

# SOIL CRC

Performance through collaboration



## **About this project**

*The two-year Visualising Australasia's Soils project, funded by the Soil CRC, will create a data stewardship and governance model and web portal to access shared public and private soil datasets. Read more about the project at the [Soil CRC website](#).*

# Visualising Australasia's Soils Project Newsletter

*March 2019*

*Project Leader Associate Professor Peter Dahlhaus  
Federation University Australia's Centre for  
eResearch and Digital Innovation, Ballarat  
[p.dahlhaus@federation.edu.au](mailto:p.dahlhaus@federation.edu.au)*

## Project kick-off workshop in February

More than 30 participants from partner organisations attended our project kick-off meeting 11-14 February 2019.

Some travelled from as far away as New Zealand, Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, Canberra and Tasmania to attend.

The workshop marked a very successful start to the project and was a very enjoyable networking opportunity for all participants. It is clear from the comments we received during the workshop that people found the discussions very useful, particularly in gaining feedback about what the grower groups' interests and concerns are in sharing data, and ways we need to accommodate this.



The workshop discussions have helped to frame what needs to be achieved in the two-year timeframe of the project, such as:

- developing a free, working portal that is intuitive to use, value-adds to the data (e.g. showing trends) and provides user support
- creating grower-centric case studies that outline the value proposition to sharing data
- building trust with grower groups and addressing fears of data misuse, disadvantages or penalties in sharing data. Having these groups advocate use of the portal because there is a clear, obvious benefit. Groups maintaining control over the sharing of their data
- capturing narratives about the use and value of the portal and the extent to which it matches user needs.



The next steps for the project include the steering committee setting governance and stewardship procedures, working with grower groups, bringing some existing project data into the test portal, launching the newsletter and videos, and planning the next project meeting at the Soil CRC conference in April. Social research to measure the impact of the portal is also being planned.

## Workshop video

We took some video footage during the workshop and interviewed many of you about your thoughts about the workshop and the project. We are producing a short video (to be hosted on the Soil CRC website) comprising snippets from these video discussions. Themes discussed include the need to make better use of soil data through sharing and to work with grower groups in practical, trusted ways that add value to their projects. Stay tuned!

## Helping you communicate the project to your farmer stakeholders

We'd like to produce some short, written articles and photos that help you to communicate the value of the project to your farmer stakeholders. These articles would be easily adaptable for partner organisation publications. If anyone has particular ideas about what they'd like us to address, please let Katherine or Peter know. See details on page 1.

## It's your data!

The idea of VAS is for project partners to gain maximum value from sharing data and using the resulting portal. We are keen to ensure that partner organisations and their stakeholders understand that the project is not about taking data from organisations against their wishes or assuming ownership of it. Any organisations sharing data with the project can specify the basis on which they share the data and remain in ownership of the data. This is the reason the project will set governance and stewardship procedures for data. If you would like to discuss any particular concerns your group may have about sharing data, please contact Peter.

## Steering Committee

A steering committee has been created for the project, comprising the following members:

- Project Leader – A/Prof Peter Dahlhaus, FedUni
- Soil CRC Program Coordinator – Dr Richard Doyle, UTas
- Technical expert – Alistair Ritchie, MWLR
- Broadacre farming group – Vacant (acceptance pending)
- Cane grower group – Rob Milla, Burdekin Productivity Services
- Mixed farming group – Jane McInnes, Riverine Plains Inc.
- Government/agency – Warwick Dougherty, NSW DPI
- Global initiatives – Dr Peter Wilson, CSIRO.

The role of the project Steering Committee is to provide expert advice to the project research and development team, both acting as a sounding board for the ideas and approaches that will be tested and refined, and as a body to direct the project development to ensure that the project aims and goals are met.

To achieve this, the Steering Committee will provide advice and direction on the development of the soil data federation as a fundamental foundation activity in the Soil CRC. Specifically, the Steering Committee would provide direction on:

- social architecture of the data federation, including governance, branding, data stewardship, data supply, data licensing, required data access controls, relationships to other local and global initiatives and sustainability of the data federation
- technical architecture of the data portal, including the systems architecture, data standards, vocabularies, data services, data consumption, technical relationships to other initiatives and planning for future technologies
- demonstrating and measuring the impact of the data federation through establishing a clear value proposition using case histories, demonstrations, engagement and extension, as well as understanding end-user expectations, barriers and incentives to engage in the project.

Steering Committee members are asked to participate in meetings and workshops initially during the period from March 2019 until March 2021. The Steering Committee may be reconvened after this time based on future funding, technical and development plans for the VAS data federation. The Steering Committee would operate as a core group of participants and bring in specific additional expertise as required. The Committee will be chaired by the Project Leader.

More information, including the Terms of Reference are available from Associate Professor Peter Dahlhaus at CeRDI by emailing [p.dahlhaus@federation.edu.au](mailto:p.dahlhaus@federation.edu.au).

## What's next

- The project will be presented at the Soil CRC Conference in Newcastle 2-4 April 2019. We hope to present a working version of a soil portal draft at the conference, just to demonstrate an example or pilot.
- Work is progressing on the Governance Framework and the Data Stewardship Framework for the VAS soil data federation. We hope to have both frameworks circulated to the Steering Committee for this input by May 2019 and finalised by early July 2019.
- Discussions have commenced with two industry participants (farmer groups) who are prepared to be early test pilots in the process.
- Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research and FedUni are working on finalising the technical architecture and soil data standards for presentation to the Steering Committee in May 2019.