Lead Agriculture Teacher

RESEARCH SUMMARY

AGC6724

FAST FACTS

Problem

South Australia needs capable agriculture teachers and stronger links between schools and industry to build the future primary production workforce

Project

The project supports and develops agriculture programs in schools by providing teachers, schools and students with mentoring, professional development opportunities, curriculum resources and industry connections

Participants

AGCOMMUNICATORS:

Sue Pratt, Belinda Cay, Cara Heney

Dates

Start: 1 Jul 2024

Finish: 30 Sep 2025

The Lead Agriculture Teacher program is strengthening agricultural education and career pathways across South Australia by supporting schools, teachers and students. It operates in schools already running ag programs and also helps introduce ag programs to new schools. During the project, Lead Ag Teacher Sue Pratt directly supported 51 teachers, including 23 new to agriculture, delivered eight professional development activities and developed 12 curriculum resources. Agriculture programs were introduced to eight new schools, exposing more than 7,000 additional students to food and fibre production systems and agricultural careers. The program also reached more than 2,000 young people through careers events.

Background

Agriculture teachers play an important role in shaping students' understanding of food and fibre production and introducing them to career opportunities across the agricultural sector. However, schools can face challenges accessing current industry knowledge, suitable teaching resources and support for teachers who are new to agricultural education.

The Lead Agriculture Teacher role was established to provide direct support to South Australian schools and strengthen connections between education and industry. The program works alongside the Agriculture Teachers Association of SA and a broad network of industry, government, education and research organisations. The Lead Agriculture Teacher role was co-funded by the SA Sheep Industry Fund and SAGIT.

Research Aims

The core objectives of the project were to:

- Support and mentor teachers to deliver high-quality food and fibre education in specialist agriculture programs and broader science and technologies subjects.
- Build teacher confidence and industry networks to support best practice content.
- Strengthen the industry relevance and rigour of agricultural curriculum in schools.
- Help schools develop strategic plans for school farm infrastructure and equipment.
- Design and deliver targeted curriculum resources.
- Support SACE agriculture teachers and students.
- Promote agricultural career opportunities to students and teachers.

In the field

Lead Agriculture Teacher Sue Pratt is an experienced ag teacher and past president of the Agricultural Teachers Association of SA (ATASA).

Sue has worked directly with schools across metropolitan and regional South Australia mentoring agriculture teachers, focusing on curriculum review and embedding rigour. Sue's role has included supporting new schools to introduce agricultural programs and liaision with industry, professional associations and higher education providers to ensure content is relevant and rigorous.

Sue and the AgCommunicators team have facilitated professional development activities including workshops for teachers new to agricultural education, SACE Agriculture teachers and sessions focused on carbon farming.

Sue has developed new curriculum resources based on a range of agricultural industries, including ways to include agricultural concepts in SACE Physics, Biology and Chemistry.

Results

Sue visited 35 school sites and supported 51 individual teachers, including 23 teachers who were new to agriculture. These teachers are now part of Sue's Lead Ag Teacher network which includes almost 280 teachers in 100 schools.

Sue helped eight new schools introduce agriculture-related programs, exposing more than 7,000 additional students to agricultural production, food and fibre concepts, and career opportunities.

Eight professional development activities were delivered with 354 teachers engaged. The project developed 12 new curriculum resources with topics including protected cropping, pigs, farm safety and carbon farming.

Sue attended 10 careers events, reaching more than 2,000 young people from 31 schools. Sue also produced a newsletter each term to keep staff and schools updated on new resources, professional development opportunities and industry news.

The project responded to changing school needs by providing direct support to Year 12 students and teachers rather than proceeding with planned regional SACE workshops. Sue visited 10 schools and worked with 89 students on their SACE investigations.

The program is helping grow engagement with agricultural education with Stage Two SACE Agriculture enrolments increasing from 314 students in 2023 to 362 in 2025. Agriculture Teachers Association of SA membership grew from 115 to 156.

Sue also engaged directly with Adelaide University's Schools of Education and Ag, Food and Wine. In a South Australian first, agriculture has now been introduced as a specialisation within the new Adelaide University (AU) Bachelor of Education, creating a more direct, quicker pathway into agriculture teaching.



Banksia Park International High School teachers undertook a professional development session at Australian Grain Technologies. Lead Ag Teacher Sue Pratt pictured centre.

Value for growers

By improving teacher confidence and access to industry knowledge, the Lead Ag Teacher program helps improve student's understanding of modern agriculture and build interest in careers such as agronomy, research, technical services, agribusiness and on-farm roles.

The expansion of ag programs into more metropolitan and regional schools also broadens awareness far beyond students who have an existing connection to primary production.

The program also provides a practical link between schools and industry, helping ensure students are exposed to current agricultural practices and a diverse range of career pathways.

More information:

Sue Pratt, AgCommunicators
T: 0428 445 171 E: sue.pratt@agcommunicators.com.au

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