

## **Final Report**

# **NxGen 2016-2018**

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NxGen 2016-2018 – TU15002

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## Summary

Since 2012, annual Turf NxGen Forums have been widely supported by family farming business as they enable the next generation of turf growers to develop long lasting and beneficial professional relationships.

The NxGen Forums for the turf industry facilitate an increase in business management skills and communication of relevant R&D and Industry Marketing information to the participants and wider through the various industry communication channels.

The NxGen Project provided 3 successful annual events:

August 2016 – Perth, Western Australia

May 2017 – Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

June 2018 – Cairns North Queensland

The turf levy funding enabled a substantial reduction in registration cost for delegates. The Forum promoted widespread professional development of the next generation of Australian turf growers with a strong emphasis on networking, sharing ideas, team work, leadership and education.

The events success was apparent through the advocates of the program, who continued to attend each year and promote and encourage others to the event.

## Keywords

Turf, Leadership, networking, professional development, next generation.

## Introduction

NxGen Forums provided a valuable mechanism for encouraging and enabling the next generation of turf growers to network, learn and promote professionalism. They provided a long-term investment in our next generation of turf growers and aim to retain industry expertise and help improve the long-term profitability and professionalism within the industry.

This project was built upon the four successful annual Forums held by Turf Australia since February 2012 and are in line with reaching the outcomes of the Australian Turf Industry R&D Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) 2012-2017 and updated report 2017-2021.

The program is developed for young growers and employees under 40 years of age but includes those who are over 40 if new to the industry or taking over the family business. A group of under 50 participants was preferred to support networking and logistical operations with a goal of targeting focused and committed delegates who displayed a willingness to learn.

## Methodology

Project planning and co-ordination and delivery of the NxGen Forum was managed by Turf Australia staff creating a cohesive development over the three years of the project.

The annual NxGen Forum was held in different locations throughout Australia each year, offering new experiences and opportunities to learn about different turf growing conditions and to continue to attract new delegates and keep the event fresh and relevant to returning delegates.

The locations were chosen based on the ability to accommodate the event for both workshops and social events as well as close vicinity to team building activities. Turf Australia would liaise closely with turf farmers in the area to co-ordinate farm visits and ensure they offered new and interesting opportunities for NxGen delegates.

The program consisted of educational workshop sessions, team building activities and farm visits.

The project concept addresses key areas to provide continued professional and personal development:

- Business management
- Personal development
- Turf technical information
- Industry development
- National R&D and marketing initiatives
- Team building and networking

Feedback collected from each Forum was reviewed to continue to improve the event programs and activities.

In addition to the above items, the program also addressed any current industry information that was relevant at the time of the events and would benefit the delegates in farm operations. Professional and engaging presenters were organised and Turf Australia utilized the services of key personnel in turf levy research and development projects to keep growers up to date with levy funded projects and deliver project outcomes.

Team building activities were designed to create opportunities for delegates to connect in situations outside of the conference room and in some situations, take them outside their comfort zones.

Farm visits have always proven to be a big attraction for turf producers and the NxGen group are no exception. The farm visits provide a great opportunity for growers to visit farms of different sizes, producing a variety of turf species and utilizing varied operational techniques both on the farm and in the management of the business. In addition to farm visits, some Forums included a visit to a turf facility such as a sporting venue or botanical garden.

The program was run over two and half days and commenced with a casual welcome dinner giving delegates an opportunity to meet new people and reunite with past delegates. Day two consisted of educational sessions in the morning and team building in the afternoon. The final day was a bus trip to turf farms and turf facilities.

Outcomes of the event would be incorporated in the Hort Innovation Levy funded, Turf Industry Communication projects, TU12014 and TU16004.

## Outputs

NxGen Forums were delivered in 2016, 2017 and 2018 as required by the project.

Each Forum included:

- Program development
- Event Budgeting
- Delivery of NxGen Forum
- Review of Forum feedback
- Delivery of articles and reports for Turf Communication Project outcomes, magazine and eNews.

## Outcomes

| NxGen Forum 2016      |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Date                  | 28th – 30 <sup>th</sup> August 2016   |
| Location              | Perth, Western Australia  |
| Presentations         | <p>Josh Byrne, ABC's Gardening Australia – Importance of Green space and the development of the WA Green Space Alliance.</p> <p>Will Pearce, Sports Turf Research Institute – STRI projects including the Blue2Green system.</p> <p>Dr Louise Barton, University of Western Australia – Turf research trials at Uni of WA.</p> <p>Warren Stephens, City of Belmont – turf requirements for local government.</p> <p>John Forrest, WA TAFE – best practice in turf growing and installation.</p> |
| Field Day /Farm Visit | Kings Parks, Greenacres Turf Farm, Domain Stadium and NIB Stadium.  |
| Number of Delegates   | 42  |







|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>NxGen Forum 2017</b> |   |
| Date                    | 30 April – 2 <sup>nd</sup> May 2017   |
| Location                | Canberra, Australian Capital Territory  |
| Presentations           | <p>Simon Adermann, Lawn Solutions Australia – Farm health and safety, its more important than you think.</p> <p>Grant Thomas, Nuturf – Using the best agronomic management to create turf efficiencies.</p> <p>Jill Rigney, The Right Mind International – Growing Green Industry Leaders.</p> <p>James Greenshield, Resilient Leaders Foundatoin, Fostering the optimal performance from your staff.</p> <p>Michelle Dickinson, Sports Turf Research Institute – Do you know all the turf disease?</p> <p>Paul Spencer, Greenway Turf Solutions, Turf Farm Management.</p> |
| Field Day /Farm Visit   | Parliament House, Royal Canberra Golf Course, Canturf   |
| Number of Delegates     | 51  |







| NxGen Forum 2018      |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Date                  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> June 2018   |
| Location              | Cairns, North Queensland  |
| Presentations         | <p>Lachlan Moncreiff, Paragon Gardens – The importance of education and surviving the dry times.</p> <p>Lynn Davidson, Jimboomba Turf – Making the most of the Australian Standards for erosion control for your business.</p> <p>Jill Rigney, The Right Mind International – Good Communication skills</p> <p>John Neylan, Turfgrass Consulting and Research – Why do we have herbicide resistant weeds? We all play a role.</p> |
| Field Day /Farm Visit | Tropical Lawns, Harden Park Lawns and Cairns Botanical Gardens  |
| Number of Delegates   | 45  |



## Monitoring and evaluation

Throughout the program all events and operational processes were assessed. Feedback from delegates was assessed when planning for future events and a group of delegates were chosen to be an advisory team to assist in the planning of the events.

The success of the program was apparent through continuation of advocates of the NxGen who continue to attend the event. A total of 12 delegates attended all 3 forums in this project and 7 delegates attended 2 of the forums. In addition, several turf farms chose to send different staff members each year but still maintained a regular presence and distributed the opportunities to educate their staff members.

The feedback from all three events maintained a very positive result including recommending the event to others in the industry as well as the quality of presentations. There was a consistency of strong response on the benefits of networking with other growers of similar age and being able to share issues and ideas as well as overall satisfaction with the management and implementation of the event.

In reviewing the overall outcome of the event, Turf Australia consider that the project was managed professionally and with a clear understanding of industry needs. The turf industry continued to adopt and support the concept of the NxGen program and all levels of the industry acknowledged the successes of the 2016-2018 program.

## Recommendations

Turf Australia and the wider turf production industry strongly recommend the continuation of the NxGen Forum and through experiences gained in this project, Turf Australia believe that the program would benefit from some extension to the existing system.

The Australian Turf Industry has a large number of farms that are family run and many with the next generation of growers strongly involved in the management of the farms in preparation for taking over the business. In addition, there are several new young growers already managing turf farms and many are located in isolated regional areas.

It is therefore recommended that NxGen Forum continue in 2019 and beyond with a further emphasis on leadership and professional development. The expansion of the NxGen concept would include further engagement with the NxGen group throughout the year in the form of electronic media and social media. This concept will create a pathway to offering further professional development opportunities and increase networking outside of the once a year forum. The output for this aspect would include programming, resourcing information and engagement with the wider turf and agricultural industry to develop informative newsletters as well as management of a social media program.

## Intellectual property, commercialisation and confidentiality

No project IP, project outputs, commercialisation or confidentiality issues to report.