



Communique



4 March 2020

Soil CRC Participants Conference 2020

There are only three weeks until the [Soil CRC Participants Conference](#). We currently have over 130 registrations, including 100 Soil CRC participants. We've opened the Wednesday (25 March) session to external attendees and already have about 30 guests who have registered.

REGISTER HERE



The Conference is being held in Adelaide on 24-26 March. The latest version of the [program](#) is on the website along with details of how to [register](#). Registration for the conference is free and includes complimentary attendance at the Welcome Reception and the Conference Dinner.

I encourage all members, students and staff of Soil CRC participant organisations with a direct interest in the CRC to attend our annual conference. It's a great opportunity to understand the directions and activities of the Soil CRC, to meet people and create networks within the CRC, and to position you and your organisation for future funding opportunities in the Soil CRC. I know there are people who have said they are coming, but have not registered. It is critical that you register.

Registrations close **17 March 2020**.

Call 20-1 Major Investment Round 3

Proposals for projects in the latest Soil CRC Major Investment Round were due on 10 February. We received 12 proposals and these have now been reviewed by the Program Leaders and the Administration team for alignment, compliance and quality. We will be providing feedback to each of the proposal leaders over the next week or so, with revised proposals to be submitted by 19 March.

This step is important in ensuring that the best possible projects are presented to the Research and Adoption Committee for their recommendation and to the Board for approval. Board approval is scheduled for 29 April with announcements to be made the follow week.

New Student Coordinator

We are excited to introduce our new Student Coordinator, Dr Cassandra Wardle. Cassandra started at the Soil CRC this week with a jam packed, two-day visit to our Newcastle head office. She will be based in Brisbane and will work closely with our PhD students to foster the development of a virtual cohort, providing them with a 'Soil CRC experience'. Cassandra was recently the Project Coordinator of a consortium of graduate research schools from eight Queensland universities which involved:

- establishing and supporting an International HDR Ambassador Network of 60 international students from across the universities;
- consulting extensively and developing a 'peer-to-peer career-buddy program';
- organising an HDR student conference and industry networking event; and
- engaging consultants to develop HDR resources.

Cassandra can be contacted at cassandra.wardle@soilcrc.com.au. Welcome Cassandra!

Board Meeting

The Board held its first meeting of 2020 at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ), Toowoomba on 26 February. Both USQ and Herbert Cane Productivity Services Limited made presentations to the Board about their strategic directions and the opportunities that the Soil CRC can provide. The Board approved the Terms of Reference for its newly established Commercialisation and Intellectual Property Committee (CIPAC) which will provide oversight of the intellectual property and commercialisation activities of the Soil CRC. The Board also discussed CRC milestones (see below) and the strategic opportunities that the increasing public and corporate interest in soil health and soil carbon sequestration provides for the Soil CRC.

The remaining face-to-face meetings for 2020 are scheduled for Canberra (28 May), Wagga Wagga (26 August) and Newcastle (28 November).

Review of Commonwealth milestones

An important aspect of our Funding Agreement with the Australian Government is the continued achievement and delivery of our agreed Commonwealth milestones. In total, there are 90 milestones across our four programs over the 10 years of the CRC. To date, 20 milestones have been due, and we have achieved 19 of these on time, with one milestone achieved three months late. This is a great achievement and has helped to assure the CRC Program Office that we are on track.

However, we also recognise that the milestones were drafted in 2016-17, and as we complete our 3rd year and head into our 4th year, it is appropriate that we review our milestones to ensure that they are all still relevant in the context of the evolving external and internal environment in which we operate. Program Leaders will review their milestones in their program session at the Soil CRC Participants Conference and we encourage all attendees to have input into the process. Any proposed changes will be reviewed by the Research and Adoption Committee and the lead contact of each Participant organisation will have the opportunity to make a comment on behalf of their organisation, before changes are approved by the Board and submitted to the CRC Program Office.

Managing soil for high performance after a drought



In December, the Soil CRC requested proposals from participants for a short-term project that aimed to collect the known, scientifically-based information about how soils react to extended periods of water deficit (drought), how they respond when it does rain again, and most importantly, what management

actions farmers can take to optimise the performance of their soils when the water stress of a drought is removed.

We received eight proposals which were considered by a panel in early January. The project was awarded to Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA) with a contribution being made by Agriculture Victoria. The final report is scheduled for delivery in April, with a plan to widely disseminate the information to where it is needed across Australia. Brian Hughes (PIRSA) will summarise the preliminary findings at the Soil CRC Participants Conference.

Thankful4Farmers



The Soil CRC is now a collaborative partner with Thankful4Farmers. This is a collaborative initiative bringing together industries, brands, influencers and consumers in a united effort to raise awareness of the important and positive role that farmers play in 'putting food on the table three times a day' and to generate revenue to support sustainable agriculture and regional communities across Australia. They are working with global brands from diverse industries, Australian brands and Thankful Ambassador Matt Moran.

Thankful4Farmers recognises that farmers are our front line environmentalists and also responsible for future food security and so, Thankful4Farmers was launched to support sustainable agriculture and future food security. Their goal is to help fund projects that tackle the systemic challenges in order to have the greatest impact. Their revenue is sourced from end-users through innovative payment schemes (i.e. 'buy a plate' when dining at a restaurant, pay a premium for branded products) and they aim to increase the positive perception of farmers in the community. There are three main pillars to their investment: sustainable agriculture, community development and farmer wellbeing and mental health.

The partnership between the Soil CRC and Thankful4Farmers is not a financial one, but through our collaborative support for each other through events and publicity, we can jointly further our mutual interests. Further information can be found at www.thankful4farmers.com.au.

CEO activities

In February, I attended [Birchip Cropping Group's](#) Annual Trials Review Day and met with the new CEO, Fiona Best, and Board members and staff. I presented at an event organised by the [Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform Australia](#) and contributed to a discussion about the science of regenerative agriculture.



A highlight of February was the [EvokeAG conference](#) in Melbourne, attended by 1300 delegates, where I led a panel discussion on technology advances in soil health. Panel members included Nicole Dimos ([Society of Precision Agriculture Australia](#)), Craig Lobsey ([University of Southern Queensland](#)) and Ehsan Tavakkoli ([NSW Department of Primary Industries](#)), all members of the Soil CRC. Interest in soil health was very high, and the discussions were very encouraging.

[Listen here](#) to the interview I did with Peter Somerville from ABC Country Hour live at EvokeAG.

In the past few months, I have also had a number of meetings with corporate stakeholders and potential investors, many showing an interest in sustainable agriculture, soil stewardship and carbon sequestration. Hopefully, some of these discussions will turn into productive, collaborative relationships.

I'll be visiting [Federation University](#) on 5 March and [Murdoch University](#) on 13 March. In addition to the Soil CRC Participants Conference on 24-26 March, I will be speaking at the [Talkin' Soil Health Conference](#) in York, WA on 12 March and the [Australian Organics Recycling Association \(AORA\) Conference](#) in the Hunter Valley, NSW on 2 April.

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Conferences

- [Soil CRC Participants Conference](#), Adelaide SA, 26-28 March 2020
- [Talkin' Soil Health](#), York WA, 11-13 March 2020
- [Climate and Carbon in Agriculture 2020](#), Adelaide SA, 31 March-1 April 2020

- [Australian Organics Recycling Association 2020 Annual Conference](#), Hunter Valley NSW, 1-3 April 2020
- [National Soils Conference](#), Cairns Qld, 29 November-4 December 2020

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. 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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