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CEO COMMUNIQUE

1 July 2022

It's our 5th birthday!

The Soil CRC today celebrates five years of activity and reaches the halfway mark of its 10-year funding agreement with the Australian Government and its 39 participant organisations. It is at times like this that we need to recognise the tremendous contribution of everyone involved in the Soil CRC – scientists, students, farmer groups, technical staff, administrative staff, managers and everyone that has supported and contributed to the CRC in some capacity so far. In particular, I want to recognise the staff of the Soil CRC who help to make it all happen, and the members of the Board and various committees that provide governance and direction.

I had the opportunity to speak with NSW ABC Country Hour about reaching the half way mark of the Soil CRC, you can listen [here](#).

By many measures, the Soil CRC has been a success so far, but there are many more things that we can and should be doing. The [2022 Soil CRC Participants Conference](#) in Adelaide (23-25 August) is an opportunity to hear about some of the achievements so far, and to talk about what we should be doing in the remaining five years.



2022 Soil CRC Participants Conference – Keynote Speaker announced

I am excited to announce that Ben Barlow, CEO of [New Edge Microbials](#), will be the Keynote Speaker at our 2022 Soil CRC Participants Conference. New Edge Microbials is Australia's leading supplier of rhizobial inoculants and under Ben's leadership, has grown to become the leading Australian-owned producer of biofertiliser, biostimulants and biocontrol products for agriculture.

From a farming family in the Moama region in southern NSW, Ben's early career led him into corporate finance, holding leadership roles both nationally and internationally. With the benefit of that experience, Ben now has commercial interests in farming and pre and post farm gate agribusiness enterprises that support the business of agriculture. This makes him very well placed to speak on a topic highly relevant to our CRC "Innovation and soil science – a commercial perspective".

Registrations for the 2022 Soil CRC Participants Conference opened two weeks ago and already we have close to 100 registrations. Check out the [latest program](#) and register via the [link on the website](#).

External review

To help set the Soil CRC up for the next phase, the Board has agreed to commission an external review of the CRC, to be undertaken in the next four months. It will not be as detailed and expansive as the three and five-year reviews that used to be an obligatory part of the CRC Program. It will provide an opportunity to reflect upon what has changed in the past five years and how the CRC is set up to deliver its objectives. This review will then inform a strategic planning process in the first part of 2023, leading to the release of our 2023-2027 Strategic Plan that will see us through the remaining years. There will more detail on this at the conference and in subsequent emails.

Board Meeting – Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga

On 24 May, the Board met at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga. This was preceded the previous day by presentations by Charles Sturt Soil CRC researchers and a visit to a NSW DPI research site at Lockhart. The Patron of the Soil CRC and National Soil Advocate, Penny Wensley, and her Senior Policy Officer, Sue Bestow, joined the research tour, the dinner and part of the Board meeting the next day and it was great to have their insights and support. We were also fortunate to be joined for part of the tour by the Hon Michael McCormack MP, the recently re-elected local member for Riverina and Co-Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Soil. At a dinner that night, the Board was joined by senior representatives from Soil CRC farmer groups Central West Farming Systems (CWFS), FarmLink, Holbrook Landcare Network and Riverine Plains, as well as Charles Sturt University.

At the Board meeting, there were presentations from CSU, CWFS and FarmLink and from the National Soils Advocate. As the meeting was just a few days after the Federal Election, the Board discussed the potential implications and opportunities for the Soil CRC created by the change of government. The Board agreed on a process for an external review of the Soil CRC, received updates on the research, education, finance and communications areas of the business, and approved the CRC's budget for 2022-23. Importantly, the Board approved a further project from Round 22-1 as follows:

Program 2 – Soil performance metrics

- Rapid soil tests using 'lab-on-a-chip' and an app – Liang Wang, University of Newcastle

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Perth on 30 August 2022. Details are still to be finalised, but will include a dinner with Western Australia CRC participants.



CEO Meetings and Travel

With the easing of travel restrictions, I have had the opportunity to resume face-to-face engagement with many of our participant organisations. In my travels, I have been reminded of the great work that is being done in the Soil CRC and this becomes particularly obvious when you can speak to people in person and see and hear their passion for their work firsthand.

I have visited PIRSA in Adelaide (4 April), Riverine Plains in Yarrawonga/Mulwala (12 April), University of Tasmania in Hobart (18 May), Birchip Cropping Group (21 June), Wimmera Catchment Management Authority in Horsham and Federation University in Ballarat (22 June) and South East Water in Frankston (30 June). I also attended part of the AORA (Australian Organics Recycling Association) Conference in Adelaide on 28-29 June and caught up with many of our stakeholders there. I welcome suggestions and opportunities for other participant visits in

coming months.

At the end of July, I will be travelling to Glasgow, Scotland for the 22nd World Congress of Soil Science. This major conference is held once every four years and brings together 3000+ soil scientists from around the world. If anyone associated with the Soil CRC is attending the conference, please let me know.



Sara Hely and Jane McInnes (Riverine Plains) at the Yarrawonga summer cover crops research site for Terry Rose's project (4.1.002). Summer crop just harvested, waiting to sow the winter crop.



Kelly Angel (Birchip Cropping Group) at the Birchip field site for Mick Rose's project (4.2.001). The lentils are just germinating.

In-kind contributions

A reminder that all contributions are reported through SoilCentral and that they are due on the following dates:

- Project Quarterly Reports (PQRs) were due 30 June 2022 (SoilCentral closes 10 July 2022)
- Non-Project In-Kind (NPIK) reports are due 10 July 2022 (SoilCentral closes 20 July 2022).

It is particularly important that we get a project report from every Project Leader that captures everyone's in-kind contribution to that project, and a NPIK report from the nominated representative of each participant organisation, capturing contributions from any previous quarters this year that were not previously submitted.

Should you need any assistance with this, please email projects@soilcrc.com.au.

Call for publications

We are currently compiling our Annual Report. If there are any publications from the 2021-2022 financial year that have not already been sent to projects@soilcrc.com.au, please send them now.

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Contact list

We forward this communique directly to staff in our Participant organisations who we believe should be receiving communications about the CRC. If you do not wish to receive communications directly, please unsubscribe below. If there are others who wish to be on the list, please forward their names to Kathy Stokes at kathy.stokes@soilcrc.com.au.



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