

Dr Debra Cousins

Director Strategy Innovation and Design | DEPI Biosecurity

A106/424 Gore St, Fitzroy VIC 3065

dcousinsau@yahoo.com.au

Mobile: 0417978247

SUMMARY

- Experienced executive with a background in strategy and outcomes based research management within government and in joint ventures with universities and industry.
- PhD and extensive research experience in agriculture; approximately 100 peer review publications including international collaborations. Impact Factor total > 200.
- Board level experience in State government science strategy advice and program development and implementation, and national government committee experience.
- Demonstrated ability to build productive relationships in different work environments with end users and stakeholders, including government, academic and non-government organizations.
- Experienced manager of NATA accredited government laboratories including external business unit servicing live animal export to Asia. Sound reputation as an independent assessor (national and international).
- Leadership of diverse teams with up to 7 direct and >250 indirect reports and >\$26m budgets.
- International experience on OIE and FAO Programs and policy development.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI), Victoria (November 2010 – Present)

DEPI has a focus on boosting productivity in Victoria's food and fibre sector, protection of the environment and the management of the natural resources, strongly influenced by decision making at a local level.

Director Strategy Innovation and Design, Regulation and Compliance Biosecurity.

Key Responsibilities and Accountabilities:

- Provide leadership to develop and build an integrated divisional approach to emergency preparedness, learning and development, engagement and innovation and strategy and decision making.
- Improve governance and accountability for shared decision making at the divisional level.
- A direct report to the Executive Director leading a diverse team of senior staff to influence divisional change through engagement and influence rather than by line management.

Key Achievements:

- Successfully established a new branch aimed at strongly influencing business integration and culture change in the Division (e.g.; development and implementation of a learning and development strategy, the first coordinated assessment of emergency preparedness across the division to national standards, development and implementation of stakeholder engagement initiative for high-impact threats, and Biosecurity IT strategy).
- Developed (and launched in 2013) a new 4-year business strategy and communication tools; led (in 2012/13) development of a transparent prioritization approach for investment of Biosecurity funding (\$50m), based on outcome-focused project management and zero-based budgeting.

- Developed and launched an innovation-systems pipeline. This included baseline measurement of the Division's capacity to innovate, and sharing learning through 7 innovation forums involving high-profile high-achieving speakers from industry and other government agencies.
- Acted highly effectively as Executive Director for 6 weeks in 2011 during which the Division faced with multiple emergencies (legislation changes and community uproar after a fatal dog attack, plus incursions by pigeon paramyxovirus, green snail, Queensland fruit fly and smooth newt).
- Led recruitment and development in the DEPI Regulatory Reform Team during the SGI. This included bringing in Malcolm Sparrow (Harvard) to help build DEPI capability in regulation and compliance problem solving.
- Current review of Biosecurity research and development requirements and roles, identifying the need for greater clarity in needs-driven prioritisation and where out-sourcing of research is desirable.

Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia (DAFWA)

The Department of Agriculture and Food is an economic development agency with regulatory responsibilities that assists the agriculture, food and fibre sectors to be sustainable and profitable, focusing on export-led growth.

Director Livestock Industries Innovation July 2010 - November 2010

Key Responsibilities and Accountabilities:

- Leadership and management of the Livestock Research Development and Extension (RD&E) Team, including budgets, staff performance, portfolio balance, investment and associated IP.
- Developing strategies to improve international market opportunities for sectoral industries.
- Part of the Senior Leadership Team implementing a major transformation of DAFWA.

Key Achievements:

- Successfully developed an innovation strategy within DAFWA.
- Mentored and supported women throughout the organisation, and provided a feedback mechanism for addressing their issues through substantial organisational change and budget reductions.
- Led a review and facilitated co-funding arrangements with industry to support RD&E.

Deputy Director General, Industry Development August 2009 to June 2010

Key Responsibilities and Accountabilities:

- Executive role with a mandate for organisational transformation, leadership and management, policy and strategy.
- Facilitate alignment of private sector and government strategies and tactics, delivery of new strategic plans to support industry development, development of new initiatives and providing sound advice to the Minister of Agriculture and Food in relation to industry development issues.
- Strategic leadership and management of industry development for DAFWA, including RD&E programs for grains, livestock, horticulture and food, focusing on the post-farm-gate supply chain.
- Management of 5 direct reports, >250 other staff, with a budget of \$26 million.

Key Achievements:

- Following election of new government, oversight of the development and launch and implementation of four new industry development plans.
- As a member of the executive team, led staff through a structured process to design and implement a major restructure of the organisation after a 15% decrease in budget.

- Provided policy advice on new initiatives (regional sale yards strategy, inputs taskforce report, beef stocktake report, northern abattoirs project).
- Oversaw development of multidisciplinary project development and successful ERC bids for new grain infrastructure facilities for GM crop development in the regions.

Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre for Emerging Infectious Disease (AB-CRC)

An unincorporated joint venture managing investment of \$70 million (partner cash and in-kind from university, state and commonwealth government and industry) over a 7-year term 2003-2010, managed under ASX principles with a governing independent Board. Mandate to improve diagnostics, surveillance and knowledge of emerging threats.

Deputy CEO (2008-2009), Professor, Curtin University and Director Application and Linkage and Executive Member (2006-2009), Program Leader, Application and Linkage (2003-2006)

Key Responsibilities and Accountabilities:

- Strategy development, implementation and evaluation of research communication, commercialisation, and consultancy, with a major focus on knowledge exchange and non-commercial uptake of research within the Centre to enhance linkages and increase the application of research into policy and practice in the agriculture, public health and environment sectors.
- Critical assessment and review of research and education projects funded by the Centre.
- Assist in strategy development, governance, financial and research management of the Centre.
- Departmental head of AB-CRC staff and researchers based at Curtin (when Deputy CEO).

Key Achievements:

- Successful implementation of knowledge exchange strategy that led to major changes in the attitudes and behaviours of researchers and end users, delivering a major culture shift towards the end user driven research focus expected of the Centre.
- Lead role in the successful national adoption and use of new technologies to manage the eradication of (and prove freedom from) equine influenza, freeing up national and international horse movement. The CRC won an Innovation award for this work in 2010.
- Project manager for the independent economic analysis of part (\$13m) of the CRC research portfolio that showed realised benefits of \$228m (Net Present Value \$215m, Benefit Cost 17 to 1).
- Created new national initiatives in cross-sector learning via 'Knowledge into Practice and Policy' workshops in 2007 (partnering with other government departments and key leaders in the field).
- 70 PhDs completed including 20% overseas students or Australian students working internationally.

Premier's and Western Australian Science Council (2003 - 2009)

Key Responsibilities and Accountabilities:

- Independent Member of the government advisory state Science Council over 6 years (3 terms).
- Advised three successive state government Science Ministers on science strategy, policy and investment,

Key Achievements:

- Government planning and investment successfully leveraged major new investment and development and implementation of education science mentoring programs and recognition programs for key science achievers including science teachers.

- State research priorities developed and, innovation programs including major research facilities program, Premiers Research Fellowships implemented.

Department of Agriculture and Food Animal Health Laboratories, Western Australia

Held various positions in research and diagnostic service delivery from 1976), including as **Manager Animal Health Laboratories** from 2003-2007.

Key Responsibilities and Accountabilities:

- As Manager, Animal Health Laboratory, was responsible for strategic, financial, personnel and infrastructure management providing diagnostic and research capabilities providing internal (government) and external (private) business turnover of approximately \$5.5m p.a.
- Managed >60 permanent and contract staff employed in city and regional locations, delivering services underpinning market access of agricultural products, within ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation.
- Represent WA on national committees.

Key Achievements:

- Director, OIE (World Organisation Animal Health) Reference Laboratory, Tuberculosis 1993-2010, facilitating international standards and international collaboration.
- Director, Australian Reference Laboratory for Bovine Tuberculosis (1992-2010), providing crucial support for the successful Australian Bovine Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign.
- Strongly influenced development of national standards for diagnosis of exotic diseases, Johne's disease, tuberculosis and other zoonotic diseases, underpinning increased understanding of disease epidemiology and industry confidence in national programs.
- Consultant at international meetings (Food and Agriculture Organisation and World Health Organisation) and invited reviewer of national and international (UK, EU, CAN and NZ) research programs.
- Internationally recognised researcher, demonstrated by numerous invitations both to speak at overseas meetings over a 20 year period and to prepare policy and scientific papers for the OIE.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Executive Fellows Program (2013) ANSOG Canberra,

Graduate, Australian Institute of Company Directors (2012) Melbourne.

Advanced Diploma in Management; Leadership and Managing Change, Strategy and Finance (2006/2001), Australian Institute of Management, University of WA.

Doctor of Philosophy (Microbiology) 'Passed with Distinction' (1996) University of WA.

Bachelor of Applied Science (Medical Laboratory Science) (1975) Curtin University.

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Authored or co-authored several book chapters and approximately 100 scientific papers in internationally recognised journals; a similar number of conference presentations including numerous invited presentations to national and international conferences. Publication and presentation list can be provided on request.

REFEREES

Terry Hill

Executive Director, Irrigated Agriculture, Department of Agriculture and Food, WA
Phone 0428 930 251, email terry.hill@agric.wa.gov.au.

Dr Stephen Prowse

Research Translation Consultant (Former Chief Executive Officer, Australian Biosecurity CRC and Wound CRC), Phone 0419 371 134, email stephenjprose@gmail.com