



Performance through collaboration

A COMMUNIQUE FROM DR MICHAEL CRAWFORD

CEO OF THE CRC FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE SOILS

1 December 2023

Strategic Plan 2023-2027

At the AGM this week, we released the [Soil CRC Strategic Plan 2023-2027](#). This plan helps set the direction for the Soil CRC for Years 7-10 of our funding term, taking us through to completion of the Commonwealth Funding Agreement. The plan was developed through a facilitated process involving the Board, Program Leaders and senior staff and it builds upon the findings and recommendations of the external review that was undertaken in late 2022.

As we enter the remaining years, there will be an increased focus on integration, adoption and outreach, ensuring that the knowledge outputs of the Soil CRC are appropriately disseminated to next users, and ultimately to the farmers and land managers who are dependent on a high performing soil, and the new Strategic Plan reflects this.

A key part of the planning process was to consider the likely scenarios for the Soil CRC beyond the end of its current funding in 2027. Our assessment is that it is unlikely that the Soil CRC would attract sufficient industry and private sector funding to substitute for the lapsed government funding and enable us to continue in our current format. While it is possible that there may be other sources of government funding outside of the CRC Program (which we are pursuing), the likely scenario is that the Soil CRC will come to a natural end in 2027. Consequently, the Strategic Plan reflects that thinking and, in consultation with participants and stakeholders, we will be developing and implementing a robust wind-up plan that maximises the legacy and impact of the Soil CRC.

Year in Review 2022-23

I am proud to release our latest 'Year in Review' publication, presenting an overview of achievements and progress in the Soil CRC over the past year. The Year in Review is designed to be more readable and relevant to our participants and stakeholders with a focus on project updates and case studies, and there is a list of publications and PhD students. The [full report](#) and a [summary of the report](#) can be found on our website.

Annual Report 2022-23

Separately, our formal Annual Report provided more specific and detailed information to the CRC Program Office, allowing them to evaluate our progress against the CRC Funding Agreement. Following their assessment, they provided us with the following feedback: *"It is great to see the CRC in a good position at this stage of its life. Project activity is strong with milestones being achieved and the financial position is sound. Student engagement is strong, recognition of CRC Personnel is rewarding, and a strategic focus to maximise uptake and value of CRC outputs is welcome given the CRC's decision to wind up at the end of its term."*

This feedback shows the importance of our systems and processes for reporting – all of which contributes to this outcome. I would like to thank everyone who has played a role, small or large, in achieving this result.

Annual General Meeting

The Soil CRC held its 2023 Annual General Meeting and Participants Meeting on 30 November. It was held online and attended by lead contacts of many of our participant organisations. Business was brisk with the Finance Reports presented for comment, and the results of the Board elections announced, followed by reports from the Chair, Dr Paul Greenfield, and myself as CEO. Thank you to those participant representatives who attended.

Board appointments

Prior to the AGM, Members of the Company (i.e. the Major Partners) were asked to vote on nominations for a number of Director roles on the Board of the Soil CRC. Major Partner representatives Andrea Bishop (Griffith University) and Malcolm Buckby (SAGIT) were due to retire by rotation and both offered themselves for re-election alongside other nominations Warwick Dawson (University of Newcastle) and Michael Friend (Charles Sturt University). At the AGM, it was announced that Andrea Bishop and Michael Friend were the successful candidates.

Two of the independent directors, Ralph Hardy and Simon Speirs, were also due to retire by rotation. Both indicated their willingness to re-nominate and this was accepted by the Nominations and Selection Committee and the Board and endorsed by the Members at the AGM.

Congratulations to Michael on his election and to Andrea, Ralph and Simon on their re-elections. And a special thank you to Malcolm Buckby for his contribution to the Board since the commencement of the Soil CRC and for his co-leadership of the bid in 2015-2017.

You can find the [full list of our Board Members](#) on the Soil CRC website.

2024 Board meetings

The Board holds its quarterly meetings at locations across Australia where it can engage with participants and other key Soil CRC stakeholders. Since the commencement of the Soil CRC, the Board has held meetings in all states of Australia, and at the last Board meeting for 2023, the Board agreed on its locations for its meetings in 2024.

1 March - Adelaide SA (PIRSA/SAGIT)
28 May - Brisbane Qld (Griffith University)
27 August - Wagga Wagga NSW (Charles Sturt University/NSW DPI)
26 November - Perth WA (Murdoch University)

Publications

One of the exciting outcomes of the CRC's progress is the steadily increasing volume of publications. As more work is completed, more publications are produced, and it is in all our interests to capture the details of these publications and celebrate the knowledge that has been created.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all participants of the requirement to secure CRC approval before publishing project outputs. By following the procedure and seeking approval we all ensure that:

- Only the best quality publications are linked to the CRC
- Any risks are appropriately managed.
- The full extent of our activities is reported to the Commonwealth
- Information and data are shared widely among our participants via our website, fact sheets and through the efforts of our Soil Knowledge Broker, Felicity Harrop.

The publication process is simple:

1. Send your proposed publication and a completed Request to Publish form (available on [Soil Central](#) and the [member area](#) of our website) to projects@soilcra.com.au. The form includes instructions about branding, by-lines and acknowledgements so it is wise to make any necessary changes before submitting the manuscript for approval as this will save time.
2. The CRC staff will record the details of your publication for reporting purposes and send you an approval or any queries ASAP.
3. Once your publication appears, please email the final details through so that we can capture any changes in title, journal or date of publication.

When the time comes to finalise your projects and submit the final report, project leaders are required to list all publications and/or communication reports for end-users produced and released that have not been previously reported in project PQRs and/or notifications with a copy to the Soil CRC. This includes books, book chapters, refereed journal papers, conference papers and abstracts (refereed and non-refereed), reports, papers, newsletters, booklets, computer programs, videos, digital media, web portals, blogs, websites, etc. aimed at transferring know-how or practical information to end-users.

Thank you for helping us to make the best use of everyone's hard work.

2024 Major Investment Round 7

On 10 November, I released the [Guidelines for Proposals](#) for our Major Investment Round 7, which identifies the priorities for investment for next year. This is likely to be the last major round

of investment and I encourage you to familiarise yourself with the opportunities. If you have any questions or interest, please contact the relevant Program Manager. Applications are due on SoilCentral on 16 February 2024.

National Soil Action Plan

At a World Soil Day Event in Canberra on Tuesday morning, the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Murray Watt, launched the **National Soil Action Plan**. This plan helps to put the detail into the National Soil Strategy that was released in 2021. As CEO, I have contributed to the Working Group that developed this plan and it is great to see it finally released. Through our investment and delivery, the Soil CRC is active in supporting all four priority actions of the action plan and we will ensure that all future investment and delivery by Soil CRC continues to do so.



The Hon Murray Watt launches the National Soil Action Plan at the Parliamentary Friends of Soil World Soil Day Event in Canberra.

CEO meetings and travel

I have continued to engage with participants and stakeholders in various forums and meetings around the country. In addition, in recent months, I have had the invitation to represent the Soil CRC at two forums internationally in recent months. In September, I represented the Australian Government at a Global Forum on Soil Health in Yangling, China, and in November, I travelled to Mangalore, India as a Guest of Honour at an International Conference on Decarbonizing Agriculture. At both events, there was much interest in the cooperative research model of the Soil CRC and in the research that we are doing to improve soil health and soil organic matter.

I am always happy to hear of other opportunities for engaging with Soil CRC participants across Australia.



Top to bottom: Global Forum on Soil Health, Yangling, China; International Conference on Decarbonizing Agriculture, Mangalore, India.

Quarterly reports and Christmas closure

From the Projects Office, a reminder that quarterly reports are due over the Christmas/New Year period.

The SoilCentral portal is now open for FY2023-24 Q2 reports. Project Quarterly Reports (PQRs)

and Non-Project In-Kind (NPIK) reports are all due 10 January 2024. The SoilCentral portal is open now and we encourage you to access the portal and submit your reports prior to the Christmas break.

Many of our office staff will be on leave from 15 December and will be returning on Monday 8 January 2024. I will be working until 21 December and then returning from leave on 8 January. Should you have issues accessing or submitting your report in SoilCentral during this time, please send an email to projects@soilcra.com.au. Minimal monitoring of this 'projects' inbox will occur during the closure period, so it may be a few days before you receive a response.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our participants for your contribution to the Soil CRC and I look forward to seeing more of you in person in 2024.

Enjoy your break if you are taking one and enjoy good times with family and friends.

And Happy World Soil Day on 5 December!

Dr Michael Crawford

Chief Executive Officer

CRC FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE SOILS

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Contact list

We forward this communicate 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@soilcra.com.au.



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