

biodiversity

in grain & graze

Biodiversity in Grain & Graze (BiGG) was Australia's largest ever evaluation of biodiversity on mixed farms. A community-government-industry partnership, BiGG's innovative combination of strong science and participatory research achieved an unprecedented understanding of biodiversity on mixed farms and the social, economic and production relationship between farm management and the biodiversity of rural landscapes.

BIODIVERSITY IN GRAIN & GRAZE (BiGG)

Forty seven participating farmers managing around 170,000 hectares of farmland took on the role of passionate advocates for biodiversity, selling the message that biodiversity does not start and end in patches of remnant vegetation. BiGG successfully brought together governments, farmers, scientists, ecologists, catchment management authorities, industry organisations, and school children to work for a common goal.

CLIENT

Grain & Graze was run by a consortium of Research Development Corporations including Meat & Livestock Australia, Australian Wool Innovation Limited, Land & Water Australia and the Grains Research and Development Corporation. Grain & Graze and its sub-program Biodiversity in Grain & Graze (BiGG), were managed by Dr Richard Price of Kiri-ganai Research.

TIME FRAME

2003-2008

COMMUNICATION GOALS

The BiGG project aimed to identify practices to improve natural diversity in agricultural landscapes, including farmland outside remnant vegetation. The communication strategy for BiGG involved showcasing biodiversity work in the Grain & Graze regions using 'Biodiversity Champions' as the most powerful way to raise awareness about biodiversity in the target audiences.

THE ROLE OF SEFTON & ASSOCIATES

Sefton & Associates provided communication support to BiGG to help it promote its findings through the Grain & Graze network and beyond that communicate to farmers and landholders the benefits of improving natural

diversity in agricultural landscapes. Sefton & Associates played an important role in developing the legacy outputs for the project, including the case studies booklet and oral history CD.

TARGET AUDIENCES

- Farmers (including Grain & Graze regions)
- People interested in environmental developments on farming land
- People who influence farmers' decision-making (advisors, consultants)
- Natural Heritage Trust
- RDC partners
- Environmental industry groups (e.g. WWF, ACF)

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Sefton & Associates used a diverse range of communication channels to achieve communication outcomes including: media, the Grain & Graze program newsletter, other newsletters (partners), the program website (www.grainandgraze.com.au), other relevant internet sites, workshops and farm events, partner events, partner extension networks and farm consultants. It prepared the BiGG case studies booklet and audio oral history CD as ongoing legacies of the program. To promote BiGG to a wider audience, Sefton & Associates entered the program into the prestigious Banksia Awards and was an award winner.

"...Robbie and her team know rural Australia, know how to listen to it, and know how to speak to it. The BiGG project has certainly been rewarded by this empathy..."

ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

- Media releases throughout the duration of the BiGG project
- Production of case study booklet
- Production of audio CD
- Promotion of the BiGG farmer forum
- Partner engagement of the contributing organisations through provision of tailored case studies and information.
- Entry of BiGG in the Biodiversity category of the Banksia Awards



MAIN PROJECT OUTPUTS

- Database of biodiversity information
 - Booklet Thinking BiGG: Farmers tell their stories of biodiversity from participating farmers*
 - Oral history CD Talking BiGG featuring interviews with project participants*
 - Biodiversity and productivity fact sheet*
 - Field data collection manual on protocols for collecting biodiversity data
 - Farmer-led 'hunches' about managing for biodiversity
 - Recommendations on farming practices likely to improve biodiversity.
- * produced directly by Sefton & Associates

KEY OUTCOMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- BiGG won the Biodiversity category in the prestigious Banksia Awards
- A foundation of 47 farmers passionately engaged with biodiversity through their personal experience
- 8,500 farmers aware of BiGG through Grain & Graze extension activities
- Thousands more landholders aware of biodiversity issues through BiGG communication activities.

CLIENT TESTIMONIAL

I write this reference from Cloud Nine, not yet having allowed myself to come down from the heights of winning, with our project partners, the 2008 Banksia Environmental Award under the Land & Biodiversity category. While winning such an award comes from a basis of good land-holder cooperation, damn good research and a highly dedicated team, the key ingredient to differentiating one great research project from another is incredible communication: communication that presses the right buttons and inspires admiration, commitment and a sense of achievement. That is what Sefton & Associates brought to Grain & Graze overall, and over and above all expectations to the Biodiversity in Grain & Graze (BiGG) project in particular.

A brilliantly prepared and written competition entry was only the final piece of the puzzle Sefton & Associates put together. The Thinking BiGG report, which included 17 written case studies of a selection of our participating farmers, and the Talking BiGG audio CD of interviews with farmers, researchers and managers, were just two of the many products put together by Sefton & Associates that brought the project to life and carried its influence well beyond the 47 participating farm families. An evaluation of the Grain & Graze program suggests that the BiGG project has potentially influenced the conservation attitudes of over 8,500 farmers across southern Australia.

Working alongside Sefton & Associates to produce such high quality products has been a pleasure. The team involves project leaders and managers to a level that is appropriate. They are utterly professional, yet fun and rewarding to interact with. One is left feeling confident instructions will be followed through and that even the most ethereal of ideas will be made tangible. Robbie and her team know rural Australia, know how to listen to it, and know how to speak to it. The BiGG project has certainly been rewarded by this empathy.

DR RICHARD PRICE, MANAGING DIRECTOR,
KIRI-GANAI RESEARCH.