

Final Report

Turf NextGen program

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Delivery partner:

Turf Australia

Project code:

TU19002

Project:

Turf NextGen program (TU19002)

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Funding statement:

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation, using the turf research and development levy and contributions from the Australian Government. Hort Innovation is the grower-owned, not-for-profit research and development corporation for Australian horticulture.

Publishing details:

Published and distributed by: Hort Innovation

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www.horticulture.com.au

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Contents

Contents	3
Purpose of the Report.....	4
Achievements.....	5
Outcomes	15
Recommendations	17
Refereed scientific publications.....	17
Intellectual property	17
Issues and risks	17
Other information.....	17
Appendices	18

Purpose of the Report

The objective of the Turf NxGen Project (2021 to 2023) was to provide an annual event and ongoing educational resources for the next generation of Australian turf farmers which encourages and promotes leadership, professional development, and networking. The NxGen Project strongly emphasised collaboration with industry peers to support innovative ideas, concepts, and problem-solving, as well as exposure to presentations and activities that challenged attendees to think strategically and productively. Over the past three years the Project has provided resources for the group to extend their development at both farm and business levels, as well as opportunities to continue the social connection with other “Young Gener’s.” NxGen events/conferences were designed around the key topics that the younger generation were facing, such as succession planning, costs of production, sustainability, being productive and innovative.

Background Statement

The Turf Industry has observed that a sizeable number of Turf farmers are progressing succession planning, whereby the family farm would pass down to younger generations. However, the younger generation are in urgent need of guidance when it comes to preparing for succession planning within their businesses. While this is only one key topic, NxGen has discussed over the three years (2021 – 2023) it highlights the need for such a project in terms of being a main support for the younger generation. Today the NxGen Project is noted as being pivotal in aiding and educating these successors, as well as offering an excellent opportunity for them to develop their business and financial skills.

Attracting and retaining competent and quality staff members is an ongoing challenge for most turf farmers. As there are no turf production-specific training programs, the NxGen Project Conferences and information sessions (2021 – 2023) have provided an excellent opportunity for our “younger generation” to expose their staff to best practices, innovation, and expert industry-focused support.

Outcome Statement

The success of the NxGen Project from 2021 to 2023 is in seeing the emergence of strong young turf leaders who have become part of their farm business management or succession program. Support will also come from farmer-mentors who see it their role to help educate and guide the next generation of turf farmers. The content of the Project and the speakers chosen all covered key topics such as strategic thinking, innovation, and continuous improvement in farm business practices. The NxGen Project aimed to have all young turf farmers strive for improvement in all these areas, identified above, and to become inspired, to find new opportunities that increase the profitability for the betterment of their business and the industry. Feedback and attendance of the young turf leaders at the Annual Turf Industry Conference shows the positive output this Project has had on the Turf Industry’s young leaders.

Strategic Investment

The NxGen Project from 2021 to 2023 aimed to achieve a critical investment strategy, as detailed in the Strategic Investment Plan (SIP 2022-2026) specifically:

Outcome 3: Improved capability and innovative culture in the Australian Turf Industry and maximise investments in productivity and demand.

Strategy 2: Provide opportunity for the required levels of engagement between industry, across industry members and relevant stakeholders to innovate through trusted relationships.

KPI: Improved networks and cross-industry collaboration increasing the efficiencies and use of R&D outputs and building a stronger, more resilient industry.

Achievements

Table 1. Achievements

Achievement criteria	Delivery partner assessment: • Achieved • Partially achieved • Not achieved	Justification
Detailed Final Report on the 2021-2023 NxGen Conference including event evaluation and outcomes achieved.	Achieved	<p>The Conference</p> <p>Every NxGen conference had a ‘theme’ that reflected the industry’s key issues faced by the turf sector that year. However, in 2021, following two years of COVID, the Conference theme was based on “reconnecting” the NxGeners with their peers. Subsequently the speakers’ presentations were all about motivation, leadership, and reconnecting.</p> <p>The Location</p> <p>In considering an appropriate location for every conference, Turf Australia investigated easy assessable areas that would suit the majority of the NxGen delegates. Taking into consideration the challenges of restrictions, a location away from major cities was preferred but still in good proximity to turf farms. The location is always part of the attraction for the NxGen Conference and some of the delegates will come earlier to make the most of the time away from the farm. For instance, over the three years the Conference has been held, it has been located at: Shoal Bay, New South Wales from 20th – 22nd February 2021 Mackay, Queensland from 15th – 17th August 2022 Melbourne, Victoria from 5th – 6th September 2023</p> <p>Number of Delegates</p> <p>On average each conference had up to 40 plus delegates, this included individuals from turf farm businesses, as well as presenters and organisers. Some farms sent 3 or 4 staff members, which was noted as a big commitment to the Project. These members also included staff in different roles such as farm hands, sales, and management. The target number of farms to attend was 20 which was not achieved but is a goal that Turf Australia believes can be reached now NxGener’s see the benefit of the Conference. In 2023 a record attendance of more than 50 delegates attended the Conference which was held in Melbourne Victoria.</p> <p><i>See appendix 5 and 6 for a list of attendees (Confidential)</i></p> <p>The Program</p> <p>In developing the NxGen Conference Program, the focus was always on having speakers that reflected the Conference’s theme and key topics occurring within</p>

the Turf Industry at the time. In addition to the Presentation Day on Day 1, Field Days were organized for Day 2 at farms that had innovative ideas and production techniques to show the NxGener’s.



Program		
Sunday, 20th February	6.00pm	Welcome dinner and drinks Shoal Bay Country Club, Cane Lounge.
Monday, 21st February	8.30am – 1.00pm	Conference Presentations - Bruce Yelland, Moshie Simon Schifferle, Draslovka Justin Herald, Customer Culture
	1.30pm – 4.30pm	Team building activity - 'Amazing Race'
	6.00pm	Conference Dinner
Tuesday, 22nd February	8.00am - 2.00pm	Field Day, bus trip - Buchanan Turf Farm, and Tocal Agricultural College
	3.00pm	Newcastle Airport drop off

Program (above) for NxGen 2021 Conference

Day 1 – Presentation Day

At all three Conferences, **delegates and sponsors** came together in one central location to exchange their knowledge and services and establish connections. The **speakers** were always impressed by the young delegates' camaraderie, laughter, and eagerness to learn. Compared to other industry events they had attended, one speaker noted that the participation and humour of the young representatives contributed significantly to the Conference’s success.

The evenings were always very casual (either a dinner or cocktails) with the ultimate aim to have the NxGeners and Turf Australia staff freely mingle. On some occasions such as in 2021, delegates undertook the AMAZING RACE – which was created as a team building adventure. The adventure was a fusion of fun, thought provoking, interactive challenges and a race against time across different areas. Other conferences were not so adventurous but always offered an opportunity during the day or evening to have a “team building” activity.

Team Building Activity



The AMAZING RACE

This year the NxGen 2021 team will undertake the fun and challenges of an AMAZING RACE team building adventure. This team adventure is a fusion of fun thought provoking, interactive challenges and a race against time across, through and over the streets, parklands of Shoal Bay.

A fun activity suitable for everyone.

Team Building Activity – The AMAZING RACE – which occurred in 2021

Day 2 – Field Day

The second day of the Conference was always a field day where delegates may visit a farm or alternately a sporting field. For instance, in 2023, when the Conference was held in Melbourne, Victoria, delegates thoroughly enjoyed a field trip to two major sporting field sites. The first site was Casey Fields Regional Athletics Centre where Anthony Kennedy, the Field Ground Curator, explained the importance of the ovals in hosting many vital sporting events, including being the practice location for the Melbourne AFL Football Club. The trip ended with a visit to Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club, where Nick Rennison, the Curator, showcased the former home of the Australian Open. Nick explained the vital role of turf selection in managing the site.



Casey Fields Regional Athletics Centre (above)



Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club (above)

Feedback

Following the Conferences, delegates were emailed a survey to provide feedback on the NxGen Project. From 2021 to 2023 there has been a slight increase in respondents to the NxGen Survey. In the future, Turf Australia is planning to hand out the survey at the Conference, so we receive a higher number of responses. Sending it out by email sees many growers not taking the time to complete the survey.

All suggestions and input were very beneficial and were considered by Turf Australia when organizing the next NxGen Conference.

Feedback in 2023 included:

What was the best time of the year to hold the Event?

Either between May and August or during winter.

Topic ideas/suggestions for the next conference included:

- Marketing
- Soil replacement
- Commercial irrigation
- In-depth machinery operation
- Nutrient management
- Cost of production

As the 2023 Conference was based around staff recruitment and what sort of jobs existed in the turf world – delegate suggestions included:

- Truck Driver
- Project Management
- Digital Marketer
- Operations Manager
- Office Administration
- Soil Scientist
- Nursery Hand

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racetrack Manager • Golf Superintendent • Turf Manager • Lawn Technician <p>The turf job suggestions will see Turf Australia work with other turf industry sectors to promote further recruitment of young apprentices or graduates.</p>																																				
<p>Update on the Extension Program</p>		<p>Each year an extension program was developed to continue communication between NxGener’s post the Conference and further develop learnings from the Conference.</p> <p>This included a learning feature article in the summer edition of Turf Australia’s magazine (<i>see appendices</i>), recapping the activities and learnings from the Conference. In addition, a section in future E-newsletters (<i>see appendices</i>) and magazines is always allocated for NxGen to continue focusing on leadership skills and following-up on information from the Conference and general leadership insights.</p> <p>Turf Australia has also profiled different NxGener’s within the Turf Australia publication. This coverage always occurs from when the NxGen Conference ends to the start of the next Conference.</p> <p>In promoting the next NxGen Conference advertising was placed not only in the Turf Australia magazine but within other turf media mediums, such as, social media (Facebook posts), Turf Australia’s website and Direct Emails.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="582 1111 1481 1462"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="4">Communication Schedule</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Stage One</td> <td>1/11/2021</td> <td>15/11/2021</td> <td>Magazine advertisement</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stage One</td> <td>8/11/2021</td> <td>8/11/2021</td> <td>Email to all growers</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stage One</td> <td>22/11/2021</td> <td>26/11/2021</td> <td>Social media and Text messages</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stage One</td> <td>29/11/2021</td> <td>29/11/2021</td> <td>Individual email to past NxGeners</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stage Two</td> <td>1/12/2021</td> <td>19/12/2021</td> <td>Promos with highlights from past events, testimonials focus on presenters</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stage Two</td> <td>1/12/2021</td> <td>19/12/2021</td> <td>Feature article in Summer 21/22 magazine</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stage Three</td> <td>17/01/2022</td> <td>29/01/2022</td> <td>Strong push to remind growers that 2022 is the chance to reconnect etc.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Stage Three</td> <td>1/02/2022</td> <td>12/02/2022</td> <td>Last chance to book</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><i>Communication Schedule 2021 (above)</i></p>	Communication Schedule				Stage One	1/11/2021	15/11/2021	Magazine advertisement	Stage One	8/11/2021	8/11/2021	Email to all growers	Stage One	22/11/2021	26/11/2021	Social media and Text messages	Stage One	29/11/2021	29/11/2021	Individual email to past NxGeners	Stage Two	1/12/2021	19/12/2021	Promos with highlights from past events, testimonials focus on presenters	Stage Two	1/12/2021	19/12/2021	Feature article in Summer 21/22 magazine	Stage Three	17/01/2022	29/01/2022	Strong push to remind growers that 2022 is the chance to reconnect etc.	Stage Three	1/02/2022	12/02/2022	Last chance to book
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Advertising



		<div data-bbox="582 342 1214 846"><p>Turf Australia NxGEN</p><p>All roads lead to NxGen!</p><p>Turf Australia is looking forward to welcoming you to NxGen in Shoal Bay.</p><p>The coastal town of Shoal Bay, NSW will be the home of NxGen and a great venue to inspire and ignite learning and networking.</p><p>We look forward to welcoming the regular NxGeners as well as encourage others new to this experience to come and along and connect with likeminded, enthusiastic turf industry colleagues.</p><p>At this year's event we will introduce you to two inspiring presenters who will focus on developing your skills, leadership and continuous improvement of your turf business.</p><p>So, if you are 40 or under and keen to connect with other turf industry workers, then please book now to secure your place at NxGen.</p><p>DETAILS: Date: Sunday 20 February – Tuesday 22 February Cost: \$285 (member rate) Location: Shoal Bay Convention Centre, Port Stephens, NSW</p><p>More information available at: https://www.turfaustralia.com.au/events/nxgen-2021/</p><p>Sunday, 15th August – Tuesday, 17th August Shoal Bay Convention Centre Port Stephens NSW</p><p>Hort Innovation TURF AUSTRALIA NxGEN</p></div> <p data-bbox="582 853 1005 884"><i>NxGen Ad for 2021 conference (above)</i></p> <p data-bbox="582 918 1412 981">Below is the Social Media coverage of the event shared on the Turf Australia Facebook for NxGen 2023.</p>
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Turf Australia
September 5 · 🌐


The largest Turf Australia NxGen event ever, titled "My Job, My Career, My Industry," is taking place in Melbourne today. Over 50 delegates are listening to key speakers discuss mentoring and the latest STRI research.

#turfaustralia #nxgen2023 #Syngenta #lawnsolutionsaustralia #cynthiamahoney #suncorpstadium




		<p> Turf Australia September 6 · 🌐</p> <p>NXGen's Field Day was hosted by Steve Cole from Lilydale Instant Turf who took delegates to 2 sport field locations. Casey Fields Grounds Curator Anthony Kennedy explained how the ovals hosted many sports and was also the practice location for the Melbourne AFL Football Club. Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club's Nick Rennison showed off the former home of the Australian Open.</p> <p>#Syngenta #nxgen2023 #lawnsolutionsaustralia #turfaustralia #STRI #lilydaleinstantlawn</p>  <p>Website</p> <p>Over the three years, the NxGen Conference was well promoted by the Turf Australia team on the Turf Australia website which is the industry's main site for all communications and conference registrations.</p> <p>https://www.turfaustralia.com.au/resources/nxgen-extended/</p>
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Direct Emails (see below)



Shoal Bay NSW
20-22 Feb 2022

It's time to reconnect



The NxGen Conference is the perfect opportunity to reconnect following the past couple of very challenging years. Turf Australia looks forward to welcoming our younger growers and staff members to this exciting event.

A great way to start the new year by heading to the beautiful NSW coastal town of Shoal Bay, to meet up with other NxGeners.


Close to the Newcastle Airport, located in the Port Stephens area.





A program designed to inspire, educate and connect

Sunday, 20th Feb	Welcome Dinner
Monday, 21st Feb	Conference, Team building activity, Dinner
Tuesday, 22nd Feb	Field Day

Click on the link below for all the program details, registration and booking information.

BOOK NOW



Outputs

Table 2. Output summary

Output	Listed in M&E Plan: • Yes • No	Description	Evidence and data
Management of an Annual Event.	Yes	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event budgeting Programming Consultation with NxGener’s Promotion of event Execution of events offering relevant and engaging presentations 	<p>Budget</p> <p>The Budget (<i>see Appendix 1 - example of 2021 budget</i>) was always developed and refined on confirmation of final costs in the lead up to each event and confirmation of registrations.</p> <p>Promotion of the Event</p> <p>The Program was extensively promoted to the industry through Enewsletters, social media, the Turf Australia website and direct contact with growers.</p> <p>The Conference was planned to ensure that all aspects were managed professionally and provided a quality product to meet the expectations of delegates. Presenters were chosen based on their area of expertise, to provide a variety of topics and most importantly to follow the Conference’s theme, such as in 2021 “It’s time to reconnect”.</p>

			An engaging program was delivered with positive feedback from delegates.
Target attendance	Yes	A target of about 20 turf farms will be represented at each event.	<p>A record total of 35 delegates attended the 2023 NxGen Conference, which included farmers, turf farm businesses, as well as presenters and organizers. Some farms sent 3 or 4 staff members, which is a big commitment to the program and included staff in different roles such as farm hands, sales, and management.</p> <p>At all conferences many individuals were “return” delegates as they saw the value in attending the Conference.</p> <p>Turf Australia extensively promoted the Conference to farmers nationwide. Sometimes the Conference occurred at a time not suitable to delegates for various reasons, and several past delegates could not attend due to family and work commitments. The other consideration is that in 2021 the Industry slowly returned to normality following COVID but, many delegates still feared travelling.</p> <p>In total all conferences had 40 plus delegates in attendance, a figure we are aiming to increase now the Conference has been well received by the younger generation – with the best publicity being delegates telling fellow farmers how good the conference was.</p>
Extension Program	Yes	Delivery of extension program post the annual event. Continued engagement through social media and ongoing resources	The focus for the extension program commenced from the end of the NxGen Conference to the start of the following conference.
Database of annual NxGen attendees	Yes	Management of full Database for NxGen attendees (2021 – 2023)	Turf Australia maintains a complete database of attendees from 2012 – to the present. This information rewards delegates who attend five or more Conferences with a certificate. It also allows for the assessment of who was likely to participate in or needs to be directly communicated with, in terms of attending the Conference.
Annual Assessment	Yes	Annual evaluation as per M&E report	<i>See Appendix 2 for a summary of the M&E report from 2021 – 2023.</i>
Contribution to Comms program.	Yes	Contribution to material for Turf Communications program TU16004	<p>The NxGen Conferences were able to offer a large collection of educational articles for all mediums of communication – either within the Turf Australia magazine, Turf Australia’s Enews or Facebook.</p> <p>In 2023 the Communications Program had ended and a new Communications contract was only in draft form. NxGen feature details of presentations and learnings from the Conference have been included in 2024 Magazine, Autumn edition, which forms part of the new communications project.</p>

Milestone report	Yes	Complete milestone report	As required.
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Outcomes

Table 3. Outcome Summary

The outcome as listed in M&E Plan	Progress to achieving the outcome	Evidence and data	Progress: • On track • Off track
<p>Intermediate Outcome:</p> <p>Over the time of the NxGen three-year Project, the Young NxGener’s focused on developing their leadership skills and the continuous improvement of their turf businesses. They also reviewed workplace operations and personal goals to create a more sustainable and innovative business. Succession Planning also proved a very popular theme with many young NxGener’s facing the issue on their own farms.</p>	<p>The Feedback from the Conference, both via an online survey and direct contact with delegates, indicated that the Conference offered a lot of positive interaction with the presenters and very good networking opportunities during the different activities. Each year the field days were well received with the delegates liking the ability to learn either from other farmers or from sporting curators.</p>	<p>The Feedback from all three Conferences (2021 – 2023), primarily showed positive outcomes. Across the three years, feedback comments included:</p> <p>Speaker Feedback Shared:</p> <p>“I found Jenny to be a good and clear speaker (Turf Australia Executive Officer).” (2021 Conference)</p> <p>“Bruce Yelland’s talk was very informative although a lot of what he said related to larger businesses I still took away some great tips.” (2021 Conference)</p> <p>“Justin (Herald) was very good at telling stories, but I really didn’t take anything away from his chat.” (2021 Conference)</p> <p>Team Building Activity</p> <p>“Absolutely – there is no doubt, the networking was great.” (2021 Conference)</p> <p>From a Presenter:</p> <p>“The interaction from the audience was so good it made presenting so much easier.” (2023 Conference)</p> <p>Field Days</p> <p>“Really enjoyed the trials at Tinamba Turf on turf and soil nutrition” (2022 Conference)</p>	<p>On Track</p>

		<p>General</p> <p>“Had a great time and was well organized” (2022 Conference)</p> <p>“Great theme, presentations and well organized.” (2023 Conference)</p> <p>Would you attend another NxGen Conference (asked from 2021 – 2023)?</p> <p>“Absolutely – there is no doubt, the networking was great.” (2021 Conference)</p> <p>“YES, without a doubt.” (2022 Conference)</p>	
<p>Intermediate Outcome:</p> <p>Farmers feel more connected and supported within the industry through improved opportunities to network, obtain resources and communicate with other industry services.</p>	<p>As the Country, as well as the Turf Industry, started to reconstruct their lives following COVID, Turf Australia gained a strong perception that the young delegates were eager to travel, learn and network again.</p> <p>This was evident in 2023, when the NxGen Conference delegate numbers hit a record level of 50.</p>	<p>When delegates were asked if they would recommend NxGen to other industry members and if they would return to future conferences – the answer was a resounding “Yes”. Turf Australia has assumed that the delegates feel supported at NxGen and take away a lot of productive information. The networking has also been noted as a key part of the Conferences over the past three years.</p>	<p>On Track</p>
<p>End of Project Outcome:</p> <p>Overall, the NxGen Project from 2021 to 2023 has been seen as an overwhelming success. Both presenters and the Field Day location have been well received. Presenters have all confidently followed the theme of that conference year which has only emphasized the key messages Turf Australia wanted to</p>	<p>It could honestly be stated that the NxGen Project spanning from 2021 to 2023 has overall been successful and most significantly a good education experience for young NexGen.</p> <p>Numbers were always 40 plus with a record number of delegates (50) at the 2023 Conference. All presenters remained with the theme and engaged strongly with the audience. The Field Days offered outstanding venues – either farms or sporting arenas.</p> <p>In particular, the NxGen 2023</p>	<p>The number of delegates (40+) and the positive feedback from Turf Australia’s young industry leaders proved that the NxGen Project has played a key role in preparing our young farmers for the future.</p> <p>Future NxGen Projects will follow this successful formula and continue to develop Turf Australia’s emerging young turf industry leaders.</p>	<p>On Track</p>

<p>deliver.</p> <p>Over the three years, Turf Australia has seen a strong discussion from the floor from delegates who related to the different topics. This again highlighted the need for such a Conference that brings young turf farmers together (NexGen).</p>	<p>Conference demonstrated a strong network of NexGen emerging, with young delegates now on state or national boards.</p>		
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Recommendations

What the past three years of the NxGen Project have shown is that the formula for each Conference has worked and has been embraced by the young delegates. Having two-days – Day 1 Presentations and Day 2 – Field Days, was an ideal length of time to keep delegates engaged. With that said, it is important this conference formula/structure continues as it has clearly shown to be successful.

There does need to be a greater media drive to increase the number of delegates. The suggestion is to start the media campaign earlier and directly call the “young NexGen” personally inviting them to the Conference. Social media and other forms of information outputs during and following the Conferences proved themselves successful and should be maintained.

It is also important that Turf Australia takes consideration of the Conference theme and refers to survey results that may have made future suggestions. Presenters that follow the Conference theme are also vital and must be able to engage the delegates with floor conversation. This has seen an increase in the confidence of many young farmers in terms of openly having an opinion when the presentation engaged delegates.

It has been noted that many of our young growers are now expressing interest or seeking roles on either state or national boards. Therefore, Turf Australia should be mindful of encouraging this at each NxGen event as the Project is about creating “future leaders”.

Refereed scientific publications.

None to report.

Intellectual property

No project IP or commercialisation to report.

Issues and risks

None

Other information

At each NxGen Conference over the past three years, delegates were given a conference folder containing copies of levy-funded fact sheets and information on other R&D projects. This allowed delegates to review the material after the Conference and share it with work colleagues.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Budget

Budget – NxGen 2021

The Budget below was developed and refined on confirmation of final costs in the lead up to the Conference and confirmation of registrations.

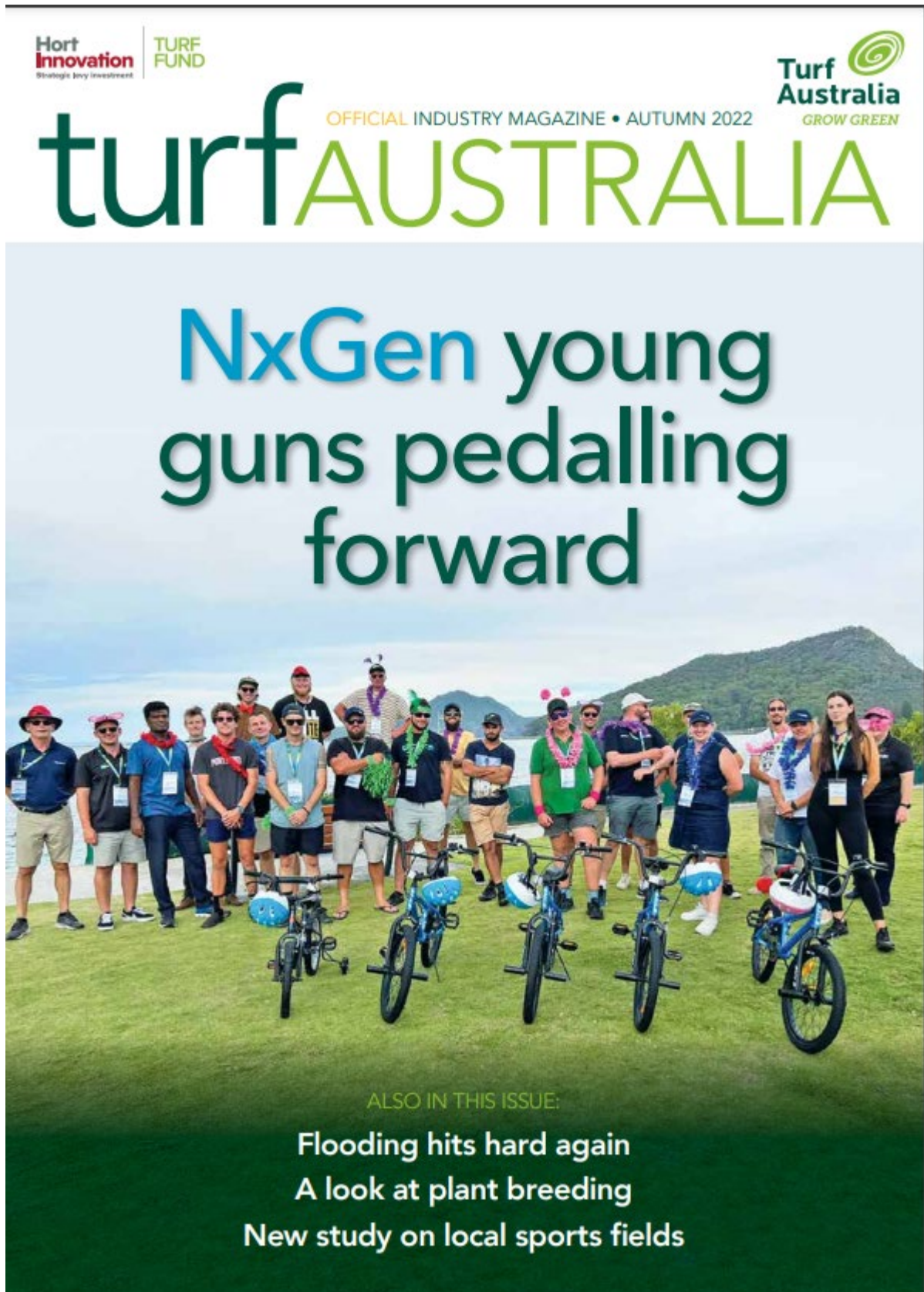
Income	Details	Event Budget
Registration	Charge \$285 Member.	11,400
Project Funding	Levy Investment	31,500
		\$42,900
Expenditure (based on 50)	Details	
Venue	Welcome Dinner	6,000
	Half Day Conference	2,400
	Conference Dinner	6,000
	Breakfast costs per person (2 days)	2,500
	AV Equipment/ room hire etc.	950
Presenters – Justin Herald	Presenter Fee	4,500
	Accommodation	420
Bruce Yelland, Moshie	Accom and Flights	2,000
Merchandise/Stationery		1,800
Team building Activity	The Great Race	4,400
Day 3 expenses	Catering	2000
Bus Hire		900
Printing/Stationery		1,200
Graphic Design		950
Comms Staff	Accommodation	420
Admin	70 hours	5,600
Bookkeeping		300
Staff Costs	Accommodation	1,260
Pre event planning - venue inspection etc		1,200
Post event operations	Survey and event wrap up etc 10hrs	800
Extension Program	Admin Hrs, Comms support. 40 hrs	3,200
Total		\$48,800
Less in kind		\$7,190
Total Expenses		\$41,610

Appendix 2
NxGen 2021 to 2023 Evaluation

Key evaluation questions (From the M&E plan)

Key evaluation questions	Project-specific questions	Results
<p>1. To what extent has the project achieved its expected outcomes?</p>	<p>To what extent has the project developed and delivered a professional conference with a program that provides engaging presenters, strategic thinking, and networking opportunities?</p> <p>Has the project reached the goal of representation to at least 20 turf farms?</p> <p>What evidence is demonstrated in the development of leadership skills?</p>	<p>It was achieved with positive feedback.</p> <p>A record total of 35 delegates attended the event in 2023, including individual farmers, turf farm businesses, presenters, industry delegates and organizers. Some farms sent 3 or 4 staff members, which was a big commitment to the Project and included staff in different roles such as farm hands, sales, and management. In 2021 and 2022, delegate numbers were 40+.</p> <p>Over the three years, whilst the target number of farms to attend (20 farms) wasn't achieved, Turf Australia extensively promoted the event to farmers nationwide and will do so moving forward. With the 2021 Conference held in August and the 2022 and 2023 Conferences held in September it was communicated to Turf Australia that many delegates could not attend due to family and work commitments. In addition, since COVID, there has been a steady improvement in delegate numbers.</p> <p>Leadership skills can be seen in the number of current and past NxGener's involved at a Board level.</p>

Key evaluation questions	Project-specific questions	Results
<p>2. How relevant was the project to the needs of the intended beneficiaries?</p>	<p>How relevant were the Conference topics to the current needs and development of the NxGen farmers?</p> <p>How relevant were the extension Projects to the needs and development of NxGen farmers?</p>	<p>All NxGen Conferences have proven themselves to have provided a good range of topics that supported the different positions of the delegates, including staff recruitment, succession planning and careers in turf.</p> <p>Very relevant – with young delegates often calling Turf Australia for further details or information about the key presenters.</p>
<p>3. How well have intended beneficiaries been engaged in the project?</p>	<p>What evidence is demonstrated in farmers being engaged and provided opportunities to develop innovative and strategic thinking?</p>	<p>Moving forward, Turf Australia will undertake further detailed monitoring by personally talking to NxGener’s.</p>
<p>4. To what extent were engagement processes appropriate to the target audience/s of the project?</p>	<p>To what extent have the projects increased engagement within the NxGen group during and after the Annual Conference?</p>	<p>Increasing delegate numbers across three years has shown an increase in engagements from the NxGen group. This was clearly seen in 2023 when there was a record attendance of 50 delegates.</p>
<p>5. What efforts did the project make to improve efficiency?</p>	<p>What efforts did the three-year project make to improve efficiency through the Annual Conference Project and management of the extension program?</p>	<p>Taking the opportunity to share important Turf Australia information and fact sheets from other levy R&D projects. The networking of the Turf Australia board with the young NxGener’s.</p> <p>The Conferences across the three-years were always held at a different location and ones that would be appealing to the delegates.</p> <p>The locations gave delegates (many of whom were from WA, NSW, and QLD) a look at how turf behaves in different regions or climates.</p>



INDUSTRY EVENT NxGEN



Innovation first at NxGen

Turf farmers are always interested in hearing about what other turf farmers are doing to learn, grow and improve our operations. But what about other industries? How is the broader agriculture sector approaching innovation and what can we learn? NxGen headed to the **Tocal Agricultural College** to find out.

Tocal Agricultural College has a long and proud history, dating back to 1822 when James Webber took up a land grant in the Paterson Valley in the New South Wales Hunter region. These days the college is run by the NSW Department of Primary Industries and provides a wide range of tertiary education, skills training courses, traineeships, and industry field days.

Despite the rich history, Tocal has its eyes set firmly on the future – which is what brought the NxGen group to the campus in February 2022.

The first stop at Tocal was a demonstration of drone technology.

Whilst most of the growers in attendance were already exploring various applications of precision agriculture, and some already had drone licenses, seeing the drone in full flight was still exciting and inspiring for the attendees.

“The value in adopting technology is clear, but it's critical that turf farmers are looking closely at any investments to ensure that they fit into the broader strategy of the business.”

The drone could be equipped with ag-chemicals and conduct spraying automatically to a given set of parameters.

After the drone, attendees were treated to another application of precision ag, via the use of an automatic sprayer boom which could help growers ensure consistent applications of important ag-chemicals.

Leveraging AgTech

But the drone and sprayer are just two applications in the broad field of AgTech. But what is AgTech and how can it improve a turf farm's profitability, productivity and sustainability?

Whilst AgTech might be a relatively new term, it's existed as a concept since the Agricultural Revolution. Drones, farm management software and precision agriculture might seem revolutionary, but so was the invention of automatic harvesters, agricultural chemicals and ride-on mowers when they were first commercialised.

The value in adopting technology is clear, but it's critical that turf farmers are looking closely at any investments to ensure that they fit into the broader strategy of the business.

With new technologies rapidly reaching market, here are some questions to ask when it comes to making key business decisions.

Other key questions to ask include:

- Does the provider have experience, and do they have customer case studies available?
- Am I buying a complete solution, or just a piece of hardware which will require further investment to set-up?
- Technology can be confusing – is there after-sales support available?
- Is there a set-up fee involved, and will there be ongoing costs and maintenance?
- Will the device work on my turf farm (low reception, susceptible to flooding etc)
- Is the device designed for use within the turf industry?
- Will the device be collecting my data and if so, who owns that data?

Innovation is critical for the continued success of our industry and by asking some key questions, your investment in AgTech will enable your business to innovate and become more productive, sustainable and ultimately, profitable.

Want to learn more about how AgTech can improve your operations? The NSW DPI has released **AgGuide: A Practical Handbook** to help producers navigate the world of AgTech. Check it out here: <https://www.tocal.nsw.edu.au/publications/farm-management/agtech>



Appendix 4
Enewsletter February 2022 NxGen Coverage



Welcome to the Turf Australia February Newsletter.

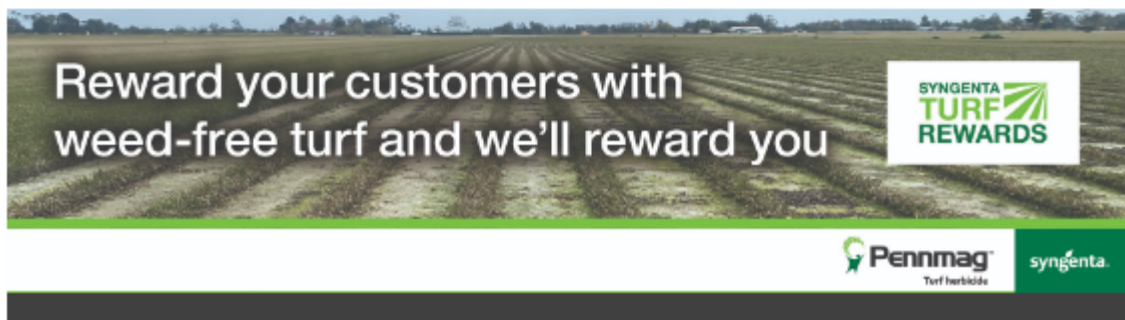
Apologies to members, for resending our newsletter, which had an incorrect link. This has been updated to include some new information on LSA's upcoming conference.

The countdown is almost over and next week, we will be welcoming our up-and-coming turf growers to our NxGen Forum.

We couldn't be more excited to be hosting another event.

There's plenty of other stuff happening in the turf world too so read on for key updates from around the country.

Jenny Zadro



Appendix 4
Enewsletter February 2022 NxGen Coverage

Only a few days to go!



Finishing touches are being put on NxGen 2022 and Turf Australia is very excited about welcoming our NxGen group to Port Stephens, NSW next week.

We've got an action packed schedule lined up including presentations from our partners Moshie, Draslovka and Customer Culture as well as a field trip to Buchanan Turf and Tocal Agricultural College.

We are looking forward to seeing you there!

Looking for Lawnspiration?



The Lawnspiration Facebook Page is seeking social media content to highlight turf growers more frequently and they would love to hear from you.

If you have any cool images or videos to share that show some of the most interesting parts of being a turf farmer please reach out to PR@bitecom.com.au.

Check out the page below.

[Read more](#)

HAVE YOUR SAY: Strategic Agrichemical Review



A new, strategic levy-funded project, 2021 Strategic Agrichemical Review

LSA National Conference (sponsored)



Lawn Solutions Australia is excited to announce registrations are now open for our annual Lawn Solutions Australia National Conference!

This year's conference will be held over 2 days on the 23rd and 24th of May in the beautiful Northern Rivers of NSW at Ballina and Lennox head. We can't wait to finally see all of our wonderful