

**A COMMUNIQUE FROM DR MICHAEL CRAWFORD  
CEO OF THE CRC FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE SOILS**

**3 November 2017**

Greetings Soil CRC colleagues

*Participant Agreements*

I am now delighted to inform you that the last of the participants has signed the relevant agreement, meaning that we now have all 38 legal agreements in place to the satisfaction of the Commonwealth, thereby releasing further payments from the CRC Program. I would like to thank everyone for the cooperation and persistence in reaching agreed versions of the agreements and then having them signed through their organisation. In the next week, we will return a copy of the executed Major Partners Agreement to each of the Major Partners and the remaining Partners Agreements to other Partners. This will then enable those participants who received an invoice for the first quarterly cash contribution to the CRC to progress with payment. Well done to Facey Group in WA on being the first participant to pay their quarterly invoice.

*Quarterly reporting*

Even though we have just commenced, we are obligated to return our first quarterly report to the CRC Program Office, reporting on activities to date, and the in-kind contributions of participants. Mark Flick, Finance Manager, has sent an email to each participant (to the person listed on the relevant agreement for 'receipt of notices') advising of requirements and providing a template to be returned by 10 November. There may be a risk that this request gets 'lost' in some large organisations, so if you are still looking for it, please contact me. Well done to Burdekin Productivity Services for being the first participant to return their quarterly report.

*Project development*

Today we received the first group of project proposals in response to my call on 13 October for scoping study projects. We have eight highly collaborative proposals, each one addressing one of the eight priority areas that were identified. I have been very impressed with the level of collaboration and cooperation amongst CRC participants and the high level of enthusiasm shown by individual contributors to develop the best proposal possible. A special thank you to the Program Leaders and each of the Project Leaders for their role in being open to all ideas and harnessing them into a cohesive project proposal.

The Management Committee (CEO, Program Leaders, Operations and Finance Managers) will meet on Monday 6 November to review the proposals and identify ways in which they might be improved (if at all). They will then be reviewed by the Research and Advisory Committee panel on 16 November, who will then make recommendations to the Board meeting on 29 November. At each step in the process, there may be some scope for making improvements to the projects to ensure that the best outcomes are achieved in this important stage of the CRC's establishment.

### *Farming Smarter CRC*

The Farming Smarter CRC bid was recently announced as being successful in progressing to Stage 2 of the Round 19 CRC process. I met with the CEO of the Farming Smarter CRC bid team, David Miron, this week to discuss potential alignments and complementarities between our CRC and their CRC, should it be successful. The Farming Smarter CRC and the CRC for High Performance Soils are strongly aligned and complementary in terms of end-users, participants and program activities. We share 4 universities, a state government department and about 15 farmer groups in common participants and both CRCs are focussed on improving farm productivity and profitability. However, we are also highly differentiated, with the Soil CRC focussed on soil, or 'below ground' aspects of farming, and the Farming Smarter CRC focussed on plant and animal or 'above ground' aspects of farming. If successful, the Farming Smarter CRC will work with the Soil CRC (and vice versa) to coordinate activities with farmer groups and to develop approaches to working collaboratively where respective programs touch on 'below ground' and 'above ground' research.

### *Stakeholder visits and interactions*

I have spent the majority of the past two weeks in the office at Newcastle, working on a range of activities contributing to the ongoing establishment of the CRC. I have also been making contact with a range of participants and other stakeholders by phone. I will be visiting North Central CMA and Federation University in Victoria on 13 November and the University of Tasmania on 23 November and I continue to welcome the opportunity to discuss my travel plans with any participants to identify other available dates.

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