



Communications Review Research

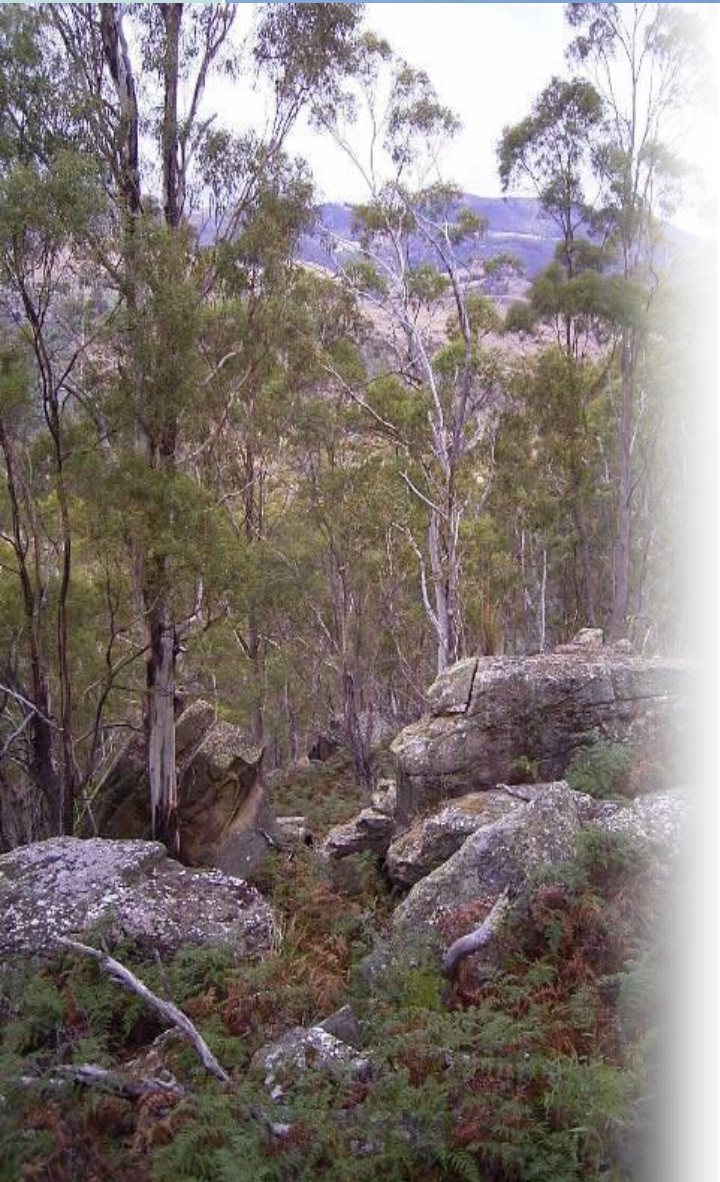
Report of Key Insights & Implications

Date:
29 June 2007

Prepared for:
Department of the
Environment and
Water Resources

Ipsos Consultants:
George Katos
Bridget Bentley
Ainsley Harper

Report Contents



| | Page Number |
|------------------------------------|-------------|
| ■ Background | 3 |
| ■ Major Highlights | 8 |
| ■ Implications and Recommendations | 26 |

Background



- **The Department of the Environment and Water Resources wished to evaluate the performance of the Forest Conservation Fund (FCF) to date, and to examine its effectiveness in meeting the programme's objectives.**

- **The programme was launched 10 January 2007 by the former Minister for the Environment and Heritage in Tasmania.**
 - The first tender round opened 3 March and closed 31 May 07.
 - To be eligible for the first round, landholders had to request a site visit by 7 May.

- **At the time of this research being conducted, only 7 landholders had completed a site visit, with over 200 requests received.**

- **Due to the higher than expected response, the Department made the decision to extend the tender round, revising the tender submission date to 16 July 2007.**
 - A letter advising the revised date was sent to all landholders who had submitted a request for site assessment.



Aim & Objectives

- **Ipsos was engaged to review the FCF communication strategy in order to determine the success of:**
 - Engaging landholders willing to consider a covenant on their property.
 - Engaging stakeholders to promote the FCF to their constituents.
 - Raising awareness about economic and other benefits to landholders of providing forest conservation services.

- **Research deliverables are intended to inform the next round of the FCF:**
 - Determine if the communications strategy is contributing to meeting the objectives of the FCF.
 - Determine the effectiveness by which the initial Ipsos market research findings have been incorporated into the FCF communications approach and programme implementation.
 - Identifying barriers to participation in the programme for landholders.

■ **In-depth interviews were conducted with a mix of landholders, advisors and stakeholders.**

- 21 x 40min telephone interviews with members of the FCF target audience.
- Conducted between 30th May to 12th June 2007.
- Conducted with a mix of landholders recruited from lists provided by the service providers:
 - A mix of farmers and hobby/lifestyle farmers, with a range of native forest areas from 26 hectares to over 1500 hectares, total property areas, and enterprise types.
 - Landholders who have showed various levels of interest and engagement with the FCF.
 - Stakeholders and professional advisors, who provided insights on how they felt they were engaged and communicated with as well as providing feedback on the success of communication directed at landholders.
- All interviews were conducted by Bridget Bentley and Ainsley Harper.

| Interviews | (n=21) |
|--|--------|
| Landholders that requested an Information Kit but did not proceed | 5 |
| Landholders that requested a Site Assessment | 4 |
| Landholders whose Site Assessment is complete (none had received results from their site visit from the Conservation Adviser) | 5 |
| Professional Advisors | 3 |
| Stakeholders | 4 |

- It was intended to include a sample of landholders who had received the direct mail but had shown no interest in the FCF campaign. However, it was difficult to elicit meaningful responses from these landholders, since most did not recall the programme nor the direct mail brochure. The sample structure was therefore changed to include a larger number of interviews with landholders who had actually engaged with the programme in some way.

- **The findings of this qualitative research present an indicative assessment of the success of the communications campaign in achieving its objectives.**
 - However, the communications campaign is still in progress – landholders were yet to start their tender application, no-one had received the results of their site assessment so contact with the Conservation Adviser was limited, and as mentioned earlier, very few landholders had completed a site assessment.
 - While the 21 interviews conducted have provided some important learnings, they cannot be deemed as representative across the entire target audience population.

- **The communications campaign is in a critical stage of encouraging and supporting participation through the Conservation Advisers and support network – there is still a long way to go to achieve some of the aims and objectives of the FCF communications strategy:**
 - *Aim:* To encourage private landowners in Tasmania to participate in the FCF programme and specifically the tender process.
 - *Objective:* to have a positive effect on landowner engagement with the FCF programme and tender process
 - *Aim:* to promote the Australian Government as a leader in forest conservation practices and supporting Tasmanian communities.
 - *Objective:* to have a positive effect on landowners awareness of the Australian Government's leadership role in forest conservation practices and support for Tasmanian's communities.

Major Highlights





Landholder interest in the FCF has exceeded expectations

Overall, the majority of respondents considered the communication successful in raising the awareness of the FCF among landholders.

The figures also tell the story...500 enquiries to the 1300 number and 236 requests for site assessments.

This result is supported by the preliminary market research conducted by Ipsos, which suggested that raising awareness and interest in the FCF would be easy.

However, respondents indicated that they will measure the overall success through the success of:

- 1. FCF achieving the goal hectares reserved; and**
- 2. Landholders' initial expectations being met, resulting in successful contracts.**

Therefore the programme still has some way to go...

This success is considered essential for the credibility of future rounds of the FCF.

Eye-catching, targeted & repetitive communication - all key in gaining strong awareness and programme recognition

■ Most recalled becoming first aware of the FCF through the press ads in the Tasmanian Country and other local papers.

- Press ad considered “*eye catching*” in full colour, prominent position and full page.
- Using high frequency in targeted publications was successful in achieving brand recognition.

“It’s like when you see Coca-Cola on TV, you don’t need to watch it anymore because you know what it’s about. I think the effort that went into the ads was good because I got to the point where I knew the information and didn’t have to read it anymore, but its presence reminded me of it all the time.”

“Every farmer would have seen the ad’s in the Tas Country cause it’s delivered to every farmer. They were big, you couldn’t miss them and they were regular.”

■ Many recalled receiving the brochure through direct mail and considered it to be effective in delivering a simple and concise message.

■ If landholders missed the press ad or brochure, they were sure to hear the radio ad.

- Particularly successful in attracting lifestyle/hobby farmers, who tended not to be on the industry targeted mailing lists.

■ The logo and branding was considered distinctive and successful in aiding recognition.

■ Having a presence at AgFest and the story on the ABC’s Country Hour were also considered important to some.



A strong call to action prompted landholders to contact the FCF for more information

■ Each communication medium prompted landholders to contact the FCF to request an information kit or to attend an information session.

- Most landholders contacted the 1300 number to request an information kit.
- Fewer landholders were drawn to the website for information. Those who used it were satisfied with its ease of use, layout and content.

“The website was reasonably easy to navigate.”

“The website was very good, informative, clear, great.”

- Half of the respondents interviewed attended an information session and commented that they were well attended by a diverse group of landholders.

■ Stakeholders and advisers were important in converting programme awareness to action by giving landholders assurance of the FCF’s credibility, trustworthiness and relevance.

- Even though most stakeholders and advisers adopted a passive approach to supporting the FCF (described by one as a “*communication facilitator*”), many actively engaged in sending out brochures to members, answering landholder queries and conducting one-on-one discussions.

“I’m on farm 5 to 6 times per week. If they have relevant forest, I make them aware there’s money available through the FCF...I don’t give them material, but do give a phone number. Sometimes farmers have seen the advertisements but haven’t taken the next step to do anything about it. So this triggers them to do something.”

Landholders considered the information kit to be the most important communication medium

- The information kit was rated by most as an excellent and comprehensive source of information.

“It’s well constructed and reader friendly for farmers, without too much jargon. I like that it’s not one long book, rather it’s made up of brief and focused leaflets.”

“Very thorough, More than adequate. Nothing else needed to be included.”

- It provided landholders with comprehensive information about the FCF, and then became an important reference as questions arose and/or while waiting for the site assessment.
 - For some, this information provided them with everything they needed.
- The few criticisms of the kit related to the extent of the information contained within. For some it was too comprehensive and required too much reading, whilst for others it didn’t contain specific information relevant to their individual circumstances.
- When appealing to a diverse population of landholders, meeting the needs of everyone is impossible. However, this does reiterate the importance of personal contact in explaining the programme and process, answering questions and ultimately supporting on-going interest and participation.

“I would just make the comment that there is a lot of material there so it does require extensive consideration and review. There’s a lot involved in it.”

“I spoke to people the other day that were really befuddled about the process – they had the information kit and it had confused them so they hadn’t applied.”

Communication materials were considered very effective in enabling landholders to decide on whether to participate

“I went to the meeting and had the information kit. Knew all I needed to know. No further questions.”

- However, most respondents interviewed were still involved in some stage of the tender process and viewed on-going communication from the FCF as critical in assisting them through the process.
- Stakeholders and advisers suggested that landholders were satisfied with the communication materials, since most had received very little feedback about the FCF.

“It ran well for us. We didn’t get much feedback, which is usually a good sign because we usually only hear the negatives.”

- As found in the initial Ipsos research, the FCF is a new and highly complex concept for landholders to consider. Their expectations for information and engagement were therefore extremely high and some felt the communication materials and delivery fell short in some areas.

Farmers are sensitive to expensive communication campaigns

- **There was a concern amongst some landholders that too much money was being spent on the FCF communication campaign and programme implementation, due to:**
 - The look and feel of the materials - too **'glossy'**.
 - The high profile nature of the service provider, KPMG.
 - Many landholders received the direct mail brochure several times, given the fact they are members of more than one industry group – this was considered wasteful.
- **This also led to a perception that the values of forest conservation being communicated by the FCF were in conflict with the material these values were being presented through.**
- **This concern was heightened by landholders' uncertainty about money – how much might be left in the 'kitty' for them – the number one barrier to participation, as discussed later.**
 - Landholders may also have been concerned through their past experience and/or involvement with programmes that had high overhead costs.

“I was concerned about the cost of the information kit and that the only one that's going to get any money out of it is KPMG. Flying shiny seated consultants over from Sydney and Canberra was overkill.”

“Some landholders received 7 brochures and were shocked by the waste! I consequently didn't send out any to my database. The industry groups, regional groups, NGOs...we all have the same data sets – one person on my Board got 6 in a week!”

“I did have a laugh because I thought it used up a lot of trees to produce it.”

The information sessions were successful in providing general information about the FCF in a personal manner

- **As mentioned earlier, around half of the landholders interviewed attended an information session. Those who were positive about these sessions tended to be lifestyle / hobby farmers and advisers.**

“It was informative, reinforced the information in the pack and was an opportunity to ask questions. I think the presentation went really well.”

“I could see the commitment of the people presenting. They were grass roots and committed to making it work. I felt I could trust the people they had doing the assessment.”

- **The farmers who attended were more likely to have concerns with the content and delivery of the sessions. Overwhelmingly, these concerns stemmed from their desire for financial guidance. For some, the seriousness of their concerns influenced their decision not to engage with the programme.**

- There was an expectation that they would be provided with clearer guidance on financial considerations and many were frustrated when not provided with this.
- Presenters were seen as unable to answer certain questions, which was perceived by some to demonstrate both a lack of knowledge and evasiveness, leading to distrust of the programme.
- Some attendees felt the presenters treated them as having very little understanding of the native forest on their properties.
- These concerns lead to some meetings being extremely heated, with landholders leaving angry and frustrated.

“There were elements relating to the definition of particular forest type. The person giving the seminar hadn’t anticipated the question and didn’t have an answer, so his attempt at an answer was vague. For landowners who were edgy anyway, this is a good way to loose trust.”

“They could not offer tangible information of how much people were going to get. Telling farmers that they have a formula, but it’s too complex is insulting farmers’ intelligence.”

- **However farmers felt the information was simply presented to them, with very little opportunity for questions.**

- Given the distance many farmer landholders travelled to get to the venues and the length of the sessions, this was not looked upon favourably by some.

“The presenter had a PowerPoint presentation he just read out, which was a reiteration of the brochure. No-one hung around to talk afterwards and to go over things with people. They went out the back door because they coped a lot of questions they couldn’t answer and people were irate with them. We wanted to stand and chat to someone to bounce ideas off them and we couldn’t.”

“I left before the end because it was three hours when it could have been put into an hour.”

- **The meetings were held in major centres, requiring many landholders to travel considerable distances and invest substantial time in attending.**

- While acknowledged it would require more resources, many farmers would have preferred the meetings were run in some of the local towns.

“I don’t know if these guys know that there isn’t much forested land in Burnie, Hobart and Launceston. We’re busy landholders, who’s going to go to a meeting on a Monday afternoon at four in the arvo? They have to go to where the people are.”

Timeliness is crucial for satisfaction

- The unanticipated interest in the FCF undoubtedly led to difficulties in responding to landholder requests in a timely manner, including distributing information kits and undertaking site assessments.

- Those that called the 1300 number and left messages were expecting that someone would respond to them within two or three days – delays of one to three weeks for a response were considered unacceptable.
 - Of the 14 landholders interviewed, 10 rang the 1300 number at some stage, and 4 claimed to have experienced delays in response time.
 - Most of the delays experienced related to waiting for responses to questions about the programme, and updates on timing.
 - However, one landholder claimed he ***“waited two weeks for an information kit to arrive.”***

- Some received little warning of upcoming information meetings.
 - One stakeholder was embarrassed by sending out letters which were received by their members two days after the advertised information meeting. This stakeholder had to field calls from annoyed and confused landholders.

Timeliness is crucial for satisfaction

- **Delays in receiving information kits flowed onto delays in hearing if and when a site assessment would be scheduled, and then receiving communication on the completion of a site assessment, leading to landholders feeling stressed and anxious.**
 - These delays undoubtedly affected the level of participation in the FCF, with *lack of time* being a key barrier to participation mentioned by landholders who chose not to continue.
 - Some landholders felt the delays were financially impacting them, particularly those in drought affected areas.

- **These delays also impacted on landholders' perceptions of the communication success, since at the time of conducting this research, most landholders felt there had been little attempt to keep them up to date with what was happening and how the delays might impact on the tender application process.**

“The time they got back to us from the initial application was too long. It was a bit over a month and we thought it was all over and we had missed out.”

“They (farmers) won't receive any money this financial year. This was a feature explained at the meetings – that farmers would have some money this financial year and some next.”

“We contacted them and got the kit and sent it back and conservation adviser came out. She said she would contact us, but we haven't heard anything. I don't have a number for her so I rang Canberra and there was an answering machine. I left message and still haven't heard. I know the applications have now closed.”

- **However, the one landholder interviewed who had completed their site assessment and also received a letter informing them of the extension to the deadline was extremely satisfied.**

“The communication has been very effective. They have been keeping me informed by letter so there is a paper trail and I've been happy with that.”

Despite the desire for personal engagement, many landholders found few avenues to do this

- **The 1300 number worked extremely well for taking requests for information kits, however it fell short through people's expectation that it was an 'information line' rather than a message bank.**
 - As such, people were surprised when unable to reach a person at the end of the line. This led to many trying several times before finally leaving a message.
 - Those with complex questions found it difficult to communicate when leaving a message.
 - However, for one the phone call to 1300 number had been the most valuable communication medium

“Because it was personal and the phone call back telling me that I had been successful, so they kept me in the loop.”

- **For many landholders, the site assessment was the first point of personal contact in the FCF where they could discuss the programme and the particulars of their property.**
 - This was an adjustment for those who had been used to working closely with local people on land management issues and programmes, where advisors were easily accessible.

“With the biodiversity programme we worked with the local people and it was much more effective. I had her office number and make an appointment to see her at any time. This assessor is just not available.”

There are high expectations of the role the Conservation Adviser will play in providing information, advice & support

- **The Conservation Adviser is critical in influencing landholder uptake of the programme, in many cases they are the only point of personal contact, the ‘face’ of the FCF.**
 - The ability to choose a conservation adviser was considered a benefit. Where possible, landholders chose someone known to them either personally or by a trusted source.

“I had a choice in the conservation adviser. That was very important. It gives me a sense of choice and input and being part of the process.”

“We had confidence in the assessor because we had known and worked with her before – at least she knew the area and she is from the country and not just a city kid that has gone through Uni.”

- **Landholder satisfaction of the Conservation Advisers and site assessment is too early to determine, since those who had completed their site assessment had not received further communication or updates.**

- Most were satisfied to date, although some expected to have received more information at the site visit.

“She was honest, genuine, loved the forest and really knew her stuff. She provided clear information and went through all the papers. She spent hours in the bush and came back and told me about the types of bush and that we had one weed.”

“She had to go away and put this up against the points score. She never gave us anything at the time and we haven’t heard from her since. She told me where on the aerial photo she had been and she showed me the map she had with all the numbers on it which related to the species, but didn’t leave us with any information.”

“We discussed with the advisor all the criteria on which they were going to be doing their assessment. I went out with them and looked at indicative types of forest, the old growth and newer, and issues of grazing were discussed. It would be fair to say we had an understanding of some issues but there are a whole range of things on the assessment that we don’t understand yet. Hopefully when they come back with some completed assessments we will be able to establish that.”

- The list supplied by the service provider, of landholders who have participated in the FCF to some extent, suggests that in addition to attracting farmers, a considerable proportion are landholders owning lifestyle and/or hobby farms.
- All landholders interviewed expressed a positive attitude towards conserving forest on private land.

“It’s a treasure, you don’t really know what is in it...it’s naturally surviving.”

“Protecting our environment for the future.”

“I believe in preserving it for future generations. It’s an incredible ecosystem...with freshwater crayfish, platypuses, mushrooms, fungi, etc all within the 13 hectares I’ve got.”

“The whole programme is a step forward as far as conservation management goes. There’s a recognition that the landowner is the ideal person to manage that land because he’s already there.”

- For those landholders who received an information kit, but chose not to participate, there was no one major barrier.
 - Three were concerned about being restricted on what they could do on their land and/or the ability to pursue future opportunities.
 - Three believed the programme was not relevant to their situation.
 - Two said it was due to a lack of time to submit an application.
 - One cited a lack of trust of government.

Why landholders chose to participate with the FCF...and not to participate

“It has got credibility. It gives us support – when people look at a piece of bush with trees falling down but that the government has given us permission to keep it like that.”

“It sounded exciting - they have an alternative to logging and they appreciate people who want to preserve the ecosystem and be compensated for it – a bit of lateral thinking for once from the government.”

“The earliest part that attracted me was curiosity that someone was thinking about private forest.”

“We needed longer to investigate this and you had to respond in a short time. The system is rather unusual as you had to put a bid in and that’s a difficult concept to deal with in a short time – we didn’t have the required time.”

FOREST
CONSERVATION FUND 

“Awareness by other people that this is a beautiful piece of bush and that we’re not just sill deep green greenies. It’s got credibility and given us support.”

“Because the government is running it I felt confident it would be legally done.”

“The uncertainty that everyone walks away from the meetings with is that there’s a calculation done called a conservation index and the value the farmer receives, it’s hard to calculate. There are some vagaries around that that has people guessing ... I’ve had people reluctant to go ahead for that reason.”

Key Drivers

- Voluntary
- Financial Benefits
- Offering different timeframes for contracts
- Ability to determine price
- Ability to decide on management actions, including the ability to continue grazing
- Gaining knowledge of forest management and the species within the forest
- Conservation Benefits
 - Conserving forest on private land is important to the whole community and landholders will be supported in doing this
 - Already involved with some conservation projects so feel comfortable the process will be the same
 - A chance to protect some of the remaining bush in the area from Gunns
 - Provides support and credibility to those wanting to conserve their land

Key Barriers

- Inability of landholders to determine price
- Covenant attached to title of land – perceived negative impact on property price; future changes to Government legislation
- Feeling of insufficient time to grasp a new and difficult concept and to seek advice prior to the closing date
- Delays in the process impacting on payment timing (e.g. no first payment in this financial year)
- Lack of certainty that accepted price will cover all input costs
- Competitive nature of the tender
- Distrust of government
- Landholders wanting to keep open future land use options
- Too much paperwork

Determining a price, a difficult concept to grasp

- The ability of the landholder to determine their own price was both a driver and barrier to participation.
- This is not surprising, given the findings of the initial Ipsos research, and the experience with environmental stewardship programmes conducted in other regions.
- Lack of information provided on financial considerations within the communications led to general cynicism and negative feelings.
 - Landholders wanted to understand how the value of their forest would be determined. Instead they were told that the assessment process was not available and too complex for them to comprehend.
 - For some, the tender process was viewed as the Government being deliberately evasive.
- Surprisingly, stakeholders and advisors reported receiving few direct requests of financial assistance by landholders, despite this being advised by the FCF communication materials.
 - Perhaps this will change when faced with preparing the tender application.

“We needed to sit down with the assessors and discuss their methods of assessment, e.g. what is old growth forest? Ours has been selectively logged for over 150 years and no-one could tell us if it is old growth.”

“Its pretty obvious they want the land for as cheap as possible by not providing the information to use as a guide. The government might say its worth peanuts when the owner thinks its worth thousands for kitchen cabinets.”

“I would like more information about other schemes that have been run with this Dutch auction process. What sort of value did participants of these programmes submit to the government? Should it be \$100 or \$100,000 for the area and what’s the conservation index on their farm?”

While stakeholders & advisers are important communication targets, advisers proved difficult to engage

- **Generally, the information meetings were poorly attended by advisers because of the commitments involved in running their own businesses.**
 - Those who did attend found it valuable in increasing their understanding of the programme.
 - The information kit proved a valuable reference for answering landholder queries.

- **Most stakeholders and advisers felt satisfied with the level of information they initially received about the programme, however some expressed disappointment with the lack of on-going updates.**
 - This is considered important in keeping their members/clients informed, as well as understanding how they might better support the FCF, and most importantly feeling that the FCF values their relationship.
 - No-one was aware that the submission for applications was extended.
 - Further information requested included - updates on timelines, number of applications received, sorts of issues that have arisen, how conservation advisers have interacted with landholders.

“They could be giving us email updates on where the Fund is at and how it’s operating. Is there likely to be a delay in processing and I speculate there will be, but perhaps they have it under control.”

“They’ve been good at giving us things to hand out but we haven’t been communicated with. I have been surprised there’s been no newsletter update on progress, because surely we’re an important stakeholder.”

“It was our original request and also on the strategic plan that the FCF would compliment existing regional programmes and it hasn’t happened at all. There’s been no collaboration at all. It’s almost like we’re competing.”

Implications & Recommendations



Managing landholder expectations is critical to ensuring successful contracts and the success of future FCF rounds

- **While the response to the FCF has been more than encouraging, managing landholder expectations has proved challenging due to insufficient resources being allocated.**
 - If these expectations are not met, there is a risk that it will adversely affect the number of landholders who submit tender applications, as well as the satisfaction of those landholders who chose not to participate due to a lack of time.

- **The FCF is obviously addressing this by employing more conservation advisers and providing existing ones with greater resources, as well as providing an extension to the tender application deadline, which has been communicated to landholders through a letter.**

- **However, there are a number of other measures that need to be employed to ensure that participation rates are maximised:**
 - Regular updates alerting participants, stakeholders and advisers to delays, the management of these delays and changes to timelines / conditions needs to occur through a short email and/or letter.
 - Landholders awaiting site assessments need to be informed of the date (or at least the week) of their site assessment so they can understand the implications for developing their tender application.
 - The 1300 number should be staffed while landholders are preparing their tender applications to reduce the stress and uncertainty involved in preparing the application. While it is likely the conservation adviser would be the first point of contact, this research has demonstrated that when landholders have a question, they want it answered immediately, so if the conservation adviser is unavailable, the 1300 number is the next best thing.

- **While it is too early to assess the effectiveness of the conservation advisers, it is important to remember that their support will be essential in not only receiving good quality tender applications for round 1, but also managing the expectations of those who are unsuccessful, so they might be encouraged to participate in future rounds and/or other NRM programmes.**

Continual communication with stakeholders and select advisers is just as important as communicating with landholders

- **On-going communication with stakeholders has fallen short of the FCF communication strategy, which acknowledged this group as being “*an important influencer on and conduit to the participation of the primary target audience in the programme and tender process.*”**
- **There is a valuable opportunity to better utilise the credibility and networks that this group has with landholders.**
- **Providing stakeholders with regular updates on how the implementation process is progressing and information on how they can best support their members, would go a long way to making them feel more like a active partner.**
- **The FCF should also encourage all stakeholders to have a link to the FCF on their websites.**

There is an opportunity to use the fantastic response by landholders as part of a strong and positive communication message to all landholders throughout Tasmania.

Communicating this message would demonstrate the programme's genuine appeal amongst landholders, which would add to the credibility and acceptance of future rounds.

This could be done very effectively through the FCF website, stakeholder websites and through a media release in the Tas Country and/or segment on the ABC's Country Hour.

Round 1 has achieved high levels of awareness, from which future rounds should build on

- **Stories that feature successful applicants should be published to build the programme's credibility and user-friendliness. This should be done as soon as round 1 is completed to keep the programme top of mind and strengthen its appeal.**

- **Future rounds of the FCF should consider a communications strategy that manages the response rate to ensure programme resources can manage demand. This could be achieved by:**
 - Commencing with a general call for interest through targeted media, such as the Tas Country and radio, without stating a closing date.
 - Enquiries can then be closely monitored and further communication tailored to achieve the desired response. If enquiries are too low, the frequency of communication could be increased and/or direct mail used.
 - Including a closing date would also create a sense of urgency.

- **Any future communication materials should be printed on recycled or Forest Stewardship Council certified paper stock and clearly promote this. Doing this will have multiple benefits including:**
 - Being in line with the values and objectives of the Forest Conservation Fund.
 - Strengthening the Government's image of being committed to conserving forest.
 - Taking the perceived 'gloss' and expensive look out of the communication materials.

- **While it is important that the programme delivery platform is structured, it is also important that it is flexible to adapt to change quickly**
 - The implementation strategy must factor in possible programme risks, such as increased levels of interest, and include formulated contingency plans that are ready to implement if required.
 - Decisions to increase resources and change timeframes must be done promptly and smoothly to reduce the disruption to participants.

- **Improving the timeliness in responding to messages to the 1300 number will not only improve satisfaction amongst landholders, it will also increase the perception that the programme offers personal contact and interaction.**
 - If it is not possible to have the 1300 number continuously staffed, an option could be to staff it during peak times of the day. For farmers, this is generally between 8am-9am, 12pm-2pm, and of an evening. For all calls outside of this time, the message should clearly state the hours of operation to give landholders the option of calling back, should they wish to speak with someone personally.

- **Regular progress reports are essential for managing the expectations of landholders, stakeholders and advisors and ultimately encouraging participating in the FCF. This may take the shape of:**
 - Short email / letter updates alerting participants to delays, the management of these delays and changes to timelines / conditions.
 - Mixed media editorial and advertisements could communicate changed timing for tender closure, future intentions and recognition of interest to date.
 - The website should report changes and explanations immediately.

The financial barrier has proven a difficult hurdle to overcome

- **The tender process and in particular, the financial aspect, is a major barrier for landholders participating in many environmental stewardship programmes across Australia. Some programmes have delivered workshops which have included a trial auction. They have found it of direct benefit to landholders' confidence in preparing their tender application and to the quality of the final contracts.**
 - The workshop provided practical examples and experience in developing an offer and in the competitive assessment process in a non-confrontational manner.

- **Running a workshop of this nature may prove an effective way of providing assistance for landholders facing the challenging task of determining a price for their tender.**

- **The FCF has attracted a diverse array of landholders. As part of the evaluation process, it will be important to further investigate the types of landholders attracted, including the differences between participants and non-participants, as well as farmers versus lifestyle / hobby farmers.**
 - Although indicative, findings of this research suggest that lifestyle / hobby farmers have different communication needs and expectations that should be further explored to ensure programme satisfaction and good biodiversity outcomes.

- **Running future information seminars in large regional towns, such as Oatlands or Campbelltown, would be seen by landholders as the government coming to them and reduce the overall commitment in time required to attend such an event.**