

Australian  
**Rural Leadership**  
Foundation

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Leading the Nation

# TRAIL*blazers*

## 2012

# REPORT

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DR GRAHAM BONNETT

funded by

SUGAR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION



Graham Bonnett



**TRAILblazers 2012**

## Overview of Sugar Research

### Development Corporation in Leadership Development

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SRDC has been a consistent and strategic investor in leadership for the sugar industry over the last twenty years.

The following summary provides an insight into SRDC's investment in leadership through the Foundation

- 1996, ARLP (Australian Rural Leadership Program) 3 - Bob Rossi
- 1997, ARLP 4 - Max Craigie
- 1998, ARLP 5 - Drew Watson and John Pratt both co-sponsored by CSR Limited, Canegrowers and Australian Sugar Milling Council
- 1999, ARLP 6 - Ray Wimberley
- 2000, ARLP 7 - Kelvin Griffin
- 2001, ARLP 8 - Paul Giordani
- 2003, ARLP 10 - Trevor Adil
- 2010, TRAIL – Mark Whitten, Amanda Vickers
- 2011, TRAIL - Matthew Keally
- 2012, TRAILblazers – Dr Graham Bonnett

The TRAILblazers program offers a unique opportunity for seasoned leaders who may not have had the chance to undertake formal leadership training previously, or who need to refresh their leadership agenda and goals. The program also allows them extend their circle of influence beyond their immediate industry sector.

TRAILblazers is one of the few senior leadership development programs for seasoned leaders that offers a solid and catalysing experiential education component as part of its educational methodology. This creates an intimate and powerful learning environment that prompts lasting change.

TRAILblazers and TRAIL allows both ends of the leadership spectrum – emerging leaders and seasoned leaders – the opportunity to expand their strategic leadership thinking, as well as join the Foundation's network of over 700+ Fellows around the country, in all primary industries, across communities, government, and politics.

With this kind of solid investment, the sugar sector will continue to benefit from the expertise and talent of its industry members; its leadership investment is creating forward-thinking, ethical, flexible and responsive leaders for an industry that faces many current and future challenges and opportunities.

## About Graham Bonnett

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Graham Bonnett comes from an agricultural background in England where he studied agricultural science with an emphasis on crops. He was awarded a Bachelor of Science with Honours in Agricultural Science (Crops), and a Doctor of Philosophy, both from The University of Leeds, United Kingdom. His doctoral studies focused on the mobilisation of stem reserves in barley.

After completing his doctorate, Graham worked at the University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia on improving the quality of annual pasture before joining CSIRO in 1993. He has worked since in Canberra, Townsville, and for the past nine years, in Brisbane. In Queensland Graham has been working on understanding the growth and development of sugarcane and improving sugarcane varieties. Currently he leads the Advancing Agricultural Productivity and Environmental Health research theme of CSIRO's Sustainable Agricultural Flagship.

Graham is currently a member of the Gene Technology Technical Advisory Committee (GTTAC) and was Deputy Chair of ComBio 2011 (Cairns), the national meeting of several scientific societies.

In 2009 Graham was awarded the Queensland-Smithsonian Fellowship to further his work in sugarcane. Graham and his family spent five months at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) in Panama where he successfully conducted a comparative study of a wild relative of sugarcane that is an invasive weed in Panama but is much less invasive in Australia.

Graham is an active person who cycles to work every day and has competed in several triathlons over the past 12 months. He competes regularly in badminton competitions (he is president of the Queensland Masters Badminton Association) and enjoys spending quality time with the women in his life.

## Highlights of the program

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This year's TRAILblazers had a diverse range of leaders from the sugar, fisheries, cotton industries, agri-banking, an Indigenous pastoralist and a feedlot supply business. The intimate group of six proved to be one of the most valuable and enjoyed aspects of the program for the participants.

The four-day experiential phase was a highlight not only because of the nature of the setting and the activities, but also for the opportunity to engage at a practical and deep level with others in the exploration of personal leadership capacity and approaches.

The theory sessions provided an impact on individual's leadership thinking and frameworks and are designed for their practical application directly in the work place and industry.

Networking and the opportunity to meet other Fellows and members of the Foundation at the Graduation dinner extended the value of the program for future engagements, support, and collaboration.

## Results against course objectives

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Below is a table summarising the overall participant evaluation of the program against its stated objectives.

The outcomes were rated from: 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot).

Course Desired Outcomes	Overall score
I developed my personal leadership skills and style	4.5
I have expanded my leadership frameworks, concepts and strategies for a more resilient and robust approach to handling complex issues	4.0
I have established new relationships and networks with other leaders across sectors and regions	5.0
I have developed a fresh perspective and focus for my ongoing professional development and contribution to rural Australia.	4.7

**Australian Rural Leadership Foundation: TRAILblazers report to Client**

The participants' rating of each element of the program against its stated objectives is summarised below. Again, the scale used was: 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot).

<b>DiSC – did the session achieve the objectives:</b>	<b>Overall score</b>
I developed an understanding of how to work better with others	4.2
I understand personal behaviour preferences and how to adapt	4.2
<b>Outdoor Experiential Learning Activities – did the session achieve the objectives:</b>	
I developed personal leadership skills	4.2
I developed group communication skills	4.2
I developed self awareness	4.3
I gained understanding of group dynamics and how to affect them	4.3
<b>Political Leadership – did the session achieve the objectives:</b>	
I have a greater understanding of the pressures and differences in leading on behalf of others in the political arena	2.0
<b>Leadership Maturity Framework – did the session achieve the objectives:</b>	
I have a greater understanding of my personal stage of leadership development and how to evolve to the next level	3.5
I understand that in order to lead in more complex situations I need to evolve my leadership thinking and framework	4.2
<b>Crucial Conversations – did the session achieve the objectives:</b>	
I now have a focused and effective way of dealing with difficult conversations	4.2
I feel confident to be able to prepare for and undertake difficult conversations	4.2
<b>Julcy Thinking – did the session achieve the objectives:</b>	
I have new ways of looking at old problems	4.3
I have new practical strategies to address difficult, complex issues	4.5
<b>Social Media – did the session achieve the objectives:</b>	
I have new awareness of the role and impact of social media	4.7
I have a developed a personal action plan with regards to social media	3.5
<b>How to Think Like A Futurist – did the session achieve the objectives:</b>	
I have new approaches to dealing with long range strategic challenges	4.3
I know how to identify and respond to/plan for trends in my environment	4.2
<b>Masterminding – did the session achieve the objectives:</b>	
I have a clear plan on how to address my individual challenge	4.0
I now have a strong network of peers on whom I can rely for advice and support in the future	4.3

## Facilitators' Comments and Recommendations

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The program met all its objectives (4 out of 5 or above) in most categories. The areas that participants commented on for improvement are:

- “I have a greater understanding of the pressures and differences in leading on behalf of others in the political arena.” The speaker did not stick to the briefing and did not address some participant questions.
- “I have a greater understanding of my personal stage of leadership development and how to evolve to the next level”. The speaker spent too much time on earlier stages of development and not enough on interpretation of reports.
- “I have a developed a personal action plan with regards to social media”. The information was rich and appreciated, but there was not enough time to develop a personalised action plan.

The way in which these course components are covered will be revised prior to the next program.

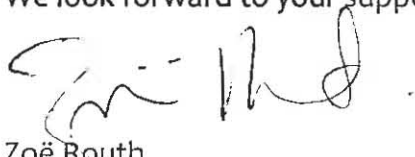
## Conclusion

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Thank you for your continued support of TRAILblazers and TRAIL, investing in both senior rural leaders and emerging leaders in the sugar cane industry.

Trailblazers is an annual highlight on the Foundation's calendar and offers a valuable opportunity for the development and support of senior leaders. It is also a great way to extend the network of accomplished and influential leaders in rural and regional Australia.

We look forward to your support on future programs.



Zoë Routh  
Manager – Short Course Development and Delivery

16 April 2012.

### Inclusions:

- Rural Leader
- USB of course photos