

# La Grange agriculture and water opportunities

Planning the future for agriculture in the La Grange region, West Kimberley  
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## From the Editor

Bringing a region together to discuss the future for that region is an exciting opportunity for any project. For the Regional Economic Development Water Opportunities project (La Grange Agriculture and Water Opportunities) this idea is fast coming to fruition with the first regional workshop for landholders confirmed for 8 and 9 May at Eco Beach conference centre.

The workshop is an opportunity for landholders of the La Grange region to get together, meet each other and discuss the future for agriculture development as a region. The focus for the workshop is establishing relationships, commencing a regional vision and to provide a forum of appropriate speakers to address a range of key issues raised by regional landholders



### Contents

- From the Editor
- Consultation program
- Landholder meetings
- Vision planning
- Property planning
- Resource assessment
- AEM survey flight
- Hydrogeology report
- Soil assessment
- Regional workshop
- Market and investment

The Department of Agriculture and Food is the lead agency working with the Department of Regional Development and Lands to deliver this Royalties for Regions funded project.

Since commencing the project's consultation process and individual property planning exercise, as well as the preliminary work on regional vision planning, common thoughts, aspirations, concerns and views surrounding the future for agriculture development and water resources in the region have been continually expressed by landholders. These recurring issues identified by the traditional owners, business owners and pastoralists within the region have formed the agenda and guest speaker list for the two-day gathering.

In addition to planning the regional workshop and continuous ongoing consultation and communication with landholders, the individual property planning exercise has commenced and initial regional vision planning work is in progress.

The project's technical team has started the resource assessment program through the Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) survey flight and the on-ground inventory of current bores. Hydrogeologist Bob Paul's report 'A review of the Broome Sandstone in the La Grange area' is complete and to be published in May. The first stage of the pre-feasibility market and investment research is also finished.

The soil assessment program is due to commence in May, starting with the EM38 survey offered to participants with appropriately cleared areas of land.

On behalf of the La Grange Agriculture and Water Opportunities project we thank the traditional owners, pastoralists, horticulturalists and stakeholders who are participating in the project and everyone else who has taken an avid interest.

We look forward to the upcoming May workshop and the opportunity to get together as a group and to a continued working relationship as we investigate the viability and future for agriculture development in the region.

Cheers



## Consultation

### Landholder meetings

Initial consultation meetings have taken place with six of the seven pastoral properties, both operating horticulture businesses and three of the four traditional owner groups from the region.

These meetings have included formal presentations made to large groups and small informal gatherings on individual properties or in the Broome office, with each of the landholders showing interest in the project and engaging as participants.

Throughout the project, as the technical team conducts the resource assessment and research is carried out surrounding markets, investment and economic opportunities, the consultation process will continue to communicate all information to project participants and stakeholders, encouraging feedback and input.

### Regional vision planning

Following the initial consultation process and in addition to ongoing communication of project information, developing a clear vision of how the region views the future for agriculture development in La Grange is the next phase of the project.

The regional vision planning process starts with identifying what individuals hope to see achieved in the region in the future; the topic discussed during individual and group meetings and more recently through a seven point questionnaire exercise that participants and stakeholders engaged in via email over a seven week timeframe.

Information gathered from the formal and informal get-togethers as well as the questionnaire, is being collated for discussion at the regional workshop.

The regional vision planning work will support the development of a vision statement for agriculture development in the La Grange region, enabling the traditional owners, leaseholders, business owners and stakeholders to be fully involved in future planning for the region and ensure development focuses on purpose and values and is relevant for years to come.

***“Vision without action is a daydream.  
Action without vision is a nightmare.”  
- Japanese proverb***

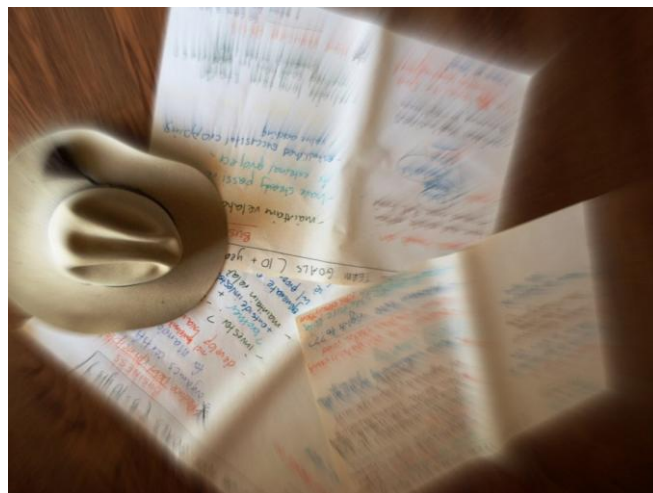
### Individual property vision planning

Participants in the La Grange project are offered the opportunity to engage in an individual property vision planning exercise.

Individual vision planning documents developed through the project remain confidential and belong to the landholder.

The common ground that is appearing throughout each of these individual plans clearly identifies common aspirations and concerns of landholders throughout the region and is vital for developing the regional vision plan.

The property planning exercise, therefore, not only provides participants with a vision document to support their own business but also supports the bigger picture of developing the vision plan for the region.



Individual property vision planning assists development of the regional vision plan.

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## Resource assessment

### AEM survey flight

The airborne electromagnetic (AEM) survey aircraft will recommence flights over the La Grange region in May, after demobilising in December 2012 due to turbulent weather.

Although the survey is incomplete, adequate data has been collected to showcase initial survey results and an update of current data and visuals collected through the AEM survey will be presented to project participants at the La Grange Landholder regional workshop in May.

The complete survey result will be made available to the public, released with the overall project.

### Hydrogeology report

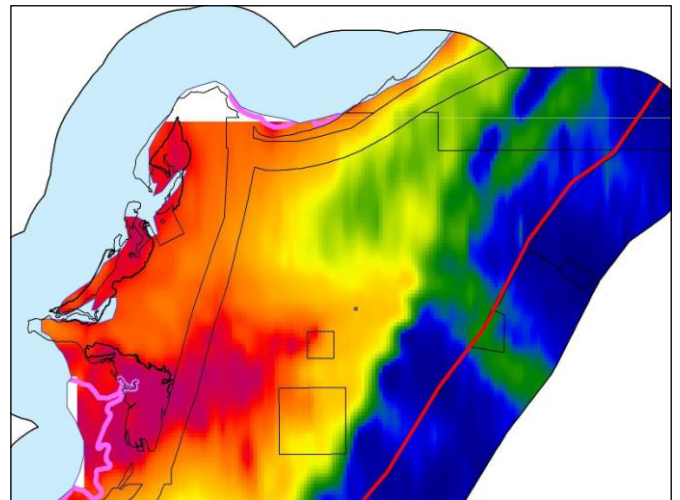
Project hydrogeologist, Bob Paul's report is in final proofing stage, to be published in May.

Titled 'A review of the Broome Sandstone in the La Grange area' the report is a review of what we currently know about the Broome Sandstone, identifying knowledge gaps and providing recommendations for the resource assessment. The bore inventory will commence after the stakeholders meeting in May.

### Soil assessment program

Henry Smolinski leads the soil assessment program that is due to commence in May. Soil assessments and ground electromagnetic (EM) surveys will be largely guided by the AEM survey results, however, for areas that are currently under irrigated agriculture, cleared for operation or are proposed sites that are open country, these sites can be surveyed prior to the AEM results, using a ground electromagnetic instrument called the EM38.

The EM38 is slotted into a PVC sled together with a GPS and strapped to a rubber mat which is dragged behind a vehicle or a quad bike covering around 10 hectares an hour. The survey helps predict potential changes to soil properties which will assist landholders to better manage land under irrigation and to determine the most suitable areas for agriculture development. Project participants with appropriately cleared sites are encouraged to register for the survey opportunity that will commence after the Regional workshop in May. To register for the survey, contact [felicity.brown@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:felicity.brown@agric.wa.gov.au) and for more information contact [henry.smolinski@agric.wa.gov.au](mailto:henry.smolinski@agric.wa.gov.au)



Initial La Grange AEM survey results will be presented to workshop participants



## Regional workshop

Landholders and stakeholders of the La Grange region will gather together at the first regional workshop to be held at the Eco Beach conference centre, 8 and 9 May 2013.

The two-day get-together is an opportunity for people of the region to come together, meet each other and discuss the future vision plan for agriculture development in the region.

Participants will be presented with various agriculture related topics identified as important for the region's future by pastoralists, horticulturalists, traditional owners, stakeholders and community representatives.



## Market and investment research

The pre-feasibility study conducted by Peter Hansford, identified that local stakeholders believe there is a huge gap between strategy and the reality of growing the north. The unreliability of freight, the absence of export infrastructure and skilled labour, a lack of research and agronomy support and the long time horizons are all issues of concern to investors.

Peter's report outlines that with growing world demand and a shrinking capacity to produce food in the Murray-Darling Basin there is a growing interest among domestic and international investors in arable land with the potential to feed growing Asian populations.

This project, like most new developments, involves a complex mix of tenure, infrastructure, resource availability, agronomic, technology and regulatory decisions and challenges government in terms of the provision of transparent information governance and timelines.

The report found that collaboration between government departments and partnerships between local suppliers of goods and services will be key to developing the opportunities and securing new economic development for the region.

### La Grange region



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