



Department of Water and Environmental Regulation

Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

Bridging the gap between soil testing and true practice change for improved fertiliser management

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Project context

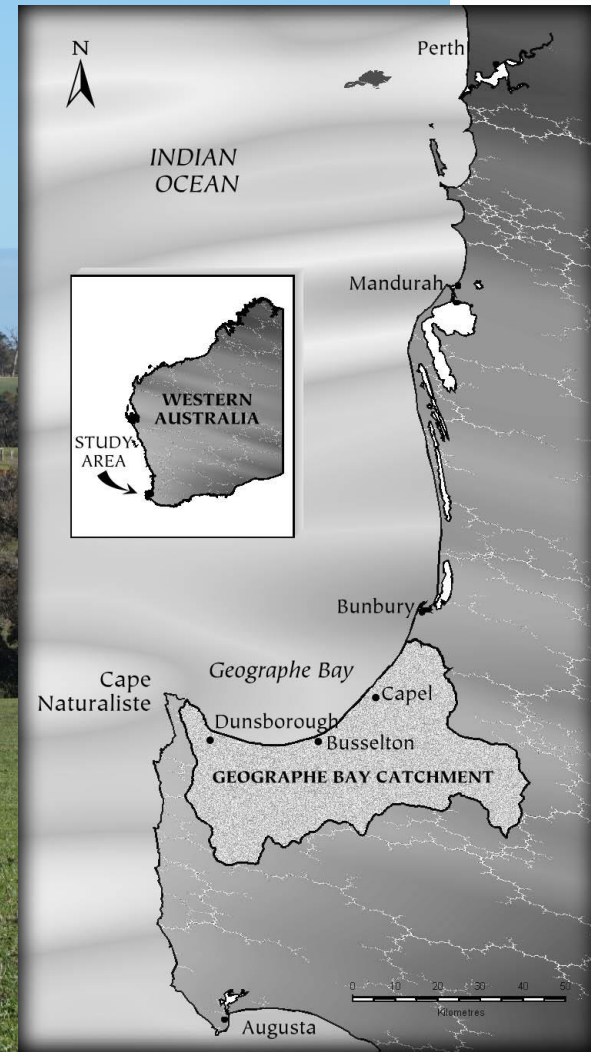
10 years of running excellent soil testing program

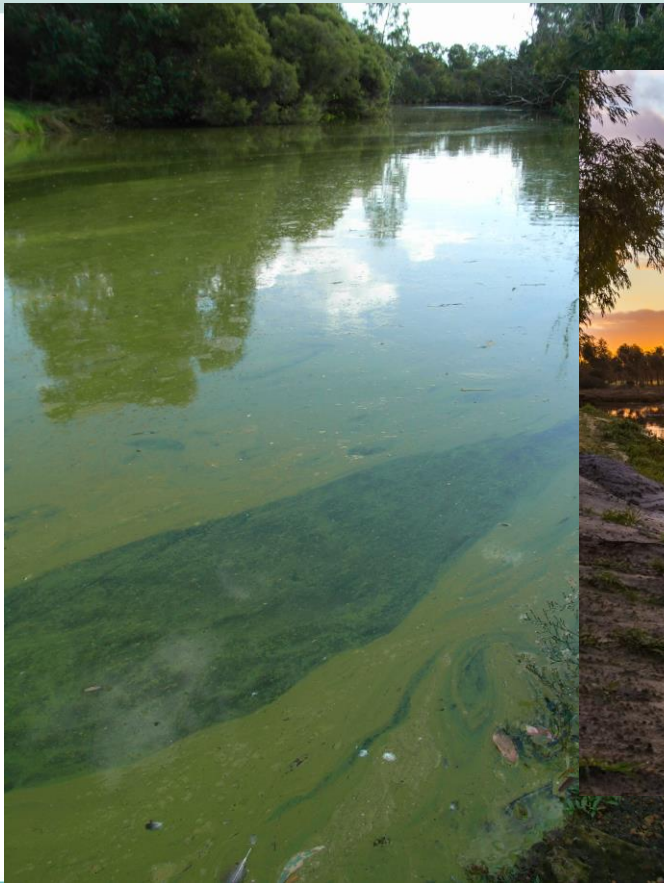
- in partnership with Dept Primary Industry & Regional Devt (DPIRD)

420 000 hectares soil tested

51% grazing farms tested

- 80% of paddocks high P
- Surveys = high P-based fertiliser
- Knowledge ➕ practice change





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What support do farmers need to change practices around fertiliser management on grazing properties?



Type of support tested to foster practice change



Methodology

- 80 farmers involved in soil testing
- 8 case study farms selected
 - for 3 years agronomic support
 - subsidised
- Test effectiveness of 1:1 support over time on practice change

Case study farmer #1



Ross, beef farmer

Graham, agronomist

Results of soil tests

SOIL NUTRIENT STATUS			
TARGET PRODUCTION: 90% of maximum			
High	Medium	High	Low
P	K	S	pH

“I was actually quite surprised to see how much residual fertiliser was in the soil from previous practices, where we just threw out super every year like we have been doing forever.”

After initial session with agronomist Ross:

- Cancelled 30 tonnes order of super phosphate in March 2017
- \$\$\$
- Ordered 30 tonnes of lime to boost pH

Timing very important -the tendency to revert to the old way was when 1:1 support was critical

what are other
words for
change your mind?



relent, have second thoughts,
do a U-turn, come round,
back out, come around,
backtrack, go back on, rethink



Thesaurus.plus

Subsidies – try before you buy

For \$300 farmers could access:
\$5000* worth of soil sampling, lab
analysis & mapping

\$2000* worth of tissue testing

\$3000* worth of 1:1 support

**indicative total amounts per case study farmer*



Source: stock.adobe.com

Benefits – for Ross

- Cattle live weights up by 50kg entering feedlot
- Less spend on feed
- \$41 000 increase in profit



Benefits – for water quality

(Preliminary findings)

	Farms (n)	P applied Before (total kg)	P applied After (total kg)	Reduction
Case study farms (after 12 months)	8	21,776	14,667	33%
Other Farms (after 12 months)	12	25,290	22,057	13%
Case study farms (after 3 years)	8	21,776	12,392	43%

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Learnings for future extension

- Knowledge alone is not enough
- Confidence to change practices improved with extra support over time
- 1:1 model is expensive – is it better?
(longitudinal study required)

1:1 agronomic support over time, and at critical times, can start bridging the gap to true practice change around fertiliser management on grazing farms



By Frits Ahlefeldt

Source: starcana.com

Thank you



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