



Final Report

Turf Industry Communications 2012 - 2017

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Turf Australia Limited

Project Number: TU12014

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Summary

The Turf Industry Communications 2012-2017 project (TU12014) provided a high level of communication and information sharing within the Australian turf industry, its growers and key stakeholders, including Horticulture Innovation Australia (Hort Innovation, previously Horticulture Australia Limited) and Turf Australia (TA).

The project delivered a number of tangible outputs including: a fortnightly e-newsletter, quarterly industry magazine, an upgraded website, industry fact sheets and the implementation of a social media strategy. These were delivered in a range of formats including hard copy, digital and multimedia, to maximize the audience reach and value of the investment in R&D.

The project was developed following the Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL – now known as Hort Innovation) and the then Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) Group, Turf Australia (TA) developed 5-year R&D Strategic Investment Plan 2012-2017 which focused on communicating up-to-date technical knowledge about turf production, business management and marketing to turf growers and other strategic partners.

As a result, the project helped to develop and foster the advancement and profitability of a sustainable natural turf grass industry and through effective communication that helps to ensure that turf and the industry is professional and valued by industry members, industry sectors, the Australian community, regulators and other stakeholders. It also enabled direct communication with levy payers and strategic partners, such as the nursery & garden industry and the turf maintenance sector, including Sports Turf Associations, Australian Golf Course Superintendent Association and Race Course Owners.

Keywords

Turf; Turf Australia; growers; industry engagement; communications; magazine; investment; collaboration; stakeholders, industry research, industry development, turfgrass.

Introduction

The communications project was developed following an independent communication audit conducted by Naturally Resourceful under a HAL (now known as Hort Innovation) contract in August 2012. The audit included extensive consultations with growers from the turf industry, representatives from various industry sectors, Turf Australia (including the Business & Industry Development Manager) and HAL (Hort Innovation).

Key findings of the audit were that Turf Australia's existing communications products, particularly its magazine, production guide and conference were highly regarded by industry members and strategic partners as sources of up-to-date technical information about turf production and business management. Two other important findings of the audit were that: while most people surveyed were aware of HAL funding for R&D, few read any final reports; and, most turf growers used the internet daily to source information with many investigating the option of marketing online through Facebook.

These findings were used to guide the development of current communications project TU12014. Its focus is on ensuring that the results of R&D are effectively and efficiently extended based on our knowledge of the information seeking behaviour by industry members and their preferred communications products.

Turf Australia's role in extending the results of R&D to do with turf production, business management and industry marketing is unique; no other organisation is involved in this area. The results of the audit also demonstrated Turf Australia's information products are highly valued by the industry and are essential to the sustainable production of turf and management of turf businesses.

Methodology

The key issue being addressed is to improve grower awareness of technologies and practices that will support a profitable and sustainable industry and ensure its future. The approaches to doing this are as follows:

- improving the extension of R&D conducted by producing results and recommendations in forms that ensure relevance and describe their practical application on the farm
- harvesting key messages from research and publishing them in a variety of formats to maximise their use
- keeping growers and others in the industry up to date with important technical and policy developments that have the potential to affect the industry profitability and sustainability e.g. changes to pesticide regulations or environmental management requirements.

A communications plan was developed and provided the strategy and activities to be implemented from 2012 to 2017 to coincide with the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) developed for the Turf Industry. There were two related philosophies underpinning the plan. The first was the communications medium already valued by turf growers and allied industries will be used, and in some cases upgraded, to deliver key messages. The second was that the plan harvested the considerable information resource contained in R&D reports, projects, conferences and workshops during the period. An emphasis was on making messages consistent and available in a variety of mediums as a way of maximising exposure and uptake by growers and audiences.

The progress of the plan was evaluated twice during this project. The results of evaluations during implementation will be used to make any modifications necessary to the plan to ensure effectiveness. These evaluations took place in 2015 and 2017.

Quantitative and qualitative monitoring and evaluation included:

- Informal feedback on communications products
- Registrations to conference compared to past events
- Downloads of communications products from the Turf Australia website
- Visits to the website
- Number of recipients of the e-newsletter confirming each year that they want to be kept on the mailing list
- Number of people subscribing as a “friend” to Turf Australia’s Facebook page
- Numbers of growers registering for proposed workshops on social media
- Continued advertiser commitment to the magazine
- Results of two evaluations to be undertaken during the life of the communications plan.

Outputs

The outputs of the project have been:

- Delivery of 108 fortnightly e-newsletter updating readers on R&D and technical developments <http://www.turfaustralia.com.au/news/turf-eneews>
- Delivery of 19 quarterly magazine, 24-36 pages, full colour, focusing on production and business management and Turf Australia activities (delivered in hard copy and digital formats) <http://www.turfaustralia.com.au/news/turf-industry-magazine>
- a regularly maintained and updated website www.turfaustralia.com.au with content of relevance to growers, consumers and allied industries
- a social media presence on Facebook www.facebook.com/turfaustralia
- development and delivery of 13 fact sheets delivering key messages from R&D projects and industry relevant issues (ie. Natural turf vs synthetic turf) and publishing them in digestible, user-friendly formats (hard copy and digital) <http://www.turfaustralia.com.au/resources/fact-sheets>
- two evaluations of awareness and the effectiveness of Turf Australia communication products – completed in 2015 and 2017.
- Workshops & seminars of national significance

Industry magazine:

A major output of the project has been an industry magazine, published quarterly during the year in line with the seasonal aspect of the industry, <http://www.turfaustralia.com.au/news/turf-industry-magazine>.

Initially, the magazine was to be produced bi-monthly, but feedback from the industry was this was not the correct timing to effectively deliver research and development, production, business management and Turf Australia activities to members. The project parameters were altered for the magazine to be instead published quarterly in line with spring, summer, autumn and winter seasons.

Agrihort Communications was initially engaged as a subcontractor to help produce the magazine for Turf Australia. The Agrihort Communications team of Katie Fisher, Liz Mecham and Grant Nelson coordinated and provided the editorial, design and publishing aspects of the magazine throughout the project period. However, to comply with new Hort Innovation requirements to reduce sub-contracting arrangements, Turf Australia employed staff, who were previously employed by Agrihort Communications, to enable the industry magazine to continue to be published using the same skilled and experienced staff from January 2016.

A total of 19 editions of the magazine have been produced. The final output of the project is to produce and distribute a USB drive which contained all editions of the magazine and turf fact sheets created during the project. The USB drive had the capacity for growers to search for relevant articles using information categories and/or keywords to allow them to fully utilise project outputs in their own business activities. All turf levy payers will receive this USB.

Each magazine was produced in full colour and contained between 24 and 36 pages, which was determined by the amount of information needing to be delivered to growers at the time of publication. The magazine format delivered a high-quality magazine with interesting photographs, easy-to-read wording and a blend of short, medium and longer articles covering Marketing, Research & Development, Industry Development, Business Management and Grower Profiles.





Above: Turf Australia Industry Magazine covers from Spring 2012 to Autumn 2017.

Website:

As part of this project, the Turf Australia website, www.turfaustralia.com.au, has been refreshed and is constantly kept up to date with relevant information covering turf marketing, research and development and other industry issues. During the time of the project a number of Turf Australia staff have been responsible for the regular updating of website content.

Initially, Turf Australia Office Manager, Christine Hughes (2012-2014) oversaw the website content, while from July 2014 Turf Australia Communications Coordinator, Dave Raison, with assistance from the Administration Officer, Rachel Layt, maintained the website. From January 2016, Rachel Layt, has taken over the responsibility for the website.

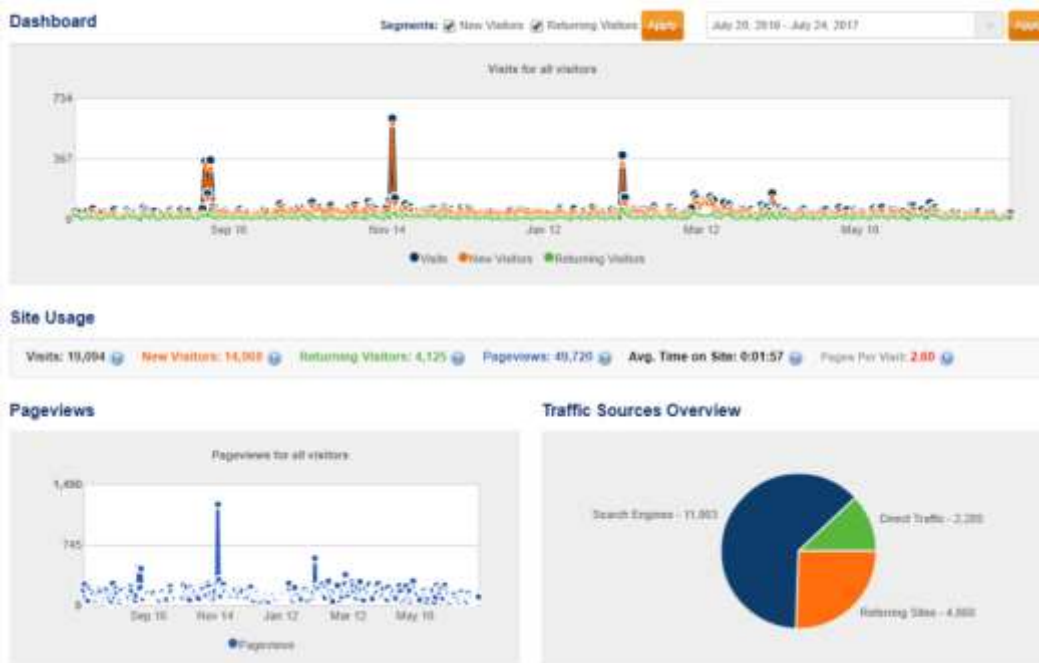
As requested by HIA and recommended by the Turf Industry Communication Review, the TA website front page was changed to be more consumer focused and be a source of information as referred to from the Lawnspiration Facebook page from January 2016. In addition, the website contains all the national marketing program info-graphics, <http://www.turfaustralia.com.au/resources/info-graphics> .

An output of the project was to increase visitor numbers to the Turf Australia website. Over the course of the project site visitor numbers have significantly increased, with 14,871 more people visiting the Turf Australia

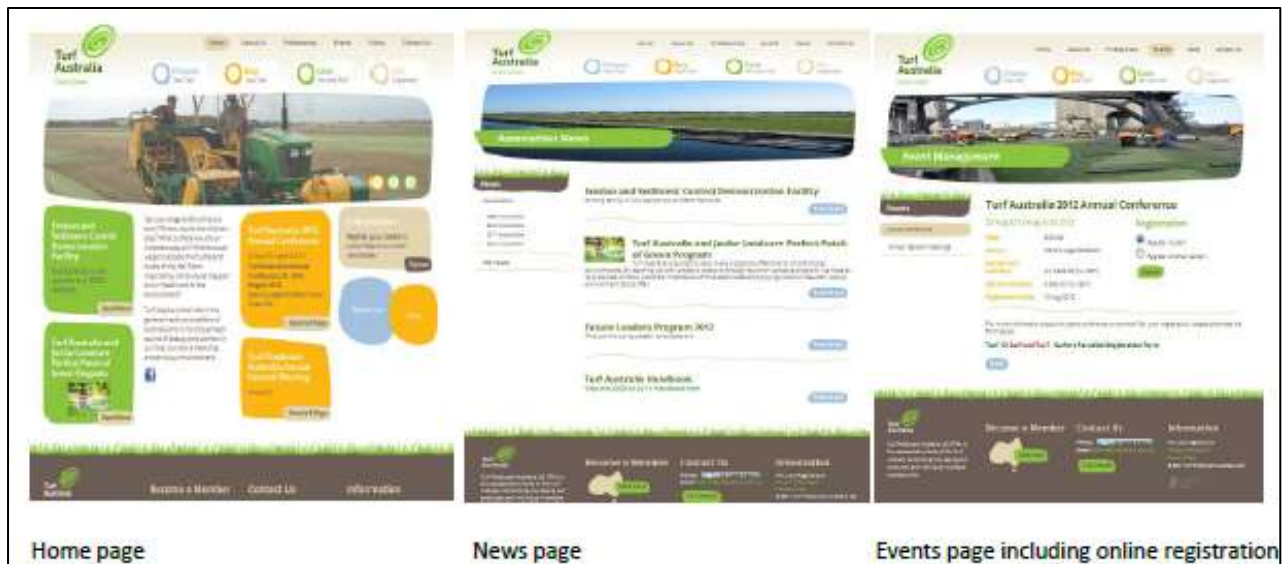
website when comparing 2015/16 to 2016/17.



20th July 2015 – 20th July 2016 website metrics



20th July 2016 – 20th July 2017 website metrics



Turf Australia website 2012-2013



Turf Australia website 2014





Turf Australia website, 2016-2017.

Facebook site:

Turf Australia has continuously operated a Facebook page during the course of this communications project, www.facebook.com/turfaustralia. Initially started in 2013 under the responsibility of Christine Hughes, the 'Turf Producers Australia' Facebook page was a closed group page. The page was designed specifically for turf growers to provide relevant industry only information on R&D and marketing issues, as opposed to a public page providing information for customers.

Following Christine Hughes' departure from Turf Australia in 2014, the Facebook page was kept updated and monitored by Turf Australia Communications Coordinator, Dave Raison, with assistance from the Administration Officer, Rachel Layt, and retained its closed group status.

In 2014, a marketing/customer-focused Facebook page, Lawnspiration, was created by HIA in conjunction with Bite Communications and Turf Australia using marketing levy funds and was designed to engage both customers and growers. Growers were encouraged to take marketing information created for the Lawnspiration page and use it on their own business or personal Facebook pages to encourage greater understanding of natural turf in the wider community. Through a series of competitions and promotions, the Lawnspiration Facebook page amassed tens of thousands of followers, while the Turf Producers Australia Facebook page maintained or only slightly increased its follower numbers.

In January 2017, the Turf Australia Facebook page was changed to an 'open page' and renamed to 'Turf Australia's Growers' and revitalized to be used as a more useful communication vehicle to the next generation of turf growers. The total reach, numbers of people engaged and page likes have increased significantly – from 63 to 159 – following this change.



Turf Producers Australia Facebook page 2013-14.



Turf Producers Australia Facebook page 2014-2015



Turf Australia's Growers Facebook page 2017

Turf eNewsletter:

A fortnightly eNewsletter was distributed to growers throughout the entire period of the project with a total of 108 eNewsletters delivered to 450 recipients from a database of growers and industry stakeholders, <http://www.turfaustralia.com.au/news/turf-e-news>.

Initially, the eNewsletter was a very basic layout and over the course of the project has evolved to being a more professional-looking document, linking readers back to the Turf Australia website to read articles to further engage them. The first edition of the eNewsletter was distributed on June 5, 2013.

At the end of 2014, the Turf Australia eNewsletter was given a refreshed image to better engage with growers. The improved visual look and layout of the newsletter was reflected in the open rates during 2015. Open rates in 2015 represented a 15% increase on 2014 and 46% increase on 2013 open rates.

The E-newsletter format was again simplified and improved in mid-2016, resulting in positive feedback from industry.

Introduction to the Turf Australia E-news, 5 June 2013



14th Edition

In this Issue

- **Turf Australia & State Turf Associations working strategically together.** A successful meeting was held last week that involved the State Turf Association Presidents and the Turf Australia Board to determine how to work strategically together in developing and representing the industry.
- **Turf Australia responds to synthetic turf press coverage.** Turf Australia issues a Press Release and conducts 7 radio interviews in response to the recent media coverage and misleading information about synthetic turf.
- **DAFF Levies to work with Turf Australia to minimize levy leakage.** Keith Tolmie, Regional Manager with DAFF Levies, will work with Turf Australia to minimize levy administration costs, promote the benefits of the levy program and ensure widespread compliance with levy collections.



Turf Australia E-news November 2014.



E-news December 2014 (above)



E-news 2015 (above)



E-news 2015 (above)



E-news 2015 (left)





E-news 2016 (above)

E-news 2017 (above)

Turf Fact sheets:

A total of 13 Turf Fact sheets have been produced over the period of the Communications Project and have covered a broad range of industry issues including production, business management, marketing and the natural turf vs synthetic turf debate, <http://www.turfaustralia.com.au/resources/fact-sheets>.

The first turf fact document produced in 2013 was in response to industry demand and provided information on the differences between natural turf and synthetic grass.

A new design was established for the Turf Australia factsheets in 2014 to ensure easy to recognise branding and subject matter. They have been designed specifically for the following areas:

- Production
- Business Management
- Marketing

Further revision of the turf fact sheet design occurred in 2015 and they become more regularly published in line with the quarterly industry magazine to increase grower awareness of the valuable information contained within them. Information contained within Turf Facts related to specific aspects of the industry and continued useful, tangible information growers could use in their own business development. They acted as an appendix to the information provided in the magazine, as well as being a stand-alone document. This was particularly evident in 2014 when a 4-document series of turf fact sheets was produced specifically addressing the marketing issue of the cost of turf in response to consumer feedback to turf businesses.



2014 fact sheets (above)

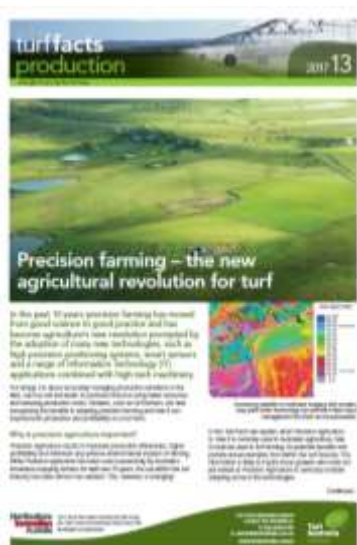


2015 Turf Fact sheets (above & left)

2016 fact sheets (below)



2017 fact sheet (below)



Evaluation of awareness of Turf Communications Project

As part of the communications project, two external reviews and evaluations of the project and its effectiveness took place.

The first of these was undertaken in 2014/2015 by Anne Currey, Naturally Resourced, and was on the whole, positive, as was the 2016/2017 review of the industry strategic needs conducted by Pat Abraham, KeyLink Solutions.

2015 review: The aim of this review was to complete an external review of Turf Australia's communications project (project TU12014). In particular, the review examined the effectiveness of the variety and mix of communication tools used, as per the industry communication plan, in transferring R&D outcomes to growers.

The key methods for carrying out the review included an industry survey (phone survey of growers in December 2014) and interviewing state and Turf Australia staff members. The findings were then compared with the results of a benchmark survey administered in 2012 and a review of the communications strategy developed for Turf Australia in 2012.

The key findings of the review were:

- Turf Australia's newsletter, conferences and field days remain highly valued as sources of information about turf production and R&D.
- Turf growers believe they are aware of R&D and outcomes, which are described in the various communication tools produced by Turf Australia and turf organisations in NSW, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia.
- Growers believe that about the right amount of information is being produced by Turf Australia and that Turf Australia and State associations are not duplicating information in their communication tools.
- The Turf Australia communication strategy, the focus of which is to concentrate on doing the basics well, is being successfully implemented.
- Turf Australia should evaluate whether it should continue to buy space and put effort into providing articles for *TurfCraft* and *Australian Turfgrass Management*. As part of this evaluation it should identify its target market(s) and its aims and then assess whether it is getting value for money or whether funds and effort could be better expended in other areas.

In a situation where funding for communications activities is reduced, the following communications options were considered:

- Having one website for turf grower associations with state-specific content included in separate pages. These pages could be maintained by state-based staff and association members.
- Developing one national e-newsletter which has state content. Software is available that would allow for newsletters to be sent to recipients based on their information preferences e.g. NSW growers receive national content plus content that is specific to NSW. Another option is examine the "Queensland solution", i.e. members receive the national e-newsletter and a Queensland e-blast is sent when necessary to communicate state based issues.

Following on from the independent review, some actions within the communications were altered to reflect this review, including some communications functions being centralised, consistency of branding and quality in terms of production and messaging are important to projecting a professional image.

In 2016 and 2017, Pat Abraham from Keylink Solutions was contracted by Hort Innovation to develop the Turf Industry Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) 2017-2021 and industry communications was rated by industry members as the second most important strategic priority for levy investment, behind industry engagement and extension.

At the Turf Australia State Forums held in 2016, Pat workshopped the strategic investment priorities for the turf industry. This included "what is currently working well" and what new activities do we need to do. The exiting industry communication program was widely recognised as providing valuable services to the industry and prioritised for continued levy funding.

As part of the development of the Turf SIP 2017-2021, a planning meeting, known as the *A Meeting of the Turf Minds*, was held at the Hort Innovation Offices in Sydney on October 24, 2016. Facilitated by Pat

Abraham from KeyLink Solutions, Turf growers from across Australia, along with key industry stakeholders, reviewed the key messages obtained from the Strategic Investment Planning sessions held at the four Turf Australia State Forums in 2016.

The *Meeting of the Turf Minds* identified six Research and Development (R&D) outcomes along with a marketing outcome for levy funding.

The most important R&D Outcome identified was to invest in industry extension and engagement with the aim to increase the current level of engagement by turf growers in industry activities that have or are to be funded through the turf levy. Effective turf industry communication was also determined to be of very high importance.

Communication/Extension Activities

A significant number of communication and extension activities in addition to the project outputs have been delivered during this communications project. These extension activities have been promoted and reported on throughout the project period through the industry eNewsletter and magazine. Information delivered in these extension activities have also been included in Turf Fact Sheets.

Through the use of the industry communication vehicles, industry uptake of these extension activities has significantly increased over the five years of the project.

2013:

In addition to the National Turf Australia Conference (project TU12703) and the 'Nx Gen Forum' (TU12020), five industry seminars were held.

- November 2012, Turf Growers Association of NSW Annual General Meeting, Pitt Town, NSW approximately 25 participants
- November 2012, Turf Growers Association of NSW Annual General Meeting, Pitt Town, NSW approximately 25 participants
- January 2013, Turf Victoria Meeting, East Malvern, Vic, approximately 12 participants
- January 2013, NxGen Forum, Tambourine Mountain QLD, over 35 participants
- February 2013, Turf Growers Association of WA meeting, Perth, WA, approximately 12 participants
- May 2013, Turf Australia Conference & Field Day, Gold Coast QLD, 110 participants
- June 2013, Turf Growers Association of NSW meeting, Pitt Town, NSW approximately 60 participants.

These seminars were delivered by the Business & Industry Development Manager (BIDM) with Turf Australia, Richard Stephens, and they covered a range of marketing, R&D and industry issues.

In addition to the communication activities listed above, the BIDM provides regular articles to the commercial publication, TurfCraft, a bimonthly publication with an estimated readership of 4000.

2014:

During 2014 the following meetings and forums were held:

- February 2014, Meeting with Turf Producers International in Orlando, Florida
- March 2014, Cost of Production Seminar in Melbourne, 5 participants
- April 2014, Nx Gen Forum Hawkesbury Valley, NSW, 54 participants
- June 2014, Profitability crisis seminar held in Windsor, NSW with over 70 participants.
- 18 August, Turf Farm Business Profitability Seminar, Brisbane Qld, over 30 participants

- 27 & 28 August, Turf Australian Annual Conference, Penrith NSW, over 120 participants
- 29 August, Turf Australia Field Day, Freemans Reach NSW, over 160 participants
- 16 September, Turf Farm Business Profitability Seminar, Perth WA, over 20 participants
- 18 November, Turf R&D and Marketing update in conjunction with Lawn Solutions Australia, Claredon NSW, over 20 participants.
- 25 November, Turf Chemical Resistance Seminar & Field Walk, Freemans Reach NSW, over 20 participants
- 2 December, Turf R&D and Marketing update in conjunction with Lawn Solutions Australia, Caboolture Qld NSW, over 10 participants.

These meetings and seminars were delivered by Turf Australia (involving both the Business & Industry Development Manager (BIDM), Richard Stephens, Communications Officer of Turf Australia, Christine Hughes (prior to her departure in 2014) and Communications Coordinator of Turf Australia, Dave Raison, as well as other service providers. as well as other service providers. They covered a range of marketing, R&D and industry issues.

In addition to the communication activities listed above, the BIDM provides regular articles to the commercial publication, TurfCraft - a bimonthly publication with an estimated readership of 4000, and the Australian Turfgrass Management Magazine that is produced by the Australian Golf Course Superintendents Association of Australia.

The topics covered in the July – December 2015 editions of the TurfCraft magazine include: Horticulture Australia Changes; the R&D and Marketing benefits of Turf Levy; the 2015 TA Industry Conference; Strategic planning for turf farm businesses; the 2015 industry field day; Business development workshops; The new Horticulture Innovation Australia; Heavy Vehicle legislation; developing strategic alliances between the turf and nursery industries; and, the turf herbicide field trial.

The topics covered in the July – December 2015 editions of the TurfCraft magazine include: the 2015 TA Industry Conference, Horticulture Australia Changes; The R&D and Marketing benefits of Turf Levy; the 2015 industry field day, The new Horticulture Innovation Australia, Heavy Vehicle legislation.

2015:

A strategic and external review of the Communications project took place in 2015 (see project outputs for detailed information).

There were also several industry workshops and seminars conducted that have been reported on in the industry communications for the first half of 2015. While these workshops and/or seminars had their operational costs largely funded via other projects (including TU13004, TU120202 & TU12024) and/or mechanisms, the turf industry communications program is nationally coordinated and, these workshops and/or seminars provide relevant and up-to-date content which is utilised by the communications program. The workshops and seminars covered Turf Farm Business Profitability, a cross section of industry R&D and marketing information, advanced turf chemical training and leadership development of the next generation of turf growers.

There were also a large number of workshops held during 2015 including:

- 19 February, Turf Farm Business Profitability Seminar, TPI Educational Conference, Carlsbad California, over 120 participants

- 17 March, Turf NSW Field Day, Pitt Town NSW, over 50 participants
- 28 April, Turf NSW advanced turf chemical workshop, Richmond NSW, over 30 participants
- 10 - 12 May, NxGen Forum, Twin Waters QLD, over 50 participants
- 4 August, Turf Telephone Sales Training workshop, Richmond NSW, 31 participants
- 26-28 August, Turf Australia Conference & Field Day, Sunshine Coast QLD, 159 participants
- 24 October, Turf Telephone Sales Training workshop, Brisbane QLD, 20 participants
- 10 November, NSW Turf Grower Seminar, Pitt Town, NSW, 40 participants
- 18 November, Turf Telephone Sales Training workshop, Perth WA, 13 participants

Business & Industry Development news items were also written for and regularly published on a bimonthly basis in both the 'Australian TurfGrass Management Journal' and 'TurfCraft'.

2016:

Turf Australia, in conjunction with the Sports Turf Association, produced and distributed a Work Place Health & Safety Chart. This chart, specifically designed for the turf industry, helps to inform growers about the work place health and safety hazards, and what to do in case of an emergency.

The final Telephone Sales Skills workshop was held in Victoria on 20 October 2016 and provided growers with some excellent strategies to help improve their sales and maintain their turf prices. Presented by Kevin Kosky from Big Hat Professional Services, the workshop was the final one in the national roll-out these important workshops held in 2015 and 2016. They provided invaluable support to businesses and their staff who want to communicate better with customers and those who attended, walked-out with skills to engage customers, get more useful information and close a sale." For more information on the final Telephone Sales Skills workshop, please refer milestone report 107 for project TU13028, Development of the Victorian Turf Industry.

A series of successful State Forums, primarily funded under project TU15700, National Turf R&D Conference 2016 and 2017, were held during July, August and September 2016. An informative program was developed, in conjunction with Hort Innovation, and favourable feedback was received from the participants. See below for a copy of the Sunshine Coast, QLD Forum program.

For more information on the 2016 State Forums held by Turf Australia, please refer milestone report 103 for project TU15700, National Turf R&D Conference 2016 and 2017.

The development of the turf industry Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) has also been undertaken by Pat Abraham from KeyLink Solutions who was engaged by Hort Innovation Australia. Turf Australia worked closely with Pat to ensure a thorough strategic review of the turf levy investments, including industry development and communications. The State-based Forums held by Turf Australia provided Pat with a platform to interact directly and face to face with 150 turf growers and the communication project outputs also provided electronic and web based interaction options, enabling a thorough and independent review and the development of a new industry Strategic Investment Plan.

During 2016 the following meetings and forums were held:

- February 2016, Meeting with Turf Producers International in Houston, Texas
- QLD State forum, Caloundra, Wednesday 27 July, attracting 45 participants
- NSW State forum, Oakville, Tuesday 16 August, attracting 55 participants
- WA State forum, Wembley Downs, Wednesday 31 August, attracting 25 participants
- August 2016, NxGen Forum, Perth WA, attracting 42 participants

- VIC State forum, Healesville, Wednesday 14 September, attracting 15 participants
- Telephone Sales Skills workshop, Melbourne, 20 October, attracting 6 participants
- NSW Growers Information night, Pitt Town, November, attracting 30 participants.

2017:

During the first six months of 2017 the following meetings and forums were held:

- February 2017, meeting with Turf Producers International in Tampa, Florida
- May 2017, NxGen Forum, Canberra, ACT attracting 45 participants
- June 2017, Turf Australia national conference & field day, Hunter Valley, NSW with over 130 participants.

Outcomes

The project activities have enabled:

- Increased grower awareness of the economic, R&D and market factors that affect the turf industry
- Enhanced grower professionalism
- Improved understanding and adoption of business management, R&D and marketing initiatives on-farm
- Greater awareness of the key strategic issues for the turf industry and ways of managing them at an individual farm and industry wide level
- Allied industries are more aware of turf production and management issues
- Enhances industry sustainability and profitability.

Evaluation and discussion

The Turf Australia Industry Magazine produced by Turf Australia was to be published bi-monthly. However, industry feedback indicated a preference for a quarterly publication, aligned with the seasons throughout the year.

The first publication, October-November 2012, was 20 pages, the Summer 2013 edition was 24 pages while both the Autumn and Winter 2013 edition were 28 pages. The style is full colour with interesting photographs, easy to read wording and a blend of short, medium and longer articles covering Marketing, Research & Development, Industry Development and Grower Profiles.

Feedback from the Industry Advisory Committee, the Turf Australia Board and industry members has been overwhelmingly positive and indicate a significant improvement on the previous Turf Australia newsletter.

The primary target audience is the individual owners, managers and financial controllers of the various turf production businesses across Australia. There is a secondary audience of HAL and strategic associates whose livelihoods depend on turf e.g. golf and racecourse managers, and sports turf managers. The communications plan will be delivered from 2012 to 2017.

Turf Australia has an accurate contact list for turf production businesses around Australia, as well as for associated strategic partners. This means Turf Australia can target its communication products effectively and with accuracy.

The essence of the communication plan is to harvest information and make this available through a range of communication mediums to ensure maximum exposure. Most of these mediums are already established and well regarded in the industry. As a way of improving its communications reach and effectiveness, however, in the first year of the plan Turf Australia will work to upgrade its website and develop a series of factsheets that take key messages from R&D reports and extend them to producers and members of allied industries.

Built into the plan are three evaluations to check that materials are being used and valued by the industry. Based on the results, the plan can be modified to ensure it achieves its objective of Turf Australia being recognised as the provider of up-to-date information on turf research and development and marketing and as the authority on strategic directions and issues of national importance to the turf industry.

Critical success factors for adoption include:

1. Information developed in a number of formats to suit different needs of growers and other audiences
2. Tailoring information so that it is relevant to industry needs and, where appropriate, able to be applied at farm level.
3. Information is professionally produced to a high standard.
4. Adapting and modifying communications and materials and content based on feedback obtained through planned evaluation activities.

These factors will all influence the value that growers and other audiences place on communications, and hence on inclination to adopt recommendations.

Recommendations

A dedicated and tailored turf industry communications program is essential to develop and foster the advancement and profitability of a sustainable natural turf industry in Australia. Coupled with a professional, independent and highly regarded industry extension and engagement program, industry communications have the potential to significantly change and improve the productivity and farm gate profitability within the turf industry.

An effective industry communications program will facilitate the uptake of Research & Development (R&D), provide information and knowledge on industry developments, events, explain the benefits from the industry R&D and Marketing levy investments and provide industry stakeholders with information to better inform the wider community about the many benefits of turf and the turf industry.

The opportunity provided by effective communications is to improve the professionalism and profitability of the turf industry and ensure the industry and turf itself is valued by industry members, industry sectors, the Australian community, regulators and other stakeholders. In other words, an effective communications project will highlight turf's environmental, economic, well-being, social and emotional benefits to the community by encouraging industry stakeholders to be advocates for turf.

A new industry communications project should be contracted that uses a suite of communication vehicles including a regular e-newsletter, a quarterly magazine, a refreshed and updated industry website and develop a community of practice through an interactive industry Facebook page. As Turf Australia and the State Turf Industry Associations are solely dedicated to advancing and improving the turf industry, industry communications provided by Turf Australia and the State Turf Industry Associations will always be tailored specifically for and respected by all industry stakeholders.

The first three outcomes from the Turf Industry Strategic Investment Plan 2017-2022 (final draft version) are:

Outcome 1: Turf revenue has increased by 5% pa plus CPI from targeted marketing programs

Outcome 2: Improved strategic decision making by turf growers from increased knowledge of industry data and consumer insights

Outcome 3: Improved farm practices and profitability from increased awareness and adoption of turf R&D

An effective industry communications project will contribute to achieving outcomes two and three of the Turf Industry Strategic Investment Plan 2017-2022 (final draft version), which will in-turn assist outcome one to also be achieved.

Intellectual property/commercialisation

No commercial IP generated

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Appendices

Copies of all editions of the Turf Australia Magazine and *Turf Facts* are available on the Turf Australia website, www.turfaustralia.com.au