



LECTURER,

PRECISION AGRONOMY



MATT NOTLEY
Tocal COLLEGE



Department of
Primary Industries



PURPOSE OF YOUR ROLE

The major purpose of my role is to stay current on production technology to investigate the practical application and management impacts and then design courses around that. So I teach at three levels within the College; I am involved with the youth education program on campus, adult education online and I also run external courses across New South Wales with farmer groups.

How does that help build stronger primary industries?

The Department is all about stronger primary industries and building resilience, technology is going to have a big part to play in that in the future, especially in aiding management decisions. By using data, sensors and automating fairly mundane, labour intensive roles we can make more efficient, more productive and more profitable systems in our primary industries sector.



A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR ROLE

I am still studying so I do one or two hours of study before coming to work and I start work anywhere from 7 to 9am depending on what we've got on. During the work day I could be working with students, presenting lectures or doing practical activities, I could be in the central west of New South Wales hosting a grower group or running a webinar, I could be monitoring our paddock trials, or I could be marking online Diploma students. There is a lot of variety in this role!

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES THAT ARE USEFUL IN THIS ROLE?

- Communication and getting along with people, you meet a lot of different people and it is important to be able to connect with them all.
- Being able to read and understand information is definitely a key part of my role, and being able to see the potential for implementation of new ideas and technology.
- Being involved in a range of programs requires good organisational skills. From ensuring I have all the resources I need to run different courses in different locations to planning travel and even just time management is really important.



TRAINING / EDUCATION

The Certificate IV in Training and Assessment allows us to train under the vocational framework which is what the College operates under. To deliver any of the units that we offer we need to have be competent in that unit. So my Ag qualifications cover a lot of those and then we have other relevant skills. It is also important to have experience in the industry and to stay up-to-date, different industries deliver updates and those are really useful.

Quote

'Becoming more digitally aware and capable is going to become a really important skill set of agricultural workers.'

WHAT IMPACT DO YOU SEE TECHNOLOGY HAVING IN THIS FIELD IN THE NEXT 20 YEARS?

We are going to see a lot of automation and a lot of telemetry and data driven management. We are seeing some now and it is only going to become more important. It's going to become very important that farmers and new entrants into the industry make sure they are aware of how these systems work and how they can implement them in their day-to-day jobs. Becoming more digitally aware and capable is going to become a really important skill set of agricultural workers.



Working with the students and some of the other staff that I get to work in with, we always collaborate really well and try and get productive outcomes that meet the needs of our students. It's rewarding seeing someone learn to do something more advanced, more efficient and with a more profitable outcome.



I often get approached about technology that is just not of benefit to the industry yet. I spend a lot of time with students and farmers breaking it down to work out if there is a practical application on farm. Farming is changing so rapidly though, it may not be useful now but it could be with a few more years development.

DOES CREATIVITY PLAY A PART IN THIS ROLE?

We're constantly looking for new and improved ideas, ways of getting information out, new technology that's out and how it can benefit the industry. It requires thinking outside of what is current practice.



Staff Profile

BACKGROUND

I was born in Gosford and went to school on the Central Coast. My parents bought a block around Walcha which we became involved with as we were growing up. I always had a pretty strong connection with agriculture, I studied ag in high school, did work experience and worked at weekends on farms in the New England area.

I was a student at Tocal College and I did my Certificate III, IV and Diploma here. I did my Certificate III full time on campus and then Certificate IV as a trainee. That involved me working on a farm most of the time in a position based at a town called Beckom which is down near Wagga, in New South Wales. That was on a cropping enterprise with some prime lambs as well. I also studied my Diploma externally while working at the same place.

I've had a few roles, mostly based around being on farm and mostly around cropping farms including working at Elders for a short period of time - that was mostly in a livestock role and I decided that I really



liked cropping so I came back into the more agronomy technology side.

I am studying for a Bachelor of Agriculture through the University of New England in Armidale, by distance education while working at Tocal College. This is a great job, being part of training the next generation of Australian farmers, meeting a lot of current Australian farmers and seeing a lot of the state in the process!

