

The SA Soils Scoop

with LUCY PORTER

Building networks and sharing knowledge about the health and management of South Australian soils

The SA Regional Soils Coordinator role is part of a national network of Regional Soil Coordinators (RSC), *supported by the Australian Government through funding from the Climate-Smart Agriculture Program under the Natural Heritage Trust.*

The Regional Soil Coordinators work across all levels of industry to understand stakeholder needs and engage with regional and national networks to build the knowledge base and capacity in soil management. The RSCs aim to help inform, protect and develop healthy soils within agricultural systems.

Hi There,

Winter has arrived with some promising rains. Its been a steady start t the season.

Local programs

Regional Soil Coordinator Update:
Ten participants completed two days on hands on training for the Soil Science Australia Soil Management field training modules in Adelaide during May as part of their pathway for Registered Soil Practitioner accreditation. The training consisted of:

- Hands on experience with soil pits and soil cores to identify soil horizons
- Experience identifying soil textures and classification
- Field testing for pH, carbonates and water repellence
- Knowledge and experience sampling soil for laboratory analysis

The training was a great opportunity to build confidence in describing a soil within the landscape, understand what properties they have and what that means for how they may impact plant growth, nutrient balances, water retention and yields across paddocks.

Hort connections was held in Adelaide in early June. The event had a broad range of sessions and industry representatives, with over 4,000 delegates in attendance. Soil conversations were integrated across the event, included within the sustainability panel session discussions, fertiliser management sessions and composting topics.

I attended on the Wednesday, and my key highlights were:

- Learning about Artificial Intelligence from the National AI Centre on how these tools can be used to improve efficiencies and collate information across the value chain. Check out their website here for information on how to use AI in business, AI training, and resources Homepage | National AI Centre.
- AusVeg's plus one serve campaign to encourage Australians to eat one extra serve of vegetables per day Plus One Serve | AUSVEG
- Meeting the new Northern Hub Regional Soil Coordinator Oscar Giudici, who commenced the role in April.



Encouraging careers in Agriculture for the next generation:
Demonstrating at the Careers in Food and Fibre event at Golden Grove High School was a fantastic opportunity to promote soil careers. Staff from Adelaide University and the PIRSA Soil Collaboration Centre provided demonstrations on why we care for soils and what career options are available. We demonstrated soil structure with a soil core and 3D printed models, soil colour and relating it back to the parent material and weathering processes, soil chemistry through pH testing and nutrient availability and soil constraints through a water repellent soil demonstration. We discussed careers in soil research, technology, extension and policy.





Opportunities:

The 2026 grower survey for dry saline soils is open for feedback until Friday July 17.

The survey is aimed at farmers who have dry saline or magnesia patches on their farms, but responses are also useful from farmers who are unsure, only have small areas, or are just starting to notice patchy establishment.

This survey is about dry saline or magnesia patches — not Mallee seeps or watertable-related salinity. For more information and to fill in the survey visit AIREP's website: 2026 Grower Survey Open | Dry Saline Soils | AIR EP

PIRSA Soil Bursary Opportunity

The Soil Collaboration Centre SA Soils Bursary will be open from July 1, 2026 supporting individuals and groups to undertake soil professional development and capacity building activities. For more information visit the PIRSA Website: http://pir.sa.gov.au/scc

Upcoming CSIRO training for using ANSIS

Join the ANSIS team for a series of 1-hour online training sessions to help you better understand the range of ANSIS tools and help you get the soil data that you need. **ANSIS training 2026 – Australian National Soil Information System**

14 July 2026 - *Viewing soil data using the ANSIS site-report, visualiser and summary tools*

11 August 2026 - *Session 3: Using an API to connect directly to soil data via ANSIS*

National Programs:

From the Smart Soils National Community of Practice

National Community of Practice:

- Regional Soil Coordinators met in Cairns for their bi-annual meeting to tour the wet tropics region and atted the Enhanced Rock Weathering Symposium.

The group attended the Enhanced Rock Weathering Symposium at James Cook Uni to hear the latest in enhanced rock weathering research and support the Climate Smart Agriculture program. Key takeaways were:

- There are positive opportunities for carbon dioxide removal to be achieved on-farm by spreading crushed rock to soil.
- Research trials are underway, including here in South Australia, with a team at Adelaide Uni undertaking the trials to investigate the impact and viability in our region.
- Our dry climate is proving to be quate a challenge!
- More information is needed, with trials continuing into 2028 to collate data.
- Check out website for further information Enhanced Rock Weathering for Agriculture Field Trials | Australia

Highlights from the Soil tour were:

- Visiting a banana farm to learn about why maintaining a healthy soil biological community is important to them for potentially reducing their risk and susceptibility to banana panpanama disease and how they recycle banana leaves, under palm cover crops and their practices for improving soil health through in-row cover and disease management when high trafficability is required,
- learnt about phosphorus monitoring in waterways which is for monitoring sediments (turbidity) for protecting the great Barrier Reef,
- green manure crops and nitrogen reductions using Sunnhemp in sugarcane rotations
- meeting graziers using a Soilkee pasture renovation tool to introduce multi species pastures and incorporating green manuring to improve hard setting high magnesium soil by aiming to improve soil organic carbon.

Soil in profile: Young in Soil and Earth Sciences Society

South Australia has a quiet but growing movement happening beneath its feet. The Young in Soil and Earth Sciences Society (YISES) is a volunteer-run group dedicated to giving the next generation of scientists and environmental professionals the hands-on experience they need to build careers in soils, land management and environmental science. Founded in 2022 by Dr Emily Leyden and Luke Finn, the group was born from a simple observation: while online learning had brought flexibility to education, it had come at a cost. Students were completing degrees in environmental, agricultural and soil sciences, graduating technically literate but with limited practical experience in the field. YISES was created to fill that gap.

Inspired by Queensland's Soils Crew, a training and networking model that ran from 2010 to 2019, Emily and Luke saw that something similar was needed in South Australia and set about building it from scratch. A student-led committee quickly formed, events followed, and a community took shape. Today, that committee, which includes Alex Busch, Alice Sforza, Kate Matthews, Enqi Wu, Summer James, Emma Seeliger, Emily Leyden and Luke Finn, is largely composed of current students and recent graduates who have stayed on to give back. Emerging professionals are not just participants in YISES, they are its organisers and leaders.

Building Skills, Community and Careers in Soil Science

The group's mission is to inspire and connect the next generation of people who will work to sustainably manage soils, the land and the environment**.** They achieve this by delivering free and accessible, hands-on training in the field, mentoring and networking opportunities that build soil science capacity, strengthen career pathways and advance sustainable soil management knowledge across Australia.

Developed by students for students, the group runs:

- A network with over 180 members spanning students from both local Universities, TAFE SA, and early -career soil scientists working across academia, government and private industry
- Four soil pit training days each year held at various locations where students characterise soil pits, identify soil constraints, erosion risk, and assess land suitability for agriculture
- Quarterly networking nights or quiz nights which build community and member engagement
- Annual mentoring nights where students and industry professionals develop networks and relationships, discuss career pathways, experiences and learnings from their soil science careers
- Provide sponsorship support to send student and early-career teams to the National Soil Judging Competition each year

Committee member Alice Sforza describes what makes it worthwhile: "My favourite part is seeing participants arrive at a soil pit day feeling unsure and then walking away with real enthusiasm and more confidence in the Australian classification method. Seeing those same people go on to compete in the soil judging competition and grow into capable professionals, that makes everything we do as a committee feel incredibly rewarding."

Beyond technical skills, YISES opens doors that students often don't know exist. "A lot of people discover career pathways they had no idea were available," Alice says. "Agricultural extension, applied research, data and policy, land contamination and remediation, academic careers, these are all possibilities. Sitting down with professionals at mentoring nights and asking them about their day-to-day work helps people figure out what kind of role they actually want to pursue. That's why we believe those nights are just as important as soil pit days."

What is The National Soil Judging Competition (NSJC)?

Each year, YISES raises funds to send South Australian teams to the NSJC, a three-day professional development event where teams work with coaches to classify soils, identify landscape characteristics and apply the Australian Soil Classification standards in a structured, competitive format.

The first two days focus on intensive training across multiple soil pits. On the final day, participants are assessed individually and as teams across three pits. This year's competition will be held in Perth in October.

The results from YISES-supported teams have been outstanding. Highlights include:

- Sending a YISES member to represent Australia at the 2026 International Soil Judging Contest in Nanjing, China
- The student team placing 1st in the 2023 (Darwin) and 3rd in the 2025 (Armidale) competitions
- Two students placing in the top 10 individuals at the NZ Soil Judging competition in 2024
- Winning the 1st overall best team, 1st placed early career soil team, and 2nd student team, and 3rd placed individual early career categories in 2025 in Armidale

Get Involved

YISES is open to anyone who works with, studies or is curious about soils. Whether you are a student just starting out, a recent graduate finding your feet, or an experienced professional who wants to support the next generation, there is a place for you in this community.

The group's next event is a **Soil Horizons Workshop on Thursday 23 July**, led by soil expert Dr Mel Fraser. Using hands-on profiles, texture-by-feel exercises and Soil Hub virtual pit data, participants will describe soil horizons, identify constraints and assess land-use suitability across Eyre Peninsula soils.

Follow YISES on **Facebook, LinkedIn** and **Instagram** (@yises_adl) to stay across upcoming events.

YISES is entirely volunteer-run, with support from the South Australian branch of Soil Science Australia, a not for profit professional society of soil scientists. The group relies on sponsorship and fundraising to deliver its events and support teams at national competitions. If your organisation employs people who work with soils, or if you would like to sponsor a group that is actively building the next generation of soil professionals, get in touch with Emily Leyden (emily.leyden@adelaide.edu.au) or contact younginsoilsa@gmail.com.

Soil Events Calendar

JULY

TBA **YISES Zooming into Horizons workshop – Waite Campus Urrbrae Young in Soil and Earth Science society** Young in Soil and Earth Science Society Adelaide | Facebook

14 **CSIRO Online Training: Viewing soil data using the ANSIS site-report, visualiser and summary tools** - online ANSIS training 2026 – Australian National Soil Information System

21 **Hart Field Site Winter Walk – Hart** Hart Field Site Group - Winter Walk

29 **GRDC Grains Research Update – Cummins** GRDC Grains Research Update – Cummins - GRDC

30 **GRDC Grains Research Update – Streaky Bay** GRDC Grains Research Update – Streaky Bay - GRDC

31 **MNHRZ Winter Walk - Giles Corner** Mid North High Rainfall Zone

AUGUST

3 **Ag Excellence forum and Awards – Adelaide** Annual Forum by Ag Excellence

5 **GRDC Grains Research Update – Maitland** GRDC Grains Research Update – Maitland - GRDC

6 **GRDC Grains Research Update – Burra** GRDC Grains Research Update – Burra - GRDC

7 **UNFS Annual Expo - Melrose** 2026 UNFS Annual Expo – AG Excellence

11 **CSIRO online Training: Using an API to connect directly to soil data via ANSIS** ANSIS training 2026 – Australian National Soil Information System

14 **YISES Soil mentoring night Young in Soil and Earth Sciences Society - Location TBA Adelaide** Young in Soil and Earth Science Society Adelaide | Facebook

31 - Aug 1 **SPAA Australasian Precision Ag Symposium – Sydney** 2026 Australian Precision Ag Symposium

SEPTEMBER

TBA **YISES Soil Pit Day - Location TBA** Young in Soil and Earth Science Society Adelaide | Facebook

8 **AIREP Lower EP Crop Walk – Lower EP** AIR EP Lower EP Crop Walk (8 September 2026) | AIR EP

9 **SARDI MAC annual field day – Minnipa** SARDI MAC Annual Field Day (Minnipa, 9 Sept 2026) | AIR EP

15 **Hart Feld Site Hart Field Day - Hart** Hart Field Site Group - Hart Field Day

24 **MFMG Grain and Graze Field Day Western Flat** Events - Grain and Graze Field Day: Western Flat

25 **MNHRZ Spring Field Day** Mid North High Rainfall Zone

OCTOBER

11 **Hart Field Site Spring twilight Walk – Hart** Hart Field Site Group - Spring Twilight Walk

13-15 **Australian Almond Conference – Adelaide -** Events Archive - Australian Almonds

16-17 **State Landcare Conference – Murray Bridge** State Landcare Conference: Growing Strong Together - Landcare Association of South Australia Inc.

22 **MFMG Conmurra Field Day and Soil CRC Presentation - Conmurra** Events - Conmurra Field Day and Soil CRC presentation

25 **SAAL Central Australian Pastoral Bus Tour – Coober Pedy return** Central Australian Pastoral Bus Tour

28 **MFMG and FAR Australia Field Day: Bool Lagoon and Straun** Events - MFMG and FAR Australia Field Day: Bool Lagoon and Struan

28-31 **Soil Science Australia Australian Soil Judging Competition – Boorloo (Perth)** Soil Judging - Soil Science Australia

NOVEMBER

1-5 **Soil Science Australia National Conference - Boorloo (Perth)** Soil Science Australia National Conference

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SMART SOILS FOR AGRICULTURE

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