andre Estrella, Sunraysia Senior Brand Manager.

Other Outputs

A range of other outputs were delivered during the project period. These included:

- The Project Reference Group provided input and guidance on project activities, on a regular basis
- Project updates were provided for relevant meetings and the APIA Annual Conference
- Milestone and final reports were prepared for Hort Innovation
- APIA regularly liaised with processors and Hort Innovation

Additional Outputs

The articles, e-news items & field event listed below were prepared during 2018, following cessation of the previous prune industry development project mid-year and before the DP18000 project agreement was signed.

Articles prepared for *The Vine*

2018

Oct Nov Dec 2018 edition (pages 20-21) <https://www.dropbox.com/s/27engk9hp8474ij/>

E-news editions

2018

ausprunes_eneews vol 7 issue 11 RD program restricted <https://www.dropbox.com/s/t3ztrp5sdldtf2p/>

ausprunes_eneews vol 7 issue 12 APIA promotions <https://www.dropbox.com/s/aa2op5eq0ghsr9m/>

ausprunes_eneews vol 7 issue 13 New format for 2018 Conference <https://www.dropbox.com/s/6psj7q0cro0f7ua/>

ausprunes_eneews vol 7 issue 14 Rural Womens award <https://www.dropbox.com/s/zwc3hz25ahshehz/>

ausprunes_eneews vol 7 issue 15 APIA thinning demo <https://www.dropbox.com/s/oditgj27chiayzf/>

Field Event

2018

Prune Thinning Demonstration

This field event was held on 30th October, 2018 just prior to the project agreement being signed. The location was Peter Raccanello's variety trial site on Barracks Rd, Yenda.

About 30 prune growers attended and gave positive verbal feedback about the information provided in relation to the practicalities of mechanical thinning of crop load to achieve better quality fruit (as many growers had to manage a heavier crop set).

Outcomes

The project outcomes delivered through project activities included the following:

Four articles prepared for *The Vine* magazine

- Increased grower awareness of the industry's strategic objectives of undertaking R&D and extension to provide results that support activities to increase the demand for Australian prunes and improve producer profitability
- Increased information flow to growers on latest research results, Industry Development matters, best practice management, industry forecasts and other industry issues that enhanced grower capability to implement R&D outcomes and deliver the supply and fruit quality improvements needed by the industry
- Encouraged sharing of knowledge and technical information amongst prune industry sectors resulting in more informed growers & industry stakeholders making more informed decisions
- Encouraged grower interest and participation in project field events

For the Ausprune e-news

- Increased grower knowledge, capability and efficiency
- Identified and promoted opportunities for improved industry practices
- Provided timely advice and warnings to APIA membership base and other stakeholders

For the Grower workshops or field walks

- Improved information flow to growers
- Provided practical application of improved practices
- Better understanding of new technologies
- Improved information exchange between growers
- A more informed grower base, with improved information sharing amongst industry sectors

For the Grower Forum

- Improved information flow to growers
- Better understanding of new technologies
- Improved capability to adopt research outcomes
- Greater opportunity to hear from specialist speakers
- A more informed grower base, with improved information sharing amongst industry sectors

The communication activities undertaken through this project enabled APIA to continue to provide prune growers and other stakeholders with relevant research & development, market news and best practice information. This has enabled them to make more informed decisions in relation to their enterprises.

Monitoring and evaluation

For this project, APIA was required to measure and report on project success and evaluation activities through a simple monitoring and evaluation process.

Monitoring of project activities included gathering of information on the publications (*The Vine*, E-news) being finalised and distributed on time, field events and grower forum being scheduled and staged, with reports being prepared as required.

All planned project activities were delivered on time.

In addition, grower feedback on publication content was noted and used to help determine relevant future topics. Feedback was also provided to APIA Executive members during informal chat with growers and industry stakeholders during field events and the Grower Forum and in the networking time afterwards.

The Project Reference Group provided useful input and guidance on work plans, as well as monitoring the delivery of project activities and evaluating the progressive achievement of desired outcomes (outputs, budget and timelines).

Recommendations

APIA strongly recommends that a similar communications strategy continue for the Australian prune industry with the aim of keeping growers and industry stakeholders updated with new technologies, research and changes to best practices, market intelligence and promotion activities.

Refereed scientific publications

None to report

Intellectual property, commercialisation and confidentiality

No project IP, commercialisation or confidentiality issues to report.