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OFFICIAL INDUSTRY MAGAZINE


Turf
Australia
Grow Green

Summer 2016

Turf steals the show

ALSO
IN THIS
ISSUE...

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Inaugural AGMs for national horticulture bodies
How a jockey became a successful turf grower



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EDITORIAL

Ross Boyle



As Turf Australia begins to align with the new processes and guidelines under the new Horticulture Innovation Australia (HIA) model, an Interim Turf Growers Advisory Group meeting recently took place (December 1) to answer some vital future funding questions.

The members on the phone hook-up addressed the uncertainty over funded roles within Turf Australia and the State Industry Associations which need to be clarified before HIA appoints the official Turf Strategic Advisory Panel (TSAP) members in early 2016.

Members participating in the interim panel included myself, Anthony Heilig (QLD), Gavin Sutherland (VIC), John Keleher (QLD), Con Paino (WA), Lawrence Stephenson (QLD) and Tracey Daniel (SA).

Consultants, Scott Williams and Russell Pattinson, addressed the Interim panel at the start of the phone conference to provide an overview of the results from their review of the Turf Industry Development services. Also, Turf Australia's Business and Industry Development manager, Richard Stephens outlined a proposal for the continuation of the Turf Industry Development and Communication services before leaving the phone conference.

"TURF AUSTRALIA CONTINUES TO WORK WITH HIA TO HELP ENSURE THAT THE NEW MECHANISMS WILL ENABLE GENUINE INDUSTRY INPUT INTO THE STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT OF TURF LEVY INVESTMENTS AND PROVIDE OUTCOMES FOR THE ENTIRE INDUSTRY."

The interim panel sought advice and updates from HIA staff on the position of the Business and Industry Development manager, the four Industry Development Officer (IDO) roles, and industry communications.

The funded IDO project roles in New South Wales and Western Australia have come to an end, and in the interest of the members of staff over the holiday period, the interim panel sought advice from HIA to see that the roles continued through until early 2016 when the official TSAP announcement was made by HIA.

State IDO roles in Victoria and Queensland are funded through until 2017.

HIA presented the new guidelines and facts about the way in which industry roles would be funded, and we are aware that this will be very different to previous arrangements.

However, it was only fair and reasonable due to there being no TSAP in place at this stage to give staff some certainty over the Christmas period before formal long-lasting decisions were made.

Once the TSAP has been announced, it will be able to make decisions about these roles with all of the information at hand about HIA guidelines and facts and the decision will be a considered-one, rather than a rushed-one.

While the interim TSAP meeting was held via teleconference, it is planned that the next official meeting will be face-to-face with group members and HIA staff.

The turf industry itself is currently in a solid position and it is my understanding that every bit of turf being grown is being sold, and in some individual varieties, there are shortages of turf.

Everyone is busy, and happy, and that is a good thing for this industry.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish turf growers and industry affiliates compliments of the season, and look forward to the robust way in which the industry is finishing 2015 to be carried through to 2016.

Ross Boyle, Rosemount Turf
Chairman, Turf Australia

**THE TURF AUSTRALIA BOARD
WISH YOU A HAPPY CHRISTMAS
ALONG WITH A PROFITABLE
AND PRODUCTIVE
NEW YEAR!**



From left to right: Sarah Mason (Coastal Turf); Ross Boyle (Rosemount Turf); Anthony Heilig (GoTurf); Anthony Muscat (Greener Lawn Supplies); Tony Cornwell (Mardi Park Turf); Bec Sellick (The Lawn Doctor).



Voice of Horticulture helping Horticulture Innovation Australia

November 27 was a pivotal day for our industry as two important national horticultural organisations, Voice of Horticulture (VoH) and Horticulture Innovation Australia (HIA), held their Annual General Meetings (AGMs) for the first time.

Following these meetings, growers should expect better representation and more information coming from their national bodies. Growers should also benefit from unqualified political support as Peak Industry Bodies (PIBs) negotiate their way through the new national structure.

While the two AGMs were quite different, the aim of both organisations is to help with the sustainable and profitable development of Australia's horticultural industries, including turf. The chief adviser to Senator Anne Ruston, the assistant minister for Agriculture and Water, attended both AGMs and the Senator herself attended the last part of the HIA AGM.

VoH is an advocacy body set-up for the benefit of horticulture growers. One of its objectives is to hold HIA accountable and help ensure HIA delivers real outcomes for growers and horticulture industries as a whole. VoH currently has 33 of the 38 horticulture PIBs, including Turf Australia, as members.

At the VoH AGM, PIBs were reminded that horticulture levies had a sunset clause which meant that within the next few years a review of all horticulture levies would take place.

As a result, it was suggested that collectively PIBs all needed to educate the community on the many benefits of horticulture and the levy system so that the industry had public support - lots of positive and good, coherent stories about horticulture are required.

It was also noted at the VoH AGM that HIA was now asking VoH for help in working-out new processes and procedures in the management of horticulture levy funds, which is the responsibility of HIA.

Feedback from the VoH AGM was that sufficient time was devoted to questions from the floor and there was an overall positive feeling during and after the meeting.

The VoH AGM saw the re-election of John Dollisson (apple and pears) to the board while Peter Vaughan (nursery) and Lisa Rountree (olives) were also elected. They join existing board members Tania Chapman (Chair), Pat McNamara and Doug Philips.

In contrast, the HIA AGM attracted 60 attendees to listen to presentations which were procedural and lacking details from HIA Chair, Selwyn Snell, and Chief Executive Officer, John Lloyd.

At the meeting, it was announced HIA had 1840 members, however, it was not explained that only 381 of those were verified voting members of HIA. There is an estimated minimum of 20,000 horticultural industry members nationally who are eligible to vote.

The voting process for electing/re-electing HIA board members was confusing and took an extended period of time. This left limited time for general questions from the floor, with only 10 minutes allocated.

Many of those at the meeting voiced their disappointment at the lack of time allocated to general questions, while others indicated that growers had not been communicated with effectively, and had become disinterested in HIA processes and bureaucracy therefore, there was a push for the implementation of new procedures.

Of the four newly elected (or re-elected) HIA board members, two were elected by the members; Sue Finger, a Yarra Valley Apple Grower, and Steven Lynch, also from Victoria with a background in the nut industry.



VoH chair, Tania Chapman.

"VOH IS AN ADVOCACY BODY SET-UP FOR THE BENEFIT OF HORTICULTURE GROWERS. ONE OF ITS OBJECTIVES IS TO HOLD HIA ACCOUNTABLE AND HELP ENSURE HIA DELIVERS REAL OUTCOMES FOR GROWERS AND HORTICULTURE INDUSTRIES AS A WHOLE. VOH CURRENTLY HAS 33 OF THE 38 HORTICULTURE PIBS, INCLUDING TURF AUSTRALIA, AS MEMBERS."

Another two HIA directors were directly appointed by the existing board members. They were Mark Napper, who runs a fruit orchard at Bangalow in New South Wales (NSW), and Richard Hamley, a Queensland (QLD) potato grower and previously a General Manager with The Costa Group.

The remaining board members are: Selwyn Snell, QLD – Chair; Professor Rob Clark, Tasmania – Deputy chair; David Cliffe, NSW; David Moon, QLD and Peter Wauchope, Western Australia.

While VoH chair, Tania Chapman criticised HIA for its poor industry engagement, lack of transparent processes and inadequate explanations while it has transitioned from Horticulture Australia Limited (HAL), she now believed some of VoH's concerns had been heard by the HIA board.

**Horticulture
Innovation
Australia**



Voice of Horticulture

INSIDE THE NEWS

Q&A with HIA's John Vatikiotis

As Horticulture Innovation Australia (HIA) begins to develop new structures and processes, its staff begin in new roles to work with the 43 horticulture industries. We meet **John Vatikiotis**, the person now responsible for working with and developing the relationship between turf growers and HIA.

**What is your official title?**

Relationship Manager Lead. This role has the responsibility of managing a number of industry sectors that have research and development (R&D) and marketing investment in Pool 1 (otherwise known as the 'Industry Levies Investment Fund'), as well as providing leadership and management to a group of other Relationship Managers employed at Horticulture Innovation Australia (HIA).

What is your background and what skills and experience do you bring to HIA?

My background has primarily been in sales and account management for over 20 years. I worked with IBM Australia for 10 years in a range of management roles and more recently was responsible for the set-up of the first global Inside Sales Business Development unit for IGT Australia.

My experiences are broad in a variety of market segments, and having successfully led teams in the past equips me with strong credentials to continue the development of HIA's engagement strategies for the horticultural value chain – with particular focus on growers and producers.

What is it like working for HIA, a relatively new organisation, and what other horticulture industries do you look after?

It has been a great experience in my first two months. It is also great timing with the recent transformation changes the organisation has been going through. I am part of a highly competent and passionate team whom have an outcomes driven culture – something that I definitely appreciate.

In addition to turf, I am also responsible for relationship management for the nursery, mushroom, pyrethrum and cut flowers industry sectors.

As a newcomer to the turf industry, what has pleasantly surprised you about the industry to date?

First and foremost, I am very impressed with the people. Whether they are part of Turf Australia, its Board or the turf producers that I have been fortunate to have had the chance to meet. There is a genuine passion for the turf industry. I really appreciate the level of enthusiasm and hard work ethic in everything they do for their respective businesses and the turf industry as a whole.

What do you see as the major challenges for the turf industry, both at an industry wide level and at an individual on farm level?

To improve production and marketing systems that provide producers with growth and sustainable profitability. I believe there is great opportunity for the turf industry to leverage its unique direct

supply chain model to improve the value that this brings to the industry's customers.

How will HIA work with the turf industry?

In all industry sectors HIA is looking to service the industry through partnering organisations and individuals within those industries. It is crucial that we are all working together. Robust effective planning, strong well-considered advice, open, frank and inclusive communication at all levels will ensure that HIA continues to strive for ongoing positive outcomes for turf producers. It will be important to leverage the dedication of the quality people at HIA in alignment with turf industry objectives. Every activity and engagement needs to have the intention of benefitting the turf industry and its producers.

Can you describe the industry engagement processes that HIA will now use? How can busy individual growers input in a practical way into levy investments, either directly and/or via a third party?

HIA is seeking opportunities wherever possible to engage with busy turf producers. Some of these will be at individual producer levels and some will be through industry leadership and representation.

The first simply means to engage individually is through turf producers being members of HIA. It's free and easy to do online via the HIA website. By becoming a member of HIA, turf producers identify themselves and we are better able to communicate directly with them. I strongly encourage turf producers to take a few moments to join online. (<http://www.horticulture.com.au/>)

Other ways in which HIA will engage will be through consultation and advice on levy investments. A Strategic Investment Advisory Panel made up of producers from the turf sector will be established to provide HIA with industry investment advice. HIA will also consult with Turf Australia and the other array of industry bodies and associations.

HIA funds the turf industry's communications project through Turf Australia and we look forward to better utilising this engagement method more over the coming months.

Whilst still evolving, it is anticipated that HIA will also run industry meetings and workshops in turf growing areas. This will enable producers to conveniently hear firsthand about the levy and government funds that have been invested on their behalf and it also provides another good opportunity for producer feedback.

Producer input is vital to making good levy investment decisions. I feel that the more producers are made aware of and understand the value of the levy in advancing the industry, the more likely they will want to be engaged with future planning.

If possible, can you explain how the turf industry can leverage funds and investments under HIA's Pool 2 'Green Cities' fund? Or is this still under development?

The HIA Strategic Plan is still under development but will near its completion over the coming months and is due to be lodged with government by the end of April 2016. As a subset of that plan, the Pool 2 co-investment fund known as 'Green Cities' will also be detailed to a level which will identify the key investment priorities for research that are to be addressed within the fund. It is at that point that there will be greater clarity as to how the turf industry can participate in the 'Green Cities' fund, where a key outcome will be the development of urban green space.

INSIDE THE NEWS

Simple changes to a phone call can be very profitable

Workshops giving growers the phone skills to make themselves better salespeople have been held around Australia with glowing praise from growers. Liz Mecham explains.

The *Phone Skills and Pricing Workshops* are explaining how to make the most of a customer's phone call and educate growers and staff on how small changes to phone etiquette and phrasing could turn into sales.

The workshops were conducted by sales communication training presenter, Kevin Kosky of Big Hat Professional Services (who also addressed the Turf Australia Annual Conference).

The workshops addressed the key points of how to sell the real value of turf, improve phone sales skills and convert callers into customers.

They have now been well attended by growers in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia. Victoria will host a workshop early in 2016.

The day-long workshops also aimed to help growers, and their office staff (who answer the calls) find out the actual needs of the callers by asking more effective diagnostic questions. The workshops have also assisted in increasing sales through having provided advice in terms of promoting 'sales' offers add-ons, like fertiliser.

Feedback from all workshops to date has been glowing, with most attendees noting how simple changes, like smiling when talking on the phone, can change the feel of a phone call to a customer.

Learning simple phone selling techniques like maintaining a positive manner during the call, asking more questions of the customer and their needs, and using effective sales pitches that growers could take away and use in their businesses were all noted by workshop attendees as lessons learned from the workshops.

Growers who attended the workshops also responded to the effective way in which the workshops were delivered, and the relevance of the information which gave practical examples of selling techniques which would be taken away and put directly into the business.

Growers responses have ranged from "excellent" and "educational" to "very informative" and "no (I don't want more workshops) I don't want my competitors knowing more than me!".

The enthusiastic way in which the presenters engaged with growers and the light hearted environment were identified by most attendees as why it was a positive learning experience.



Above: Kevin Kosky from Big Hat Professional Services delivers a lively and interactive presentation to turf farm staff in Perth, WA.

Below: Participants in the NSW telesales workshop practice 'selling' to each other



turf australia

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Natural turf's benefits seen at



The many benefits of natural turf are now becoming more widely recognised by the community, and especially now with sustainability becoming a key environmental focus. Therefore at many garden and general festivals throughout the country we are seeing natural turf used as part of the landscaping tools. During October and November, natural turf was used in a number of common and unusual spaces to promote the benefits of turf.

Liz Mecham takes a look at three events which used natural turf as an element in their activities in both Victoria and Western Australia.

festivals across the country

Turf a big star at Melbourne's Fed Square

Federation Square in Melbourne had a distinctly green tinge in October when natural turf was laid on its concrete surface to form a pop-up park for the public to enjoy.

The pop-up park was part of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) Festival of Landscape Architecture: *This Public Life at Federation Square* which ran from October 15 to 17.

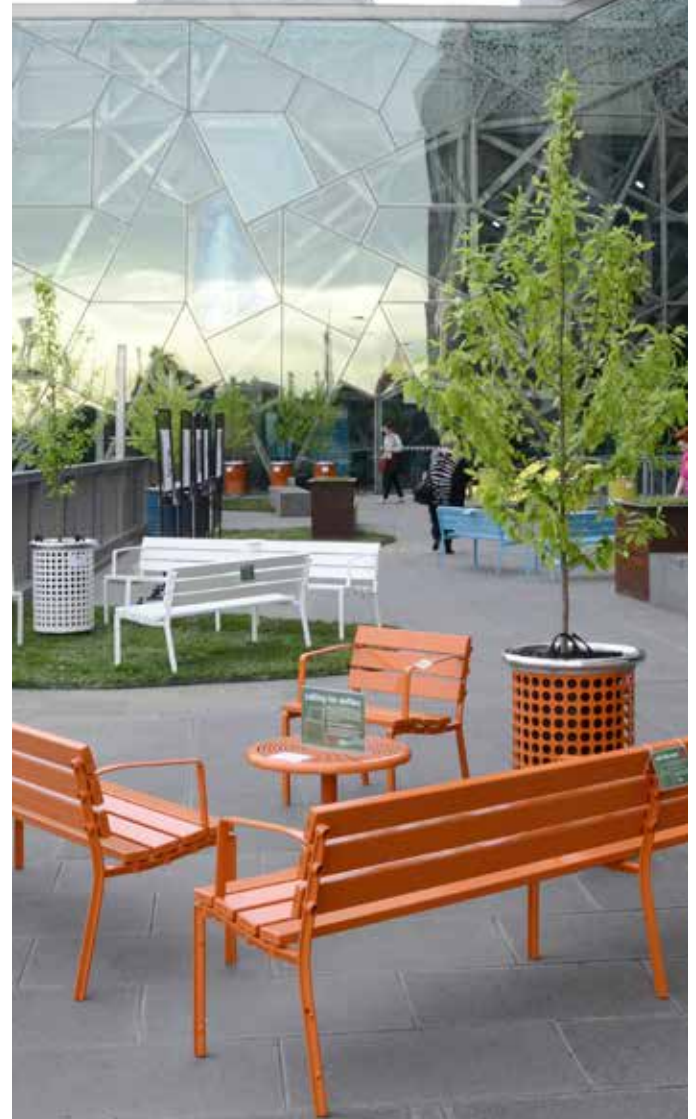
The park was installed by AILA corporate partner, Lawn Solutions, and was installed outside Deakin Edge for the duration of the event.

During the conference breaks some of the 500 delegates at the festival sessions were eating lunch and relaxing in the park which had been installed with Street Furniture Australia sun lounges, cafe tables and forum seats in the shade of leafy trees planted in brightly coloured rim bins.

Street Furniture Australia also held a selfie contest for people's chance to win the furniture in the pop-up park.

Additionally, a 'green carpet' of natural turf was laid at the entrance to Deakin Edge to act as a red carpet for the duration of the conference.

1



Natural turf's benefits seen at festivals across the country

Turf a top choice for festival's ground cover

More than 160,000 people attended Perth's Beaufort Street Festival in November and for any of them seeking a bar for a drink or seat, they also found natural turf.

The Beaufort Street Festival is Western Australia's largest single-day festival and presents more than 30 bands on four stages, along a three-block stretch of Beaufort Street in the city's centre.

Art exhibitions and installations, community participation events and more than 100 retail outlets also make-up the festival program activities.

This year, three licenced venues rolled-out natural turf from West Coast Turf in their beer gardens and extended trading areas, and with temperatures climbing to almost 40°C on festival days, the choice proved a wise one.

Late Night Valentine, Five Bar and Clarence's all laid natural turf as flooring for their activated spaces, which ranged from basic bar areas with rustic outdoor furniture to lounges completely with bean bags, misting fans and palms.

For Late Night Valentine staff, the choice to use turf was an easy one having been burned, almost literally, using synthetic turf the year before.

"It's usually hot at the festival and we used synthetic turf the year before and people roasted on it, natural turf is just that much cooler and nicer underfoot and gave a much better atmosphere to the area we created," they said.

The Coconut Bar created by Late Night Valentine was a "luscious area" with an estimated 3000 people walking on or taking a seat on the turfed area over the Festival

Images: Beaufort Street Festival and OK Media Group.





Turf and nursery plants feature in Urban Heat Island demonstration

Melbourne's Bourke Street Mall took on a much greener look in October when turf was part of an education campaign about urban green space.

A pop up green space, promoting the positive impact of green spaces on the environment and the mental and physical health benefits they provide, was erected and exhibited in Melbourne's CBD for 24 hours on October 12.

The pop up space was a collaboration between the Nursery and Garden Industry of Victoria (NGIV), Landscaping Victoria and Turf Victoria, and was been designed by multi-award winning landscape designer Mark Browning, Cycas Landscape Design.

The pop up space was one event as part of the wider Australian Industry of Landscape Architecture's Festival, This Public Life, which took place in Melbourne in October.

The aim of the space was to highlight the importance of green spaces in an urban environment, with Mark demonstrating how a changing climate can be resisted through a move from 'Grey to Green'.

David Reid, Industry Development Officer, for NGIV and Turf Victoria, said green spaces were undervalued assets and their public and private forms are in decline across Australia.

"It's time that their value is recognised not only for aesthetic reasons, but also for how they improve our lives and promote physical and mental wellbeing.

"The green space also aimed to develop a public understanding of Melbourne as an urban heat island and demonstrate how turf, trees, and shrubs can help to counteract the effects of the city's rising temperature," he said.

The 24-hour pop up green space was open to the general public in the Bourke Street Mall and attracted many onlookers who were encouraged to engage with the project through social media and the hashtag 'urbanheatislandeffect'.

The pop up display was created using donated supplies from Warners Nurseries, Weedslow Mulch, Anston Architectural, Anco Turf; and with the assistance of Darren, a homeless man residing in the area who gave invaluable assistance in the setting up of the island to the team in the early hours of the morning.



Tour educates architects

Educating Landscape Architects about turf was a key driver behind a recent onfarm tour in Victoria as part of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architect's (ALIA) festival in October.

The *Greener Environments Turf Tour* was one of the activities on offer as part of ALIA's This Public Life Festival.

In what was a first-time experience on a turf farm for many participants, Anco Turf based at Cranbourne in Victoria, hosted the tour which gave landscape architect's a first-hand look at turf growing, harvesting and aeration.

Participants were also given a tour of the Melbourne Botanical Gardens at Cranbourne.

More than 20 landscape architects braved hot and blustery conditions to see the turf farm in operation, as well as displays provided by some key industry partners.

Host Ryan Cotter, General Manager of Anco Turf, gave some insight into their relatively new operation.

He explained how farm's choice of location was partially determined by the soil type of the area and how the high sand-content soils of the Cranbourne farm were attractive to customers in the commercial and sportsturf sectors.



The high sand content means turf harvested from the farm does not need to be washed prior to installation in most instances, and the sand profile meets most free-draining, soil requirement specifications for projects, Ryan explained.

Ryan also explained the different turf varieties and the processes involved from the initial planting stage through to harvesting and delivery.

Following on from the farm tour, Gavan Hegan of Nuturf addressed the audience on the importance of soil structure in turf design and maintenance. Stan Wells, of Equipment Solutions, then demonstrated the need for relieving soil compaction, which included an 'Agrivator' aeration demonstration on a newly-harvested turf surface.

Anco's manager, Bruce Stephens also gave a practical demonstration on ground preparation and turf installation and establishment which inspired many questions from participants.

MARKETING

Win A New Lawn comp ramps up Facebook fans

Marketing activities for turf this quarter have included some solid media coverage and an increase in online traffic thanks to a lawn giveaway.

The big ticket marketing item for the second half of the year has been an online *Win A New Lawn* competition, driven through the Turf Australia Facebook page, Lawnspiration.

It follows on from a successful similar competition last year.

The winner will receive a new lawn of up to 200 square metres in size valued at up to \$3000, from Lawn Solutions Australia.

The prize will also include installation and ground preparation works to the value of \$3000 – paid for with turf marketing levy funds – and a lawn care package from Yates valued at \$500.

Two runner-up prizes of \$300 lawn care packages from Yates will also be awarded.

To win, entrants must state why they need a new lawn in 25 words or less on the Lawnspiration Facebook page. They can also submit videos or photos to support their entry.

The competition concluded at the end of November and winners announced via the Facebook page.

Other than the competition, the Lawnspiration Facebook page continues to be the main driver in raising interest in, and providing information on, turf.

The page now has over 14,000 followers, a rise in more than 1000 followers in recent months.

That audience is made up of over 80 per cent male Facebook users, with the 25-34 year old age group the most represented in the audience.

The page is managed by Bite Communications, the PR firm charged with implementing the Turf Australia marketing plan.

Each week, the page is updated with three posts and audience questions answered.

Analysis of the page has shown followers engage most with posts that give them advice about how to care for lawn.

The best page posts since September have shown that even if the audience don't actively engage with a post (likes, comment or share) they are still reading the content and clicking on links to learn more about lawn care.

The most popular post in recent months has been how to identify the right type of lawn for varying situations.

The infographic *Which turf is best for me?* was published on September 7 and engaged with 12 per cent of the overall audience.

The post was seen by 2000 people and had 10 shares, 16 comments and 32 likes.

In addition, there were 323 post clicks, of which 245 were photo views.

The high number of photo views showed the audience found the information interesting and wanted to read more about choosing the right turf variety.

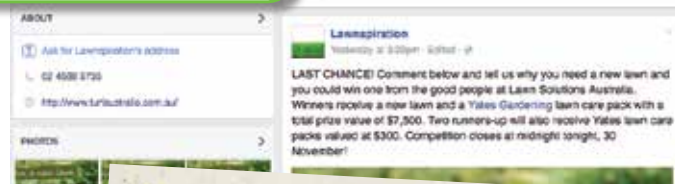
Moving forward the page will look to include more information about lawn care to capitalise on that interest.

Part of the work completed by Bite Communications has been to develop infographics to help choose the correct lawn and lawncare tips.

These infographics, which are often used as Facebook posts and the Turf Australia website, were previously created to be nationally generic, but have now been updated to be more state specific and reflect the different environmental conditions in each state during the seasons.



14,925 people like this



Along with three updates to the Facebook page each week, paid advertising on Facebook will continue to be used to grow the page. The ads, which cost 29 cents per 'like', have been performing well to date.

From a more traditional media perspective, work continues on creating informative stories and having it published in newspapers and magazines, and discussed on radio.

One single seasonal spring lawn care advice story distributed nationally had an excellent result with 24 print media stories and one radio story generated.

A summer lawn care advice story is due to be released in December, while work continues on creating a story around the importance of green space with the University of Technology, Sydney.

In coming months, the activities will include more generation of media stories in line with the changing seasons, and continuing to update the growing Lawnspiration Facebook page with information on lawn care.

In 2016 the popular *Perfect Patch of Green* promotion with Junior Landcare will return for which schools, kindergartens, child care centres and children's community groups can apply to receive an area of turf to help children play and learn on. 🌱

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

GoTurf, QLD, uses fertigation through its pivot irrigators.

Fertigation – an option to cut increasing costs of production

Turf growers who are finding nutrient input costs are increasing have been urged to look at fertigation as an option to reduce these expenses.

The Pump House project designer and manager, Michael Bevege told growers at the Turf Australia Field Day in August that fertigation could be the solution for a number of nutrient applications. Liz Mecham reports.

Fertigation – the precise injection of fertilisers, soil amendments, and other water-soluble products into an irrigation system – can apply nitrogen based fertilisers (bulk liquid or mixed blends); natural kelp or seaweed solutions; microbes; wetting agents and even pesticides and herbicides, if managed well.

Pump House project designer and manager, Michael Bevege explained to delegates at Turf Australia's Field Day in August that the advantages of fertigation included being able to optimise growth by applying fertiliser directly to the root zone, and being able to apply nutrients at any time during the growing season based on crop-need.

He added that other advantages included, high mobile nutrients, such as nitrogen, could be carefully managed to ensure rapid crop-uptake and fertilisers could be applied quickly to address any deficiency issues - all with minimal crop-damage.

From an operational perspective, fertigation systems lead to reduced tractor operations on-farm as well as saving fuel, wear and labour.

A well-designed system, Michael said, was simple to use and suited automation, and because growers were using less fertiliser overall, it often reduced any off-site impacts the farm had on the wider environment.

Michael explained that, while installing a fertigation system was a matter of fitting additional equipment to an irrigation system, there were a number of chemical handling issues that needed to be considered when upgrading.

These included: how and where the fertiliser would be mixed (at the shed or in the paddock); if the right handling, mixing and transport equipment was in place and were all the appropriate occupational health and safety requirements being implemented.

To get the most from a fertigation system, Michael said good calibration was vital, installation of an anti-backflow check valve was essential to prevent injected fertilisers from siphoning into the water source, and systems should only commence injection after the irrigation system was pressurised.

The types of fertigation systems available to growers include – venturi injectors, dosing pumps, proportional injectors, and fully automated multi-channel injection systems.

Michael told growers that careful selection of dosing equipment was required and urged them to consult a professional to ensure the correct equipment was chosen for their system. To be successful, growers must know the irrigation system's parameters, such as flow, pressure and application rate.

He reminded growers while fertigation had proven to be cost-effective in most agricultural industries, cheaper wasn't always better when it came to choosing a system and equipment.

For more information visit: www.thepumphouse.com.au

Simple changes to an irrigation system can cut high costs

By Liz Mecham

Upgrading irrigation equipment can seem like an overly expensive option when turf farmers are looking to save money. But as irrigation designer Peter Chadband, managing director of The Pump House, explained to growers at the Turf Australia Field Day in August, spending money can actually lead to saving money.

Irrigation designer, Peter Chadband was quick to point out to growers at the recent Turf Australia Field Day that real pump cost savings can come from a number of sources when updating irrigating equipment.

These included: electrical controls; improved sprinkler systems; uniformity and filtration systems; low pressure alternatives such as boom and pivot irrigators; improved pipeline and mainline designs; high efficiency pumps, and motors with variable speed controllers.

However, Peter also explained that a better understanding of a plant's requirement for water and nutrients could also lead to cost savings without upgrading equipment at all.

At the Field Day, Peter also gave a 'real world' example of how energy and water savings could be made onfarm.

Based on a 37 kilowatt electric pump running for 1000 hours a year on an average tariff of 20 cents per kilowatt hour, the standard electricity charges would be \$8,140 per annum.

He said savings of up to 10 per cent could be expected using a high efficiency pump and motor, and another 10 per cent using larger pipelines and filter systems.

Variable speed drive controllers, Peter added, were best suited to systems where flows and pressure varies, and by using these, growers could expect savings of up to 25 per cent.

An additional 10 per cent savings in water and power could be achieved by improving sprinkler layout designs.

By investing in these types of technologies, Peter said an electricity bill could be cut from \$8140 to \$4450 annually.

For more information on how to make these savings, contact Peter Chadband T: (07) 5441 4644 or visit www.thepumphouse.com.au

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT



Soil knowledge a must when irrigation and fertlising

Understanding the soil under your turf and the correct way to adopt an irrigation and fertilisation program to gain efficiencies and cost reductions was the key message from a presentation at the recent Queensland Turf field day. Liz Mecham reports.

Above: Queensland DAF Development Horticulturalist Suzette Argent presented an interactive 'Managing soils for turf' workshop at the 2015 Turf Australia Field Day.

Below: Anthony Heilig (centre) and the team at GoTurf assess the new irrigation system on the Queensland property on an informative YouTube video demonstrating the benefits of upgrading irrigation equipment.



A presentation from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (QLDDAF) highlighted to turf growers how the type of soil on farms could mean an irrigation upgrade was a good idea for the property's bottom line as well as the wider environment.

DAF Development Horticulturalist, Suzette Argent said a demonstration trial with turf grower Anthony Heilig, GoTurf, had shown changing from boom to pivot irrigators had seen significant cost savings in water, fuel and labour, while also decreasing the amount of nitrogen leached through the soil.

"Broadly speaking growers need to look at their soils and understand the characteristics of that soil when they are looking at their irrigation and fertiliser program," Suzette explained.

This was particularly important when looking at sandy soils in high rainfall areas where traditional methods of irrigation and fertilising could be updated.

"Particularly in areas like South East Queensland where there are environmentally significant areas along with a lot of sandy soils, the impact of nitrogen leaching through turf farm soils could be felt in more than just the farmers' back pocket," she added.

"These Pumicestone landscape soils are very leaky, and particularly around the GoTurf farm, there is a RAMSAR listed wetland that can be significantly affected by what happens on the farm."

To demonstrate just how easily water can leach nitrogen through the soils and out of the root zone of the turf, Suzette constructed a simple sand column demonstration and poured coloured water through the soil to show how quickly it moves from the surface through to the soil.

Similarly, a sponge demonstration showing the difference in water holding capacity of a dense sponge (representing clay soil) and a broader sponge (representing sandy soil) opened growers eyes as to how much difference there was in soils and how irrigating them the same way can be detrimental.

“The demonstrations just go to show what growers perhaps already know, but visually can’t imagine,” she said.

“And knowing your soil is a key component to getting the most out of it.”

Suzette said changing the way turf was irrigated from long, soaking irrigation schedules to smaller, more frequent waterings on sandy soils had shown less water and fertiliser leached below the root zone, therefore staying where the plants needed it.

“When you look at the technology and equipment that is now available to growers, having a demonstration like the GoTurf farm to show just what sort of improvements can be achieved is beneficial to the whole industry,” she stressed.

SUZETTE SAID CHANGING THE WAY TURF WAS IRRIGATED FROM LONG, SOAKING IRRIGATION SCHEDULES TO SMALLER, MORE FREQUENT WATERINGS ON SANDY SOILS HAD SHOWN LESS WATER AND FERTILISER LEACHED BELOW THE ROOT ZONE, THEREFORE STAYING WHERE THE PLANTS NEEDED IT.

The GoTurf farm invested in a pivot irrigator and fertigation system three years ago, transitioning from boom sprayers and travelling irrigators and broadcast spreading of nitrogen fertiliser.

Anthony Heilig said the labour savings from not constantly having to move boom sprayers was significant, but perhaps not as financially significant as fuel savings of up to \$40,000 a year, and water savings of up to 3.5 megalitres per hectare.

“We went from fuel usage by irrigators of over 1000 litres a week to less than 400 litres a week,” he said.

The fertigation system installed has also allowed for weekly “top-ups” of soil nitrogen requirements, keeping it around the root zone, rather than weekly spikes and dips following application and irrigation.

Anthony and his family have been part of a YouTube video showing how much more efficient their farm has become since installing their first irrigator. The farm now has three.

So converted to the new way of irrigating, Anthony has used his farm as a demonstration site for the field day and industry field trips to promote the benefits of upgrading to new irrigation technology. 🌱

To watch the YouTube video on GoTurf and how pivot irrigators have changed the farming operation for the better, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yHIHdVYDxQ



Queensland DAF Development Horticulturist Suzette Argent (above) demonstrates a comparison of how quickly water moves through light sandy soils (below left) compared to heavy clay soils (below right).



RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Accurate soil mapping set to increase whole farm efficiencies



Being able to accurately know what your soil needs is a key element in ensuring cost effective and environmentally sustainable turf farming.

Liz Mecham talks to **Tim Neale** from **Precision Agriculture** in Toowoomba who spoke at the recent Turf Queensland Irrigation, Pumping and Fertigation workshop and learnt that the technology now available to growers can accurately map and test their soils and crops to give them the ability to increase efficiencies across their farms.

“The technology available now through GPS, electromagnetic soil mapping and satellite imagery can really benefit the turf industry if growers are willing to take it up,” that’s according to Tim Neale from Precision Agriculture.

“Some of this technology has been around for quite some time but growers can really get some efficiencies these days through the software and technology available.”

Some efficiencies might be only a couple of per cent, Tim explained, but they all add up.

Data presented at the Turf Queensland workshop was based on the *Rural Water Use Efficiency Irrigation Futures* project case study farms which showed a five per cent increase in efficiency using technology such as GPS, soil mapping and satellite imagery.

“When you are paying per hour, a five per cent efficiency gain across days and months in terms of labour time, maintenance time, machinery usage time, and fuel ... the reduction in costs through the uptake of technology could pay big dividends for growers,” he stressed.

“GPS TECHNOLOGY HAS BEEN AROUND FOR 20 YEARS AND THERE ARE PLENTY OF HIGH ACCURACY SYSTEMS GROWERS CAN INSTALL ON TRACTORS TO IMPROVE THEIR EFFICIENCIES.

Precision Agriculture, Tim Neale.

At the workshop Tim discussed with growers the three main ways they could use the technology to benefit their production.

“GPS technology has been around for 20 years and there are plenty of high accuracy systems growers can install on tractors to improve their efficiencies,” he added.

“The annual calculations on just one area of cost of production,

Above: NDVI and EM mapping can be easily completed with equipment mounted on a motorbike and driven across turf paddocks to give accurate readings and return useful data to growers.



MOWING IS ONE AREA GROWERS CAN GET THE MOST BENEFIT FROM GPS TECHNOLOGY WITH A 5% OVERLAP COSTING FUEL, TIME, AND WEAR. IDENTIFYING AND REDUCING THAT OVERLAP CAN BENEFIT GROWERS SIGNIFICANTLY.

like diesel-use, shows the system pays for itself quite quickly in terms of overall cost savings.

“It’s simple to adopt and when you’re mowing three times a week and can get an improvement of just five per cent that can really pay dividends over the course of a year.”

Using electromagnetic soil mapping, Tim said, was useful for growers to know what the soil under the turf was doing and how it could be balanced to ensure a whole paddock area was productive.

“Mapping the soil under the turf can give a much clearer picture of the inherent soil characteristics and then things like variable rate fertiliser application and irrigation can be used with much more effectiveness.


“Balancing out the soil and giving it what it needs can lead to better overall production across a whole paddock, rather than just guessing what the soil needs and just using a blanket application of fertiliser or water.”

Tim also said the use of plant health mapping technology through satellite imagery like the Greenseeker system could also have significant environmental benefits.

He said being able to understand the health of the plant ensured things like variable rate nitrogen application could be used most effectively.

“Things like variable rate nitrogen fertiliser application can increase the performance of the turf and decrease costs and waste for growers,” he said.

“And as most turf farms are in areas of Australia where environmental impacts need to be considered, particularly in terms of urban and saline areas, it’s important for growers to know how much to apply to avoid damage to the wider environment.”

Areas of high salinity not previously identified, had been picked-up on a case study farm due to mapping, Tim said. 

Growers keen to see what sort of efficiency gains could be made using such technologies on their properties can use online calculators based on a simple excel spreadsheet on the Precision Agriculture website www.precisionagriculture.com.au

“ IT’S SIMPLE TO ADOPT AND WHEN YOU’RE MOWING THREE TIMES A WEEK AND CAN GET AN IMPROVEMENT OF JUST FIVE PER CENT THAT CAN REALLY PAY DIVIDENDS OVER THE COURSE OF A YEAR.

Precision Agriculture, Tim Neale.

Up to 40 growers and industry representatives at the Irrigation, Pumping and Fertigation workshop held on-farm at Golden Finch Lawns, Coominya, QLD.



PROFILE



Moving from horse training dreams to profitable turf production

John Maas might not have come into turf growing in the conventional family succession way, but since he bought his first farm with a patch of turf on it almost 28 years ago, he's now growing turf under a unique irrigation system as a full time occupation and has a second generation in the business. Liz Mecham learnt how John and his wife, Jennifer, began as turf growers almost by mistake.

John Maas, was a former jockey looking for land on which he could train racehorses around Perth, and the original block 'Greenfields' he purchased at Wanneroo, north-west of Perth, happened to have a patch of turf sown in a back paddock.

After trying to lease out the turf production without much success, John turned his attention to making a bit of income from the plot of turfgrass, an area of Greenlees Park and Wintergreen couch varieties.

"It started as a strictly cash and carry job," John said. "We had one dodgy old turf cutter that we measured the turf out with and when we got to the required length, had a little axe we'd hack it off with ... it wasn't the prettiest of operations, but it began to turn a bit of income."

It piqued John's interest in turf, and led to more areas, over time, of his Wanneroo property being converted in turf.

There is now almost 10 hectares of turf at the Wanneroo property, sown to Wintergreen Couch and Palmetto Buffalo varieties after "Greenlees Park kind of went out of fashion", John explained.

Expanding with the new millennium

About 15 years ago, the Greenfields Turf business expanded to include the 60ha Bullsbrook turf farm, about 35 kilometres away from the Wanneroo block.

SNAPSHOT

- Grower:** John, Jennifer and Nathan Maas
- Property:** Greenfields Turf Supplies, Wanneroo and Bullsbrook Turf, Bullsbrook, north-east of Perth CBD
- Focus:** Year round turf production growing turf varieties suitable for domestic situations
- Market:** Domestic subdivisions – in back/ front yard turfing and public open spaces.



The Bullsbrook farm has 34ha planted to turf, including Palmetto Buffalo, Empire Zoysia, Wintergreen and two Kikuyu varieties, a straight kikuyu and Village Green.

"We bought Bullsbrook with the idea that it would provide an employment option for our children (sons Daniel and Nathan)," John said.

"And in the long run it has worked out that way. Daniel started to work with us before going to work in the mines and Nathan has now joined the team and works with the business full time."

The spread of varieties mean the two turf farms cut and deliver turf year-round.

"There's no real down season, that's for sure," John added.

The tight knit team at Bullsbrook Turf has just seven members, including John and Nathan. The balance of the team includes two farm workers, two truck drivers (who double up as farm workers after delivering turf) and a business secretary.

"It's a small team, but certainly a dedicated one," John said, with some of his employees logging over a decade with the business.

The two turf farms, along with a leased block at Wanneroo, now service the burgeoning domestic subdivision market.

THE KEY BEHIND BULLSBROOK TURF'S YEAR ROUND CUTTING SUCCESS COMES FROM ITS UNIQUE OVERHEAD IRRIGATION SYSTEM ... A SERIES OF TALL POLES ALMOST SIX METRES IN HEIGHT ERECTED IN PADDOCKS WITH HIGH TENSILE WIRE STRUNG THE 65 TO 70 METRES BETWEEN EACH POLE.

As housing subdivisions take shape, Bullsbrook is subcontracted to provide the turf for the new lawns.

"It's a constant business stream but a tricky one, too," John said.

"No two day orders are the same in terms of the number of orders or the size of the orders."

Bullsbrook also promises a next day delivery if turf is ordered by 10am, something John said is always abided by within reason, and the customer appreciates, which has led to plenty of repeat business.

Irrigating from the sky

The key behind Bullsbrook Turf's year round cutting success comes from its unique overhead irrigation system.

The irrigation system is a series of tall poles almost six metres in height erected in paddocks with high tensile wire strung the 65 to 70 metres between each pole.

From the wire hangs a series of 15 centimetre hooks, which suspend the 30 millimetre water pipe in the air.

At 12 metre intervals, a 30 centimetre riser is attached to the pipe, to which a knocker sprinkler is fixed.

The design of the irrigation system is based on a South African-designed 'floppy system' which has a similar base set-up, but has a flexible polyurethane top on the riser which 'wriggled' backwards and



Daniel and John Maas standing front of some of the driveway trees that were planted when the turf farm was being established.

forwards when water was run through the lines.

The floppy system, John said, creates a rain-like droplet which made it an efficient way of watering the turf as it creates a more natural water delivery to the turf.

"It didn't take very long after we installed the floppy system to work out the Australian sun was going to play havoc with those tips," he said.

After just one summer exposed to the Western Australian sun, the floppy tips of the system became perforated, swollen, blocked and too damaged to work.

While sprinkler systems traditionally struggle with the high water pressure from bore pumped water, John said the knocker sprinkler was the best way to make use of his irrigation set-up after the failure of the flexible tips.

"Sprinklers are usually fraught with danger in these parts because the high water pressure leads to lots of misting, meaning higher risk of loss of water to wind displacement and irregular watering patterns, which can result in 'dry patch'," he explained.

"But that is outweighed by the benefits this system gives us in terms of flexibility of irrigating areas."

Continued...

Panoramic photo showing one of the Pivot Irrigators on Bullsbrook Turf Farm.



Moving from horse training dreams to profitable turf production (cont.)

The overhead irrigation system is set up over 13ha of the Bullsbrook property, with two additional pivot irrigators taking care of the rest of the turf areas.

The overhead system can be constructed to water almost any size. In the Bullsbrook set-up, areas of 1 to 1.5ha and 2ha can be watered at any given time.

“With pivots you’re restricted with them being connected to the water source or the layout of the land allowing you to ‘walk’ them to where you want to water, our overhead system means you just put the water where you need it without moving anything,” he added.

Growing through challenges

But being able to irrigate through such a system and grow as much turf as they do hasn’t been an easy process for the Bullsbrook Turf team.

When John developed the Bullsbrook property in 1999 and was seeking to increase his licensed water allocation through bores on his property, he struck bureaucracy trying to balance the environmental needs and rapid urban expansion of the area with the existing agricultural production areas.

IT WAS A HARD THING TO DO AND IN SOME WAYS I’M NOT SURE IF WE WERE THE OUTRIGHT WINNER (MIGHT HAVE BEEN A PLACE BET) ... WE GOT THE ADDITIONAL WATER, BUT THE CONDITIONS THAT IT CAME WITH WERE STRICT.

Grower John Maas.

“It was a very tricky and long process when we were trying to increase our allocations from 200,000 kilolitres to 433,000 kilolitres,” he said.

It became a long, drawn-out battle with environmental groups and the Western Australian Department Water, resolved only recently but with ongoing implications.

“It was a tough battle because there were so many boxes to tick, and hoops to jump through to prove why we needed the water, when there were constant road blocks from the environmental and urbanisation side of things,” John said.

“We are in the Ellenbrook catchment area and it is considered a sensitive environmental area and being so close to Perth ... it all came together to make it very hard for us as producers to get more water to produce turf.”

In the end, the increase in allocation was approved, but John said it has come with significantly increased monitoring of the production bores



Developing the turf farm almost 30 years ago was a challenge with typical WA sandy soils and limited rainfall, which continues to decline. The bottom photo shows Andy Robertson planting the trees along the front drive. Andy, now retired, still helps out doing odd jobs on the farm.



and monitoring bores, which have a data logging device on them.

This includes regular testing of the soil and water to ensure chemicals and herbicides used on the property are not leaching into the soil and the wider environment.

“It was a hard thing to do and in some ways I’m not sure if we were the outright winner (might have been a place bet) ... we got the additional water, but the conditions that it came with were strict,” he said.

“Our monitoring is now controlled by Bob Jefferies of Soil Management Consultants, who is in touch with the Department of Water every quarter and annually for our reviews. I don’t think too many other farms have this requirement.”

But certainly the battle hasn’t stopped John and his Bullsbrook Turf team from producing good turf, now or into the future.

What it has done, is altered the original horse training dreams that were going to bring riches to John through winnings.

“That dream sort of shifted when turf became our main business,” he said.

“Now we just have shares in a few horses that other people train for us ... I think it’s probably taken a whole lot longer to make money out of turf farming than we first thought all those years ago,” John laughs. 🌱

The unique overhead irrigation system on Bullsbrook Turf Farm covers more than 13 HA.



Access to internationally available chemicals and herbicides – a step away?

By Liz Mecham

A program to more efficiently register chemicals for use in turf is moving forward with the release of discussion papers addressing key reform measures.

Most importantly for turf growers within those measures is the potential to have herbicides and chemicals given permits for use in Australia based on international efficacy trials, meaning they could have access to chemicals their international counterparts do, much sooner than expected.

The *Improved access to Agvet chemicals for agricultural industries* program, being undertaken by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC), is evaluating herbicides and pesticides across all agricultural industries.

Since an original workshop at Canberra in June where agricultural industries came together to put forward their chemical and herbicide issues and requests, the discussion papers were released at a workshop in October on 15 key reform measures.

State-based workshops to gather feedback about the reform measures and discussion papers will take place in 2016 but growers are encouraged to read the papers and make submissions where appropriate.

The discussion papers cover nine main topics impacting turf growers, with additional reform measures covering all agricultural industries and chemical registration more broadly.

Key reform measures within the discussion papers are:

- Using overseas decisions for the benefit of registration.
- Scope of regulation.
- Removing efficacy assessments.
- Removing trade assessments.
- Crop grouping.
- Contestable provision of assessment services.
- Streamlining import and export regulation.
- To have the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) Chief Executive Officer act as a poison scheduling delegate.
- Outstanding issues with legislation.

“From a turf perspective there are three big positives in these reform measures – that overseas decisions could see chemicals registered here, the removal of efficacy assessments and crop grouping,” NSW Industry Development Officer, Dave Raison explained.

“For turf growers to have greater access to chemicals through a process which sees international efficacy trials taken as data for use in Australian conditions is a big positive for the industry, and so is crop grouping, which could see chemicals available for use in other crop such as pasture, also available to turf growers, which just makes sense.

“FROM A TURF PERSPECTIVE THERE ARE THREE BIG POSITIVES IN THESE REFORM MEASURES – THAT OVERSEAS DECISIONS COULD SEE CHEMICALS REGISTERED HERE, THE REMOVAL OF EFFICACY ASSESSMENTS AND CROP GROUPING.”

“There are obviously points to consider with conditions which are unique to Australia but the discussion papers are certainly addressing the three main sticking points for turf growers when it comes to accessing internationally available chemicals and herbicides.”

The program looking into how chemicals and herbicides can have registrations streamlined comes after the Federal Government reacted to agricultural industries concerns that, while Australian industries use a lot of chemicals, the Australian market-place is considered small on a world-wide scale.

Currently, Australian growers are unable to use some chemicals which can be accessed by their international counterparts due to a lack of investment in the Australian registration process by global chemical companies.

The \$8 million program aims to find out what chemicals industries need registered, and why, and if there is a correlation between industries for the uses, and how the process of registration for use in a number of industries can be completed. ☺

The discussion papers can be viewed on the Department of Agriculture and Water website at www.agriculture.gov.au/ag-farm-food/ag-vet-chemicals/better-regulation-of-ag-vet-chemicals/streamlining#summary-of-reform-measures



turftalk



Top left: Bruce Stephens from Anco Turf (left) with Turf Award winners from the Victorian Schools Garden Awards, St Joseph The Worker Primary School, Reservoir.

Top right: The completed garden at St Mary's Primary School, Hampton, which was Victorian Schools Garden Award turf grant recipient.

Activities for Turf Victoria have included a number of high profile events and annual awards.

Natural turf featured in two prominent 'pop up' locations as part of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architect's event, 'This Public Life' festival.

The Festival of Landscape Architects included a number of greening projects but most notably included a pop up garden and social media experience in Bourke Street Mall to show the cooling effect of green space in urban areas (see Inside Turf story).

Additionally, a 'green carpet' of natural turf was laid at Federation Square's Deakin Edge during the festival.

The success of awards programs in schools was highlighted with the opening of a new garden and learning area at the St Mary's Primary School, Hampton.

The school was the recipient of the Victorian School Grants Award program, run by Nursery and Garden Industry Victoria in 2014. The new garden includes a large turf area, mini amphitheatre, veggie patch and a mini orchard which will offer interactive outdoor learning spaces for the students, while a sensory garden and discovery grove including a dry river bed, bridge, sandy beach and palm trees provides a stimulating area for explorative and creative play.

The 2015 Victorian School Grants Award (VSGA) winners were announced at the Royal Botanic Gardens on November 26. The award announcement was attended by over 500 school students.

The VSGA encourages school communities to come together and get involved in the development of green spaces within their school environments. These gardens provide spaces where children may learn about produce gardens, biodiversity and sustainable practices, as well as providing a way to engage students, teachers, parents and the broader community.

The winning school for the Turf Victoria award was St Joseph the Worker Primary School, Reservoir.

The school will receive 300 square metres of Kikuyu turf, which will this year be supplied by Anco Turf.

Upcoming events include a telesales workshop for growers being held early in 2016. These workshops have been held with great success in other states showing that simple changes to telephone skills and over the phone sales techniques can lead to increased turf sales.

As another year closes the Turf Victoria IDO wishes to thank growers for their support of events during the year, and wishes turf growers a busy and successful festive season, and a prosperous 2016.

For more information contact David Reid T: (03) 9576 0599 or E: idovic@turfaustralia.com.au

new south wales

Great spring weather conditions and high demand for turf in both the domestic and commercial sectors has seen a flurry of activity for most turf producers across NSW.

Reports have even noted a shortage of some varieties, with some larger commercial works even looking to source supplies from interstate over recent weeks.

This increased activity for turf harvesting and delivering has also heightened the risks involved in turf operations and all operations are cautioned to heed compliances and proper safety around turf handling and transport.

The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR) is now in operation around the country and growers are reminded to consider their Chain of Responsibility (CoR) obligations when it comes to turf haulage and deliveries.

According to the new NHVR guidelines, all parties in the road transport supply chain now have specific obligations under the law to prevent a breach. CoR requires every responsible person in the supply chain – consignor, dispatcher, packer, loader, scheduler, receiver, manager, as well as the driver and operator – to take positive steps to prevent mass, load restraint, dimension, route, fatigue and speed offences.

A range of penalties including warnings, improvement notices and prohibition orders and significant fines, also now give courts greater enforcement measures for penalising offences.

Compliance with other safety regulations should also be maintained during busy periods, especially with hot conditions and a higher proportion of casual workers on many farms. Growers need to be mindful about safe work practices, inductions, training and personal protection equipment.

Turf operations can be working very long hours over many weeks or months to service extremely high demand at this time of the year. With this increase in activity, both employers and employees must be even more conscious of the health and safety of all workers in the operation.

The NSW Turf Growers Association (Turf NSW) is continuing to work with Turf Australia and the reorganised Horticulture Innovation Australia (HIA) to maintain funding for the NSW Industry Development project.

With HIA's business model still being worked through, an extension until the end of 2015 has been allocated to assist in continuing a number of activities within the project.

Turf NSW has been working with the Sport Turf Association of NSW in a joint arrangement and it is hoped that this arrangement will continue with Jenny Zadro now taking on a more active role in the association's activities.

INFORMATION FROM YOUR STATE TURF INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS.

Local Land Services has also committed to continue support for Turfgrowers with assistance with workshops and other funding projects in the planning stage for next year.

The energy of the new committee following the recent AGM will also help the association take on a number of new initiatives aimed at strengthening the association into the coming year.

For more information contact *Dave Raison* M: 0413 837 837 or E: ido@turfnsw.com.au

western australia



Feedback from Western Australian turf growers to date indicates that Spring has increased turf sales. This is a pleasing reality after experiencing suppressed sales for some time.

The rise in sales is being supported by increased training for turf growers through a telesales workshop which was held on November 18. The workshop, like those held elsewhere in Australia, aimed at improving the over the phone selling and customer service skills of those involved in the industry with eleven administration staff attending.

WA Turf growers, along with the Sports Turf Association (WA) and the Golf Course Superintendents Association WA, again supported the Challenge Institute of Technology and its graduates in 2015. The awards night for graduating students was held in November.

Recipients of industry supported awards were: Michael Giamboi - Best Apprentice (Bayer Award) presented by Danny Hambleton, Globe Australia; Matthew Kempton - Lecturers Award (Lawn Doctor Turf Farms) presented by Terry Sellick, Lawn Doctor; Jayden Pickering - WA Sports Turf Graduate (CH Bailey & Sons Shield Award), presented by Genevieve Bailey, Baileys Fertilisers; Tony Guy, President of the Sports Turf Assn (WA) – Inaugural Sports Turf Person of the Year 2015 – sponsored by the Turf Growers Assn WA, Presented by Darren Kirkwood, Chairperson TGAWA.

This was an excellent turf industry awards evening with all in attendance enjoying a great evening. Feedback on the event has been very positive, with industry sponsors in particular, delighted to be involved in honouring our future turf managers.

One such response came from Andrew Ogden, managing director of Western Irrigation, who sent a note saying: “Congratulations on a really well organised and run event... I think it was the best awards night I have attended – with something of interest for the students, the lecturers, the industry people, and the sponsors in fact everyone. I found the speeches were really engaging; Verity James was an excellent MC; the student awards were well done without being too drawn-out; and the overall positive tone of the night was outstanding. Well done!”

The industry in the west continues to work collaboratively with a number of groups to promote the benefit of turf.

A recent Green Space Alliance workshop brought together stakeholder groups involved with writing a paper on the value of green space in Perth to the community. The November workshop had the additional support of allied groups including mental health and physical wellbeing associations to support the case for green space being maintained and increased in the city.

Additionally, WA Turf growers are working with the state Department of Water to develop a community education calendar in regards to turf watering. The calendar will include tips on irrigation scheduling and turf maintenance with water dependent on the time of year. This calendar will be available for 2016 and it is hoped householders adopt the practices when watering their lawns.

A thank you to WA turf growers and their staff for the help and support of activities during 2015. Wishing all growers and staff a busy turf laying summer season and looking forward to a greener 2016.

For more information contact *Eva Ricci* M: 0422 120 990, T: (08) 9437 2180 or E: idowa@turfaustralia.com.au

queensland



Queensland Turf's ongoing aim to improve turf growing efficiencies and profits through collaborative projects continues to kick goals for its members.

The Healthy Waters program with Queensland Department of Agriculture and Forestry (DAF) has taken a major technological step forward. A “Variable Rate Irrigation” unit will be installed on Australian Lawn Concepts South-East Queensland (SE Qld) property in which is believed to be an Australian turf industry first. The irrigator will be able to vary the amount of water it irrigates and fertigates on to the turf dependent on the turf variety and health, and the soil beneath it, along its seven-span length.

An open demonstration day of the technology at the ALC property in the Albert catchment is planned for April 2016. The day will also include information on the trials utilising NDVI Greenseeker technology currently underway at Golden Finch Lawns as part of the DAF Healthy Waters program.

Workplace Health and Safety has moved forward with the rolling out of a WorkCover program targeted at developing a ‘workplace light duties list’ among other areas. The list has been developed by turf growers and their staff directly detailing what could be considered ‘light duties’ for staff employed on the turf farm. This list is then forwarded to a local doctor utilised by the turf business. In the event of a workplace accident, injured employees visit the doctor who can assess the list and identify specific light duties the employee can undertake as part of their rehabilitation program. The program aims to give a practical implementation to WorkCover’s ‘Getting Back Is Getting Better’ campaign.

The Rural Water Use Efficiency Irrigation Futures project (RWUEIF) has wrapped up its SE Qld pilot farm projects and in October began on three properties in North Qld (Mackay, Cairns and Townsville). Case studies for the three southern farms have been completed and show what can be achieved with technology in terms of improving water and energy efficiencies, reducing waste, and increasing yield and profit. The North Qld farms will be monitored through until mid-2017 and the final case studies due at that time.

A project to develop a number of small robotically operated mowers – Mowbots – specifically for the turf industry is also moving forward with Emerald-based business Swarm Farm developing GPS and robotically driven machinery which could house the required technology. The continuing issue is funding of the development. The business has agreed to try and develop a Mowbot and trial it at Emerald Green Turf nearby with the hope of having a viable machine for use by the industry.

Water restrictions in North Qld continue to bite hard with level three restrictions, restricting the use of water for turf installation, to come into effect in January 2016 when the dam reaches 20% capacity. Whilst the production of turf can continue with on-farm water supply such stringent restrictions will hurt local turf growers as it will restrict installation. However it is hoped from this adverse situation, opportunities for growers to continue to supply and install turf will be identified. With Southern Qld producers experiencing similar conditions in 2007 through the drought, it highlights the wide variance in climate conditions turf producers face within Queensland and reinforces Australia as the dry country with the need to continuously be searching for water efficiencies.

The Turf Queensland board and executive wishes all growers a successful summer season and thanks them for their ongoing support and help with implementing programs and attending workshops and field days.

For further information on the above projects visit www.qtpa.com.au or contact *Jim Vaughan* M: 0407 131 025 or E: jim@qtpa.com.au

INSIDE TURF

Richard Stephens

BREAKING NEWS!
An Australian Standard for using turf as an erosion control agent is to be developed! Good news for expanding the turf market!



Developing the Turf Industry

In an effort to ensure industry levy funds are being spent wisely, Horticulture Innovation Australia (HIA) commissioned two separate independent reviews in 2015 of the Turf Industry Development and Communications programs.

THE TURF AUSTRALIA'S E-NEWSLETTER, CONFERENCES AND FIELD DAYS CONTINUE TO BE HIGHLY VALUED AS SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT TURF PRODUCTION AND ISSUES IN THE INDUSTRY. THE FACT THAT GROWERS INDICATED THAT THEY WANT TO KEEP RECEIVING THE NEWSLETTER AND MAGAZINE INDICATES THAT THEY VALUE THE INFORMATION.

Anne Currey, Naturally Resourceful.

Working together to improve the Turf Industry! From left to right: Richard Stephens (TA BIDM), Eva Ricci (IDO and EO - WA), Rachel Layt (TA Stakeholder and Event Coordinator), Jim Vaughan (CEO and IDO - QLD), Sarah Mason (TA Board), Anthony Heilig (TA Vice Chairman and Treasurer), Ross Boyle (TA Chairman), Katie Fisher (TA Magazine), Anthony Muscat (TA Board), Bec Sellick (TA Board), Dave Raison (TA Communications and IDO - NSW), Tony Cornwell (TA Board).

In short, the outcomes from these reviews indicated that the current industry development and communications services being provided by Turf Australia were highly valued by turf growers and should continue.

In June 2015 an independent consultant Naturally Resourceful Pty Ltd, found:

“The Turf Australia’s e-newsletter, conferences and field days continue to be highly valued as sources of information about turf production and issues in the industry. The fact that growers indicated that they want to keep receiving the newsletter and magazine indicates that they value the information. Most growers who have attended a conference or field day in the last 12 months also rate them as meeting expectations either very well or well. Turf growers are well served by information providers, including by State based turf associations and Turf Australia, as well as by companies and the service sector.”

Another independent review of the Turf Industry Development projects, conducted by Scott Williams Consulting Pty Ltd & Miracle Dog Pty Ltd in November 2015, claimed:

“While there are aspects of the ‘Business and Industry Development for the Turf Industry 2013-2017’ project that could be refined, the overarching finding of this report is that the project (and the broader industry development program including the state-based projects) is providing benefits to industry and should continue.”

Scott Williams, from Scott Williams Consulting, and Russel Pattinson, from Miracle Dog, went on to say at a recent Turf Grower Panel meeting that: “Overwhelmingly, the Business & Industry Development Manager along with the State based Industry Development Officer projects are highly regarded by turf growers within the industry.”

They know this because interviews were conducted with 18 key stakeholders along with an electronic industry development survey that attracted more than 100 responses.

Scott continued to say that, given the relative small size of the turf industry (240 growers according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics), this response rate was outstanding and, in itself, reflected an extremely high level of industry engagement no doubt as a result



“RESPONSES FROM THE HIA CONDUCTED SURVEY SHOWED THAT THE NATIONAL AND STATE BASED INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS ARE PROVIDING BENEFITS TO INDUSTRY AND SHOULD CONTINUE.”

of the Turf Industry Development and Communications programs. In addition, Scott said that: “High levels of practice change in the industry was also acknowledged.”

These positive results from independent reviews are good to hear as there are a lot of people who work very hard for the benefit of the entire turf industry. They include:

- **Rachel Layt**, Stakeholder & Event Coordinator, Turf Australia (part time)
- **Dave Raison**, Industry Development Officer Turf Grower NSW & Communications Coordinator, Turf Australia (both part time positions)
- **Jim Vaughan**, CEO and Industry Development Officer, Turf Queensland
- **David Reid**, Industry Development Officer, Nursery & Garden Industry Victoria (part time)
- **Eva Ricci**, Executive and Industry Development Officer, WA Turf Growers (part time)
- **Katie Fisher**, Turf Australia Industry Magazine Editor, AgriHort Communications (part time)

These professional people are committed to increasing the productivity, farm gate profitability and competitiveness of the turf industry. They work hard and regularly outside normal business hours just to get the job done. One of the reasons why they do this is they are passionate about the turf industry, the genuine people within it and the many inherent benefits of natural turf.

On behalf of the industry, I would like to thank these professional colleagues.

In addition, I would like to thank the Turf Australia Board members who freely give up their valuable time for the greater good of the entire industry. The Turf Australia Board members take their responsibilities seriously and lots of hard, often frustrating, work goes on behind the scenes. In particular, thanks to **Ross Boyle**, Chairman, **Anthony Heilig**, Vice Chair and Treasurer and Immediate Past Chair, **Anthony Muscat**.

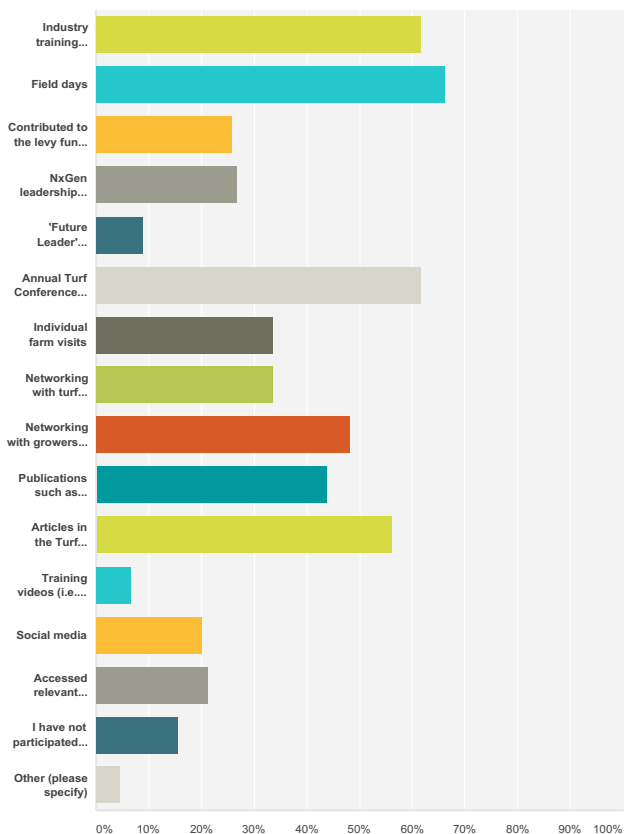
And finally, I would also like to thank you, the many genuine growers, staff and individuals engaged in the turf industry. A lot of you went out of your way to respond to the Industry Development survey, hence the high response rate, and we enjoy working with you at seminars, workshops and field days.

Turf Australia will continue to work with HIA in order to ensure professional and proven industry development and communications services continue to be developed, delivered and improved for the benefit of the entire turf industry.

Answers to two of the turf grower survey questions commissioned by HIA.

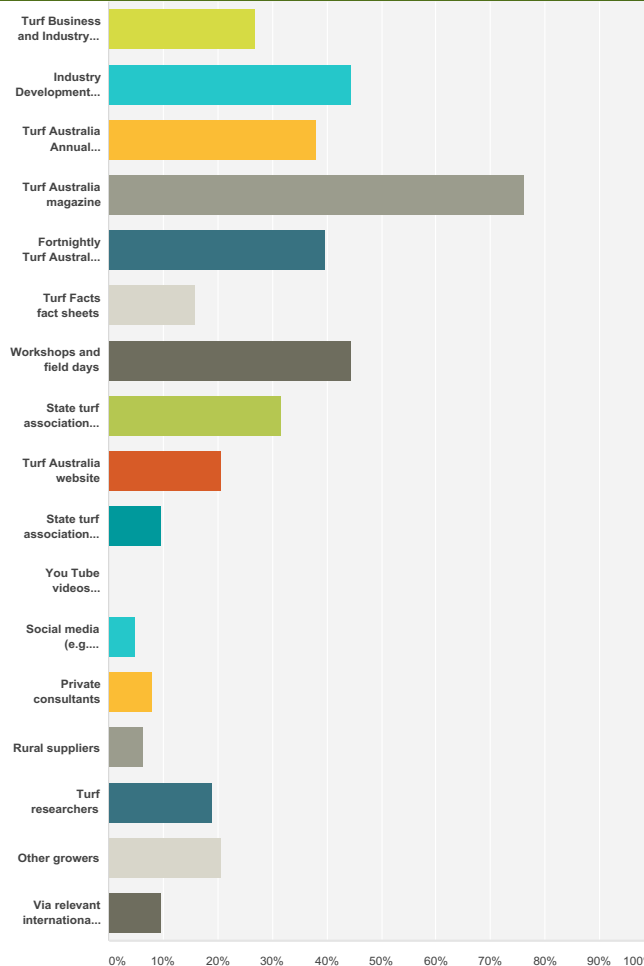
Q6 Have you participated in or used any of the BIDM or IDO project initiatives? (please tick all that apply)

Answered: 89 Skipped: 15



Q20 How do you currently learn about outcomes of the turf R&D and marketing programs? (please tick all that apply)

Answered: 63 Skipped: 41





JUMP ON BOARD.

HAVE YOUR SAY.

Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited (HIA) uses grower levies, investor and government funds to invest in Research and Development (R&D) and Marketing for the Australian horticulture industry.

Membership is free and brings many benefits for business entities, individuals and the wider Australian horticulture sector.

Membership gives growers:

- greater direct influence in the future direction of HIA and how levy funds are invested
- a strong voice in a nationwide, multi-sector research and development organisation that works

on cutting edge projects with the best researchers in the country

- timely access to industry events, information and news that could be vital to the future success of growers' businesses
- invitations to express views via HIA's regular consultation processes.

Ultimately it's about giving growers the knowledge and services to build a profitable and sustainable business.

A key feature of membership is that those members who pay levies have the right to vote at Annual General Meetings.

**JOIN HIA.
IT'S FREE**
and only takes a few minutes.

Apply online: www.horticulture.com.au
Call: 1300 880 981* or 02 8295 2395
Email: membership@horticulture.com.au

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*Calls to this number are charged the cost of an untime local call from fixed landlines. Calls from mobile phones will be charged at the rate as set by the caller's mobile carrier. Callers from overseas should dial +61 2 8295 2395.