



Australian Government

Cotton Research and
Development Corporation

FINAL REPORT

Part 1 - Summary Details

Please use your TAB key to complete Parts 1 & 2.

CRDC Project Number: **RRDP1728**

**Project Title: Smarter Irrigation: IREC Cross Sector Northern Tour
2017**

Project Commencement Date: 7/2/17 Project Completion Date: 9/2/17

Part 2 – Contact Details

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Part 3 – Final Report

Background

1. Outline the background to the project.

As part of the Maximising On-Farm Irrigation Profitability project, which is a subproject under the Smarter Irrigation for Profit project, irrigators from southern NSW and northern Victoria travelled to the Gwydir Valley to attend the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association annual research field day as well as visit other irrigation properties and the ACRI/CSIRO Research site. The funding from this project made the trip affordable and possible for southern irrigators.

Objectives

2. List the project objectives (from the application) and the extent to which these have been achieved.

- Foster cross sector capacity improvements, knowledge sharing and practice change related to irrigation management.
- Improve water use productivity.

Outcomes

3. Please report on any:-

- a) Feedback forms used and what the results were
- b) The highlights for participants or key learnings achieved
- c) The number of people participating and any comments on level of participation

Sixteen people travelled to the Gwydir valley as part of the 2017 Maximising On-farm Irrigation Profitability Tour from February 7-9. The group was made up **12** irrigators across three southern valleys (Murrumbidgee, Murray and Lachlan) farming at Hillston, Whitton, Darlington Point, Coleambally, Boort, Benerembah, Finely, Kerang, **two** researchers from Deakin University, **an** irrigation structure supplier and **a** Riverina LLS representative.

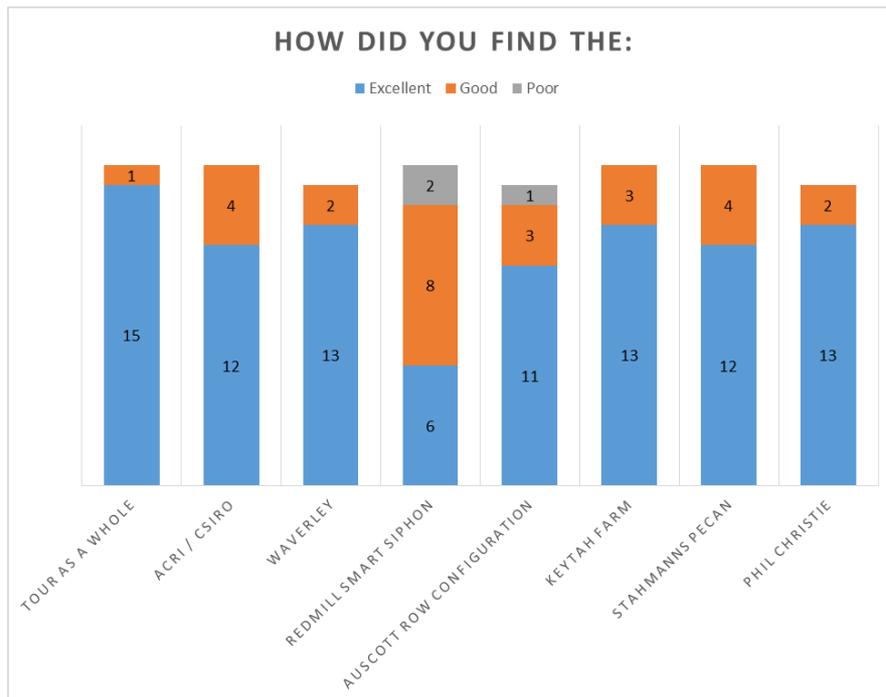


One of the additional farms visited on the Max Northern Tour was Stahmann Farm



Max Tour participants at Redmill as part of the GVIA Annual Research field day.

All participants completed an evaluation form and a summary of the results are following.



100% of participants gained knowledge and skills as a result of the tour, in the areas of:

- Information on efficiency and sale of farms.
- Alternative systems.
- Row spacing doesn't make much of a difference.
- Automation knowledge, pipe through bank.
- Knowledge on row spacing and automation.
- Networking and automation.
- Gained knowledge of scale specific on farm issues. Personal experience from speakers was great as they described trials and tribulations.
- Understanding new technology better.
- Different methods of managing large scale irrigation systems.

82% of participants said they would do things differently as a result of things learnt on the tour. Some of the things they will change are:

- Guide our research to match "real" life problems.
- Very much a learning trip for me as presently doing no row cropping.
- Continually improve irrigation layouts. Move towards pipe through the bank instead of bankless.
- Keep improving whole farming system.
- Consider pipe through the bank system seen at Waverley
- Expand beds in bays.
- As a researcher we will take knowledge of scale and issues and try and offer a way to resolve them.
- Improve controlled trafficking.
- Develop alternate irrigation delivery systems.

The things that participants found most valuable:

- Pipe through banks at Waverley– has potential for southern guys.
- The final day of tour of actual on farm activity and how they change infrastructure.
- Gives motivation to have a crack.
- Talking with all the different groups.
- Gaining insight into difference ways of irrigating / sharing information from growers in different areas.
- Gathering automation information, checking out how other farmers do things, benchmarking yourself.
- Everything was fantastic.
- Waverley, smarter syphons and row spacing.
- Networking.
- Specific issues overcome by farmers and how they achieved or are taking to achieve success. Networking meeting R & D personnel, LLS, DEPI staff.
- Comparison between irrigation methods.
- Interaction with irrigators from other valleys.
- Knowing now we are on the right track for irrigation on our soils, with bankless system.
- Seeing and understanding scale and different systems.

Budget

4. Describe how the project's budget was spent in comparison with the application budget. Outline any changes and provide justification.

As per the application budget all funds were used for hire of the bus to transport participants from Griffith to Moree.

Conclusion

5. Provide an assessment of the likely impact of the results and conclusions of the research project for the cotton industry. What are the take home messages?

The impacts of this tour were immediate and weighty. As a result of this affordable tour, 2 irrigators commenced works on changing their irrigation layouts with-in two months of the tour. Others are investigating other technologies and methods discussed on the bus.

Take home messages:

Communication and networking amongst northern and southern irrigators is essential in improving water use productivity, irrigation management and promoting adoption of new technologies. Such visits not only fosters knowledge sharing but also invigorates and motivates irrigators.