

turf AUSTRALIA

Future leaders shine at NxGen19



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

**An environmental assessment of turf
Lawn Solutions Australia holds its conference
A tribute to the life of Bill Casimaty**

CHAIR

As always, it's been another busy few months for the turf industry - with more industry-wide events, and with growers facing significant challenges with the implementation of water restrictions in various regions across Australia.

Much of the winter action was centred on July, with the Lawn Solutions Australia (LSA) Conference and Turf Australia's NxGen Forum both taking place. These events provided a great opportunity for industry wide networking, information sharing, and collaboration. The groups discussed the opportunities and challenges currently facing our industry and workshopped solutions together.

LSA Conference

The LSA Conference saw fantastic attendance this year, with more than 300 delegates travelling across the country to meet in Sydney.

This year's conference theme was 'Innovation for the Future'. Presentations across the two-day conference were heavily focused on the various avenues for innovation within the turf industry. A diverse range of topics were covered in a program that was designed to ensure that the turf industry and LSA members stay at the forefront of growth.

NxGen Forum

Continuing the promotion of the future of our industry - Turf Australia's NxGen Forum was held in the Adelaide Hills, South Australia on 28 - 30 July.

This event provides a great opportunity for our next generation to get together; sharing insights, discussing the future of turf, and learning from industry experts from diverse backgrounds.

Special mention must go to our three 'NxGen Legends', who have attended all seven years of the NxGen event - they are: Tim Muscat, Hugo Struss and Mick Newton.

Congratulations to you all, and I put the challenge out for more NxGen Legends to follow suit.

This forum continues to be a great initiative that's proven to be very successful at engaging the next generation of our workforce; our future industry leaders. It's my hope that this event continues long into the future.

Cross-Industry Meeting in Townsville

In August, Turf Queensland and Turf Australia, presented at a turf seminar at Riverway Stadium in Townsville. The event was open to various members of the turf industry with Sports Turf Association Queensland, landscapers, irrigators and turf producers all in attendance.

By all accounts the event was a success with growers and end users networking and learning together. The inspection of Riverway Stadium and presentations were all incredibly well received.

Water Restrictions

As we leave winter behind, drought and water restrictions remain a top industry-wide concern.

With many parts of Australia under restrictions, make sure you're aware of your regulations, and what these restrictions mean for you. I encourage you all to get in touch with your local state representatives with any concerns or queries. They have been working tirelessly in engaging government about these restrictions, as well as sharing best practice with growers.

I hope spring brings good rain across the country and that we don't see these restrictions tighten anymore in the future.

Introducing AusGAP Scholarships

There's a fantastic initiative happening with AusGAP, with the launch of its 2020 Scholarship Program which gives turf industry workers the opportunity to receive financial assistance towards tertiary studies.



There's a fantastic initiative happening with AusGAP, with the launch of its 2020 Scholarship Program which gives turf industry workers the opportunity to receive financial assistance towards tertiary studies.

Open to anyone who's been actively working in turf production or maintenance in Australia for four or more years - the recipients will receive a two-year, \$10,000 per annum scholarship; covering a range of courses including sports turf management, marketing, and business management.

These initiatives are important to help support the development of our workers, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to facilitate the continued growth of our businesses and industry.

If you want to learn more about the scholarships, your eligibility and how to apply, I encourage you to head to: ausgap.com.au/news-events/scholarship/.

I'd like to wrap up my Spring report with some acknowledgements.

First, I'd like to acknowledge John Vatikiotis, past Relationship Manager for the Turf Fund at Hort Innovation, who has recently moved on from the business. We thoroughly enjoyed working with John and look forward to continuing this relationship with his replacement, Bradley Mills and Hort Innovation in the future.

I'd also like to recognise LSA and AusGAP, who have been great sponsors for both Turf Australia, and the broader industry - assisting with the development and implementation of fantastic activities and initiatives.

Finally, a big thanks to Jenny Zadro and the Turf Australia team for their continued work and effort advocating for our industry and its members.



ROSS BOYLE, ROSEMOUNT TURF
CHAIRMAN
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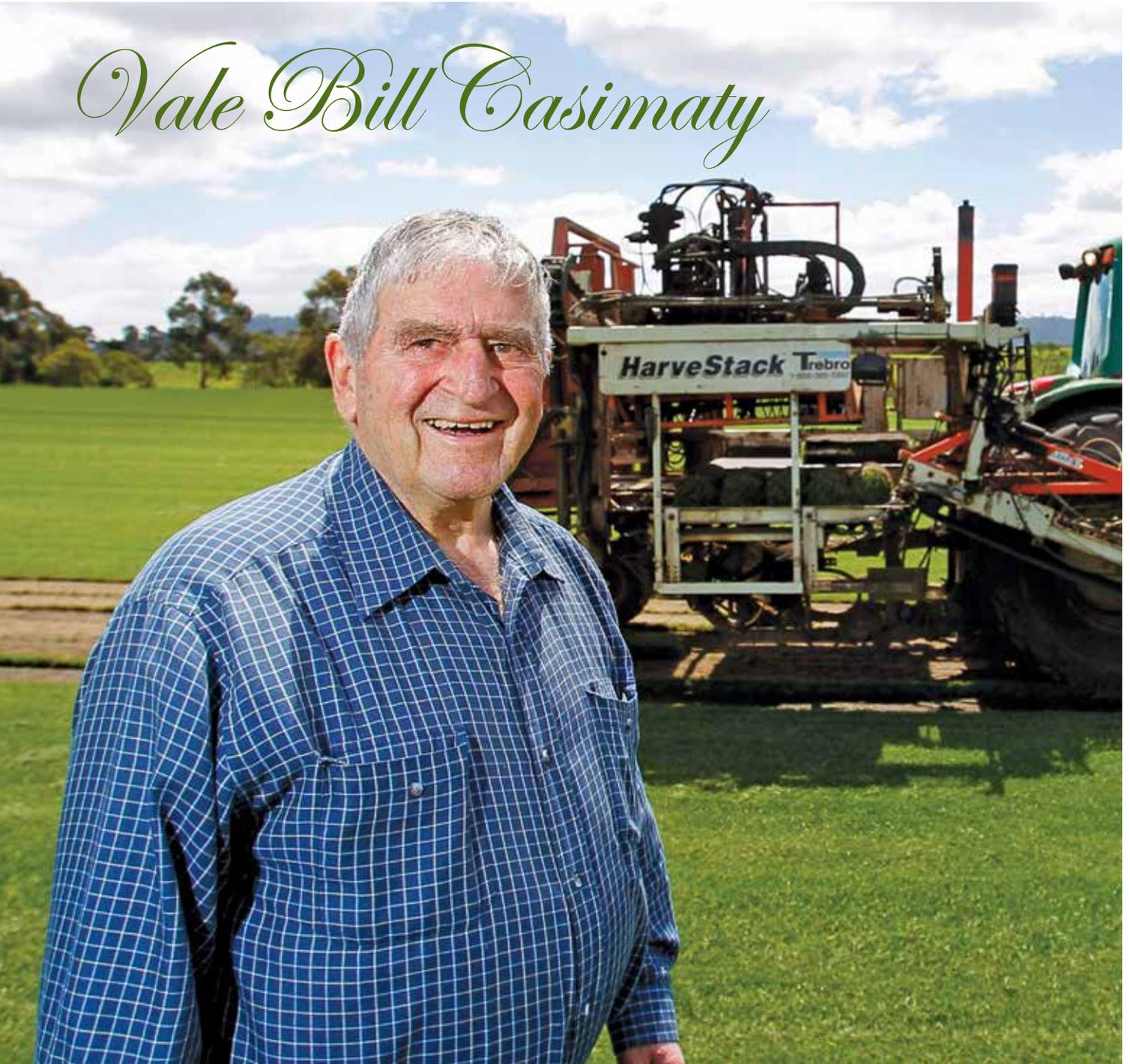
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Vale Bill Casimaty



On 6 July 2019, **Bill Casimaty** passed away surrounded by his family. A leading agriculturalist, innovator, prominent community leader and loyal family man, Bill revolutionised the global sports industry as we know it today. **Turf Australia** pays tribute to the incredible life of **Bill Casimaty**.

Bill Casimaty is a pioneer in every sense of the word. Starting his career as a dryland sheep and cereal farmer, Bill's passion for innovation was unrelenting and he soon started on a quest for new opportunities.

Soon enough, he was building a dam for irrigated cropping in order to become a mushroom farmer. In 1967, he was awarded a prestigious Nuffield Scholarship to research the global opportunities in mushroom, livestock and cropping production, before eventually settling on turf.

He started planting turf on his property, StrathAyr, situated just outside Hobart, and had early success riding the wave of Tasmania's mining boom on the west coast. Ever the entrepreneur, Bill grew frustrated with the small size of the Tasmanian market.

He expanded across the Bass Strait to grow turf in Victoria and sell to larger markets on the mainland. Operating near Australia's sporting capital, Melbourne, he looked to the sports industry as the next opportunity for business growth. It was in sports turf that Bill Casimaty, the innovator, truly flourished.

Even if Bill Casimaty is not a common household name, his creations certainly are. Washed turf, portable tennis courts and drop-in cricket pitches are just some of his innovations that will be familiar to sports fans all over the world.

Bill's son Frank Casimaty, Managing Director of StrathAyr said, "My father was a pioneer in every sense of the word and every time we watch a game of cricket or tennis, we're reminded of how he's changed the sports turf industry. He revolutionised the way turf was used in sports and that remains his legacy today."

Over time, the sports turf industry has been transformed by the development of reinforced sand profiles, a move championed by Bill. In particular, StrathAyr has had great success in working with some of the world's leading racecourses.

It all began with a visit to Hong Kong's Sha Tin racecourse, an encounter that resulted in what Frank Casimaty calls 'one of his proudest marketing achievements'.

On a trip to Hong Kong, Bill and his wife Janet lugged several rolls of washed turf in their suitcases. They paid a visit to the Hong Kong Jockey Club, which loved the product. Before long, StrathAyr was marketing its "All-Weather Turf Profiles" to curators and turf managers around the world, securing contracts with world famous venues such as Flemington Racecourse and the Melbourne Cricket Ground.



Above: Bill Casimaty with turf air freighted to Hong Kong.

Below: Turf laying in Sha Tin, Hong Kong.



Bill Casimaty, agriculturalist, innovator, entrepreneur, community leader and family man. A turf industry icon and member of the Order of Australia.

My father was a pioneer in every sense of the word and every time we watch a game of cricket or tennis, we're reminded of how he's changed the sports turf industry. He revolutionised the way turf was used in sports and that remains his legacy today.

It was in sales and marketing that Bill really excelled. Long-time friend and associate Peter McMaugh AM said, "A great deal of Bill's success was due to his almost ferocious tenacity. If Bill got a sniff of a notable turf job anywhere in the world, he would pursue it, going to an unbelievable effort to achieve his goals."

A true champion of the Australian turf industry, Lawn Solutions Australia recently inducted Bill into its Hall of Fame at its recent conference. The award was testament to his devotion to the industry, one that he remained fiercely passionate about to the very end.

On his passing, tributes flew in from all walks of life, including Tasmanian Minister for Primary Industries and Water, the Hon Guy Barnett MP. Minister Barnett said, "Bill Casimaty was a man of enterprise, innovation and vision. Bill's significant contribution to Tasmanian agriculture and business is well recognised and he helped put Tasmania on the national and world stage."

Bill has left an important legacy, not just for the Australian turf industry, but for the global industry too. He has grown the market in ways that many of us never thought possible. However, perhaps the most important lesson Bill taught us was the significance of family. His insistence on taking time out with family for activities and holidays provides us all with a valuable perspective on life.

Vale Bill Casimaty. 🍷



Living turf: A cool option for reducing heat in our cities

It's been known for a while that our cities heat up more than natural landscapes. This happens because of the urban heat island effect. Constructed materials heat up, and hold onto their heat, longer than natural surfaces. Supported by Hort Innovation and managed by Seed Consulting, a levy-funded project, **Conveying the benefits of living turf - mitigation of the urban heat island effect (TU18000)**, is exploring this concept further.

The impacts of urban heat islands go far beyond hot summers and sleepless nights. It is well established that extreme heat is a major cause of death, particularly for children younger than four and adults over 65.

Beyond the health impacts, there are major impacts too on the economic productivity of our cities. In fact, by the middle of the century many cities around the world will be spending up to 10% of their Gross Domestic Product on managing excessive heat (Estrada, F, W J Wouter Botzen, and R S Tol. 2017. "A global economic assessment of city policies to reduce climate change impacts." *Nature Climate Change* 7: 403 – 406).

A reduction in living green space, and an increase in the use of bitumen, concrete, and synthetic turf are all contributing to the urban heat island effect.

According to Dr Mark Siebentritt, lead researcher, Seed Consulting, these impacts are beginning to change the ways that local councils approach planning decisions.

"In the past, councils have focused on roads, rates and rubbish. But as residents demand a greater focus on liveability and the economy, there is a major opportunity for the turf industry to push the positive benefits of living grass," said Dr Siebentritt.

While the general causes of urban heat islands are well understood, the specific benefits of living turf compared with other land surface types has not been explored. This is especially important in cities, where the trend is for infill development to replace green cover with hard surfaces like houses, roofs, and roads.

/// In the past, councils have focused on roads, rates and rubbish. But as residents demand a greater focus on liveability and the economy, there is a major opportunity for the turf industry to push the positive benefits of living grass...

Most studies into urban heat islands have focused on the use of handheld thermal cameras to identify the surface temperatures of different surfaces. However, the team at Seed Consulting have taken a different approach, favouring thermal images taken from aircraft.

"By leveraging data taken from altitude, we are able to analyse heat on a landscape scale rather than in isolation, and it provides us with a better understanding of patterns of heat and all the variables that affect it."



Following this extensive analysis of both surface and air temperatures and using data collected in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, it was found that the surface temperature of living turf was nearly 5°C cooler than regional averages, whereas bitumen was nearly 5°C warmer than average and synthetic turf nearly 11°C above average.

The next phase of research will see Seed Consulting drill down further into the impacts of heat on individual spaces like back and front yards. As our cities grow and space is reduced, both households and councils must understand the impact of replacing living turf with synthetic turf or hard surfaces.

Detrimental health effects to pets and children, the financial impact of increased use of air-conditioning and the potential damage to living trees are all likely to be issues, but which require more research.

"The results of this work are a reminder that the planning and development decisions made today in relation to parks, streets and houses are having a direct impact on how hot, or cool, our cities are now and will be in the future," concluded Dr Siebentritt

Turf Australia and Seed Consulting will continue to share project updates in order to equip growers with the facts and figures the help them manage conversations with customers as our cities heat up. 🌱



APOLOGY

On page 9 of the Winter edition of the Turf Australia quarterly magazine a mite identification table was published that was created by Turfgrass Scientific Services P/L and GeneGro P/L. The table was published without permission or acknowledgement of the owners of the intellectual property. Turf Australia apologises and recognises this table was developed by Turfgrass Scientific Services P/L and GeneGro P/L.



New levy funded project puts synthetic in its firing line

Hort Innovation
Strategic levy investment

TURF FUND

Commissioned by Hort Innovation and run by leading professional services company, GHD, a new turf levy funded project – **‘Conveying the benefits of living turf – a bushfire retardant’** (TU17008) – aims to further prove the value of live turf by exploring its fire-retardant nature in comparison to synthetic turf.

Vegetation that is resistant to being ignited by embers or high levels of heat, helps mitigate fire damage risk. This project looks to further explore the known benefits of using living turf as a bushfire retardant, particularly in fire-wise landscaping and garden design.

The mixture of materials in synthetic turfs impacts the potential for fire ignition, making it more likely to spark by embers and heat, and for fire to sustain and spread.

The project team will perform a review of key risk factors that need to be considered when comparing the risk of bushfires for natural and synthetic turf. To do this, GHD has partnered with CSIRO’s bushfire ignition and behaviour science specialists – who will perform living turf ignition experiments, comparing the ignition and spread of fire in live turf and synthetics, testing across different variables including turf state, wind presence and ignition source.

Project Plan

Currently, GHD is performing a comprehensive literature review through research and consultation with a variety of stakeholders, including turf industry representatives. Through this they aim to better understand key issues and opportunities for live turf, particularly in bush-fire prone regions. With consultation from Hort Innovation and turf industry stakeholders, the CSIRO’s Bush Fire Behaviour & Risks Team are in the process of preparing the experimental design for the live turf ignition testing.

During the next phase of the project, CSIRO will perform the living turf ignition experiments. Undertaken in a Pyrotron, which is an ignition and fire behaviour testing facility, the team will be able to study the combustion and spread of fire with varying turf varieties in controlled conditions; observing flame propagation and behaviours that aren’t possible out in the field.

Ultimately, the purpose of the project is to showcase key benefits of using live turf for improved protection against fires; outlining the potential use and application of living turf in landscape design and other settings.

Turf Australia will continue to share updates on this levy funded project.

The ‘Conveying the benefits of living turf – a bushfire retardant’ (TU17008) project is funded by Hort Innovations using turf industry levies and funds from the Australian Government.

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Turf Australia NxGEN19



Turf's future leaders head to South Australia

The clean and green Adelaide Hills played host to the 2019 edition of the NxGen Forum at the end of July. This regular event is an opportunity for younger turf farmers to hear from experts in a range of fields, from turf farming to organisational culture. And most importantly, it provides an opportunity for growers to share ideas and learn from each other.



I was inspired by the energy our growers showed throughout the forum and we hope they've left empowered to drive change on their farms as they continue their trajectory to become the leaders of our industry.

Home-base of NxGen 2019 was Mount Lofty House. Originally built in 1852, the opulent mansion overlooking the lush greenery of the Adelaide Hills has an interesting story. Conceptualised and created by a Yorkshire-born lawyer the venue has changed hands many times. Each time new people have managed the venue, fresh ideas have resulted in bold renovations or additions. Different activities and services have been offered at the mansion over the years.

It's seen its fair share of hardship too, with the building virtually burnt to the ground in the Ash Wednesday fires, only to be rebuilt. Changing hands again since, the venue has continued to evolve its aesthetics and its offerings. A new six-star hotel was even under development when NxGen was taking place.

But this is not an advertisement for Mount Lofty House. We are telling this story because like many turf farms, it highlights the importance of new ideas and a fresh approach in overcoming adversity and looking to the future. NxGen is the turf industry's next generation of leaders and the message they can take from the success of Mount Lofty House is to not be afraid to push new ideas and evolve their businesses. Most importantly, Mount Lofty House teaches us that old and new can work harmoniously together.

It was a running theme throughout the two days the 30-strong NxGen group spent together. The first formal session of the event was a presentation by AgLeader's Oliver Richards. The company is bringing some exciting new technology to the market. The young, digital native audience understood the value proposition of the innovations presented by Oliver whether it be precision agriculture, sensors or cloud computing. But when it comes to innovation on the farm, there often needs to be a wider cultural shift.

This was explored in depth by Jill Rigney from The Right Mind who ran a session on bridging the cultural gap in organisations. She explored the tension between generations within business, reinforcing the point that tension is a good thing. The friction caused by tension creates energy, that energy leads to the change that brings about innovation.

The core message delivered by Jill was that in order to bridge the on-farm cultural divide, each generation must engage with and



understand each other. Coaching and mentoring must go both ways, not just from the older generation to the younger generation. She also reinforced that business systems and an organisation's structure should be flexible to accommodate the changing demographics of a business.

Shifting gears, there was a special guest presentation from Paul Munns Instant Lawn, one of the pioneer businesses in the South Australian turf industry. NxGen is all about sharing industry insights and the group found it interesting hearing from Stefan Palm, retail manager at Munns Turf Supplies, about the unique way the South Australian turf industry operates, largely driven through a reseller channel as opposed to the direct-to-customer model used by most turf growers in other parts of the country.

With the classroom component out of the way, the afternoon focused more on the social side of NxGen as attendees took part in some team-building exercises and a trivia night. NxGen is grounded in a sense of community and it's the loyal attendance by a core group of growers that has helped shape the event into the success it is today. As a gesture of thanks, these growers were presented with awards recognising them as either NxGen Legends or NxGen Stars, depending on their attendance in the past.

On day two of NxGen, delegates visited the Neutrog fertiliser factory in Kanmantoo and listened to a presentation on soil microbiology by esteemed microbiologist, Dr Uwe Stroehrer. The down-to-earth scientist gave a brief but informative talk on the importance of

understanding the organisms that work together under the ground on farm.

A fitting finale to NxGen 2019 was a session at The Landscape Shop, part of the vertical integration undertaken by Paul and Tracey Daniel following the establishment of their farm, aptly named 'The Turf Farm', in 2003. Their business is a prime example of innovation, bringing together new thinking and experience.

As The Turf Farm grew, they wanted to be able to expand on their own accord, and not be reliant on resellers and the retail industry, so The Landscape Shop was founded so they could manage the entire supply chain from growing, to sales, transport and after-sales service – something more familiar to other Australian turf growers.

Turf Australia's national market development manager, Jenny Zadro, was delighted with the success of 2019 event.

"Thank you to all of our partners that contributed in some way to NxGen 2019. Our sponsors, presenters and of course attendees and their businesses are the driving force behind this event," she said.

"I was inspired by the energy our growers showed throughout the forum and we hope they've left empowered to drive change on their farms as they continue their trajectory to become the leaders of our industry." @

Funding for future NxGen events is currently under review by Hort Innovation. Growers with any feedback and thoughts on the future

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Bridging the generation

Representing a cohort of growers mostly aged under 40, many NxGen attendees are grappling with generational tension in their businesses. But as **Jill Rigney** from The Right Mind explained in her NxGen session, tension is often a good thing.

A consistent theme throughout the two days at NxGen was how innovation and new ideas were strong complements to history, tradition and experience. The high level of engagement from our younger growers throughout the forum was a case in point. On day one of the forum, the group learnt how these themes applied to different generations.

Generation is a fluid concept and generational differences may not always be obvious on farm. However, when the unique characteristics, expectations and values of different generations come together in a workplace, some friction can occur.

Jill Rigney, Senior Trainer, The Right Mind is clear that this should not be a cause for alarm.

“My belief is that tension should not only be welcomed, but that it plays a pivotal role in creating real, meaningful change in a business. Tension is good, it creates energy,” Jill said.

“An older grower must acknowledge that younger workers tend to seek out satisfaction and purpose above job security, and innovation is often a key source for that ...

On the flipside, a younger grower should recognise that there is often no substitute for hard work, particularly in the minds of their employers or colleagues.

At NxGen, Jill ran through several challenges which can arise among people from different generations, which was met with nods around the room; a clear indicator that it rang true for many attendees.

One of the most obvious examples in workplaces, and one that comes up often, is the different perceptions of work ethic. In the past, value was put on job security above everything else and traditionally, a strong work ethic meant higher job security. However, the measurement of work ethic and productivity is changing.

Whilst an older grower might see long days spent ‘on the tools’ as the height of productivity, a younger grower might see a few hours spent researching new technology as achieving greater outcomes for the business.

So which is more important, putting in the hard yards on farm or looking for ways to innovate? According to Jill, there is no ‘right answer’. Instead, it’s about communication, compromise and empathy.

“An older grower must acknowledge that younger workers tend to seek out satisfaction and purpose above job security, and innovation is often a key source for that,” Jill said.

“On the flipside, a younger grower should recognise that there is often no substitute for hard work, particularly in the minds of their employers or colleagues.”

Different generations also have varying opinions when it comes to how they view authority.



al divide on turf farms

Baby boomers grew up in a time where leadership in the workplace was absolute. The boss decided what to do and when, with little opportunity to provide feedback. Generation X and millennials are more accustomed to a consultation-based management structure. They want to be consulted for big decisions, but they also want autonomy to make decisions for themselves, whether they are in a management role or not.

In a similar vein, workers are crying out for more openness and transparency. This can be a source of tension for traditional leaders, who have favoured information sharing on a “need-to-know” basis only.

The final major challenge is the different value placed on patience by different generations. The world seems to be moving quicker now and the concept of patience continues to change. Traditionalists come from a place where they are prepared to toil for weeks, months and years to get what they want. Thanks to a societal addiction to technology, millennials are now chasing instant gratification. They might even be willing to take shortcuts to reach a goal knowing that their attention span is short.

Bridging the gap

Tension is important to any business including a turf farm. Without it there is no friction. Without friction there is no energy and without energy there is no change. Of course, if there was no change we would still be hand-sowing seeds and cutting turf by hand.

The most profitable and successful turf farms are the ones that successfully bridge the generational divide. According to Jill, the first step towards crossing the divide is understanding.

“We often use the bridge metaphor when we talk about crossing this generational chasm, but building the bridge is only half the job. Each party must also cross the bridge, into the other’s world in order to create a sense of empathy. We must go beyond ‘meeting in the middle’ if we are to truly understand each other,” said Jill.

It goes without saying, communication is the most important tool to bridge the generational divide. The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has already taken place. Communication is a more involved task than holding a team meeting or sending an email. Communication involves both talking and listening. It also requires follow-up action, empathy and understanding.

It goes without saying, communication is the most important tool to bridge the generational divide. The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has already taken place.

Coaching and mentoring should also be a two-way activity. Some of the world’s most successful people have mentors, who are younger and have less experience. A second-generation turf farmer, who has grown up in the business might know everything there is to know about agronomy, however the 18 year-old farmhand might have fresh ideas on new ways to drum up business through social media. The message is simple: surround yourself with new ideas from multiple perspectives.

It was an incredibly engaging session, which was made even more powerful through the level of openness shown by attendees, who were willing to share their own experiences in managing different generations on farm.

Summing up her time spent at NxGen, Jill Rigney has a clear message for growers in attendance and back on farm.

“Embrace the different perspectives in your workplace. Whether you are Generation X, Y, Z or a Baby Boomer, we truly are better together.”







Spotlight on South Australia



Most Australian turf growers have a similar business model, providing an end-to-end service from the farm, to the lawn or field. Typically, farmers plant, cut, and harvest their own grass, as well as market, transport and even conduct after sales support. However, at the recent NxGen forum in Adelaide, attendees found that they do things a little differently in **South Australia**.

Whether it be its historic centres, diverse landscapes, or leading food and wine regions, South Australia has a history of doing things a little differently. As it turns out, the state's turf industry is unique too.

The South Australian turf industry operates more like a typical retail channel, with local farms relying on a network of resellers to reach consumers. Turf farms focus on growing and maintaining the grass, whereas resellers and agents manage distribution and sales.

Australia is the driest inhabited continent in the world and South Australia is the driest state in the country. Due to the scarcity of water, growing turf is a challenging task. It requires plenty of skill, knowledge, patience and time. Hot dry summers and wet, frosty winters only add to the complexity of growing turf in South Australia.

Customer service relies on a vastly different set of skills. As such, most of the state's turf businesses have focused on honing their specific skillset rather than becoming a 'jack-of-all-trades'. In terms of size, there are only around seven large turf farms in the state, as well as several smaller operations.

Paul Munns Instant Lawn is a turf business that has been successful for a long period in South Australia, without actually growing any grass. Despite not being growers themselves, Munns is synonymous with the turf industry in South Australia. The family has been pushing the boundaries in turf marketing ever since Paul Munns' father, Brian Munn, dug up a slice of lawn out the front of his bakery and sold it to a customer as 'New Zealand moss'.

The business has continued to thrive, building its reputation on research and development (R&D). In fact, Paul Munn was integral to the development of the first turf R&D centre in South Australia. The centre has developed varieties of drought-tolerant turf species ideal for South Australia's harsh environments. By matching research with the experience of its staff, the Munns team have become true experts, focusing on education and consultation with their clients.



Stefan Palm, Retail Manager, Paul Munns Instant Lawn joined the NxGen group to share more about how the unique structure of the South Australian turf industry has enabled the business to become masters in the art of customer service.

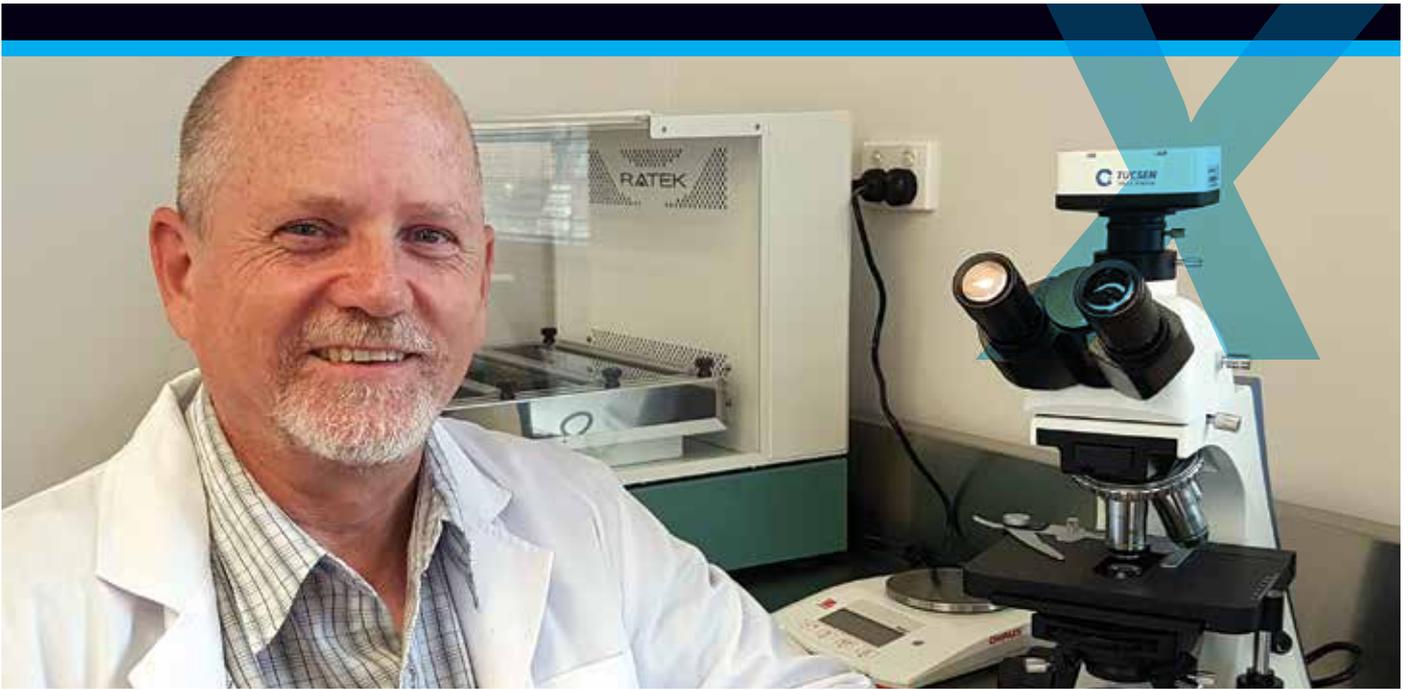
"Our focus is always on the customer. Nothing else matters to us. We have a deep understanding of our customers and we have the resources to make sure their experience with our turf is nothing short of perfect," Stefan said.

The non-integrated model has served the local market well for a long time. But the most important thing, regardless of what point in a supply chain a business is operating in, is having a reason for existing beyond making a profit. It's a concept that Paul Munns Instant Lawn is passionate about.

"Every business needs a mission, its employees need a reason to get up every day and come to work and ours is simple: the customer. Every day, we connect turf growers with customers and help them create their dream lawns, and if that makes someone's world a little better – we've had a good day," Stefan said. 🌱



Stefan Palm,
Paul Munns Instant Lawn



Down to the roots – soil microbiology in turf

Turf growers spend a lot of time trialling different fertilisers and methods. Growers might have a favoured product or brand, or they might use different brands at certain times. So how much did our younger growers know about the workings of organic fertilisers, such as those developed by **Neutrog**? As part of NxGen, **Dr Uwe Stroehler** and the team at Neutrog in the Adelaide Hills put their knowledge to the test.

The group boarded a bus bound for Kanmantoo in the Adelaide Hills to visit Neutrog, an organic fertiliser manufacturer based in South Australia. The company has been successful for many years and has a long history with some of the most well-known turf settings in Australia. It works with venues such as The Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney, Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane, Flemington Racecourse and the Royal Melbourne Golf Club.

The group was addressed by Dr Uwe Stroehler, the company's own in-house microbiologist, an accomplished scientist and an incredibly passionate speaker.

Microorganisms were the order of the day as Dr Stroehler explained how fungi and bacteria work together to improve plant health and growth.

"Bacteria and fungi perform a mutualistic relationship with the plant, both the plant and organisms benefit, so it's important to understand their relationship and how your grasses can obtain maximum advantage," Dr Stroehler said.

Taking a closer look at fungi, Dr Stroehler explained that fungi are incapable of producing their own carbon and so they turn to the plant for assistance to access sugar. However, plants and grass are not in the charity game, they too want something in return.

Plants use the fungi to extend their root network, allowing them to absorb more nutrients, particularly nutrients like phosphate and potassium, which are notoriously insoluble and particularly prone to avoiding the root network of plants.

Fungi are also important because they trap and kill nematodes, which can be harmful for turf.

"Fungi look at nematodes like they are a big bag of protein and a source of nitrogen for them, which is another prime example of this mutual relationship," Dr Stroehler said.

The lesson for growers and for end users of turf is to consider the level of nitrogen that is going onto the grass. By putting high levels of nitrogen on the grass, the fungi no longer need to worry about killing and absorbing the nematodes, meaning the nematodes again have free reign of the environment.

|| *The lesson for growers and for end users of turf is to consider the level of nitrogen that is going onto the grass.*

"Who cooks when you could get free UberEats every day," Dr Stroehler joked.

Dr Stroehler also discussed the importance of the many different types of good bacteria, and the role they play in fostering good soil health and a productive crop.

"This is particularly relevant for turf growers when we explore the role that bacteria can play in reducing thatch," said Dr Stroehler.

Thatch is a layer of matter that accumulates at the base of the grass causes all sorts of problems in grass both on the farm, and on golf courses, racecourses and parks. It prevents proper air circulation, water struggles to get through and the soil is adversely affected. This is all amplified in the dry conditions we find ourselves in as the thatch becomes even harder to break down.

The key to reducing thatch is fostering a healthy microorganism life. There are many different products and brands on the market, which are all designed to promote the best microbial environment for preventing and reducing thatch. There are mechanical approaches available to preventing thatch as well, but organic is often cheaper and less destructive.

Following Dr Stroehler's talk, the group again boarded the bus for a quick tour of the fertiliser factory before making their way back to Adelaide. ☺



Evolving the South Australian turf industry with The Turf Farm

Good business owners are successful because they challenge the status quo, questioning why things are done a certain way and adapting their business model where needed. The NxGen group heard all about this first-hand when they visited **The Landscape Shop**, a business set up by turf farmers Tracey and Paul, to evolve the way the South Australian turf industry operates.

Tracey Daniel is the Managing Director of The Turf Farm, a family-run commercial turf production and retail business located on the border between South Australia and Victoria.

Despite trying conditions of hot, dry summers and cold, frosty winters, The Turf Farm has grown to become one of the most successful turf suppliers in the region. It supplies lawn throughout the state of South Australia from Adelaide's CBD, to the most remote townships close to the Northern Territory border.

The Daniels haven't always been turf farmers, but in hindsight it's something that has always been a calling for Tracey's husband and business partner, Paul.

"When Paul was four, he would pull his parents' mower apart just to see how it worked. When we bought our first home, we had the best lawn on the street. We were the only people I knew with a lawn vacuum and a reel mower," recalls Tracey.

When an opportunity to enter the turf industry presented itself in the 2000's, the Daniels jumped at the chance.

It wasn't easy at first as the whole extended family volunteered weeks of their time to hand plant their first crop but soon enough the business was growing as the husband and wife team managed all the challenges that were thrown their way.

But after nine years navigating the South Australian market, where turf growers typically act as wholesalers, selling to resellers who manage the relationships with end users, The Turf Farm became frustrated at the lack of control they had over the supply chain.

"We were at the whim of the reseller and how they managed customer relationships, pricing, and importantly, the speed at which we could grow," said Tracey.

/// *We are passionate about ensuring that we combat the trend of declining green space by encouraging customers to design their renovation projects with green space at its core, rather than an afterthought.*

Rather than sit back and be dictated by the reseller market, The Turf Farm took matters into their own hands and commenced retailing direct to market, something that was virtually unheard of in the South Australian market. It was a bold decision, but it was the catalyst to the growth trajectory that has seen Paul and Tracey Daniel run one of the most successful operations in the South Australian turf industry.

Changing how we look at lawn

According to Tracey, one of the biggest challenges facing the turf industry is the question of price. Having taken the leap into direct-to-customer sales and marketing, it's a variable that Tracey now has more control over.

"From day one, we've grown our business based on a premium price for a premium product. Our product is no longer just the grass that we grow, it's our professionalism, our transport network, our advice and our service," said Tracey

Lawn is typically the finishing touch on a larger project or renovation and as a result is often an afterthought as homeowners look to spend whatever little money is left in their budget on the wrong type of lawn because it might be cheaper.

“We are passionate about ensuring that we combat the trend of declining green space by encouraging customers to design their renovation projects with green space at its core, rather than an afterthought,” said Tracey.

Tracey and Paul founded The Landscape Shop, to foster a closer relationship with landscapers and homeowners. Not only does it provide an additional avenue to market and sell their turf, it enables them to engage directly with customers and shift the way they think about lawn and green spaces.

Managing both The Turf Farm and The Landscape Shop enables Tracey to understand the turf journey from start to finish. She can see how customers respond and react to the turf as it is produced and delivered enabling her to be strategic in the way that decisions are made both on the farm and through the sales channel.

Making turf cool again

Tracey does not see other turf growers as competitors. Instead, she looks at the decline in house size, increase in the use of hard surfaces and an increasingly busy lifestyle as her biggest competitors.

“As an industry we need to align and work in synergy to educate the public on the benefits that green spaces bring. The health, environmental and aesthetic benefits may be obvious to us, but we need to tenaciously advocate these positive impacts to the wider community. We need to make turf cool again.

“We need to ensure that lawn remains a staple of the Australian lifestyle for years to come,” said Tracey. ☺



Paul and Tracey Daniel and family

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5. Installation
6. Training and commissioning



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Efficiency is key to strengthening the environmental performance of turf

Infotech Research recently completed Hort Innovation project - '**An Environmental Assessment of the Australian Turf Industry and a Lifecycle Assessment of Turf**' (TU16000). Over 30 turf growing sites were studied throughout this project, which aimed to quantify the environmental impact of turf over its full lifecycle. Turf Australia spoke to **John Cumming** from Infotech Research to discuss the findings.

Since commencing this project in late 2016, Dr John Cumming and the team at Infotech Research have been analysing the environmental impact of turf and benchmarking the industry's environmental performance. Over two years, the researchers visited turf farms across the country, undertaking intensive environmental assessments, with information also collected on energy and fertiliser use and water efficiencies.

Importantly, the research has uncovered ways the turf industry can strengthen its environmental performance without compromising productivity or profitability for growers.

According to lead researcher, Dr John Cumming, for all the research conducted, the theme that dominated was the importance of efficient farming methods.

"The fact that gains in efficiency result in more profit should not surprise anyone, but greater efficiency also leads to greater positive outcomes for the environment."

The research found on average, turf farmers lost 59% of the nitrogen they applied and 86% of the phosphorus. Given fertilisers are one

of the biggest expenses for a turf farm business, this presents an immediate opportunity to save costs while reducing the environmental impacts of fertiliser losses going to surface and groundwater systems.

Efficiency, put simply, is maximising the passage of inputs into products and minimising wastage.

Through conducting the project, Infotech Research found that all turf growers could tell you how much turf they sold in a year and most knew how much an input like diesel cost them per annum, but not all had determined efficiencies and set targets for improvement.

"The fact that gains in efficiency result in more profit should not surprise anyone, but greater efficiency also leads to greater positive outcomes for the environment."

"Measurement and use of input and output data is critical to improving efficiency, saving money and ensuring positive environmental outcomes. It's also invaluable knowledge when analysing whether on-farm efficiency is actually improving over time," said Dr Cumming.

Environmental impacts arise from the consumption of any resource, whether it be land, water, or minerals because all of these resources are finite. The other form of environmental impact is pollution from wastes entering the environment and disturbing natural ecosystems.

Normalising the impacts

Infotech Research looked at the five most relevant potential environmental impacts for the Australian turf industry: Water usage, eutrophication potential (blue green algae outbreaks which can lead

to killing of sensitive aquatic life forms), acidification potential, ozone depletion and global warming.

These impacts were normalised to a household's total environmental impact attributed and to installing a 150m² lawn and maintaining it over a ten-year period.

This analysis found that water use made up the greatest share of environmental impact, with 4.3% of an Australian household's water use coming from watering the lawn. Eutrophication potential and acidification made up 4.5% and 1.7% of total impact when benchmarking internationally. Whereas ozone depletion caused by the lawn was a very minor component of the total household impact at 0.0027%.

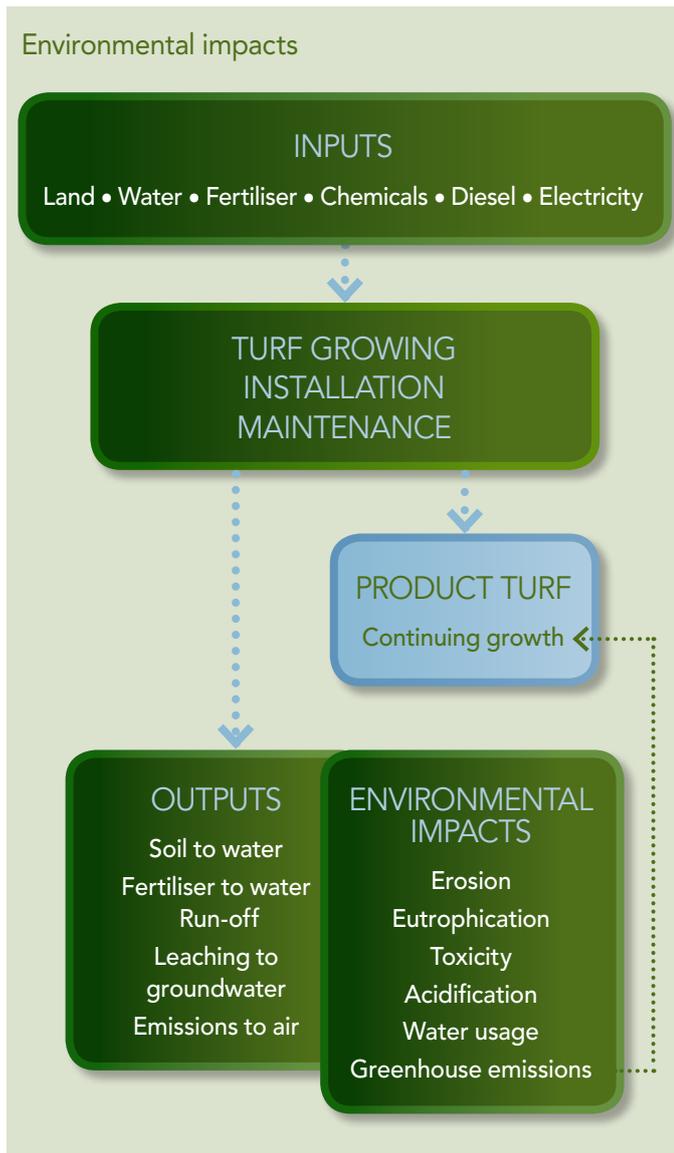
The overwhelmingly good news is the positive impact that turf has on climate change over its lifetime. According to the research, households with lawn, are having a positive impact on global warming, with a -0.18% share of total personal impact.

Essentially, this tells us that installing lawn, has the potential to reduce your carbon footprint.

"Throughout its life, turf will take carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere which goes directly into plant growth. We call this a negative carbon footprint, and it's even better than being carbon neutral," said Dr Cumming.

Turf acts as a carbon soak, absorbing carbon into plant matter and then further assisting in generating carbon in the soil in the form of organic matter.

Continued...



A fresh perspective for Lilydale Instant Lawn

Lilydale Instant Lawn was one of the turf farms that Infotech Research analysed as part of this project, and for General Manager Steve Cole (above), working with Dr John Cumming and his team provided a fresh perspective on the way they conduct their own business.

"Having someone like John visit us has given us a fresh perspective on how we approach our operations. It made us stop and think about certain factors that otherwise might not have been considered," said Mr Cole.

The fresh perspective that working with Infotech Research provided is already resulting in Lilydale Instant Lawn looking at alternative strategies to guide their future growth and development as a business.

“The strategy to future-proof this project with solar power capacity was a direct outcome of the new way of thinking brought to the business by Infotech Research.”

One example is a project underway in the company's Bairnsdale operation to upgrade the diesel pumps it uses for irrigation. The business is installing a submersible pump with a genset which has the potential to be converted to solar power. Even though the current business case is not currently strong enough to warrant the switch to solar, it remains high on the agenda for the Lilydale management team.

The strategy to future-proof this project with solar power capacity was a direct outcome of the new way of thinking brought to the business by Infotech Research.

Taking part in research projects such as this can be daunting, but according to Mr Cole it was a valuable exercise, and the impacts to productivity were very minimal.

"John and his team were incredibly respectful and easy to work with, and there was real value in having them on our farm," said Mr Cole.

For Lilydale Instant Lawn, focusing on reducing environmental impacts is a simple decision to make.

"More often than not, having good environmental practices just makes good business sense, and if we can also reduce our environmental impact at the same time, it really is a no-brainer," concluded Mr Cole. 

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Efficiency is key to strengthening the environmental performance of turf *(continued)*

Environmental outcomes

Impact category	Units	Impact per person for all activities per year ¹ (x 3 people)	10 year scenario for a 150m ² lawn (3 people) Impact of turf % of total personal impact
Water usage	m ³	33 (international) 329 Australia ²	43% 4.3%
Eutrophication potential	kg Peq	40.5 (international)	4.5%
Acidification potential	mole _{eq} H ⁺	8.25 (international)	1.7%
Ozone depletion potential	kg (CFC11)	0.0984 (international)	0.0027%
Global warming potential	kg (CO ₂ eq)	25,200 (international) 61,500 (Australia) ³	- 0.18% - 0.076%

Research conclusions

The project has made the following recommendations for the turf industry:

1. The turfgrass industry can promote its action against climate change
2. Turf growers can be good environmental custodians
3. The turf product has no end-of-life waste disposal problems
4. Recovering run-off and avoiding losses of chemicals used are necessary environmental controls for turf growers
5. Growers can continuously improve their performance by measurement and goal setting
6. Efficiency of turf growing equals care for the environment (Less is More)
7. Data sharing through continuing benchmarking helps the whole industry.

The most pleasing outcome of this research project was the quantified results showing the positive impact that turf has on the environment.

Improving efficiency is core to improving profit and environmental outcomes. And the best and simplest approach is measuring efficiencies of all inputs with the goal of minimising losses.

Turf excelled in removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere although growing and maintaining turf requires energy which results in the generation of greenhouse emissions, this is more than offset by the natural process of photosynthesis.

The most pleasing outcome of this research project was the quantified results showing the positive impact that turf has on the environment.

“By growing turf, the community can use a product that is carbon negative. This a good news story for the turf industry and should be communicated throughout the industry and supply chain,” said Dr Cumming. 🌱

For more information on this project visit <https://www.horticulture.com.au/growers/turf-fund/>

(Footnotes)

1 Global normalisation factors for the Environmental Footprint and Life Cycle Assessment (2017)

JRC Technical Reports by S Sala, E Crenna, M Secchi and R Pant

2 NSW Government and Riverina Water – Average Water Use - <https://www.rwcc.nsw.gov.au/save-water/average-water-use>

3 Quarterly Update of Australia’s National Greenhouse Gas Inventory: December 2018

TIPS FOR IMPROVING ON-FARM ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES WITHOUT SACRIFICING PROFIT

MINIMISE INPUTS

- Use less fertiliser more often
- Check weather before fertilising
- Spot spray weeds preferentially
- Plan a preventative maintenance regime for equipment

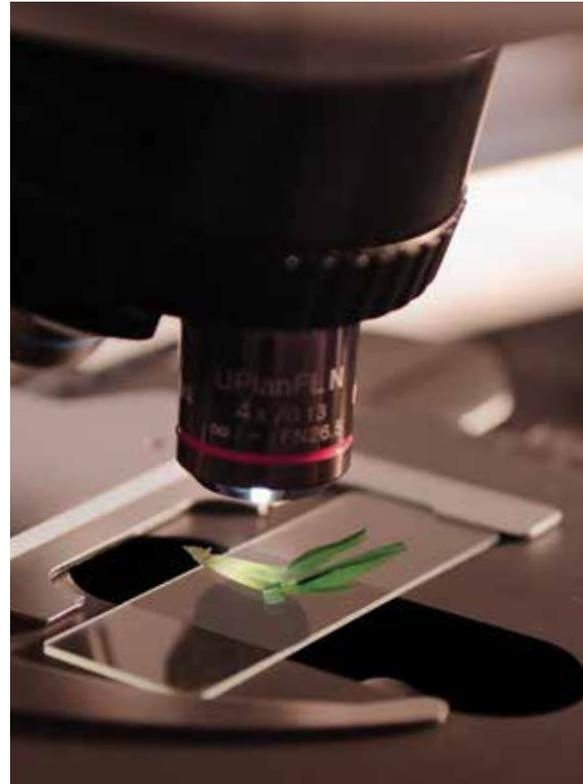
USE LESS TOXIC MORE EFFICIENT MATERIALS

- Avoid persistent and toxic chemicals
- Change from diesel to electric irrigation pumps
- Install solar panels for heating and power
- Buy the best most efficient machinery

PROTECT SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- Bund storages of chemicals and fertilisers
- Tarp piles of fertilisers and soils
- Divert run-off to dams for water reuse
- Use screens to avoid spray drift

Throughout its life, turf will take carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere which goes directly into plant growth. We call this a negative carbon footprint, and it’s even better than being carbon neutral.



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Lawn Solutions Australia looks to innovate for a better future



Winter of 2019 has been an exceptionally busy time off the farm, with industry-wide conferences and forums. **Lawn Solutions Australia** (LSA), held its conference in July and the open exchange of ideas and topical speakers were well received by all attendees. The theme was 'Innovation for the Future' which was front-and-centre throughout the entire two-day event.

The most important thing for the future of the Australian turf industry is not technology, the weather or the research. It's the people. This was loud and clear at the opening of the LSA conference, which kicked off with a morning devoted to the future leaders of the industry.

A group of around 60 young growers headed to Campbelltown Sports Stadium for the 'Future Leaders' program. Mostly under 35, these younger LSA members were greeted by celebrity gardener and LSA ambassador Jason Hodges to kick-off proceedings. Jason has a contagious, electric energy which was matched by the young growers in attendance.

The turf industry is investing heavily in research and development in order to equip our future leaders with the robust backing of science to push our sector forward.

Dr Brian Schwartz, from the University of Georgia, talked to that point exactly, with a discussion on turf breeding and what developments the industry can expect over the next 20 years.

Like any science, those eureka moments are hard work and take a lot of time, effort and experience. In fact, according to Dr Schwartz, about 5000 new grasses are developed each year in search of the next top performing grass.

"We're looking for the needle in the haystack," he said.

When we think of artificial intelligence and machine learning, our minds immediately think of companies like Microsoft and IBM and futuristic applications but these technologies are some of the most important tools in the arsenal of the turf industry as it looks to shore up its future.

"The future's pretty bright for us," he said. "We've got other grass varieties coming along if needed."

Dr Schwartz's most important message was one that aligns well with Turf Australia's current focus and it is a simple one. Togetherness.

"The key thing for everyone to remember is the importance of working together to find the right grass for Australia. It's not possible for anyone to do it on their own."

Attendees of Turf Australia's NxGen forum would have noticed some interesting consistencies between the real-life insights provided by the final presenters in the Future Leaders program and the session by Jill Rigney from The Right Mind in South Australia.

Whilst Jill spoke about some of the theory behind generational challenges in the workplace, both Ryan Cotter from Anco Turf and Lawrence Stephenson from Twin View Turf spoke about their own experiences with managing the 'changing of the guard' and taking over the family businesses. Whilst everyone's story is unique there are some clear consistencies in every farm and the group got some valuable insights as to how to focus on the culture and people, and not just the turf.

The number of attendees had swelled to 100 for the afternoon session, as Green Horticultural Group's Michael Sutton provided a look into the reshaping of Campbelltown Stadium, home of the Western Suburbs Magpies and Wests Tigers rugby league teams. The ground will also be the home of new A-League team Macarthur FC. Michael Sutton was also joined by Patrick Muscat from MusTurf to talk through the process of consultation that went with supplying the turf for the stadium's refurbishment and the importance of a quality product.



Jason Hodges,
landscaper and LSA ambassador



Ryan Cotter,
Anco Turf



Lawrence Stephenson,
Twin View Turf



Sean Healy,
Emergence Training

The day concluded with some practical mower demonstrations followed by another presentation from Dr Schwartz and the science behind TifTuf.

The final speaker was Nick Dorney from AusGAP who provided an update on AusGAP certification and genetic purity in grass.

Day two was the main event, with a stellar location at Dockside in Darling Harbour playing host to over 250 growers. As with all events, some of the most valuable time is when growers mingle with each other, sharing ideas and information and there was ample time for this at the opening of day two.

“The turf industry is investing heavily in research and development in order to equip our future leaders with the robust backing of science to push our sector forward.”

The LSA team set out to create a symbiotic balance between technical and business focused sessions and feedback in the room was that the content was well received.

Again, there were interesting correlations between the LSA conference and recent Turf Australia conferences, with Sean Healy’s session, “Stop Rewarding Exhaustion”, encouraging growers to think about ways to encourage working smarter, not harder on farm.

LSA’s Gavin Rogers gave an update on the organisation’s history and performance. The business is doing well and has had numerous successes, pushing the boundaries in marketing and winning several significant projects.

Carlos Sartoretto was recently profiled in the media surrounding his work with Wimbledon and he joined the group before lunch to provide a fascinating insight into his work.

Continued...



Gavin Rogers,
Lawn Solutions Australia



Carlos Sartoretto,
Sports Turf Research Institute



INDUSTRY EVENT

Lawn Solutions Australia looks to innovate for a better future *(continued)*

Another interesting session was with Tim Arnold, CEO, Australian Institute of Landscape Architects. Landscape architects are an important partner for the turf industry and it was productive to learn about the industry's priorities, and how turf growers and landscapers can best work together.

A raft of additional speakers spoke about their personal stories, and some important lessons for growers both as farmers and as business people.

Renowned brand strategist, Carolyn Miller, brought her enthusiasm for brand to the event, providing growers with unique insights on the importance of creativity in their businesses. Another highlight was Tom O'Toole, who brought his infectious humour to the stage as he told his story of personal and professional development.

The most recognisable of all speakers, Layne Beachley, closed official proceedings with some intimate insights into her life and career. The eight-time world surfing champion's message to LSA growers was simple: 'Choice, not chance, determines your destiny'.

The event finished with the annual LSA awards night, sponsored by Husqvarna. Many members were recognised for their contributions to the industry and individual successes over the last 12 months. A highlight was the induction of Bill Casimaty into the LSA Hall of Fame.

The theme for this conference was 'Innovation for the Future' and Bill Casimaty built his career on doing just that. The entire turf industry is in a stronger place today on account of the innovation and entrepreneurship that Bill showed throughout his career and it was a brilliant tribute to an incredible man and a fitting conclusion to the 2019 LSA Conference. 🌀



Tim Arnold, CEO, Australian Institute of Landscape Architects



Layne Beachley AO, champion surfer



Carolyn Miller, The Honeycomb Effect



Tom O'Toole, The Beechworth Bakery



Patrick Muscat, Musturf, addressing delegates at Campbelltown Sports Stadium

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'Growing into the future': the 2019-23 Hort Innovation Strategy

The horticultural industry is booming. To support and drive the continued growth and innovation of the thriving horticultural sector, Hort Innovation launched the 2019-23 Strategy on 1 July 2019.

The 2017/18 Australian Horticulture Statistics Handbook estimated the value of 'amenity' production which includes turf, to be \$2.9 billion; making up 22 per cent of horticultural value in Australia.

For the next four years, the Hort Innovation Strategy will be used to inform the future direction of the company and Australia's horticultural industry, of which turf is a key component; providing a roadmap for current and future investment into research and development (R&D).

Earlier this year, Hort Innovation gathered feedback and key insights from 350 horticultural growers and industry representatives, by hosting a series of 20 Strategy Consultation Workshops across the country and through an online feedback system. These extensive consultations were used to inform the strategy's key themes, focus areas, goals, and activities that will help the organisation and sector continue to develop and grow, by guiding the allocation of levy and government funds.

To reflect the 2019-23 Strategy, new guiding statements were developed, which will underpin investments and decision-making for the next four years (see *The Strategy at a glance, at right*).

The strategy introduces key initiatives and activities that will roll out over the next four years to support the following three strategic pillars:

Three strategic pillars:

1. Drive knowledge and innovation into horticulture industries
2. Deliver the highest value R&D, marketing and trade investments across industries, now and into the future
3. Enable activities that drive all strategies imperatives

Key activities identified through the consultation workshops, will involve more face-to-face engagement with growers, exploring market trends and potential expansion, and exploring more sustainable farming practices.

Incorporating themes from the consultation workshops, these activities will work towards developing a collaborative and sustainable approach to solving issues within the industry; placing a focus on expanding markets, extension activities, and maximising grower adoption of project outcomes.

The turf levy in action

Investments through the Hort Innovation Turf Fund are guided by the industry's Strategic Investment Plan (SIP) 2017-21. This plan was developed and finalised by Hort Innovation with input from the turf industry Strategic Investment Advisory Panel (SIAP).



THE STRATEGY AT A GLANCE:

WHAT WE DO

Hort Innovation connects growers and consumers to drive demand, and we invest in solutions to improve productivity. These combine to increase the sustainability and prosperity of Australia's horticulture industries.

PURPOSE

Hort Innovation exists to drive a prosperous and healthy Australia, by providing the best knowledge and solutions to create a world-class horticulture sector.

OUR GOALS

Hort Innovation is committed to sustainable growth in horticulture, with the overarching aim of increasing the sector's value to \$20 billion by 2030. This will be achieved through:

- Supporting growth in demand, both domestically and globally
- Supporting profitable and collaborative industries
- Delivering world-class innovation, knowledge and networks.

What is the SIAP?

Made up of industry members, the key role of the turf SIAP is to provide expert advice to Hort Innovation on how levy and Government funds are invested; ensuring the effective allocation of funds to R&D, and marketing projects to support growth and innovation in the sector.

These are your turf industry SIAP members:

- Independent Chair: Michael Worthington
- Ross Boyle, Rosemount Turf, QLD
- Sarah Mason, Coastal Turf, NSW
- Simon Adermann, LSA, QLD
- Robert Prince, Jarakad, NSW
- Terry Sellick, Lawn Doctor, WA
- Lawrence Stephenson, Twin View Turf, QLD
- Anthony Heileg, GoTurf, QLD
- Darren Kirkwood, West Coast Turf, WA

The Turf Team at Hort Innovation

Want to know more about the turf levy and how it's invested? Hort Innovation's Relationship and Marketing Managers can keep you updated with current levy-funded projects, investment, and how the findings and outputs can help you grow your business.

Bradley Mills, Relationship Manager
Samantha Ferguson, Marketing Manager



For more information on turf levy-funded projects, head to: horticulture.com.au/growers/turf-fund/investments/



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That's a wrap for the 2019 Green Leaders

The **Green Industry Growing Leaders' Program** (MT16002) has come to an end for the 2019 participants – wrapping up with the final two-day leadership forum on 1-2 August.

Across this intensive four-month professional development course, the green industry scholarship recipients have attended two leadership forums, participated in several webinars and one-on-one mentoring sessions as they developed and implemented a chosen workplace project.

The skills and tools learnt across the course were designed to support the implementation of the participants' chosen projects, which they presented to the group, sharing their experiences and insights, at the final forum. The lessons will also shape the future careers of the green leaders, which covered key areas of development including good management techniques, workforce empowerment, and the importance of continued professional development.

Congratulations to this year's five turf industry representatives on completing the program:

- Greg Pelka, Farmer at Rosemount Turf
- Sarah Measey, owner and Manager at Top End Turf
- Danny Hack, Turf Farm Manager at Lilydale Instant Lawn
- Craig Banbury, Farm Manager at Glenview Turf
- Shane Bridges, Marketing Manager at Jimboomba Turf Group

Director and program lead at consultancy firm, The Right Mind, David Hanlon said the 2019 Green Leaders were an exceptional group, who were highly engaged from the outset of the program.

"All five of this year's turf participants took away key learnings and skills, which they will be able to utilise for improved people management, or to implement key initiatives that will support the growth of their businesses," David said.

/// ... highly recommend the Green Leaders program to anyone who wants to better prepare themselves for upcoming or current management roles ...

There were several common themes across this year's workplace projects, with many focusing on the implementation of one aspect of performance optimisation, and others looking more broadly at the introduction of more productive behaviours that reflect their workplaces' business values.

Danny Hack from Lilydale Instant Lawn in Victoria, focused his workplace project on team engagement and culture, by creating platforms and opportunities that enable better communication, goal setting and professional development.

"Firstly, I implemented monthly, on-site, toolbox meetings, to share and engage staff to learn more about new facets of the business, such as on-farm operations, machinery training, or developing a greater understanding of tasks and procedures. Secondly, I created a platform to facilitate daily staff briefings, to engage staff in tasks to be done that day and get their input on how best to achieve them.

"It is my goal and intention that these platforms will become a habit and a part of normal operations at Lilydale."

Sarah Measey, from Top End Turf in the Northern Territory chose a workplace project that was very practical and would help strengthen her farm operation, developing a method of information sharing within the business.



The turf representatives busy at work in the August forum

"What I learnt across the program, is all our employees were working in silos; so, I developed a method for the staff to share information and skills within the business, which essentially took the form of a series of 'how-to' videos. The idea was that on any day, someone could pick up a task, and have the capabilities to perform it, at their fingertips," said Sarah.

At the conclusion of the program, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire reflecting upon their own experiences and learnings across the professional development course. The program scored highly across the board. It was rated particularly high for its perceived value and use of industry funding.

"It's great to see the engagement and impact of this program go beyond the direct participants. Since the conclusion of the 2019 course, two of our Green Leaders' employers have approached The Right Mind to speak to their leadership or sales team for internal training, and many of our participants have spoken about expanding their projects further," said David.

"This highlights the willingness of people to engage in training beyond the program, and that people and businesses truly see the value of these programs."

Sarah is one of those participants who plans to expand her project, saying, "Moving forward with this project, I'd like to open this platform of information-sharing to landscapers, for example, as an educational tool on turf varieties, and their suitability in certain climatic conditions. To facilitate this, I am in the process of developing a display plot on the farm, so they can come and see the varieties in different conditions for themselves and make an informed decision on what will best survive in that environment."

Between August and November, the Green Leaders participants have one more task ahead of them.

The Right Mind assigned the group an outline of an activity, initiative or task they must complete or implement, that promotes the value of horticulture and has a return on investment for their respective industry.

Although often a small-scale objective, this task is a prime opportunity for participants to exercise and showcase skills developed across the program, for example, hosting a leadership day in their business, speaking at a field day, or writing an article.

Both Danny and Sarah said they'd highly recommend the Green Leaders program to anyone who wants to better prepare themselves for upcoming or current management roles and advise future participants to take advantage of all initiatives and learning opportunities available to them. ☺

The Green Leaders Program is run by management consultancy firm, The Right Mind, and funded by Hort Innovation using turf and nursery levies, and funds from the Australian Government.



Getting back to Grass Roots field day in Middle Harbour

NEW SOUTH WALES



It's been a busy few months for Turf NSW with conferences, water restrictions, continued issues with buffalo yellow, and increased advocacy efforts with local government.

Greater Sydney is currently under Level 1 water restrictions and efforts are being focused on communicating what these changes mean for growers and their customers, particularly surrounding water metering, reporting, and exemptions to establish new lawns. Other parts of NSW are also under varying water restrictions.

Market Development Day

In May, Turf NSW in conjunction with Master Landscapers LNA and Mosman Council, hosted a 'Getting back to Grass Roots' field day at Middle Harbour.

Forming part of the Hort Innovation funded Market Development Project, this day aimed to educate landscapers about the importance of soils, irrigation, and other factors that contribute to the successful installation of turf.

There was a strong line-up of speakers and presentations, including:

- Dr. Mick Battam – discussed the importance of correct soil preparation and specification of natural turf, in order to achieve a healthy and resilient lawn.
- Greg Keys, Mosman Council – provided an overview of the reconstruction of its oval, and the specific benefits and challenges of managing a high-use field.
- Neale Tweedie, Grechs Turf – presented on different turf varieties and drought tolerance; providing background on irrigation technologies.
- Mariana Cidade, Sydney Water – gave a particularly topical presentation on educating customers and general public on better water management and consumption, given the restrictions that were about to come into effect.

The market development day was a great opportunity to engage with end-users and network with industry stakeholders, to better promote the social, economic and environmental benefits of natural turf and open spaces.

On 22 August, Turf NSW represented industry at the Parks & Leisure Australia seminar and tour event at Gore Hill Park. There were interesting discussions on synthetics and natural turf, a presentation from Syngenta

highlighting the mental, social, and environmental benefits of using natural turf and the need to better allocate open spaces.

The Turf NSW AGM will be held in late September so please keep an eye out for that.

If any Turf NSW members require assistance, please contact Matthew Plunkett on 0434 147 988 or info@turfnsw.com.au

WESTERN AUSTRALIA



It has been a busy winter period for the turf industry in WA, and it won't be slowing down anytime soon.

Like most growers across Australia, regions of WA are struggling with lower soil moisture. That's why we're excited about the Sustainable Agriculture Program, Perth NRM, which received the federally funded, Smart Farms Grant (2018-20). A project is currently underway called, 'Fertiliser and Irrigation Efficiency for Horticulture in a Drying Climate', which seeks to monitor soil moisture by assessing nutrient and water usage for different fertilisers.

Growers approached to participate in the project have been very receptive and we hope future project results will help grow our businesses and industry.

In WA, we are still facing hard economic times, with demand and sales down for turfgrasses, but we are also sensing a shift in mentality and awareness surrounding the benefits of utilising turfgrasses in green space – which is great news.

To build on this momentum, we're rolling out a series of industry-wide events – facilitating opportunities to communicate and educate the public and broader community on the environmental, economic and social benefits of natural turf.

Here's a quick snapshot of what's to come:

Turf Growers Association Western Australia to hold its Annual General Meeting

The Turf Growers Association Western Australia (TGAWA) AGM is set for 16 September at Greenacres Turf Group in Serpentine.

This year, WorkSafe WA will attend, presenting on how to receive Gold and Silver certifications, following a series of WorkSafe Plans performed in WA to assess compliance.

WA Turf Awards

Turf WA will then host its WA Turf Awards on 29 October at the Hartfield Country Club in Forrestfield. This is one of our favourite events of the year – providing us with a fantastic opportunity to network and celebrate final year students for their achievements; welcoming them into our turf community.

This event usually attracts around 100 industry representatives and is jointly sponsored by the Turf Growers Association and Sports Turf Association.

TGA WA Lawn Expo

The TGA WA Lawn Expo takes place on 2 November, at South Metropolitan TAFE in Murdoch. This event provides a great opportunity for the turf industry to educate public on the benefits of natural turf, and best practice for maintaining turf.

Currently, we have nine suppliers and exhibitors already on board, and are seeking further expressions of interest. Last year the event attracted around 1,000 attendees, and we expect similar levels of participation this year.

Please get in touch with Eva Ricci for more information.

Sports Stadium Arena Tour

We are in the process of organising a Stadium Arena Tour at the end of November. Attendees will get the opportunity to tour HBF Park, the WACA, and Lathlain Park, home-base for the West Coast Eagles.

Turf Landscape Educational Sessions

Another event series on the horizon is the Sundowner Educational Sessions designed to share knowledge, educate and communicate the importance of turfgrasses in green spaces for our communities.

For this, we will host two separate events, engaging WA's branch of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, and then the Landscape Industries Association of WA.

The theme across these workshops is "Natural Turf Installation – Getting It Right". Keep an eye out for more details to come – these events are expected to happen at the end this year.

For further information or details on any of the upcoming events, please contact Eva Ricci M: +61 422 120 990 or E: eva.ricci@turfwa.com.au.

QUEENSLAND



There has been considerable activity on the turf industry conference circuit, providing a great opportunity for growers to connect with their peers and engage in new learning activities.

Here's a quick look at some key events and activities happening in QLD this quarter:

QDAF Biosecurity meeting: Fire ant eradication

The QDAF Biosecurity team invited Turf QLD to participate in a round table on Monday, 10 June to discuss the impact of new chemical changes proposed for improved fire ant management.

This has provided an opportunity for South East Queensland's turf production sector to open a dialogue with QDAF. In fact, Turf QLD has since been invited on to the QDAF stakeholder communications group which met on 20 August. Fire ant infestation continues to be a long-term issue that effects production on farms in the nominated affected zones.

International Erosion Control Association (IECA)

In July, Turf QLD was again involved in the demonstration of onsite erosion control by the International Erosion Control Association (IECA), at a site set up at the Redlands Research Facility. Again, this was well attended, and natural turf grass was proven beyond doubt to be the best option for erosion control.

Turf Seminar at North QLD's Riverway Stadium

In August, Turf QLD alongside Turf Australia, presented at a turf seminar at Riverway Stadium in Townsville.

This cross-industry event brought together sports turf managers, students, landscapers, irrigation specialists and turf producers. It provided a great opportunity for growers, suppliers and end users to network and learn more at a grassroots level. An inspection of the Riverway AFL Stadium was undertaken, which provided delegates with a great insight into the day-to-day maintenance of the field.

Dr Mick Battam's presentation on over-used sports fields and poor construction, evoked considerable discussion, proving that using the correct soils with the right turfgrass species for the location are incredibly important. Attendees were encouraged to contact their local turf producer for quality advice when specifying natural turf, to learn more about the local climate.

Presentations were also given by Andrew Geering from The University of Queensland, and Kate Vanson from Skills Impact.

Turf Accreditation Program

The Turf Accreditation Program (TAP) remains strong and continues to be specified by several council engineers along with architects in their tender documents. The Turf QLD TAP covers the operational side of turf production more so than the certification of turf grass species that is covered by other programs. At this point TAP is only operational in Queensland.

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



Jenny Zadro, Turf Australia addresses the North Queensland turf industry

VICTORIA



Agriculture Victoria – Apply now for On-Farm Energy Tier-1 Grants

Applications for Agriculture Victoria's On-Farm Energy Tier-1 Grants are open. The grants aim to support farms in replacing energy inefficient equipment, by funding the installation of more efficient systems, enabling own-generation capacity.

The grant is available to turf growers to improve efficiency, reduce energy costs, and boost productivity. To be eligible for the grants program, growers will need to have an on-farm energy assessment completed through the Agriculture Energy Investment Plan (AEIP) and Agriculture Victoria.

For more details on the grant, head to: <https://www.business.vic.gov.au/support-for-your-business/grants-and-assistance/agriculture-energy-investment-plan/on-farm-energy-tier-one-grants>

Victorian Schools Garden Program (VSGP)

Entries are now open for schools to apply for the Victorian Schools Garden Awards (VSGA). This award encourages schools to incorporate natural turf in their grounds in order to reap the extensive benefits.

This prize encourages school communities to develop, grow and celebrate their gardening achievements while promoting a connection between natural environment and learning, with the winner receiving \$9,000 worth of turf, thanks to Advance Turf.

Schools have until the 30th September to enter the 2019 Turf Victoria Award - Turf Package Prize, consisting of 300 square metres of kikuyu grass. The winner will be announced at the Awards.

The presentation ceremony will be held on 21st November at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, with media personality and long-time turf advocate, Costa Georgiadis in attendance.



For more, head to: [http://www.vsgp.org.au/vsga-awards-program/Melbourne-International-Flower-and-Garden-Show-\(MIFGS\)-Nature-Play-Garden](http://www.vsgp.org.au/vsga-awards-program/Melbourne-International-Flower-and-Garden-Show-(MIFGS)-Nature-Play-Garden)

Presented at the 2019 MIFGS, the Nature Play Space – 'Green Connections' – has been replicated at Mullum Primary School, Ringwood.

Using funding from the Victorian State Government, this sensory and educational space aims to help connect people with nature and features an elevated turf deck feature.

Water Update

In June, Victorian growers gathered to discuss water security and the impact of low water shortages for turf and the wider horticultural sector. From these discussions, we've developed articles on water security and usage.

For further information on the above projects contact David Reid
T: +61 3 9576 0599 or E: david@ngiv.com.au

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THREE SIMPLE FACTORS TO REMEMBER WHEN CLAIMING BUSINESS EXPENSES:

1. The expense must be explicitly for the business rather than yourself.
2. If something is purchased for both business and personal use, only a portion can be claimed.
3. For everything that is claimed, there must be a record to prove it.

We're launching a new regular feature called 'From the Office' where we turn off the mower, jump off the sprayer and step away from the fields of turf. Farms are businesses like any other and it's just as important that the team in the office are as up to date with best practice as those on the tools.

This edition, we explore a topic that strikes fear into the heart of many small business owners - TAX.

For individuals, tax is often relatively straightforward. Gather all your receipts once a year, maybe visit an accountant, submit your tax return to the Australian Tax Office (ATO) and then forget about it for another year. But for small business owners, dealing with the ATO is a year-round activity. By always being on top of your finances, you can ensure you remain one step ahead.

The most important advice for growers is to ensure all records are easily accessible and current. The winter season provides a good opportunity to get the house in order but maintaining good record keeping throughout the busier spring and summer periods will help you complete and lodge your tax returns, manage cash flow, meet your tax obligations perhaps most importantly, understand how your business is doing.

Did you know that as of 5 August, 2019 fuel tax credit rates have increased in line with fuel excise indentation? Or that as of 1 July, 2019 small businesses with fewer than 20 employees are required to lodge reports with the ATO using Single Touch Payroll software?

It's not just about staying up to date within your own business, growers should keep an eye and ear out for updates from the ATO that may have implications on reporting tax.

For example, did you know that as of 5 August, 2019 fuel tax credit rates have increased in line with fuel excise indentation? Or that as of 1 July, 2019 small businesses with fewer than 20 employees are required to lodge reports with the ATO using Single Touch Payroll software?

A good accountant or registered tax agent will help small business owners understand these changes but it's important for you to stay informed as well. The ATO's Small Business Newsroom is a good place to start – details can be found below.

Growers should also understand what they can and can't claim. In the eyes of the ATO, ignorance is no excuse for incorrect claims.

According to the ATO there are three simple factors to consider when deciding whether an expense can be claimed as a business expense, rather than a personal expense.

Firstly, the expense must be explicitly for the business rather than yourself.

Secondly, if something is purchased for both business and personal use, only a portion can be claimed. For example, a new tractor could almost certainly be claimed in full, whereas a new phone may need to be split between personal and business expenses.

The final factor is simply that for everything that is claimed, there must be a record to prove it.

Tax can be daunting and even a little overwhelming but by maintaining best practice all year-round, growers can focus on what they do best, with the peace of mind that their financial obligations are in order.

Are you on top of your tax? 📧

This publication does not, and is not intended to, provide legal, tax or accounting advice, and readers should consult their tax agents concerning individual situations.

Where to find more information

- Contact your accountant or local registered tax agent
- The ATO website (www.ato.gov.au)
- Subscribe to the ATO Small business newsroom for all the latest news and tips on running your small business (<https://www.ato.gov.au/newsroom/smallbusiness/>)

Curious about social media? Confused about payroll? Please get in touch with Sam Cox on Samuel.cox@coxinall.com.au to suggest a topic for future editions of "From the Office".

Turf Australia ramps up investment in resources

The National Market Development Project covers a range of activities and tasks that are developed to promote the benefits of turf and in turn increase the value of turf.

Events are held throughout the year specifically targeting end users and recently this concept was received well in North Queensland. Riverway Stadium in Townsville was the location for the North Queensland Turf Seminar and the event saw growers, sports turf managers and landscapers connecting and learning. The group were very engaged and eager to learn about good turf practices and choosing the right turf for their needs. Many thanks to Sacha and Lachlan Moncrieff of Paragon Gardens for assisting in spreading the word about the event and also thanks to Harden Park Lawns, Tropical Lawns and Marian Lawns for travelling long distances to be part of the day. The success of the day was evident in the keenness for the group to connect with each other and the presenters. There has already been requests to make this an annual event.

In the coming months there will be some new resources available that will support and promote some of the great benefits of natural turf. Through the collaboration with other turf levy funded projects, we will be collating research results and developing usable fact sheets and infographics and growers will have access to this information.

Talking about resources, Turf Australia has recently agreed to cover the maintenance costs of managing a living library of warm season turf grasses. The collection, which contains over 160 different varieties, was originally part of the Redlands Research Centre but is now managed by Australian Sports Turf Consultants. The library will be a valuable resource for the turf grass industry. Turf Australia will seek ongoing funding options for the collection.

In the coming months there will be some new resources available that will support and promote some of the great benefits of natural turf.

The 2019 NxGen Conference was held in the Adelaide Hills in South Australia and as you would have seen from the articles and photos in this magazine, it was a great event. I would like to thank the NxGen delegates who attended the event and made it such an engaging and fun experience. While a lot of work goes into preparing the event, at the end of the day it comes down to the delegates to make it work. It is fabulous to see how first-time attendees were made to feel welcome by the group.

Two new segments were introduced this year and one focused on the NxGeners workshopping situations and coming up with solutions for problems that could impact their turf farm business, which they did extremely well. This year we also acknowledged a group of people who have been great supporters the event. Hugo Struss, Mick Newton and Tim Muscat were presented with the title of NxGen Legend to acknowledge the fact that they have attended all seven NxGen conferences. The next tier of the awards went to four people who had attended either five or six years. The NxGen Stars award was presented to Tom Mifsud, Joe Rogers, Alex White and Josh Muscat.

Membership is an important function of Turf Australia and the staff and board strive to provide members with regular industry news, support and keep you updated on changes in regulations and provide news on levy projects etc. We continue to review the services offered to our members and welcome your feedback on this at any time during the year. The renewal time for membership is July each year and we thank the growers who have paid their annual fees. I would like to encourage

other growers to do the same to ensure that we can continue to provide quality services at both national and state levels.

Turf Australia has recently held its annual general meeting and the following people are committed to support the association at board level for the next twelve months:

- President: Ross Boyle, Rosemount Turf
- Vice President: Bec Sellick, The Lawn Doctor
- Treasurer: Neale Tweedie, Grech's Turf
- Board members: Sarah Mason, Coastal Turf
Emma Burstall, Bizturf
Adam Dunstone, StrathAyr
Chris Chapman, Evergreen Turf

With water issues impacting most growers around the country, Turf Australia and the state turf bodies are working hard to have a voice with the various authorities. Growers are encouraged to work with their clients to ensure they understand the best water efficient options available and the appropriate levels of water use on new lawns.

Have a great spring and take care of yourself and your staff during the busy season. ☺

I welcome any turf producer to contact me to discuss issues or ideas by phoning the Turf Australia office on (02) 4588 5735 on mobile 0408 441 119 or by emailing me jenny.zadro@turfaustralia.com.au





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