

# **Horticulture Innovation Australia**

## **Final Report**

### **Turf Industry Development Project**

Richard Stephens  
Turf Australia Limited

Project Number: TU11015

## TU11015

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## Summary

The purpose of Project TU11015 was to provide tailored industry development services for the WA turf Industry enabling the uptake of research, development, better business practices, improved marketing and to aid in the compilation and provision of valuable information on the turf industry and its benefits for various stakeholders. The result of these project activities has been improved capacity, profitability and professionalism within the WA Turf Industry.

The WA Turf Development Project has improved the Western Australian Turf Industry through: the development and delivery of seminars; convening of relevant industry conferences; direct engagement with industry; researcher liaison; turf sector engagement; regular communications; an industry education program; and the development and use of an effective industry database.

Project priorities and specific outputs were reviewed regularly (IE 6 monthly) and adjustments made to ensure continued industry relevance and commercial reality.

During the period 1 August 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016, there have been many project activities, including:

- Three State Turf Industry Conferences: Turf Alive Symposium, Kings Park West Perth 2012, and the WA Turf Seminars in 2013 and 2015, both held at Thompkins Park, Attadale
- Two regional Turf Growers WA information seminars, held in Bunbury September 2011 and Busselton September 2013
- Twelve metropolitan based industry workshops/seminars
- Publication and distribution of eleven Turf Grass Times industry magazines, between July 2011 and December 2016
- Provision of regular bi-monthly articles for a variety of industry magazines including 'Turf Craft Magazine' and 'Australian Turf Grass Management Journal' and the 'Turf Australia Industry Magazine'
- Creation and distribution of two industry contact booklets
- Creation and distribution of one industry wall planner calendar
- Creation and distribution of WA Turf Industry diary 2015
- Major upgrade of the Turf Growers Association WA Industry Website and contact database.
- Development of new website for Sports Turf Association (WA)
- Development of Social Media, Facebook page for Turf Growers Association WA and WA Turf Industry Twitter account
- Development, publication and distribution of an information brochure "Installing and caring for your low maintenance lawn"
- Active involvement in a strategic alliance with Turf Australia and Landcare Australia via the "Perfect Patch of Green" and "Perfect Pitch of Green" program.
- Development and initiation of a national Networking program for the WA Turf Industry
- Industry strategic planning for the WA Turf Industry
- Input into the development of a new WA Turf Industry Operational Plan 2011- 2014
- Support to the Turf Australia initiative 'Turf Cost of Production Project', 2013

- Support for the Turf Australia Telephone Sales Techniques Workshop 2015
- Participation in industry forums, stakeholder groups, steering committees and major events including:
  - WA Turf Sector Seminars
  - Turf industry workshops and member seminars
  - The University of Western Australia Turf Industry Research Steering Committee and sub-committee's
  - The Perth Garden Festival, Turf Growers Association site
  - Water Corp Waterwise and Garden Industry Forums and Working Groups
  - Department of Water Steering Committee and water innovations workshops
  - Department of Sport and Recreation Steering Committee
  - Green Industry Alliances
  - Department of Agriculture Industry Advisory Steering Committees and biodiversity committees.
  - WA State Forum 2016
  - NxGen Forum in WA August 2016.
  - Localised Urban Forestry Development Plans
  - Parkland WA
  - Green Space Alliance WA
  - WA Horticulture Media Association – Turf presentations

Together, these activities have improved the ability of the WA turf industry to cope with significant economic, social and environmental changes by helping to inform various stakeholders and increasing the professionalism and profitability of turf growers in Western Australia.

## **Keywords**

WA turf Industry, industry development, capacity building, seminars, workshops, communication, research, engagement, education, stakeholders

## Introduction

Western Australia is isolated from the main turf production and maintenance areas elsewhere in Australia and climate, soil characteristics and water issues are significantly different. The WA Turf industry has a unique and 'drying' climate which has many exceptional characteristics to deal with in regards to both turf production and maintenance. Along with the busy workload of all turf farmers, due to the industry supply chain being essentially 'on farm' and year round harvesting, the need to provide tailored capacity building services was identified as a high priority to facilitate the professional development of the turf industry in WA.

In 2010 the Turf Growers Association WA and the Sports Turf Association (WA), both associations being not for profit and with volunteer executive officers, acknowledged the need for tailored capacity building services to service the WA Turf Industry. For several years prior to seeking assistance from the then Horticulture Australia Limited or HAL (now known as Horticulture Innovation Australia - HIA), these two WA associations together employed a part time officer to convene seminars and workshops, create and distribute newsletters and magazines and interact with industry stakeholders. This role quickly grew from one of basic extension to industry development and engagement with various amenity horticultural and green industry sectors and organisations.

Together, both associations recognized that by extending the role, multiple benefits could be provided to turf growers, the sports turf maintenance sector and other 'green' industry stakeholders. Critical to the success of this role was the formal employment of an Industry Development Officer (IDO) to increase awareness and professionalism within the turf industry, both production and maintenance sectors. The expertise required by the IDO included competence in co-ordinating educational experiences for both the production and maintenance sectors, being able to collaborate with various green industry stakeholders and facilitate industry uptake of relevant research, development and marketing initiatives.

The IDO's role, responsibilities and outcomes were directly related to planned activities and priorities as determined by the WA turf industry via a project steering committee. The WA Turf Industry consists of a production sector, represented by the Turf Growers Association of Western Australia (TGA-WA), a sports turf maintenance sector, represented by the Sports Turf Association (WA) (STA-WA), a golf maintenance sector, represented by the Golf Course Superintendents of Western Australia (GCSAWA), a lawn maintenance sector, represented by the Lawn Mowing Contractors Association of Western Australia (LMCA WA) and various other smaller groups.

Of these groups, the TGA-WA has the greatest level of interaction across all sectors and the closest ties with STA-WA. Through its association with the National Peak Industry Body, Turf Australia (TA), TGA-WA was able to bring issues of national significance to the WA turf production industry. Likewise, as a member of the national Sports Turf Association, STA-WA can bring relevant information from other areas of Australia to their industry sector.

A project steering committee was formed with representatives from TGA WA, STA-WA and TA and a project proposal was drafted and submitted to HAL, now known as HIA.

## Methodology

The need for a tailored and dedicated Industry Development resource for the WA turf industry was determined as an industry priority in 2010. The preferred strategy was to engage the services of a dedicated, part time, Industry Development Officer (IDO) to carry out the following within the WA Turf sector:

- Increase awareness of the attributes and benefits from the turf industry, both production and maintenance sectors, through interactions with various stakeholders
- Co-ordinate education experiences for members of the production and maintenance turf sectors through seminars, workshops and/or forums
- Compile, coordinate and communicate relevant new information, research, development and technologies and ensure the WA relevance is determined in national issues
- Produce newsletters and magazines and to maintain regular communications within and between with both production and maintenance turf sectors.

A project steering committee was created to determine the role, responsibilities and expected outcomes and a matched Voluntary Contribution (VC) funding proposal was developed and submitted to HAL. In September 2011, TGA-WA and STA-WA developed a memorandum of understanding to ensure clarity about the voluntary contributions to be paid to HAL from each organisation and the management procedures and responsibilities of the project.

## *Resources*

Initially, from 2011 to 2014, the project was funded 100% by HAL via matched funding from the federal government along with voluntary contributions from TGA-WA and STA-WA. This arrangement enabled funding for a part time Industry Development Officer position at 4 days per week.

In 2014, HAL ceased as an entity and was replaced by HIA. At that time, HIA determined matched voluntary funding for this project would not continue. However, 20% overall funding could now be provided from turf R&D levy funds, resulting in 80% of the project costs being covered, unmatched, by TGA-WA and STA-WA. TGA-WA and STA-WA agreed (reluctantly) to this new arrangement and it resulted in the position having to be reduced to 3 days per week.

Since 2011, two different Industry Development Officers have been employed by Turf Australia under this project. For the most part the duties have been undertaken by Eva Ricci, however for one year in 2012, the position was held by Louise Edmonds.

The TGA-WA and STA-WA boards and members have contributed their expertise as required. A Project Reference Group (PRG) consisting of the IDO and the two associations committee chairs and Turf Australia provided direction and set priorities to ensure industry relevance and a commercial focus. The PRG was formed at the beginning of the project and the first meeting was held on Tuesday 20th September 2011.

Detailed annual operating plans describing activities, timelines, KPIs and expected outcomes were developed annually to provide guidance to the IDO and fortnightly time sheets were kept. The project consisted of the following activity areas:

- Seminar and conference development and delivery
- Communication and administration management
- Researcher Engagement
- Turf Sector Engagement
- Education of industry stakeholders

Each of these activity areas have interrelated outputs and outcomes.

### *Seminar and conference development and delivery*

On average, STA-WA held four industry seminar days per year and TGA-WA convened a minimum of one or two industry seminars or forums per year. In addition, monthly meetings enabled various stakeholder presentations and growers were engaged and interacted with each other while the IDO enabled valuable learning and information exchange to take place.

The seminars covered industry relevant topics such as new technologies, chemical use, first aid, irrigation and site preparation, pests and diseases, equipment training and ground surface seminars. While these were aimed directly at turf growers and/or maintainers, other sectors of the industry often found the information relevant and useful. As such the seminars were generally open to industry stakeholders and often included the preparation of seminar information booklets and information sheets as required.

In addition, biennially the WA Turf Seminar is held as the major turf event on the WA calendar. The IDO is instrumental in organising, coordinating and advertising this event for the wider WA Turf sector.

### **History of seminar events for the duration of Project TU11015**

Seminars, workshops and forums conducted through the duration of the project included:

1. **Sting Nematode Information Forum** – 100 attendees from across the turf production and maintenance sectors. September 2011. Sting Nematode being a particularly significant pest problem in turf in Western Australian sandy soils. Presentations included:
  - Vivien Vanstone, Senior Nematologist Dept. of Agriculture and Food WA - *“Overview of Nematodes”*
  - Kim James, Horticulture Australia Limited - Biosecurity and Market Access R & D Manager - *“Current issues and Management”*
  - Ken Johnston, Sports Turf Technology - *“Impact of Sting Nematodes in Turf”*
  - Vinny Kapur, Grounds Manager, Kings Park Botanical Garden - *“Dealing with Sting Nematode in Turf”*



- Adrian Pitsikas, Turf Australia & TGAWA Chairperson - *“Leading up to a clean scheme for Kikuyu in WA”*



2. **The Turf Alive 2012 Nematode Management Symposium** – was held at the Frazer’s reception centre in Kings Park on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July and was attended by 140 delegates and 12 trade exhibitors. This seminar was a technical follow up on the Sting Nematode Information session that was held in September 2011.
3. **Don Loch on research project TU10002 Turf Mites Survey**  
On the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 2012 Don Loch gave a presentation to the Turf Growers Association at 25 Shields Crescent, Booragoon on the outcome of research project TU10002 Turf Mites Survey
4. **Turf Grass Association of WA Information Seminar & Annual General Meeting**  
The Turf Grass Association of WA’s information day and annual general meeting was held at the Maylands Peninsula Public Golf Course on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 2012. A special resolution was convened to change the name of the TGAA (WA) to the Sports Turf Association of WA.
5. **Turf Growers Association of WA Seminar & Annual General Meeting**  
The Turf Growers Association of WA held its 2012 seminar and annual general meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2012 at 25 Shields Crescent Booragoon. Professor Tim Colmer from the University of WA Turf Research Institute gave a presentation on two levy funded projects TU 09005 Influence of Mowing Heights on Water Use By Turf Grass and Responses of Soft Leaf Buffalo grass to Renovation and TU11012 Effectively Utilising Water Allocations for Managing Turfgrass in Open Spaces.

6. **Sports Turf Association of WA Chemical Refresher Course**

On 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2012, the Sports Turf Association hosted a course facilitated by Wayne Miller from Challenger TAFE at the Leederville Lawn Bowls Club. This course was attended by 19 sports turf managers.

7. **STA(WA) Workshop Parasitic Nematode ID Workshop**

A full day workshop was held April 4<sup>th</sup> 2013 at Challenger TAFE in Murdoch. The “Parasitic Nematode ID Workshop” workshop with the guest speaker being nationally respected Nematologist Prof Mike Hodder. There were forty workshop participants from across the Turf maintenance sector at the event. Feedback from this workshop was excellent with participants expressing interest in similar workshops.

8. **WA Turf Seminar 2013**

The WA Turf Seminar was held on July 17<sup>th</sup> 2013 as a full day seminar and trade show. The IDO had an integral role in organising and coordinating this event as the premier event on the WA Turf industry calendar for 2013. The IDO organised speakers of interest, scheduling of the event, trade sponsors, trade booths, the seminar delegate handbook and much more. The seminar was attended by 185 delegates from across WA.



The seminar theme was “Water issues WA and Public Open Space in WA”. Water was the priority issue for the WA turf industry along with the retention and extension of natural green space for urban liveability is also a priority area. Government department presentations providing incite and beneficial, and useful information to both sectors. Industry attendees had the opportunity to ask challenging questions as the seminar is interactive. The event was opened by the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Hon. Terry Waldron.



*Photo above: Hugh Gardner STA-WA, Darren Kirkwood TGA-WA and Hon.Terry Waldron Minister for Sport and Recreation*

A delegate hand book was created and distributed along with an event tote bag which included various information materials. The delegate handbook included abstracts from all speaker presentations, information from the event sponsors and a program of events.



Feedback sheets were also distributed and the response to the seminar and was overwhelmingly positive. There were 12 Trade Booth exhibitors at the event, feedback from was very positive, with all but one locking a booth for the turf seminar in 2015

### WA Turf Seminar 2013 Feedback

Please indicate the benefit of the seminar to your business/place of work

<i>Not beneficial</i>	<i>Somewhat Beneficial</i>	<i>Beneficial</i>	<i>Very Beneficial</i>
<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>7</b>

Would you consider the seminar to be value for money?

<i>No value</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Very Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>7</b>

Overall what was the best part of the seminar for you?

- 1. Jorg Imberger as presenter**
- 2. Wetting Agents Info.**
- 3. Timing and content of presentations**
- 4. Organisation of event + food**
- 5. Networking**

How could the day have been improved?

- 1. Couldn't have been**
- 2. More info on soil/plant nutrition**
- 3. Access to research results & papers**

- 4. *Microphone for audience*
- 5. *Field Day or formal tour*

Would you be interested in attending other seminars?

Yes	No
38	0

If so, what are the top 5 topics you'd like to information on at a future seminar?

<i>Water</i>	<i>Environment</i>	<i>Irrigation</i>	<i>Pests &amp; Diseases</i>	<i>Research &amp; Development</i>
31	30	29	26	23
<i>Education &amp; Training</i>	<i>Occupational Health &amp; Safety</i>	<i>Human Resourcing</i>	<i>Industrial Relations</i>	
13	7	2	1	

Other topic suggestions for future seminars:

- *Soil – Health, profile, types, benefits of amendments*
- *Drought Management practices – keeping plants alive in drought*
- *Local Turf Managers and what works for them*
- *Sports Turf & pitch management (including over seeding)*
- *Information on cool season grasses – how to manage in warm/hot weather*
- *Grey water recycling*
- *Re-turfing – How, when & why?*
- *Turf Management + budgets & fertilizing regimes*
- *Water use in turf – monitoring, coping with less water*
- *Best practice irrigation to keep turf alive with limited water*
- *Fertigation*
- *Public relations / Image of Turf*

## 9. **Cost of Production Calculator Project - TU13005**

The IDO was an active participant in the development of the Cost of Production Calculator. In 2014, the IDO assisted in the dissemination of the Cost of Production Calculator module and the training of turf farm staff to 'truth test' the tool. In May 2014, the project service provider, Rural Directions, came to Perth to deliver one-on-one training. Whilst in WA, Rural Directions and the IDO visited two turf farms to guide those farms through usage of the COP Calculator and refine the tool, which proved invaluable as a few loopholes were discovered and have since been corrected.



*Cost of Production Calculator workshop in March 2014*

The IDO issued manuals, USB sticks loaded with the excel spreadsheets and other information to all WA Turf Growers. Throughout 2014, one-on-one training was provided by the IDO to several turf farms, on site, to assist them with using the tool and have a better understanding of their profitability. Many of the larger WA turf farms used and benefited from tool while a number of smaller farms resisted.

### 10. Sports Turf Association (WA) 2014 General Meeting and Seminar

The STA-WA held a general meeting and seminar in the first week of August 2014. A presentation at this event on the “WA Environmental Guidelines for the establishment and maintenance of turf and grassed areas” was presented by Peter Ruscoe from Sports Turf Technology. There were 35 attendees at this event.



### 11. Profitability Seminar September 2014

**Grow more profit on your turf!**  
Don't miss this important turf industry presentation

**Tuesday, September 16** from 9:00am (followed by AGM) at Challenger TAFE, Murdoch Drv, Murdoch

**Grow more profit on your turf!**

<b>9:00am</b>	Registration
<b>9:30am</b>	Topic of Challenger TAFE Research area - John Forrest
<b>10:00-11:30am</b>	Workshop and Introduction - Richard Stephens - Turf Australia Richard will lead attendees on the premise of the meeting and provide an overview of consumer research into the perceived value of turf.
<b>11:30-12:30pm</b>	Consulting the Turf Profitability Crisis - Brent Robinson - Lawn Solutions Australia - Brent will provide an overview of current turf sales Australia-wide including the WA market. Are the opportunities confronting WA growers including that we are turning towards lower profit margins?
<b>1:30-5:00pm</b>	Growing Turf Sales Without Cutting Price - David Daugherty David will take the audience through a set of simplified exercises that relate directly to turf growers and explain just how some basic sales and management techniques can help take your profits off the ground again.
<b>5:00-5:30pm</b>	Questions and Answers and Where to Next?
<b>6:00pm</b>	Dinner
<b>7:00pm</b>	YUAWA AGM and General Meeting

**RSVP NOW**  
for your free registration materials finished 30th Sept 2014

Turf Australia & TGA WA 2014 Turf Industry Business Development Series

In conjunction with Turf Australia, a Turf Farm Profitability Seminar for WA growers was held on September 16<sup>th</sup> 2014. The WA IDO provided local coordination and ensured that the majority of turf growers within the state attended this forum. Twenty out of 28 farms were represented at this seminar.

All in attendance appreciated the value of this seminar and provided very positive feedback. John Maas from Bullsbrook expressed the sentiment “That this was the best workshop I have ever attended. The price of my turf will be going up as a result of the information supplied to growers today.”

## 12. WA Turf Seminar 2015

The WA Turf Seminar 2015 was voted the turf calendar event of the year in WA by its delegates. The theme was “Turf challenges and issues in WA” and the feedback from the 199 delegates was overwhelmingly positive with all of the 10 presentations and the panel of expert’s forum rated very highly by the delegates. The 16 trade exhibitors also rated the event highly with both the external large equipment displays and internal booths were well supported by delegates.



The seminar provided valuable information to both the production and maintenance sectors, including:

- Water resourcing information for the future of turf in the urban landscape
- Research updates for the two current UWA Turf Research projects
- Information sharing and industry networking



*Above left: Adrian Pitsikas, Director Greenacres Turf Group*

*Above right: Mike Rowe, Director General, Dept. of Water*



### WA Turf Seminar 2015 feedback

Please indicate the benefit of the seminar to your business/place of work

<i>Not beneficial</i>	<i>Somewhat Beneficial</i>	<i>Beneficial</i>	<i>Very Beneficial</i>
<i>0</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>27</i>

Would you consider the seminar to be value for money?

<i>No value</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Very Good</i>	<i>Excellent</i>
<i>0</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>22</i>

Overall what was the best part of the seminar for you?

- *11. Louise Barton's presentation*
- *2. Dept. of Water presentation*
- *4. Organisation of whole event*
- *4. Trade show*
- *Networking opp's*

How could the day have been improved?

- *Shutting Rob Didcoe down – too long*
- *It couldn't*
- *Field Day or formal tour*

Would you be interested in attending other seminars?

<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>77</i>	<i>0</i>

If so, what are the top 5 topics you'd like to information on at a future seminar?

<i>Water</i>	<i>Environment</i>	<i>Irrigation</i>	<i>Pests &amp; Diseases</i>	<i>Research &amp; Development</i>
<i>62</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Education &amp; Training</i>	<i>Occupational Health &amp; Safety</i>	<i>Human Resourcing</i>	<i>Industrial Relations</i>	
<i>23</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	

Other topic suggestions for future seminars:

- *Soil – Health, profile, types, benefits of amendments*
- *Drought Management practices – keeping plants alive in drought*
- *Local Turf Managers and what works for them*
- *Sports Turf & pitch management (including over seeding)*

- *Information on cool season grasses – how to manage in warm/hot weather*
- *Grey water recycling*
- *Re-turfing – How, when & why?*
- *Turf Management + budgets & fertilizing regimes*
- *Water use in turf – monitoring, coping with less water*
- *Best practice irrigation to keep turf alive with limited water*
- *Fertigation*
- *Public relations / Image of Turf*

### 13. STA-WA workshops 2011-2016

A variety of STA-WA workshops were run over the five years of the project. Average attendance for all but Cricket wicket seminars is between 20 and 30. Cricket wicket seminars attract between 90-100 registrations. These include the following;

- Cricket Wicket seminars x 3 (2012, 2014 and 2016)
- Chain Saw seminars x 2 (2012 and 2014)
- Irrigation workshops x 3 (2012, 2013 and 2015)
- Fertiliser and Nutrient workshop x 2 (2013 and 2015)
- Chemical Refresher workshops x 2 (2012 and 2014)
- First Aid Training x 1 (2014)
- Pest and Weed management – new products x2 (2012, 2014)
- New technology seminars x 2 (2013, 2015)

Almost all registrations are supported by the sports turf maintenance sector.

### 14. Phone Skills for Pricing & Profit Workshop 2015

Held in conjunction with Turf Australia, a 'Telephone sales techniques' workshop was held on 16 November 2015. Fifteen representatives from the WA Turf Production sector attended this workshop, representing 65% of WA turf production businesses. Again, this project provided local coordination and ensured a high attendance. The feedback received was extremely positive.

#### Phone Skills for Pricing & Profit Perth 2015 Participant Feedback

How relevant was the Phone Skills for Pricing & Profit Workshop to you?

Content				Presentation			
<i>v good</i>	<i>good</i>	<i>fair</i>	<i>poor</i>	<i>v good</i>	<i>good</i>	<i>fair</i>	<i>poor</i>
9	1	-	-	10	-	-	-

**Comments:** Phone skills are very relevant for our sales team to close sales. Thank you for waking some of my skills that had gone to sleep. He knows how to get motivation going. Well spoken. Kept it interesting. A very good presenter. Extremely relevant, with great tips and advice.

#### Overall, the things I really liked were:

- The script
- Phone skills and role playing most valuable to learn
- Making everyone feel comfortable and build confidence especially in a room with all your competitors.
- Great role play
- The structured way in which you present the course
- New ideas
- The idea of a script
- Ideas of what to say to customers



- Showing how you can build a person's confidence in telephone sales
- Talking and being interactive with everyone
- All of it
- The phone script is a great idea to ensure that all bases are covered
- Drills for skills reinforcement
- Body language
- Reinforcement of what we already have in place

**Overall, the things that could have been improved were:**

- Nothing
- More time
- Nothing
- Perhaps a few more people would have been better
- Overall was very happy with the program
- Sweets to be placed in a bowl, not on the desk used by grubby students

**Things I learnt and could put into practice are:**

- Asking more questions
- Better attention to detail
- Sales pitch and closing the sale, I feel more confident about it now
- The 12 point checklist
- Ask questions- listen
- Keep practicing the skills
- Engage people in a conversation
- Be more confident when closing the deal
- Follow the "Turf Telephone Script"
- Be more confident and try to sell more turf and products by learning more about the grass we sell
- All of it

**15. 2016 NxGen Forum WA**

The NxGen program is aimed at assisting the under 40's involved in running turf farms by providing turf business management and marketing information, leadership development and motivating and inspiring them about the future potential of the industry. The 2016 NxGen forum attracted over 40 participants and was conducted in WA in August with the IDO assisting by providing recommendations and details for presenters and location/site visits. Almost all presenters were Western Australian identities with presentations being very well received by attendees. Site visits were interesting, educational and well-coordinated.



## 16. Department of Water “Water Users Forums”

Two ‘Water User Water Allocation Reduction Forums’ were held in October 2016 involving separate sessions for both the turf maintenance and production sectors. Forty attendees at the STA-WA session held at the South Metropolitan TAFE while the TGA-WA forum, attracted eight turf farms.



The outcome from these forums was the establishment of a ‘Urban Water Users Group’ for the turf industry, inclusive of production and maintenance sectors. Please refer to the correspondence below received from the WA Department of Water.

**From:** WORLEY Susan [<mailto:Susan.WORLEY@water.wa.gov.au>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, November 2, 2016 7:22 PM  
**To:** 'Eva Ricci' <[idowa@turfaustralia.com.au](mailto:idowa@turfaustralia.com.au)>  
**Cc:** DREW Ben <[Ben.Drew@water.wa.gov.au](mailto:Ben.Drew@water.wa.gov.au)>; HARRINGTON Emily <[Emily.Harrington@water.wa.gov.au](mailto:Emily.Harrington@water.wa.gov.au)>  
**Subject:** FW: Suggestion SOR water users group

Hi WA Turf IDO,

Your suggestions are sensible and offer good opportunity to help people get information and plan ahead with regard to water allocations for turf production and maintenance.

My manager, has followed up with some other parts of the Department who are working in related areas, and suggested the idea of an information session and urban water users group, with local gov/park/ turf people south of the river.

This was well supported and our Kwinana Peel region and our longer term water supply planning people are interested in some sort of forum that is looking ahead.

It seems that something next year (first quarter probably) would be most appropriate time given our current workloads/priorities.

It would likely involve:

- Water availability information
- Climate information
- Planning in the area
- Implications for users (what's the same as Gngangara and what's different??)

We'd need you to advise us on who would want to be involved, and help work up the list above.

Let's keep talking  
Regards  
Susan Worley  
Department of Water  
Water Allocations Team

### 17. Annual WA Turf Industry Awards Nights

Every November, WA turf industry award nights are held to honour and welcome to the industry Turf Apprentices who have undertaken turf related studies at TAFE and who are entering the industry with completed certification and qualifications. Average attendance rate from across all sectors of turf is 90 – 100.

Five WA Turf Awards evenings have been coordinated over the duration of project TU11015. The most recent being Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November 2016, with 92 attendees. This is a night of welcoming and camaraderie to celebrate the achievements of industry apprentices and seniors undertaking evening extension classes. Turf Farmer, Jason Kirkwood, West Coast Turf, won the Best Sports Turf Graduate 2016.



### 18. TGAWA Worksafe Forum “General Duty of care on farm” – May 2015.

A two and a half hour worksafe forum was attended by two thirds of turf growers in WA. An information sharing forum that addressed the general requirements for duty of care for employees on the farm. Handouts were issues by Worksafe, and further electronic information shared with all WA growers to ensure that they are up to date with all aspects of duty of care requirements.

Feedback again was positive for this event and growers said they benefited from the Worksafe practices, guidelines and current regulations information that was exchanged. Growers recognised the need for ensuring the safety of all turf farm employees and using employment contracts to help ensure employee understanding of farm safety issues.

## *WA Industry Communications*

Turf Growers in WA are dealing with a totally different climate, soil type and social environment to their Eastern State counterparts. The severe reduction in irrigation water availability and anxiety that this causes within the community creates a significant challenge for the WA 'living green industries'. As the climate continues to change, there are many lessons that the 'living green industries' in the Eastern States can learn from WA in regard to these issues and how to deal with them.

The STA-WA and the TGA-WA both hold monthly consultation meetings in which the IDO participates in to provide information on relevant topics and extend knowledge on national and WA research, development, business management and marketing issues. Often, multiple stakeholders are represented at these meetings.

Both associations have developed tailored websites over the duration of the project. These are maintained and updated regularly to aid in the dissemination of information to members and turf industry stakeholders. While the IDO is responsible for the uploading of relevant documents and topics on both websites, this activity is not funded by HIA. Please refer to [www.tgawa.com.au](http://www.tgawa.com.au) and <http://www.sportsturfwa.asn.au/>

Western Australian tailored industry information and education has been delivered by a combined turf production and maintenance sector magazine, 'The Turf Grass Times'. Initially, 'The Turf Grass Times's was published and distributed quarterly, but when HIA funding was reduced from 100% matched funding to 20% levy funding, this was reduced to three times per year).

The preparation and distribution of 'The Turf Grass Times' is the responsibility of the IDO, duties being to seek and research stories, coordinate advertising and arrange for printing and distribution of the magazine. Initially the format was that of an extended hard copy newsletter. The newsletter quickly evolved into a magazine and with the combined input from both the Turf Growers Association WA and the Sport Turf Association (WA) has become an across industry information magazine of approximately 40 pages, that is distributed to over 300 Western Australian industry related recipients.

Since project conception, there have been 13 editions of 'The Turf Grass Times' published and distributed. Copies of each can be viewed at <http://sportsturfwa.asn.au/turf-grass-times> . A current edition is due for publication and distribution in December 2016.



Please review some of our past reports below in flip book style.

*Subscribe to be member and receive the latest copies of our fantastic Turf Grass Times newsletter.*



In addition to these 'The Turf Grass Times', this project enabled regular contributions to the bimonthly publications: 'Turf Craft' and the Australian Golf Course Superintendent's 'Australian Turf Grass Management Journal;', as well as the Turf Australia industry magazine.

In 2014 a wall planner diary with significant industry dates was developed and issued to over 500 WA Turf industry contacts inclusive of growers and the maintenance sector, local government and industry stakeholders. The calendar was sponsored by various industry stakeholders and received a very positive response.



MEMBER'S DIRECTORY

2014

Turf Growers Association  
of  
Western Australia Inc.



MEMBER'S DIRECTORY

2014

Sports Turf Association (WA) Inc

A combined industry contacts booklet has also been successfully collated, developed and distributed to members of both associations and industry stakeholders. Two editions have been

printed and distributed over the length of the project, in 2012-2013 and 2014-2015. Reduced project funding resulted in the proposed 2015-2016 edition being cancelled.

In 2015 an industry diary was prepared and widely distributed across the turf sector. The diaries included information on monthly turf maintenance tips, variety selection, association information and an industry contacts area. Growers were provided with a number of diaries to pass on to landscape contractors. Copies were also issued to local government turf managers, private school turf managers, botanical gardens, industry sponsors and other industry stakeholders and allies.



Weekly electronic dissemination of industry related news and information, such as: water issues, new technologies and equipment, pest and diseases updates, turf research and development, Occupational Health and Safety, Work Safe practices, employer responsibilities and Chain of Responsibility (Transport) is distributed to industry via email on a weekly basis.

The Turf Growers Association WA has a Facebook page that is managed by the IDO. The page is updated several times a week and now has over 350 likes, recently scoring well over 80% with regard to post “likes”. This page can be viewed at <https://www.facebook.com/turfgrowersassociationWA/>

A twitter account WA Turf Industry is also operational and is updated as required within resourcing limitations. <https://twitter.com/EvaRicci6>

### ***Researcher Engagement***

One of the significant and unique attributes of the WA Turf Industry is the WA turf levy. This State based R&D levy was established prior to the national turf levy and continues to ensure WA focused R&D occurs. A steering committee determines the allocation of funds from the WA turf levy.

The WA Turf Industry research community indicated in 2010 that they would like to better understand the needs and priorities of the growers, specifically, and the whole of industry. The IDO has provided a vital role in building and facilitating a relationship between growers and researchers, particularly from the University of Western Australia Turf Industries Research team, to ensure cost effectiveness of any R&D spend.

### **University of Western Australia Turf Industries Research Steering Committee**

The IDO represented turf growers and maintained a continual presence within the turf research community by being a member of the University of Western Australia's Turf Industries Research Steering Committee (UWA TIRSC) and sub-committee's representing the production and maintenance sectors. UWA TIRSC meetings are generally held every two to three months onsite at the UWA turf research facility while sub-committee meetings are held as required.

Facility upgrades have occurred onsite at this facility over the past four years, and the IDO has been integral to managing the involvement and in-kind support provided by both the production and maintenance sectors for various upgrades.

The IDO has attended five UWA TIRSC Open Days, each held in February annually. All fact sheets from these events have been disseminated across the WA turf sector. The IDO receives all UWA turf research milestone reports and regularly shares this information in summary format at industry meetings and electronically via email.

In addition to WA only funded turf research, UWA has been involved in several HIA turf research projects, including:

- TU07006 - Effectively Utilising Water Allocations (2011–2015) (Dr Louise Barton)
- TU13000 - Application of soil amendments to maintain turf quality on sandy soils under reduced irrigation. (Dr Pieter Poot)
- TU07006 - Identifying and managing water repellency in turfgrass grown in sandy soils (Dr Louise Barton)
- TU09005 Evaluation of soft leaf buffalo cultivars: renovation, mowing heights, and water use (Prof. Tim Colmer)

The IDO has been involved, to a certain extent, in each of these projects, such as helping to inform the WA industry of project outcomes to sitting on project advisory committees.

For example, the IDO was on the UWA TIRSC which controls project TU13000 - Application of soil amendments to maintain turf quality on sandy soils under reduced irrigation. This is a project took several years to plan and develop. The project was approved in 2013, and as a sub-committee member and representative for the turf production sector, the IDO played an active role in the preliminary processes involved with setting up a project of this nature, including the processes for supply and installation of the soil amendments and coordinating the supply and installation of 1300m<sup>2</sup> of soft leaf buffalo for the project site. Various soil amendments (organic, inorganic, blends) were incorporated in the soil on the 15th October 2013, with the turfgrass planted one week later (22nd October). This study, now completed, investigated the efficacy of a range of soil amendments to decrease turfgrass irrigation requirements.



### **South Metropolitan TAFE Turf Research**

Research is also conducted at the South Metropolitan TAFE by the School of Turf, senior management team, who are qualified Turf Managers and Consultants with many years of expertise. The IDO has been involved with this team regarding the research projects undertaken over time. Research has been conducted on sting nematode in turf, irrigation of turf with different sprinkler types and wetting agents. The TGAWA and the IDO is currently negotiating a new research initiative regarding moisture retainers in turf.

Research developments and industry information is shared electronically and via the Turf Grass Times to the wider industry and the two associations on a regular basis.

### **Social value of green space in a drying environment - Curtin University**

The IDO has also worked with the Department of Sport and Recreation (DSR) and the Curtin University Centre for Sport and Recreation Research centre in regard to the shortfall of public open space in the Perth metropolitan region. The IDO was invited on to the steering committee for a research project being conducted by DSR in conjunction with Curtin University, "Social Value of green space in a drying climate". The IDO actively pursued funding opportunities and was asked to coordinate sites for case studies for this research. The outcomes from this WA based research has since been used nationally.

### **Queensland Turf Research**

Interactions with Queensland Turf research contacts have been well maintained for the duration of this project. For example, correspondence and communications with Shane Holborn and his research role regarding the use of turf to control erosion and Jim Vaughan from Turf Queensland regarding various farm efficiency and environmental assessment initiatives. While attending the Turf Australia conference in 2015, the IDO meet with Shane and Jim to gain further on various research initiatives enabling an increased level of information sharing and dissemination of Queensland research relevant to WA.

### **Other research projects**



- 'Best practice home lawn preparation and maintenance project' - a community project, run by Turf Expert Nick Bell at Cyril Jackson Senior High School, supported by the TGAWA and South Metropolitan TAFE
- 'GeoProvide' a new age soil moisture retainer for turf and gardens current research trial at Murdoch University.
- 'Improving Urban Liveability' - Green Space Alliance WA and Dept. of Sport and Recreation WA

In addition to the above, the IDO has kept abreast of other national and international research regarding turf and green space for urban liveability, including 2020 Vision initiatives. An extensive library of documents is retained electronically and dispersed as appropriate, and upon request, to the WA turf industry by the IDO.

### *Turf Sector Engagement*

Compared to other horticulture industries, turf is unique with multiple sectors recognised by the WA Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry as being within, such as park and gardens, school grounds, sports fields and golf courses, roadside verges, household lawn contractors etc.

Prior to this project, there was no process to coordinate strategic input from the multiple sectors or to disseminate information effectively to all sectors. This project enabled active engagement across the industry sectors with direct stakeholder consultation and the creation of professional relationships. The WA Turf industry is recognised nationally as a leader in pro-active engagement across the various turf industry sectors.

Various government departments, universities and other agencies have requested and received valuable information from the IDO and benefited from the many relationships enabled by this project. Through this sharing of information and direct dialogue, turf producers in WA and nationally have benefited considerably, which can be seen in the multiple testimonies in Appendix One.

At the request of various stakeholders, the IDO has worked with the following State and Local Government bodies on a variety of issues as listed below:

- **Department of Water and the Water Corporation WA**
  - Water Allocations and licencing
  - Watering restrictions
  - Drying climate and water management
  - Garden Bore and Scheme Water Irrigation Scheduling
  - Heat Island Effect in Perth
  - South West non-potable urban water needs project
  - Gnangara Mound project in the northern metropolitan corridor
  - Water Innovation Forum
  - Garden Industry Reference Group Water Corp
  - Waterwise Partnerships project

- Greening Perth Project
- Lime Amended Bio Clay Project
- **The Department of Sport and Recreation**
  - WA Parkland Strategy
  - Pest and Disease Management in POS Turf
  - Green Space Alliance WA
- **The Department of Agriculture**
  - Biosecurity
  - Pest and Diseases Management in Turf
- **The Department of Parks and Wildlife**
  - Phytofura (Die back) in turf
- **Department of Commerce**
  - Agricultural Action Plan 2014-2016
  - Worksafe – Hazards on the farm
  - Load Restraints
  - Chain of Responsibility
  - Small business Safety
- **Swan River Trust**
  - WA environmental guidelines for the establishment and maintenance of turf grass areas
  - Fertilise Wise Project
  - Urban Users Working Group
- **South West Catchment Council**
  - Fertilise Wise Guide
- **University of WA School of Population Health**
  - Public Open Space Tool
- **Curtin University**
  - Social Value of Green Space in a Drying Climate

In addition, the IDO has also been responsible for liaising and building industry relationships with other Industry Development Officers, Business Development Officers, and Executive Officers from allied industry associations. Strong professional relationships and ongoing partnerships have been formed to the benefit of the WA Turf industry with the following:

- Parks and Leisure Australia WA – Rachel Thorpe President and Leith Fradd, Executive Officer

- Landscape Industries Association WA – Gary McKenzie President and Esther Ngang, Executive Officer
- Irrigation Australia Lid WA – Andrew Ogden, Treasure and Board member, Tracy Martin, IDO
- Nursery and Garden Industry Association WA – Carol Fudge, President and Matthew Lunn, CEO
- Horticulture Industries Association (WA Chapter) – Glenice Butcher and Neville Passmore, Board members
- Australian Institute of Landscape Architects – Nathan Greenhill, President and Walter Van Der Loo, board member, Harsha Quartermaine Executive Officer
- WA Local Government Association – Mark Batty, CEO and Julia Beijeman, Policy Officer
- Tree Guild WA – Jeff Ashe, President
- Horticulture Media Association – Josh Byrne, Neville Passmore, John Colwill, Sabrina Hahn, Sue McDougal, Derrin Thorpe, Nick Bell
- Vegetables WA – John Shannon, CEO
- Grower Group Alliance – Rebecca Wallis, Executive Officer
- Lawn Mowing Contractors Association of W.A. (Inc.) – Paul St Jack, Peter Pilgrim, Ken Griffiths

Partnerships and industry alliances mean the IDO is engaged with and participating in various seminars and conferences as well as regular (IE fortnightly) contact regarding industry alliances, common initiatives and joint ventures. This network is increasing looking to find opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing which has begun through promoting each other's professional development programs and events as well as working on joint ventures such as the combined industry display at the Perth Garden Festival.

A variety of meetings, informal and formal, have been held with these industry associations to discuss and action common industry issues and concerns (e.g. water allocations for production), production methods, biosecurity issues and collaborative opportunities such as joint seminars and workshops.

The WA IDO has participated in the following industry events, and as a result, extended relevant information back to the WA turf industry:

- Turf Australia Conferences 2014 and 2015
- Parks and Leisure Australia WA state conference annually
- Irrigation Australia WA State Conference biennial
- NGIAWA Conference 2011, 2012
- Landscape Industry Association WA Conference and Industry Awards annually
- National Industry Development and Interstate Sports Turf Associations

The IDO maintained regular and ongoing communications with both the Business & Industry Development Manager for Turf Australia and the Turf Australia Communications team. In addition,

the IDO maintained regular communications and teleconferences with the national Business & Industry Development Manager and the state turf industry development officers for NSW, Victoria and Queensland as well as regular and ongoing communication with the Sports Turf Associations for VIC, NSW and SA. The Turf Grass Times has included a two-page spread for the STA (SA) with provided articles and seminar information.

### **Australian Turfgrass Conference 2012**

The IDO attended the Australian Turfgrass Conference in Melbourne on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2012. This provided invaluable opportunity for education relating to pertinent technical and management issues in turf. It also provided opportunities to meet and network with 'Green' industry stakeholders and suppliers to the turf industry. Of note was the invaluable discussions held with Sue Bailey of the Sports Turf Association Victoria, who shared information about the workings of the STA Victoria and the development of a National STA body

### **Swan River Trust Urban Users Working Group 2013**

The IDO assisted The Swan River Trust Urban Users Working Group with a review of the Environmental Guidelines for Turf Management in collaboration with other industry stakeholders and plans to provide a platform to launch the revised document at the 2013 Turf Research Seminar.

In 2013 the IDO assisted the Swan River Trust to implement the Fertilizer Partnership Project which aims teach homeowners how to care for their lawns in ways that reduces nutrient run off into the Bennett Brook and Swan River. The partnership with the Swan River Trust resulted in the development and production of an industry-endorsed brochure educating homeowners on the correct use of fertilisers. These brochures were distributed amongst growers to be given to consumers at the point of sale.

The WA IDO regularly conducts turf grower farm visits or telephone communications ensuring that all growers are visited and/or contacted at least twice in person, in a calendar year, (telephone interactions have increased considerably over duration of the project), as per the WA Operations Plan 2015-16. Farm visits are logged via calendar appointment on desktop and noted in the bi-monthly IDO Report. The TGAWA board remains fully informed of all farm visits and interactions. Farm visits conducted include;

STA (WA) member visits have been conducted on an as needs basis according to the WA Operations Plan 2015 - 2016. Examples of visits undertaken over the period of the project include;

- Grounds Manager Kings Park Botanical Gardens – Sting Nematode trial site
- All Saints College – new products trial wetting agents
- Baileys Fertilisers – Plant tour and new products for turf
- C-Wise Compost – Compost for turf
- Aquinas College

- Hale School
- UWA Facilities Management - Grounds
- Shires of Busselton, Karratha, Fremantle, Belmont, Swan, Rockingham
- Lawn Doctor
- Statewide Turf
- Beacon Equipment
- Sports Turf Technology

### **Turf Industry Advisory Committee meeting and site visits, Western Australia – August 2013**

The IDO worked collaboratively with the then HAL Relationship Manager for Turf, Craig Perring, and the Turf Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) to coordinate their WA meeting in August 2013.

Meeting venue, accommodation facilities, dinner meeting location, WA industry presentations and site visits were coordinated and organised. The IAC held a meeting at the University of WA where presentations were given by Professor Tim Colmer on current University of Western Australia Turf Industries Research and Darren Kirkwood, Chairperson of the Turf Growers Association WA.

A site visit to the UWA Turf Research facility was included in the first day of this meeting. On the second day, the IAC visited the WA Cricket Association home ground where they viewed the pitch and turf conditions. A further site visit was undertaken at Kings Park Botanical Gardens to witness the remediation of high profile turf areas that have been significantly damaged by Sting Nematode. In the afternoon, the IAC travelled to Greenacres Turf Farm in Serpentine to view the mechanisms in place for largest turf farm in WA. The IDO attended the dinner meeting and also escorted the IAC on site visits. The IDO found this a very beneficial opportunity to discuss issues and challenges for turf both of locally and nationally with the IAC members and the IAC Chairman, Barry UUnderhill, congratulated the IDO on the valuable effort, coordination and knowledge provided.

### **Turf Australia – Perfect Patch of Green promotion 2014**

WA had two successful applicant schools for the Perfect Patch of Green promotion in 2014. These were Somerly Primary School in the north metro area and Nannup District High School in the South West rural area of the state. The IDO coordinated in conjunction with participant growers the inspections, assessments of areas, supply, delivery and installation of turf. It was an exceptional effort undertaken with a great sense of goodwill and positivity with both schools having 600m<sup>2</sup> turf supplied and installed as per their specification and requirement in a timely fashion.

The IDO actively communicated with WA media regarding this program. Local newspapers were the only media to take up these stories, as contacted by the IDO directly.



**Education of industry stakeholders**

The IDO has been responsible for collecting and compiling information for various purposes to inform local and State Governments, Universities and other stakeholders on behalf of the production and maintenance sectors. State Government and local government news, media and policies are continually monitored and regular dissemination of relevant information back to the turf industry has been an important IDO role.

The IDO ensured representation of the WA turf industry at allied industry seminars and events, by arranging speakers and presenters from within the WA production and maintenance sector or by presenting on behalf of the industry at various seminars, forums, trade shows and/or expos.

A professional relationship has been built with the WA Horticultural media, resulting in radio interviews and TV segments supporting the benefits of natural turf in the landscape, regarding industry best practice and the urban liveability and WA's best lawns specials. The IDO has also presented at a various Horticulture Media Association meetings on the benefits and value of natural turf in the urban landscape.

**Finalising the detail of the “Sprinkler Exemption for the Establishment of New Lawns and Gardens” with the Water Corporation and the Department of Water.**

After extended consultations with the IDO and members of the Turf Growers Association of WA and allied industry associations a recommended watering schedule was developed guiding the “Sprinkler Exemption for the Establishment of New Lawns and Gardens” this schedule was presented to the Department of Water in July 2012 and endorsed by the Minister for Water in November 2012.

### **Turf Sector Engagement in Water Policy Development**

The IDO represented the turf Industry, gathered and provided factual information to aid the development of workable water policies across several government departments. The Department of Water, the Water Corporation and the Department of Sport and Recreation have been developing various policies regarding the irrigation of public open space and the IDO has provided essential information into this processes.

For example, the IDO was included as a member of the working group lead by the Department of Sport and Recreation to develop the State Public Parkland Strategy (SPPS). The aim of the SPPS is to facilitate innovation and collaboration in planning the provision of public open space and associated supporting infrastructure in metropolitan areas.

The IDO has also provided information to staff within the Water Corp enabling them to develop policy and guidelines for best management practise in the irrigation of domestic gardens. Over the course of the project, regular quarterly meetings were attended with the Water Corp Waterwise team, resulting in several joint venture and co-branded initiatives to ensure natural turf is retained in the urban landscape.

For example, a co-branded turf information brochure “Installing and caring for your low maintenance lawn” was produced in May 2014 and widely distributed through 2014 and 2015. This educational brochure has been distributed across the nursery and garden, landscape and irrigation industry sectors, being available in nurseries and irrigation retail outlets, through landscape contractors and at turf farm point of sale.

Another example of joint venture was the funding of “catch cups” to properly measure irrigation scheduling in domestic gardens by the Water Corporation. The “catch cups” and “how to use” information were distributed to Turf Farms and nurseries for their customers to take ‘free of charge’. This is a very popular outcome, with the majority of TGAWA members taking up the initiative and distributing the catch cups to most customers, to assist in educating on the value or correct irrigation for turf.

Several in house garden displays have also been developed and built at the Water Corporation over the five years of the project. The IDO is approached each time to assist in involving turf growers with these displays for government. An example being Water Week (ensuring that natural, living turf is included in all displays.)



***Above: Con Paino, Westland Turf and Amy Wright, Waterwise Team, Water Corporation, ensuring that natural turf is highlighted for Water Week 2015 display at the Water Corporation WA***

The IDO worked with executive officers and allied industry IDO's and the Water Corporation on joint ventures to create displays at the Perth Garden Festival which occur in March/April each year. Grower education presentations are held at this event, with representatives from every TGAWA member farm supporting the design and build and manning of this significant educational display.

#### **Perth Garden Festival, April 3-6 2014**

The Perth Garden Festival was held from Thursday April 3 through to Sunday April 6 in 2014. The TGAWA along with Nursery and Garden Industry WA, Landscape Industry WA and Irrigation Australia Ltd WA worked collaboratively on a joint association site which proved to be extremely popular. A large site was sponsored by the Water Corporation with our green industries promoted as Waterwise partners.

Over 250m<sup>2</sup> turf was included in the design. It proved to be an excellent showcase opportunity for the industry. The feedback attained from the organisers of the event was that it was the most inviting, interesting and educational information display at the show. This was very encouraging for the TGA-WA members and growers noted a spike in sales post event.





Perth Garden Festival site 2015



### Information Brochures and Signage

An industry brochure “Turf - Nature’s Environmental Cooler” was designed and printed in 2014. These brochures are used by members to inform industry stakeholders and customers of the cooling effect turf has in an urban environment.

Core flute boards and tear drop banners were also designed and produced for use at industry and allied industry related events.



### Other WA Turf Industry events

STA-WA TAFE breakfast

The STA-WA TAFE breakfast, which supports turf education was held in February 2015 and 2016. Attracting over 60 attendees in each year, the breakfast includes a tour of the TAFE educational facilities. A presentation delivered by John Forrest, highly respected turf consultant and Business Development Manager for the school of horticulture, provided information on current TAFE research activities.



**John Forrest, BDM South Metropolitan TAFE presenting to industry**

#### **Director General Water Farm Visit - October 2016**

Director General for Water in WA, Mr. Mike Rowe, and the Regional Manager Kwinana Peel Region (Dept. of Water) Mr. Leon Brouwer, met with TGA-WA members and viewed a presentation on water management at Greenacres Turf Group in Serpentine on October 20<sup>th</sup> 2016.

A small group of growers attended this presentation, including Graeme Ferguson (AG Buffalo), Con Paino (Westland Turf), Leonard Deale and Farm Manager Anel (True Blue Turf), Adrian and Peter Pitsikas and Ray Woonings (Greenacres Turf Group). The presentation involved Greenacres Turf Group Director, Adrian Pitsikas, presenting on the development and management of a local, (dirty) drain water supported artificial wetland that has been created and managed onsite to supplement the water supply on farm, easing the reliance on groundwater.



**Left to Right: Leo Deale, Mike Rowe, Peter Pitsikas, Graeme Ferguson and Con Paino**

This unique concept works well with the Greenacres team developing an ecosystem full of biodiversity that assists in servicing the water needs of the farm. The artificial wetland supplies water on farm for up to ten months of the year.

Fellow Greenacres Turf Group Director, Peter Pitsikas conducted the farm tour and provided extensive information on the building and management of the artificial wetland and lake. The information and tour was appreciated greatly by both Mike Rowe and Leo Deale.

At a round table discussion after the tour, Mike asked growers to provide feedback on their experiences with the Department of Water and asked how the industry wishes to continue to engage with the Dept. of Water. It was noted that given that future water allocations are a major concern for many through this liaison, the Department of Water has taken a proactive step in opening communications with industry stakeholders.

The manager and others from the Water Allocations have since recently presented to both Sports Turf Association (WA) and Turf Growers Association WA members enabling valuable discussions and the development of innovations to counter the loss of water that will be available from groundwater storage areas. Possibilities include: Recycled water; sewer mining; and drain water catchment.

Through the engagement facilitated by the IDO, many turf growers now know their regional manager and/or Department of Water regional team members and have worked quite closely together to develop successful, practical water usage plans.

*"It's great to hear that you have been working with Susan and Ben to facilitate consultation with the turf sector for our Gnangara allocation planning. While our current metropolitan allocation planning focus is on Gnangara, I agree that it's an excellent idea to extend the conversation to cover local issues in the southern metropolitan area. I know that Leon Brouwer, Roy Stone and Ben Drew would all appreciate a forum for ongoing engagement. Leon will be in touch early in the next year to discuss details and set up an initial session."*

Mike Rowe, Director General Water WA

## Outputs

The outputs from this project are extensive and broad ranging. They include:

### **Direct engagement from the turf industry with:**

- Department of Water and the Water Corporation WA
- Department of Sport and Recreation
- WA Department of Agriculture
- Department of Parks and Wildlife
- Department of Commerce
- Swan River Trust
- South West Catchment Council

- University of WA, School of Population Health
- Curtin University

**Industry communications:**

- Publication of twelve issues of the Turf Grass Times magazines
- Further development of the WA focused website and social media

**Seminar delivery:**

- WA turf Seminar, 29 July 2015, 200 participants
- WA telephone sales workshop, 18 November 2015, 15 turf growers
- WA Turf Industry Awards Night, 17 November, 58 participants.
- UWA Turf Industries Research Steering Committee Open Day, 17 February, 70 participants.

**Targeted and direct turf sector engagement with:**

- WA turf producers
- Turf industry researchers
- The turf maintenance sector
- Various government departments, state and local
- Allied 'green industry' and amenity horticulture stakeholders, such as the nursery & garden industry, landscape industry and Tree Guild
- Turf Australia & other state turf representative organisations
- The Sports Turf Association, state & national

## Outcomes

As with the outputs from this project, the outcomes from this project are extensive and broad ranging. These outcomes can be verified in Appendix One, "Industry Feedback" and include:

- Increased WA grower and overall production sector profitability through the extension of relevant R&D and Marketing information and the uptake of improved business practices, such as a better understanding of the cost of producing turf and improved telephone sales techniques. The workshops held on these topics have been instrumental in helping many growers realise their actual cost of turf production and, therefore, increasing their sale price for turf.
- Improved industry collaboration within and between various WA Turf industry bodies, especially the turf grower and maintenance sector's which is unique within Australia. The relationship between the Turf Growers Association WA and the Sports Turf Association (WA) is excellent, healthy, respectful and very productive. (The Chairperson of the TGAWA, Darren Kirkwood and the President of the STA (WA) can attest to this personally. Darren can be contacted on 0428 928 309 or [wcturf@bigpond.com](mailto:wcturf@bigpond.com) and Tony can be contacted on 0417 977 734 or [tony.guy@allsaints.wa.edu.au](mailto:tony.guy@allsaints.wa.edu.au).)

- Increased recognition and evidence for the triple bottom line (environmental, economic and social) benefits provided by green space that incorporate natural turf in WA
- Increased positive perceptions of turf and the turf industry through outstanding communications
- Enhanced uptake of R&D outcomes through WA tailored extension
- Support for the image and choice of turf through sound argument and communication about its environmental benefits
- Supporting the industry's development through good leadership, adequate resourcing and the collection and use of essential data
- Building and maintaining capacity to respond to biosecurity issues as they arise.
- The creation of a 'Green Space Alliance' to promote the maintenance of and to encourage the increasing of areas of green space in urban planning for urban livability
- Improved positive perceptions and knowledge across various stakeholders in WA. (Testimonials can be sought from across the state government and local government sectors, allied industry sector, association sectors and industry membership bases to support this).
- Increased uptake of R&D outcomes through tailored industry communications and extension such as the Turf Grass Times and electronic information sharing.
- Successful industry training and awareness programs, including three WA Turf Industry seminars, several state forums, and twelve industry workshops.
- Support for the industry's development in WA through resourcing, collecting and using improved industry data for best practice outcomes. The WA Turf industry is recognised as a leader in the Green Space arena and urban liveability forums.
- Improved capacity for the WA turf industry to respond to environmental, biosecurity and water use efficiency issues due to the strong, productive relationships developed across all sectors of government and the wider industry.
- Improved research outcomes for the WA and national Turf industry. Following the closure of the Redlands Research Station in QLD, the turf research facilities at UWA are now the only turf specific public turf research facility left in the country. The UWA School of Plant Biology team have a professional, productive and proactive relationship with the Turf Sector which has largely been achieved because of this project. The Turf Growers Association WA and the Sports Turf Association (WA) are highly supportive of the UWA Turf research facility and the steering committee both financially and with in-kind support with many research projects over the years being driven from inception by both the production and the maintenance sectors, facilitated by the IDO.
- Increased professionalism in the production of seminars and workshops. Over the life of the project there has been overwhelmingly positive feedback on all workshops, events and seminars conducted by the WA Turf Industry.
- Increased level of industry empowerment. A multi-pronged approach has been undertaken, so that growers and maintenance managers able to access tailored and relevant information from the TGA WA and STA (WA) websites and by attending meetings, seminars, field days and other activities. The IDO has become the 'Go To' source for industry information.

- The overall aim of this project is to have growers able to access the latest information from a single location at any time. This project concentrated on having the best information available, tailored for WA, and to have processes in place to bring all the industry sectors together. Access to relevant and trustworthy information quickly, supporting better decision-making.
- Monthly grower meetings and personal IDO interactions have been acknowledged as excellent forums for information exchange.
- Consistent, reliable and respected industry representation to various stakeholders, including Government departments
- Productive and professional relationships with staff from various other allied industry organisations
- Having one focal point of contact for stakeholders of the turf industry
- Increased communication and respect among various stakeholders
- Provision of assistance to UWA and other researchers to ensure industry involvement in various research & development initiatives
- HAL & HIA project and milestone requirements have been met
- Raised profile of turf and the turf industry within WA

## **Evaluation and Discussion**

Project TU11015 has given the WA Turf Industry many benefits and opportunities to learn from.

Overall the project has successfully achieved its intended outputs and outcomes. In addition, the WA Turf Industry Development officer has become an integral player in WA Turf industry operations, in both production and maintenance sectors. Time short turf growers and turf maintenance managers have benefited substantially by having a professional officer on the ground, tailoring and extending relevant information for the betterment of both sectors.

To their credit the WA Turf Industry has a unique situation whereby two industry associations combine together to fund the role of WA Turf Industry Development Officer. This is unique to WA and industry members should be congratulated for developing and funding a collaborative industry extension program that provides significant benefits both turf production and maintenance sectors.

The WA Turf Industry has matured over the past five years, having a much higher profile across many sectors including amenity horticulture, research, development and education and government. This project has helped to enable professional industry advice to be sourced from the turf industry enabling verified and accurate information to be used in the development of WA water use and green space policy.

During this project, WA faced Stage 1 water restrictions which would have been catastrophic for the turf industry and disastrous for the WA community. This project, along with the commitment and perseverance of the WA IDO, enabled compilation of facts and figures and genuine collaboration between stakeholders to develop options for the amenity horticultural sector, resulting in the WA government deciding not to progress with the green space water ban, which would have completely halted domestic turf sales and maintenance.

The IDO collated and gathered industry data, enabling the WA government to assess and produce a report on the “Economic cost of water restrictions”. As a direct result of the efforts by the IDO, the Minister for Water understood the ramifications of proceeding with further water restrictions and decided that this cannot happen.

The WA turf industry believe this outcome alone more than justifies the entire investment in this project. Having an industry development officer on the ground, able to address industry concerns, tailor information for respective stakeholders in a timely manner has enabled this and many other positive outcomes for the turf industry and the WA community.

The project reference committee, TGA-WA and the STA-WA are completely satisfied that all intended outcomes from this project have been achieved. Key performance indicators in each of the project areas, IE: development and convening of seminars and relevant industry workshops; engagement with researchers; turf sector engagement and education; communications and administration management, have been achieved despite the multiple variations in funding sources and project extensions for this project.

The WA turf industry believe the WA Turf Seminars are the major turf events on the WA industry calendar and this project has enabled the coordination of three highly successful WA Turf Seminars with high delegate registration numbers and trade exhibitors. It also enabled the production of 13 Turf Grass Times magazines. These outcomes provide two more good examples of the many achievements from this project.

The WA IDO has been widely recognised as passionate, committed, energetic, enthusiastic, hardworking and dedicated to the turf industry. This has enabled her to develop a vast network of professional contacts and influence multiple outcomes for the benefit of the turf industry. Even some of the originally more reluctant to participate and cynical industry members now acknowledge that this project has been beneficial for the entire WA turf industry.

If the WA Turf industry sectors did not come together and fund this project to provide tailored industry development services in WA, the multiple WA outputs and outcomes described in this report would not have been achieved and the industry would be smaller, less informed, more fractured, have a lower level of professionalism and reduced profitability.

The success of this project has resulted in TGA-WA and STA-WA committing to funding the ongoing employment of an industry development or extension officer with or without HIA funding support.

Given that HIA claim to invest in research and development that benefits the turf grower in terms of profitability, professionalism and providing relevant information to all industry stakeholders, TGA-WA and STA-WA do not understand the reluctance of HIA to continue investment in tailored WA industry development services.

Aside from the many achievements, outputs and outcomes provided by this project, the industry has learnt a lot, including:

**Better industry data is needed**

A full economic evaluation of the entire turf industry nationally would be a great benefit for the turf

industry nationally. The reason for this is as we don't have good figures on the size, depth and value of the turf industry, this industry is taken for granted, not understood or considered professional by policy makers, both state and federal, and the community in general. This impacts on our ability to ensure a profitable and sustainable industry.

Nationally, we need reliable production data on: the number of growers, by region; farm sizes; turf varieties grown and production trends. In addition, we need information on the full economic value provided by the turf maintenance sector, including home gardens, parks and open green space areas, race courses, golf clubs and all other aspects of turf in the landscape. In addition to this we need data on the quadruple bottom line benefits of turf 'in situ' in our society, IE the economic, social, environmental and human health value of natural turf areas provide the community. This is basic and essential information for the industry to plan, be professional, be recognised as for the many benefits provided and, therefore improve industry profitability.

The current Turf Industry Strategic Investment Plan 2012-2017 includes an identified priority the need for a full economic evaluation of the entire turf industry nationally and also allocated a budget for this to happen, beginning in 2014/15. It is disappointing that this previously identified priority has not been actioned by HIA, despite repeated request from Turf Australia and TGA-WA and STA-WA.

### **Ongoing Industry collaboration is imperative for success**

The WA Turf Industry recognises and acknowledges the benefits provided by continual and genuine state and national turf industry collaboration with both the turf production and maintenance sectors. Issues of national concern require joint and collaborative problem solving along with genuine engagement and respect towards all stakeholders. For example, involvement with Turf Australia projects such as the Cost of Production and the Telesales workshops, have ensured that all Turf producers have access to tools and resources that assist in turf farm profitability.

The ongoing challenge is genuine collaboration and relationships require continual effort and, therefore resources. Engaging consultants to deliver on specific areas of activity but not resourcing the ongoing facilitation of collaboration and genuine relationships will result in the demise of the professional networks created by this project. If this happens, it would be to the detriment of the turf industry.

### **Improving the national turf marketing program**

The turf industry is very different to all other horticulture and agriculture industries in that actual growers or farmers sell direct to the end user or consumer. This means that the entire supply and value chain is 'on farm'. In addition, turf is a continual crop and is harvested year-round in every State and Territory in Australia.

This means there are considerable consumer marketing skills, knowledge and experience within the turf industry, and this simply does not exist in other industries. HIA should, therefore, utilise and value add to the consumer marketing skills, knowledge and experience that already exists in the turf industry and not treat the marketing program as something that is designed and run by HIA staff with minimal industry consultation.



Unfortunately, and especially since the creation of HIA, the levy funded marketing program has been developed and run by HIA staff with minimal genuine engagement with and input from the industry. While this may be appropriate for other industries that do not possess consumer or end user marketing skills, knowledge and experience, this is not the case for the turf industry.

TGA-WA and STA-WA believe the HIA managed turf marketing could be improved. TGA-WA and STA-WA believe the current marketing program which focuses on managing a social media page that endorses generic turf maintenance information does not increase turf sales or the profitability of the industry. The program does not address critical WA issues such as the threats of synthetic/plastic 'turf' or increasing the profitability of turf farming.

Similarly, the Perfect Patch of Green and Perfect Pitch of Green marketing initiatives also achieved no increase in turf sales, as determined by TGA-WA, and resulted only in 'feel good' publicity after these initiatives.

Despite the lack of outcomes from these marketing initiatives, the management of them often created very demanding and difficult circumstance for those growers who so generously donated tens of thousands of dollars' worth of turf for no personal gain. Unfortunately, no media attention for either was achieved here in WA. The only media coverage that occurred, were local community newspaper articles as coordinated by the WA Turf IDO and articles in the Turf Australia Industry magazine. These initiatives demanded a fair amount of time from the WA IDO and a lot of donated turf with absolutely no return to the wider industry. WA Growers have expressed a desire to not be involved in this type of initiative in the future.

### **Improved interaction and genuine collaboration between industry and HIA is required**

In regard to project TU11015, TGA-WA, STA-WA and the WA turf industry have learnt not to expect that turf levy funds will be directed to help carry out the highest priority, as determined by growers and industry as a whole, for developing and improving the profitability of the turf industry.

Both the current Turf Industry Strategic Investment Plan 2012-2017 and the draft new Turf Industry Strategic Investment Plan 2017-22 identified the highest investment priority for R&D levy funds is the provision of industry development services. Yet, despite this, tailored industry development services in WA will cease to receive funding from HIA as of 31 December 2016.

TGA-WA and STA-WA have seen a significant change in the type of interaction and level of genuine engagement towards industry from HAL (pre 2014) and now HIA (post 2014). Interaction was regular and engagement was somewhat genuine under the HAL model. Unfortunately, this has not continued under the relatively new HIA model.

WA turf growers have written to HIA on several occasions expressing concern over the lack of implementation in regard to the current Turf Industry Strategic Investment Plan 2012-2017 and a certain level of arrogance displayed by some HIA staff. The largely dismissive responses received from HIA to these concerns have, unfortunately, not improved the level of confidence in HIA and HIA processes from many WA turf growers and turf managers. For example, a senior HAL/HIA Executive describing grower bodies, such as TGA-WA, a "like pigs with their noses in the trough" whilst mimicking the sound of pig and pretending to hold and lick a bowl in his hands does not

show or demonstrate respectful, collaborative or professional behaviour.

TGA-WA and STA-WA would like the relationship with HIA to improve and invite HIA to listen to WA grower concerns and to help ensure turf levy funds are directed to help carry out the highest priority, as determined by growers and industry as a whole, for developing the turf industry.

### **Improved HIA project administration and strategic investment plan implementation**

This project has been regularly changed and repeatedly extended by HIA over its final two and a half years. Prior to the original extension of this project, turf Australia sought advice from HAL in regard to the continuation of industry development services in WA. Initially, HAL requested a new project proposal be written and submitted, which was agreed to by Turf Australia, and was, therefore, written and submitted to HAL.

However, despite requesting a new project proposal, HAL changed its mind and decided that the current project should be extended for a short period of time but with a significant change to the source and amount of HAL funds. This resulted in the project funds changing from 100% Voluntary Contribution matched funding to only 20% of R&D levy funds.

This significant change resulted in the IDO position being reduced from 4 days per week, consisting of 100% HAL/HIA matched VC funding, to 3 days per week and only 20% HAL/HIA funding from the R&D levy, or only 4.8 hours of the 3 days per week being funded by HIA. Turf growers in WA found this hard to understand given the Turf Industry Strategic Investment Plan 2012-2017 identified the provision of industry development services as the highest investment priority for R&D levy funds.

In addition to this change and repeated project extensions, mixed messages were received from HIA in relation to HIA willingness and commitment to fund industry development services, regardless of the industry strategic investment plan priorities or an independent review, contracted by HIA, saying that the turf industry development program is successful and should continue.

These issues have created considerable uncertainty over a long period of time for the WA turf industry and resulted in a lack of confidence in HIA policies and procedures.

Despite many, administratively complex changes to Project TU11015, the project has delivered on its original expectations and resulted in many significant benefits to the WA turf industry.

## **Recommendations**

The WA Industry Development Project has served the WA Turf Industry very well. The TGA-WA, STA-WA, allied industry associations, government and the wider turf industry consider the services provided by the project as highly valuable and beneficial. Given this level of local support and industry development services being identified as the highest priority for R&D Levy funds by the recent HIA strategic investment planning process for turf, HIA funding should continue to be allocated to provide industry development and/or extension services at both the national and State level.

In addition, a full economic study of the entire turf industry could help identify different levels of

production efficiency, profitability, business practices and motivation. Such information could then be used to segment growers, possibly into three or four groups – thus helping determine where and how to direct industry development services for greatest effect and efficiency.

## **Scientific Refereed Publications**

N/a

## **Intellectual Property/Commercialisation**

'No commercial IP generated'

## **Acknowledgements**

- The input and efforts of Louise Edmonds, Industry Development Officer for the year of 2012.
- The Turf Growers Association WA and Sports Turf Association (WA) Executive Officers.
- Turf Growers Association WA members, past and present.
- Sports Turf Association (WA) members and sponsors
- The wider turf and amenity horticulture industries in Western Australia
- The Turf Australia Staff and Board, past and present.
- Fellow Industry Development Officers in NSW, Queensland and Victoria past and present.
- HAL/HIA Turf industry program staff.

## **Appendix One**

### *Industry Feedback*

#### **Turf Educators and Researchers**

- a) "The WA IDO Project has served WA Turf research to great lengths. You have been great to work with on the turf research and seminar days. The industry has benefited massively from this project, I hope that it will continue on for many years to come." Professor Tim Colmer, School of Plant Biology, UWA
- b) "The IDO position has grown during the time that Mrs Ricci has held the position with major projects such the biennial WA Turf Seminar and the Green Space Alliance being undertaken on behalf of the WA Turf Industry. She has continually been an educated voice for the turf industry fulfilling the position as a contract for both the turf producers and the sports turf industry. The professionalism of the industry has developed because of her astute input. An Industry Development Officer is essential for the WA Turf Industry ". John Forrest, Business Development Manager, South Metropolitan TAFE.

## Government

- a) "I am eternally grateful for all the advice and access to industry you have offered that has made my work both easier and more satisfying." Aaron Compton, Department of Water
- b) "You have been instrumental in the positive working relationship between the turf industry and the Water Corporation" Amy Wright, Waterwise team, Water Corporation
- c) "We need wonderful people and like you projects such as the WA Turf IDO project, to keep us all sane and happy working together." Sarah Jane Collins, Plant Pathology, Dept. of Agriculture and Food
- d) "I look forward to all of the challenges and opportunities ahead, and in particular to working with stakeholders like you, to achieve great things for the way that water is understood, used and reused, distributed, managed and lived with! Your honesty and purpose are a breath of fresh air. Not only do you have the interests of your associations at heart, but the fact that community benefit is also a priority strikes home." Mike Rowe, Director General, Dept. of Water
- e) "It's been great to have your assistance, especially in setting up consultation and providing advice. Your suggestions are sensible and offer good opportunity to help people get information and plan ahead and to service your industry needs. Thanks so much for your energy and enthusiasm." Susan Worley, Water Allocations Team , Dept. of Water
- f) "I particularly respect your collaborative approach to dealing with difficult issues. Your energy as WA IDO and passion for your industry have seen policy makers stand up and take notice. It is a pleasure working with an industry dedicated officer who has not only the interests of her members as a priority but those of the general community as well" Ben Drew, Water Allocations Manager, Dept. of Water
- g) "Your energy and vitality in your role as WA IDO are to be admired. This role is imperative to the WA Turf industry and stakeholders and is highly valued by government as a source of genuine, honest information on turf related issues and concerns." Rob Didcoe, Director of Facilities, Dept. of Sport and Recreation
- h) "Thank you for organising this event Eva. I really enjoyed meeting some of your members and learning more about the turf industry and hearing their views on water issues and opportunities." Mike Rowe, Director General Water WA

## Private sector

- a) "You have done a wonderful job in the IDO role over the past 5 years, Without the WA IDO Project so many issues and concerns for turf would not have been actioned appropriately and turf may well have disappeared from the landscape with the proposed watering restrictions. Thank you for actioning on behalf of all in the turf industry in WA." Peter Pilgrim, Past President, Lawn Mowing Contractors Association of W.A. (Inc.)
- b) "The WA IDO project has been integral in supporting and extending the relationship between amenity horticultural industries here in WA. I hope that the project is retained for years to come, so many positive changes for turf and green space have come out of this project" Gary McKenzie, Chairperson Landscape Industries Assn WA
- c) "The WA IDO Project has provided WA turf growers with results and benefits that we would otherwise not have had. We are grateful for all the work undertaken by the WA IDO to achieve on behalf of us." John and Vicki Clayton, Down South Turf