

**IF YOU DON'T
HAVE A GOAL FOR YOURSELF**

**THEN
SOMEBODY WILL HAVE ONE FOR YOU**

Bruce Ward

Making the most of managing holistically	2
An early introduction to high-input agriculture	3
Managing holistically in context	8
Wholes, parts and complexity	9
The essential difference between complicated and complex	10
Human relationships are also complex, rather than complicated	11
The past was not wrong, just the past...	12
Fifteen suggestions for achieving a holistic result	14
Suggestion No. 1 – Keep it simple.	15
Suggestion No. 2 – Use language that is ‘present tense’ and in the ‘first person’.	16
Suggestion No. 3 – Stand up to social pressures to spend your money.	17
Suggestion No. 4 – Dissolve internal opposition first.	19
Suggestion No. 5 – Think before throwing out old knowledge or skills.	20
Suggestion No. 6 – Always deal with the known.	21
Suggestion No. 7 – Change your target towards a single holistic goal.	22
Suggestion No. 8 – Hold regular meetings with all decision-makers.	24
Suggestion No. 9 – Behave like the investor you really are.	25
Suggestion No. 10 – If you have lumpy cash flows.	27
Suggestion No. 11 – Think Weak-link, and your production chain to new wealth.	29
Suggestion No. 12 – Take an active part in a support mechanism.	30
Suggestion No. 13 – Grazing is a tool, not a decision-making process.	31
Suggestion No. 14 – Assuming you could be wrong is the right thing to do.	33
Suggestion No. 15 – Pay it forward!	34
A few more points	35

Making the most of managing holistically

My daughter-in-law, Camilla, tells me that she feels all things to be, ‘peace, love and mung beans’! If you and your family are not yet meeting Camilla’s high standard, then this book is written for you! But, do you have to be a ‘hippie’ to get there? The answer is a resounding ‘No’. The most successful adopters around the world are amongst the most conservative people I have ever met. Success depends not on the clothes you wear, but on the attitude you have. When I ask effective people why they have made the changes they have made, they look me in the eyes and say, “Because it’s important!”

To the question, ‘Can managing holistically deliver what I want’, the answer is a resounding, ‘Yes’. Managing holistically delivers in spades once you are satisfied of two key things: Firstly, ‘Will it be worth me changing?’, and secondly, ‘Can I change what I am now doing?’ If you think there is any chance you can improve your land, your finances or your family’s relationships, then it seems to me that managing holistically would be a worthwhile change.

Can you change? Of course you can. Take just one step and you have begun. You do not have to be ‘right’ or ‘perfect’. Nobody ever manages perfectly. It’s an unrealistic fear that you should throw away right now and stick to what you always do – being the best you can be. Trust yourself, and use the built-in feedback mechanism to your advantage. If under the prevailing circumstances you were to accidentally make an incorrect decision, the feedback loop quickly alerts you. You are able to quickly make further decisions that adjust your heading, and pretty soon you will be back on course.

There is an issue with managing holistically that I should address. People sometimes tell me that the new language is off-putting and ask, “why can’t we use everyday language?”. The answer is in the statement: if this were already everyday thinking, this would be everyday language. It is not fair to think we can use the old language to describe new concepts, but of course, the trick is to keep the new language as direct and as clear as possible.

An early introduction to high-input agriculture

I suppose I should start by describing my competence to discuss managing holistically, because it has nothing to do with many years of working with farm families, discussing with them the fundamentals of Holistic Management®¹. I think that has helped to make me a somewhat competent teacher, and a person capable of becoming a resource – as well as confidant – to a great many wonderful people around the world. For this opportunity I will be forever grateful. My real competency to write this book is based on my own life experience, with memories stretching back more than fifty years. You will have had a similar but entirely different range of learning experiences. Let me share just a little part of mine.

A great thing about a human life is our ability to look backwards and review it. Hindsight of course, is said to provide each of us with 20:20 vision. How good is that! It means we can begin to understand why the experiences we have had influence our actions today. It is some of those experiences I want to share here. I hope I can interpret them in a way that might assist you get started and keep at managing holistically.

Without realising, I was reared within a low input agricultural environment that was coming under increasing stress from two directions: state government policy, and a family decision that intimately involved me, even though I did not know it at the time.

In the 1950's and 60's my family operated a grass-based dairy that was about average sized for the district. Unbelievable as it might seem now, a big dairy in our district would milk 60 cows. We were a mid-sized operation that milked around 45 wonderful cows, and every day of the year their fresh milk was trucked to the local co-operative. Until I was perhaps twelve years old, no cow on our farm ever received a single grain of supplement. We had a low cost irrigation system – a simple 25 horsepower electric powered pump capable of flood irrigating perhaps 75 hectares (185 acres) of pasture on our 106 hectare holding. On another non-irrigated property of 260 hectares we ran beef cattle, but really, it is the dairy that provides most of the learning in this story.



¹ Holistic Management is a set of management principles developed by Allan Savory www.savoryinstitute.com It is used to reverse degradation and restore profitability.

In the 1950's the NSW state government was politically concerned about continuity of supply of low-cost fresh milk for the major cities, especially the biggest, Sydney. The nation was still emerging from the austerity of World War II, so there was not a politician of any persuasion who cared to take on the odium or responsibility that accompanies food shortages. As a result, sensitive products like milk came under a production system that was based on "quotas". We lived in a 'milk quota' area and were therefore granted the privilege or right to deliver a specific volume of very attractively priced milk. In return our obligation was to deliver no less than the specified volume (or quota) every day. If we failed to meet the daily quota, we risked having all of our production for the day priced not at the high 'fresh milk' price, but the barely economic 'processing milk' price. It was a pretty good incentive to deliver our quota.

In hindsight this was a great example of one of my favourite sayings: *If you don't have a goal for yourself, then someone else has one for you.* The government clearly had one for us in the 1950's and 60's. Both the carrot and the stick were located at opposite ends of the same price spectrum. Crude, but effective!

As I turned 12, I was sent off to boarding school. A couple of years later my sister also started at boarding school. Three times each year we headed back to Sydney on the Northern Tablelands Express for our city education. Our parents knew full well the significant financial commitment they had undertaken, and were prepared to work hard to generate the money. However looking back, I now recognise that they did not see the very real and unexpressed effect of their education decision on our behalf. Like many other people they thought they had simply raised their costs, and that by working harder they could generate the extra money required. They missed the main point, which was that the cost of our education had also raised the overheads of their underlying business.

It is a matter of basic business reality that in the absence of either an offsetting reduction in variable costs or, alternatively, sufficient increase in productivity, an increase in overheads causes the break-even point to rise.

In order to produce more milk per cow, and therefore more turnover per cow, my father gradually started to introduce grain into their diet. On a per cow basis this made sense. However it involved an increase in infrastructure. We began, slowly at first, to

move away from the classical low-input farm. Ever so gradually new 'good ideas', often proposed by well-intentioned Department of Agriculture people, were considered and increasingly, adopted. Every time one was adopted production increased. So too did the overheads.

Then it was my turn to stoke the fire. I went off to agricultural college. For two entire years I was exposed to all of the latest and greatest innovation that money could buy. New machines that could each do more of their specific task were increasingly being developed, and often their selling point was that they could do the work so much faster. Who wouldn't want that! Variable costs were lowered. Higher quality feed rations produced more milk, and to make more use of the additional equipment, feed-lot feeding some steers also made sense. Before long we were running harder and harder to stand still, but hadn't yet realised it.

At this stage I haven't mentioned to you the change in the irrigation system. I converted the property into the largest single-pump spray irrigation system on the river. The 25 horsepower electric pump that had been around for years became a 250 horsepower diesel powered monster. Oh, and did I mention that the price of diesel fuel (which was 5 cents per litre on the day we committed to that engine and pump), had more than quadrupled a year later? In the heat of the moment, what does one do? Often, one does more of the same, re-doubling ones efforts and becoming ever more addicted to high-input agriculture.

So yes, I have been there. I know just how hard it is to break away from the high-input wagon train that measures success by things like 'higher yields', 'better water use efficiency', and 'greater labour efficiency'. I know what it is like to be surrounded by like-minded addicts all doing much the same thing, and of being advised by people who only know the same ways as you. It is terrible.

I also discovered something else as well. Very often outsiders can see that what you are doing is intrinsically wrong. In my case, they instinctively knew that what we were doing was wrong, and they tried to tell me. I dismissed their old-fashioned thoughts, and the concerns they expressed. Why would they suggest that anhydrous ammonia might turn our beautiful black-loam river soils into something resembling concrete? My suppliers had told me this was the 'best of the best' of new technologies. My friends, and relatives were correct of course, but not then. At least, not then in my eyes!

I was hooked into the classic linear management regime that drives high-input agriculture. Every piece of information I was given, including the amazing financial planning processes we learnt at agricultural college, reinforced the linear thinking that supported the model. Let me tell you a little secret: you would now believe it if I told you that the best and most powerful planning system we were taught at college had the name, *Linear Programming* (LP for short). How about that? My generation was being told what was happening but had no understanding of what it meant!

I know that you are entitled to call me dumb, but at no time did it seriously occur to me that what I was doing might have adverse ecological consequences. Certainly the people I respected as teachers didn't alert me, and in fact they encouraged all I was doing. Looking back, I'd have to say that on a couple of occasions I did think briefly about it, and decided our rich, healthy river flats could cope with a bit of biological mining. I suppose it is easy to convince yourself about untruths when you *want* to convince yourself of those untruths. Perhaps you have found this in your life as well.

As if you need further proof that I am uniquely qualified to write this book, I should quickly tell you about my five years in corporate agriculture. If, like me at the time, you are the general-manager and a director of a publicly listed company, and responsible for producing vast areas of irrigated cotton, there is only one test. That test of course is, money. I was paid handsomely to manage conventionally. You might wonder if we had concerns about the environment? Well, yes we did, but only so long as it didn't get too much in the way of the money. In truth, we thought we could sustain high-input agriculture indefinitely, but looking back there is not too much evidence to support our thinking.



Finally, I should tell you about a defining chapter in my life, one that actually made me think much more deeply. My wife, Suzie, and I leased some country near Moree, NSW, where we ran sheep. We were 'conservatively stocked', in accordance with the conditions of our lease, and I was beginning to think about the landscape a bit more. We, or more truthfully, I, decided to rotationally graze the eight or ten paddocks making up the property. You can probably guess by now that I didn't actually have a clue what I was doing. I had no idea

about plant recovery times and sigmoid curves. I had no idea that my real task was to manage not only the sheep but more importantly, the time allocated between each grazing of a paddock. I still naively thought overgrazing was nothing more than 'too many animals', and I knew I had that one covered.

In many ways the management decisions we made then meant those sheep were free to alter the landscape every bit as dramatically as the changes I supervised on that cotton farm of more than 30,000 hectares (75,000 acres). The difference was that the earthworks on the cotton farm were highly visual, and the changes were made rapidly, whereas the grazing land changed subtly and much more slowly.

The big bang over the head for me was the downward change in species composition on that leased property. Within a matter of years the pasture base moved down from perennials towards annuals, and barley grass was everywhere. I knew I had caused the change but I had no idea how. That single event was a major catalyst for me as I searched, trying to understand how and why land degraded. This was a search that eventually led me to meet Allan Savory, who on two continents had been helping ordinary families use his, at the time still controversial decision-making process. Everything Allan did was aimed solely at creating positive change on large areas of land, and he challenged a lot of conventional wisdom in the process. The changes were extraordinary.

There are three types of men: The ones who learn by reading; the few who learn by observation; and the rest of them have to pee on the electric fence to find out for themselves.
– Will Rogers

Managing holistically in context

In Australia, and around the world, thousands of people are now managing holistically. Some seem to be achieving more change – financially, ecologically and socially – than others. A few percent have positively changed every aspect of their lives and their world. Quite commonly though, in hindsight they find it difficult to explain to others what happened, usually because the changes seemed to just be elementary and unremarkable, even though it is clear they were profound! When I see the pleasure these families experience, I am filled with delight and pride on their behalf. I desperately desire that every family see and feel that same delight, and I hope that this book may contribute to the success of all others.

An outstanding characteristic of the people who have led the way in Australia – and elsewhere in the world – is this: their very presence on earth physically enhances the one and only planet we all share. Everyone managing holistically does that, because it is the only objective of the entire process. By following the few suggestions in this eBook, without even realising it, you will be too.

The first thing worth commenting upon is that successful families realised early on that simply adding the ‘sexy’ aspects of managing holistically onto their current management habits, practices, and thinking, would not lead them to success. A few of them

An outstanding characteristic of the people who have led the way in Australia – and elsewhere in the world – is this: their very presence on earth physically enhances the one and only planet we all share.

were well cashed up to start with, and I am sometimes told that, “it was easy for them, because they had money”. I don’t agree with that at all. In my opinion the people with money risked more by changing than the people who had already lost a great deal and were in ‘struggle street’. The great majority of families I have worked with were genuinely ‘doing it tough’, with no real hope of staying in agriculture if they continued down the current path. That is the encouraging part of the story – success depends on the people concerned. It cannot be ‘bought’.

Either way, cashed-up or struggling, the people involved realised that in order to get started they had to make a deliberate decision to change not only their habits and practices but most particularly, their decision-

making skills. In every case they consciously accepted and acknowledged that by beginning to make their core decisions holistically, and by re-considering every aspect of their life and business in relation to the their 'whole', they would and in fact do, make steady positive change.

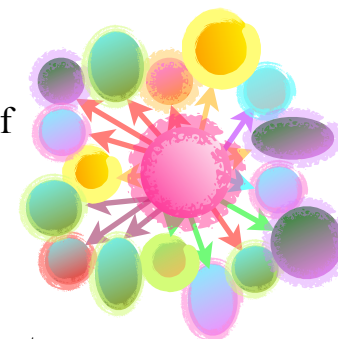
What does this mean in real life for you? It means that wherever you 'are' financially, socially or environmentally as you read this, the process of change begins when you acknowledge you are part of a unique entity, which I like to refer to as an *economic whole*. When managing holistically you look outwards from your individual economic whole towards a great many other economic wholes of which you are a part.

Wholes, parts and complexity

As an individual person you look outwards towards a great many other, perhaps very much larger, economic wholes, such as your family, farm, or business, and possibly other interests – for example a sporting club. Looking inwards you discover in turn that a human being such as yourself is comprised of whole organs such as your heart, lungs, liver, brain and so on. Whilst we each are made up from all of these things, together our own combination of them all leads us to become a unique whole.

When the economic whole that you are managing is a business, you will find you are looking outwards towards many smaller and larger economic wholes, including individuals and other business, and inwards to the people in your whole. The key point is that the wholes that make up 'you' are always unique, and the greater wholes of which you are a part are all utterly unique as well.

Each whole is *complex* in its nature. As in nature, for example, the 'whole' is permeable – we all breathe the same air and share the same water. You will notice, as in the drawing above, that there are no hard boundaries between wholes - they all have 'fuzzy' edges, and as a result every whole interacts with others in indescribably complex ways. Managing holistically is just a way of managing this complexity in a sensible and practical manner. It begins by looking at this complexity through a different lens.



For too long now, both individually and as a society we have allowed much of our thinking to be focused in the wrong direction. In particular we have tended to think that nature was made up of *parts*. For example, we have tended to see a rain forest as a 'part' of nature, and deserts as another, unrelated, 'part' of nature, when in reality there is no boundary between them, simply a gradation that blends over distance from one environmental extreme to the other.

Closer to home we can see why we have developed biocidal sprays that target specific organisms. We have long been selling ourselves the lie that these biocides only target a 'part' of nature – a weed or a pest in isolation, with no further outward effects. In practice nothing could be further from the truth.

Compounding this, it is human nature to always 'act in the way we think'. Let me explain: For far too long humans have been thinking in terms of something that does not even physically exist. I use the concocted description, 'natural parts', to describe the sheer stupidity of the notion that there are parts in and of nature. If these fictitious 'natural parts' become embedded in our thinking, then it follows that our decisions and actions will be directed towards managing each part separately, and we thus fail to see nature as a whole.

So can 'parts' exist? Well yes they can, and they do! The constructed world is made up of stunningly complicated mechanisms such as computers, telecommunications, machines, engines, aircraft, cars, bridges, factories and railway lines. Each is designed by humans, and made of parts. None of these components blend with nature or with each other. They all exhibit hard boundaries with nature. They fit rather than blend with each other.

The essential difference between complicated and complex

When the mechanical or electronic parts of a machine malfunction or are disrupted in some way, they can be replaced, and the apparatus will return to full function as if nothing adverse had occurred. I like to term mechanical and electronic equipment of any sort, whether large or small, 'complicated', in order to distinguish them from the 'complex' situations we manage in nature.

When something complex is disrupted, despite our best efforts it rarely returns to its original. For example, over time every square metre of a ploughed paddock will return towards its unploughed condition, but never will it return precisely to its original condition.

Human relationships are also complex, rather than complicated

Our relationships with each other, and with nature, are also complex rather than complicated. This is the reason why a disrupted relationship between two or more people or organisations can be restored with effort, but rarely to its original form, and never whilst we are thinking in 'parts'.

Humans have the ability, called *management*, to embrace and harness the power that is inherent in every complex whole. However, to take advantage of this opportunity and for us to permanently stop fighting with nature, we have to acknowledge that there is an 'air gap' between our capacity to 'think' holistically (something we are all pretty good at doing) and our ability to 'act' holistically. Managing holistically is nothing more than a process for bridging that gap – to be managing in terms of complexity rather than in parts.



Unfortunately we cannot look to ancient cultures for guidance in this matter, as there is abundant evidence that they also dealt with and were defeated on many occasions by land that was degraded through their own actions. The thing that is both different and alarming for us is our enhanced capacity to cause degradation more even quickly. This capacity comes about primarily because we have combined the tool of *technology* (which may not be much more advanced than that of others before us, but we have 'more' of it) with our accelerated use of the tools of *grazing* as overgrazing, and *rest* as over-rest.

The past was not wrong, just the past...

Adopting a new view of the world doesn't mean that all you have ever known or done before was wrong. That is so very far from the truth. It just means that we are each capable of (and encouraged to) look at things from a different perspective – it's the different lens that I referred to earlier. The view from the top of a hill is different to the view from the bottom, and this difference has on more than one occasion lead to people making different decisions from different perspectives. When one begins managing holistically, one should not throw out their old knowledge or skills before deep reflection. Instead, they should re-assess their suitability and application from an entirely different perspective.

I have now come to realise that one of the greatest impediments people face when managing holistically is that terrible little voice that we all have. It resides in our mind, constantly warning us that change (even if only a change of viewpoint on a subject) is potentially scary or dangerous. Far too often that wretched little voice tells way too many people that beginning to manage holistically is as scary as say, being forcibly made to stand naked and alone before a huge crowd. Most people seem to consider such a publicly naked activity an inherently scary concept, and an activity they would rather like to avoid. Yet interestingly, on March 1st 2010 more than 5,000 people simultaneously posed naked on the steps of the Sydney Opera House. What, you might wonder, made the difference? I surmise that the people on the Opera House steps were comforted by knowing they were not alone, and that they were part of a safe crowd sharing a common purpose. I want you to have that same 'safe' feeling when managing holistically.

When one begins managing holistically, one should not throw out their old knowledge or skills before deep reflection. Instead, they should re-assess their suitability and application from an entirely different perspective.

That little voice in our head is protecting the past, and that's why it wants us to stop changing things. The little voice emanates from the *amygdala*, a pre-historic almond-shaped feature we all have. Renowned American marketing expert, Seth Godin, refers to it as our *lizard brain*. It is located near our brain stem and is involved in the development of, and our response to, fear. Fear is one of the two major human emotions. The other is love. Fear of course can readily arise when we challenge the status-quo i.e. when we challenge the 'way we do things now'.

It is an utterly irrational contradiction to discover that whilst we say we desire something different – for instance movement towards our holistic goal – we actively work to avoid the very change that is required to achieve it, either by doing nothing or even more curiously, by taking actions that actually sabotage movement. Stunning as it may be, for many people it seems that the closer they are to the point of change, the more resistant they become to enacting the change. Humans will sometimes sabotage their life rather than change. When this occurs we are in the grip of the “Don’t do it” syndrome, the single greatest impediment to managing holistically.

In the next section are a series of fifteen suggestions that have been shown to assist people embark on – and sustain – the change.

Fifteen suggestions for achieving a holistic result

After many years of watching I have concluded that whenever people report difficulty in managing holistically there is a common factor. It is related to the fear factor mentioned earlier. It is human behaviour to avoid risks, in this case the 'risk' is associated with the change in decision-making, and by inference, the unknown changes in farm and business practices. In order to avoid the risks I have noticed that people will 'cherry-pick' what they think are the 'good' or 'safe' bits, leaving out the aspects they feel are either harder to do, or more risky. I don't think this is 'laziness'. It is either lack of confidence in the entire process, or lack of understanding about the process. Both can be overcome, but probably not on your own.

People often end up taking what may be the longest way between the start and the finish: it's called a shortcut. They do this by *adding* aspects of managing holistically *onto* their current management habits and practices. Unfortunately these are all too often the practices created or invented by others for the specific purpose of managing those non-existent 'natural parts' that were mentioned earlier. This approach is doomed to failure as it is no different to the relationship between oil and water, neither of which mix readily with the other!

So, here is a list of suggestions for you to consider. In writing these I have assumed that you either have had some exposure to the process of managing holistically, or have recently made the decision to begin managing holistically, and would like some additional guidance. There are many other resources available in various sections of the website that will assist you in the process you have embarked on.

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Sometimes people loathe thought of a new behaviour because they lack adequate information to judge it correctly. They imagine what a new behaviour will feel like, and their predictions come up negative. Unfortunately, they're often wrong.

- *Influencer*, by Al Switzler and associates

Suggestion No. 1 - Keep it simple.

Why: Far too often I come across businesses and people who are just way too busy. Agricultural businesses are amongst the worst, as they usually have too many enterprises, and the people have too many tasks for the finite hours in a day.

How: Take a deep breath. Take time out and look at each enterprise from a couple of perspectives. Firstly, check the Gross Profit. Is every enterprise actually producing a high gross profit? If not, fix or cull. Then have a good look at whether you are running competing rather than complementary enterprises. This is a challenging task because it questions a great many long-standing traditions, and it can be scary. For instance, because every animal is fighting for exactly the same blade of grass, cattle and sheep are competing enterprises. An example of a complementary mix might be either cattle or sheep run in conjunction with pastured poultry. They are complementary enterprises because the large animals move ahead of the small ones, conditioning and preparing quality pastures for the smaller animals, but not seeking to eat the same grass.

Resources: Take time to think about your enterprises. Ask and answer the above questions truthfully, as the answers will help you think through different ways of doing things. In particular, test what would happen to the profitability of the remaining enterprise if you removed one or more enterprises that are competing for the same resources – usually your grass, time or money. Can you decrease the number of mobs by joining them together? This action automatically increases the number of paddocks per mob, and as a result you grow more grass on the entire property. You are on the way to the change that is worth it. It can be done.

Things to look out for: Make sure new enterprises really are complementary to each other, and your life. It is highly doubtful that you have a deficiency of available work, so don't add more! Instead, make the enterprises work for you.

No. 1 big hint for this suggestion: Be truthful about what is happening now. If you are so busy that you have no time for doing the things you want to be doing, stop doing some of the things preventing your quality of life.

Suggestion No. 2 - Use language that is 'present tense' and in the 'first person'.

Why: The engine room of managing holistically is your *holisticgoal*. You'll find that including words such as 'we are', 'we have', 'there is', and so on in your *holisticgoal* develops a positive creative tension between what exists now, and what you desire.

How: This suggestion is based on a field of human science known as neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), and is perhaps the easiest of the suggestions to adopt. It works because your sub-conscious mind always wants to move you towards desirable things, but in order to help you it first needs to know what you consciously consider to be 'desirable things'. The objective is quite straightforward: give your mind something definite to feed on, and it will go to work on your behalf. By using words in the first person, present tense, you deliver movement towards your *holisticgoal* far more easily because you are leveraging the most powerful tool in the entire toolbox, *human creativity*. Give your mind a fighting chance, it wants to help you!

Resources: Something that can readily be done is to pull out your *holisticgoal* and review it. As a group, challenge all of the words in your *holisticgoal*, ensuring they genuinely reflect the way you all want your lives to be, based on your deepest values. Check that what you want is expressed in positive ways.

Things to look out for: It is very easy to insert negatives into your words e.g 'we want less stress'. I would not mention the words you don't require in your life. Be careful instead to mention the things you desire, such as pleasure, prosperity, great relationships and so on, and be surprised when the undesirable evaporates. The other thing to look out for is what I term "how-to's". A how-to is any rigid description of what you do, so try and avoid them. For instance, the value underlying holidays is more likely the notion of 'ample leisure time' rather than 'four weeks annual leave', which numerically, is a clearly defined how-to.

No. 1 big hint for this suggestion: Revisit your *holisticgoal* frequently. The more you do, the tighter and more aligned it will be to you and your family.

Suggestion No. 3 - Stand up to social pressures to spend your money.

Why: In the absence of a goal for yourself, other people always have one for you. You can be pretty sure that their goal will eventually cost you money, very often unnecessarily.

How: People happily buy things when they trust the vendor. Agri-business companies give free trips to the football, a cricket test, or the Grand Prix. Those companies know that when their largesse is carefully executed the recipients will place greater value the 'social' benefit of the 'gift', and will question less the underlying rationale or need for the company's products. Trust is the key word here. The more you trust a supplier the less you will challenge them, and this applies even when you know that using a product is in conflict with your intuition.

Resources: Use the *Cause and Effect* testing guideline at every opportunity (*"Does this action address the root cause of the problem"*). You may find that many of the inputs now used in agriculture would be totally unnecessary on your property (or the need would be limited), should your production model be altered. So, design yourself a different production model! Trust yourself in this regard. You know far more than you think you know about all of this!! There are a great many success stories at home in your own country, and from around the world. Study and learn from them, and then test the underlying concepts towards your own holistic goal.

Things to look out for: You have all of the resources needed for you to continually challenge the purpose of – and reason for – every action you take. I have found that the people who adopt this suggestion are the people creating the most 'True Profit' year in, year out. A true profit is a cash surplus produced every year as you increase the biological wealth of your land. After all expenses have been paid, these people still tend to retain more than 50% from every dollar of sales they make.

People sometimes tell me that they are too small to be financially strong. In my experience the least noticed but most profitable people are single enterprise, carefully focused small operators, but you do need to remember what one skilled practitioner once said

to me, “It is hard remaining a low cost producer, because unless you are very careful, it is so easy to be convinced of the need to spend money.”

No. 1 big hint for this suggestion: Don't try to copy somebody else's production model. There are two reasons why this won't work for you: 1) If all you do is use a direct copy of somebody else's model, you simply will not have put sufficient mental effort or capital into the subject; and 2), your economic whole is not the same as any other economic whole on the planet, so what works for you is almost certainly inappropriate for others, and vice versa.

No. 2 big hint for this suggestion: There is a huge difference between ‘not spending money’, and ‘not spending money on the wrong things’. Almost all agricultural inputs are petro-chemical based – in other words they are a dense form of energy. Every farm needs a certain amount of energy inputs in order to operate at a productive/profitable level. If one of the energy sources (say for instance, fertiliser) is removed then, without a compensating alternative energy being added, the entire production system must sink to a lower level of production or outputs. Things become financially difficult.

The good news is that sunlight, which is the most accessible and dominant energy source for a farm, is free. Of course, to capture more sunlight than is being captured now requires a change of management, and very often that is directly related to grazing management. Refer to Suggestion No. 13 to see why grazing management is so important, and why managing your grazing holistically is crucial.

No. 3 big hint for this suggestion: Do the mental work needed, make the changes required for yourself and your family, stop unnecessarily spending money on energy, and most excitingly, buy your own tickets for your entire family to the entertainment of your choice! It will be more meaningful and more fun.

Suggestion No. 4 - Dissolve internal opposition first.

Why: Sometimes a member of the family has not yet 'signed up' to the idea of managing holistically. If these people are decision-makers, then you must get them on side before continuing, otherwise they will quite likely derail your best efforts.

How: People are usually resistant to change because of fear, so the thing to be done is to break down their fear. There are two questions driving their fear: 'Is it going to be worthwhile', and 'can we do it?'

Resources: A thing that you can easily and inexpensively do is to take advantage of the best resource of all – farmers learning from other farmers. Take people who are concerned or worried to field days, and encourage them to hear and see what others are doing. Suggest they make phone calls to people they respect. Here are three questions you could suggest they ask of other people:

1. What was your biggest concern when you first started managing holistically?
2. How did these concerns turn out in reality?
3. What has the new management meant for you, your family, your land, and your business?

Things to look out for: Many people become fearful that all of their old knowledge is about to be discarded and replaced by new-fangled ideas. Assure them that all existing knowledge is important and will be considered. It will be looked at in a different way, based on new information that wasn't available to previous generations. Be aware that some people take longer than others to accept that a situation might need changing.

No 1 big hint for this suggestion: Respect people's individuality. Pushing too hard too soon can make the task harder rather than easier.

Suggestion No. 5 - Think before throwing out old knowledge or skills.

Why: Although we don't fully understand it, there are thousands of years of wisdom in existing knowledge, and we should never lose sight of this gift. However, that doesn't mean that using existing knowledge unquestioningly or in the current way is either the right or best way. There might be a habit or behaviour we continue to use because we have failed to challenge it, as life has moved on.

How: Challenge each bit of knowledge in the light of the six tools and the four key insights of brittleness, the role of time in managing landscapes, the role of predators in managing time, and most importantly, holism itself.

Resources: Humans respond well to seeing what others have done. An excellent resource is other people who are 'managing holistically' effectively. Remember, there is almost nothing new under the sun. Someone has always done before what you seek to do now, so find and learn from those people. Go back and re-read Suggestion No. 4 as well (Dissolve human conflict first).

As in so many instances, the major resource is within your family. If you care about each other enough, you will find a way to make an agreement amongst yourselves. The agreement is that you will challenge every aspect of what happens on your place and in the business. Ask yourselves, "Why do we do this thing this way?", and keep delving deeper and deeper. If necessary, use the "Five whys" process¹.

Things to look out for: Beware of the cookie-cutter approach. What works for others may not work for you, as their whole is not your whole!

No. 1 big hint for this suggestion: Challenge every little aspect of what you do. It is consistent with the foundation of managing holistically: when dealing with complexity you could be wrong.

¹ Ask 'why' something is happening. When you have arrived at the answer, ask why that occurred. When you have determined that answer, again ask why that thing occurred. Usually, by the fifth 'why' you will be at the root of a problem, rather than still considering symptoms.

Suggestion No. 6 - Always deal with the known.

Why: It is my observation that when people try to ‘punt’, especially against nature, in the long run farms can be taken from families who love their land. As you have a business model that, for instance, sees you punting the timely arrival of a seasonal break each year, you have a high-risk model. If the break is late, in truth you have no idea when the pain will end, and what the consequences might be. I find that in the long run, dealing with the known is so much more productive for mere mortals. Sure, occasionally the punt works, but it’s usually more good luck than good management, and it can be pretty stressful in its execution.

How: When managing holistically there are a host of ways to avoid the punt. For example, a *closed grazing plan* is the perfect tool to develop at the start of a non-growing season. Adjustments can then be made early, should the plan show a shortfall of feed. When trading livestock, the sell/buy approach removes the punt inherent in a buy-hold-sell approach, which is more aptly called speculating. Cropping people can avoid the punt by dealing with lumpy cash flows in an entirely different way, as shown in Suggestion No. 10. Use the skills in your family. Some people are better at some aspects of managing holistically, and some are better at other aspects. Play to your strengths, and use every card in the pack.

Resources: A proper *holistic grazing plan* is essential if you have concerns around carrying all of the stock now on hand. Ensure you create a *Closed Plan* when growth is coming to an end. In the growing season ensure there are sufficient pasture cages working in the paddock. They are a crucial bit of kit for monitoring the *Open Plan*. When combined, these resources enable you to react quickly and correctly when conditions change. Of course, a well-monitored *holistic financial plan* provides you an early-warning alert when things have deviated from plan, and corrections are far more simple and less painful that way.

Things to look out for: Always look out for the two giant weaknesses that are inherent in the agricultural mindset – people who simultaneously deny that a problem exists, and hope that it will all just go away. Avoid “hope based on denial of the truth”.

No. 1 big hint for this suggestion: Take action. Don’t bet the farm against nature. You could become road-kill.

Suggestion No. 7 - Change your target towards a single *holisticgoal*.

Why: In terms of simplicity it doesn't come much better than developing a single, all encompassing *holisticgoal* that describes precisely what everyone involved desires.

How: Sit all of the decision-makers down, with the stated purpose of beginning to manage holistically. It takes just one step to start. Make sure your *holisticgoal* contains no words about how you will achieve your outcomes. Tie a properly constructed *holistic financial plan*, a *holistic grazing plan*, and your *land plan* to your *holisticgoal*, and pretty soon the part of the world you are responsible for will become a greener, calmer place. You and your family will become planet-positive, and that is something only farmers like you can achieve.

It is a really brilliant idea to get away from your own dung-hill. Go somewhere neutral and pleasant when defining your economic whole and forming your *holisticgoal* for that whole.

Resources required: The number one resource required is ample time to do the job justice. Make at least half a day of clear time available. A day or more is much better. It is a really brilliant idea to get away from your own dung-hill. Go somewhere neutral and pleasant whilst you are defining your *economic whole* and forming your *holisticgoal* for that whole. In addition, you probably need to download the paper-work from our web-site that helps you write down both the *economic whole* you are defining, and the *holisticgoal* you are creating. You might find it useful to watch the related video – or listen to the audio – around this subject.

It is usually beneficial to have someone else facilitate these sessions. That person needs to be either an educator or a very competent practitioner who is skilled in assisting families form their *holisticgoal*. Because of its structure someone who does not know the process will not be able to assist.

Things to look out for: Whatever you do, it is vital to ensure that: 1) there are no interruptions – such as people jumping up to answer the phone or the two-way radio; 2) there are no emails requiring urgent attention; and 3) no visitors or staff require attention

during your meeting. On this occasion there should be no young children in the vicinity demanding attention, so get someone to look after them for however long is required. Somebody else can put a band-aid on a bruised knee, and kiss it better!

Involve kids from eight or ten years onwards and appreciate that children are wise beyond their years when they are given the opportunity to express themselves. After they speak, ensure you show them that they have been clearly heard. That is a real skill, as you have to listen deeply to what they say. On a number of occasions I have watched the words of children dramatically crystallise new thinking within their parents' minds, in most unexpected and beneficial ways. What ever you do, don't force children to stay in the meeting all the time, because it doesn't work!

Finally, ensure that no animals require moving in the middle of this process. I can tell you that nothing disrupts the effectiveness of the goal-setting process more than people wandering out into the paddock to shift animals. Animals are a very useful distraction for those who would rather not be involved!! Finally, even though you may wish to be as inclusive as possible in a family farm situation, I would not involve any staff in this session. They come later in the process.

Number 1 big hint for this suggestion: Begin by ensuring you have covered Suggestion No. 1 (Keep it Simple). It's your life you are working on, so do the job properly.

Suggestion No. 8 - Hold regular meetings with all decision-makers.

Why: Managing an *economic whole* holistically requires what is termed ‘collaborative management’.

How: Set a regular time for properly constructed meetings, and make sure you actually meet at the due time! Making the meetings a habit is crucial to your success, and in families especially, it is easy to just let them slide. The family is the loser in the end though.

Resources: Collaborative management requires the people involved to be open and honest with each other, but of course, people will only act this way when the emotional environment they operate in is appropriate.

The single most important resource required is to ensure that everyone in the *economic whole* gains adequate knowledge about the difference between the most common form of meeting structure, what are called ‘Co-operating meetings’, and the harder to manage but much more successful form of meeting called a ‘Collaborative meeting’.

Things to look out for: Be careful to avoid meetings becoming safe places, where everyone successfully avoids dealing with the difficult issues. This leads to an unrecognised form of the school game that used to be known as ‘chicken’. When ‘chicken’ occurs, everybody in the room is desperately avoiding being the first to disclose their true feelings about a subject, perhaps because they fear ridicule. That fear is very often fed internally by their private feelings (sometimes real but often imagined) that they are letting the side down in some manner, and they are concerned to “put their hand up” for help.

No. 1 big hint for this suggestion: The chairman of a meeting always needs to disclose that s/he will conduct the meeting ‘Collaboratively’. If the people think they are attending a normal co-operative form of meeting, but the chairman attempts to run a more emotionally advanced ‘collaborative’ meeting, confusion and trouble can emerge. If it does, halt the meeting and get the rules sorted out.

Suggestion No. 9 - Behave like the investor you really are.

Why: A business requires a number of different skill bases. First and foremost it needs people to direct the business. Then it needs managers who implement the directions given.

How: The idea of treating yourself as an investor and director first, rather than simply as a farmer/manager, is a serious mindset change for most people! In the business world there are two key aspects of company administration. There are directors, and there are managers. Directors are appointed specifically to set the direction and framework of the business i.e. what it is about. These are fundamental business decisions. Along with this they establish the broad policies (but not the detail) surrounding how the managers will manage the business. Senior managers are employed to implement the direction of the business. If the senior managers are not up to it, they go.

It seems to me that too often farm families are so busy working in their business that they forget that first and foremost they are “investors” in this significant and important thing – their farm business. They forget to set the direction of the business, and find themselves continually reacting to circumstances rather than creating their circumstances. They tend to think of themselves as “operators” of a farming business rather than as investors in a farming business, even though much of their wealth is tied up in this single investment. By starting to think like independent directors, family members assume the authority necessary to instruct their executive directors and senior managers regarding the direction in which their business is to be managed.

Imagine regular family meetings when the decision-makers are acting as directors rather than simply as managers! Imagine what would be the effect if the board of directors began to tell the senior management how the business was performing, and if this performance was unsatisfactory, the consequences. Imagine the fun of alternatively acting as a family of directors making the decisions that directors make, and then later on, meeting as a family of managers who are receiving these directions, and planning how to execute them. If that doesn't change one's head space, I'd be surprised!

Resources: The first resource is you and your family. Consider making every second or third of your regular family meetings a place to think strategically. Instead of talking about *how* you are running your cows, sheep, goats, or crops, change tack and challenge *why*. For instance, you could look at your current enterprises and ask such questions: ‘do we have any form of natural advantage for any of the enterprises we conduct?’, ‘Have we fully captured the advantage we have, or could we do more?’, ‘Are we engaged in enterprises where we are not sufficiently in control of our destiny?’. Believe me, an independent investor would want to know the answers to those questions, and many more like them. So should you.

A high level resource is the Australian Institute of Company Directors where you can get formal training in the role. If you are not yet ready for this, then begin to role-play some ideas within your family, and see what develops.

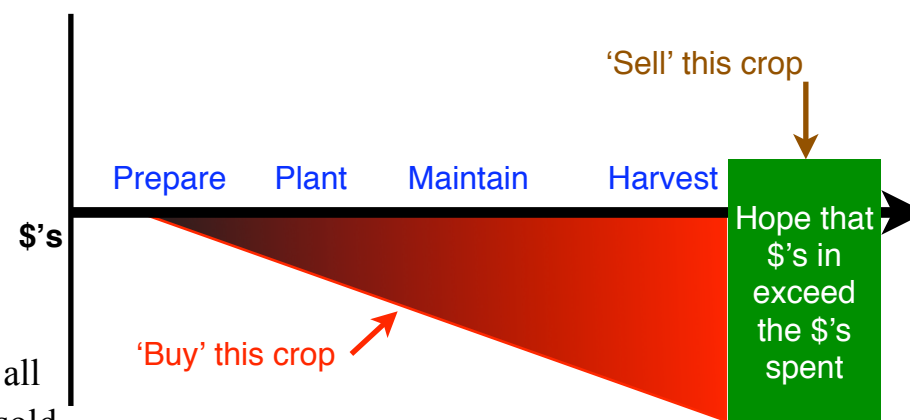
Things to look out for: There is a vital distinction between the role required of the people setting the direction of a business, whether it be it large or small, and of the people chosen to manage the business. Both are important, and in many businesses one of them is often lacking.

No. 1 big hint for this suggestion: Acknowledge that other industries have processes that might be adapted and valuable for your business.

Suggestion No. 10 - If you have lumpy cash flows.

Why: This issue is related to 'deal with the known'. The approach described here relieves you of a lot of stress.

How: Using the 'Buy-Sell' approach, cropping people traditionally create a budget that looks like the image to the right: they plan and then spend money preparing the ground, planting the crop and applying inputs, protecting the crop; and finally, harvesting and freighting it. In due course receive whatever money the market is willing to pay for the crop. Put simply, they gamble that the money received at the end will be greater than all of the money previously spent. Wool growers operate in much the same way, spending money all year, hoping that they will receive a sufficient price when the wool is sold.



Although it has previously happened, it is rare for input costs to alter violently within a season. So, whilst most crop input costs can be anticipated with a high degree of certainty the same cannot be said about either the yield that will be harvested, or the price that will be received. Both are remarkably volatile, not only between seasons but also within a season, and both are largely outside the control of a farmer. It's possible to do a year's work for little or no financial benefit.

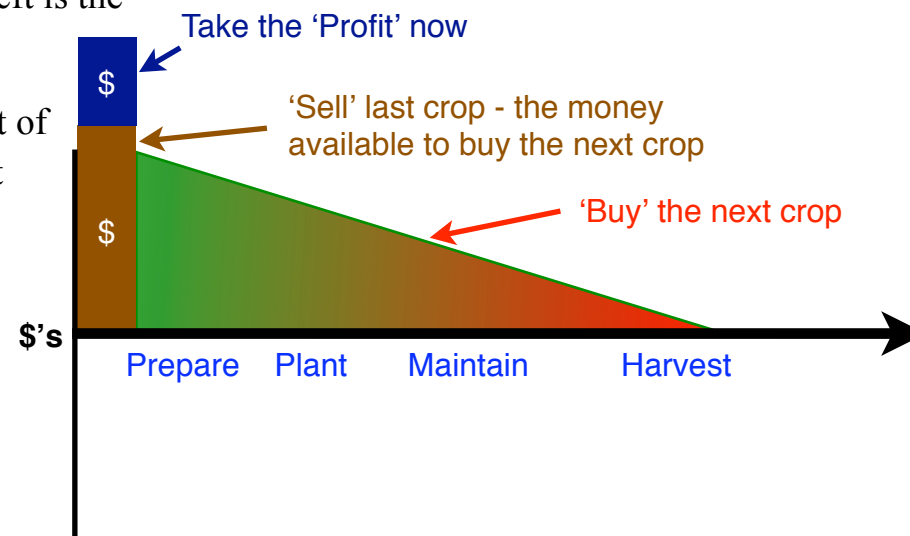
A no-cost risk management strategy that works is a variation of the sell/buy strategy now being used by enterprising graziers. It is the same model used by savvy retailers (and when you get your mind around it you understand how retailers make money selling electronic goods that constantly get cheaper). It works because people are dealing with the known (See Suggestion No. 6). Using the *Sell-Buy* approach shown in the image on the following page, the farmer calculates the gross value of the most recently harvested crop (or wool clip). This calculation doesn't have to be correct to the last cent. From gross value of the money 'in the

bank', deduct all of the expected expenses in growing, harvesting and delivering the next crop or clip. Whilst not precisely known, these are relatively predictable. Figuratively, the manager is saying: 'I have recently harvested and stored in the silo or shed a certain amount of money. After taking my desired profit, the money left is the money available to grow and harvest our next crop or wool clip.'

If the value of money in the silo or shed now is greater than the cost of growing a new one and replacing it in the silo in a years time, the next crop or clip may be worth growing. If the money in the silo or shed now

is less than the cost of its replacement, then growing the next crop is most likely locking you into a loss. It is time to think more deeply!

Resources: You need little more than a quick calculation of the value of the recently delivered crop or wool clip, and the same information you would use when calculating a conventional crop or livestock budget. You are simply looking at the data in a different way.



Things to look out for: This approach does not rely on predicting either the yield or price of a future crop or wool clip, only the cost of growing it. After each harvest, the process is repeated. The logic is straightforward: each year there is another harvest of known value in the silo or shed. From this, one can deduct the future cost of its replacement. The process works year after year, always minimising the risk of the bad decisions that inevitably occur when depending on unreliable information.

No. 1 big hint for this suggestion: It often pays to analyse the financial effects of a future crop two ways, both conventionally and this way. By doing this you get a double check that should prevent you from ploughing straight into a potential financial mine-field.

Suggestion No. 11 - Think Weak-link, and your production chain to new wealth.

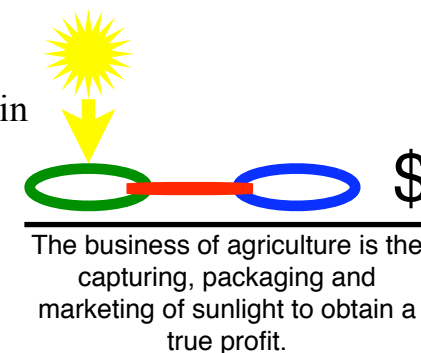
Why: This simple piece of thinking will save you more money than just about anything else you can do.

How: Just as strengthening any link other than the weakest link in a piece of real chain is a total waste of your time and effort, spending a single scarce dollar on any link other than the weakest link in the production chain from sunlight to money in the bank is an even more devastating waste of time and money. From years of painful observation, I have seen that a great deal of money that is wasted every year by far too many farmers!

Resources: Follow the steps in the holistic financial planning section of the Holistic Management handbook. Use the best resource you have at hand, which is your capacity to think, your *human creativity*.

Things to look out for: In most livestock enterprises it is pretty simple. If feed in short supply the problem is likely a 'resource link' issue. If there is an abundance of feed then you are probably looking at a 'product conversion' weak link. If it's neither of these, you possibly have a 'marketing' weak link issue. In a cropping situation poor crop health is indicative of a resource link issue. Losses at or after harvest would indicate a product conversion problem, whilst low prices would likely indicate a marketing weak link.

No. 1 big hint for this suggestion: Take time to think the situation through. Be very careful you do not run into the problem of desperately 'wanting' something, and twisting the evidence of where your weak-link really is, in order to meet a personal rather than business need. Don't make knee-jerk decisions!



Suggestion No. 12 - Take an active part in a support mechanism.

Why: It is difficult to make change on your lonesome, and only a few ever succeed. Don't bet on you being one of the few, because returning to old habits and behaviours is natural, and it's very hard to resist. Until it is pointed out to the perpetrators, all too often the people concerned do not even realise they have regressed!

How: If you are not already part of a group, then allow us to introduce you to like-minded people. You can choose to form or join local groups, or join the shared experience of people from around the world who are using the internet. If all of that fails, make a 'buddy' arrangement with someone you know and trust – someone who also wants to grow their knowledge.

Resources: Form or find a local support group. If you cannot do that, look at using technology for your benefit. Relatively high-speed internet services are now accessible to many people around the world using 3G wireless systems.

If you are working with a buddy, as much as possible try and make it a family arrangement. I know of two families who meet every month. In this case it is the blokes who check each other's graze plan for defects. Then in the paddock they work together to reassess each other's available feed reserves, in order to ensure they are each maximising their opportunities. Then it's home for lunch with all the family, including the kids, and to report on their findings. As a group they then make decisions for the next month. And do you know what, it is working for them.

Things to look out for: In my opinion, it is important to join up with people you are comfortable with. The downside of course is that it all gets too comfortable, and people lose the incentive or desire to challenge and confront each other in a caring manner. Change is constant, and it sometimes requires challenge from outside before people are able to consider and test possible changes in a considered manner, rather than rushing in wildly with knee-jerk solutions.

No. 1 big hint for this suggestion: Commit to working with others in order to change yourself. It might seem scary but it is important.

Suggestion No. 13 - Grazing is a tool, not a decision-making process.

Why?: Confusing the *tool* of grazing with the act of *decision-making* is the single biggest factor preventing people obtaining the full benefit of managing holistically.

How: Decision-making is not location specific. It happens in towns and cities, as well as on farms. Only on the farm though, do people need to use the highly visible *tool* called grazing. Regrettably this can lead people to confuse the effect of this very powerful tool with the entire process called *managing holistically*.

Resources: First and foremost you must have an *holisticgoal*. The only long term reason you would mess with grazing planning is conviction that it will lead you to the quality of life you desire, and only an *holisticgoal* describes that quality of life from a social, financial and ecological perspective.

Once you have your *holisticgoal*, you then use the combination of a holistic *Grazing Planning & Control Sheet* and an *Aide Memoire for Grazing Planning*.

Things to look out for: Once you have tested the decision to adopt grazing planning, be on the lookout for indicators that you have deviated from grazing planning and gone back to rotational grazing. You have to be brutally honest here, I am afraid, as each of the indicators listed below can eventually lead to dismal performance or loss of the farm/ranch!

- ✓ Maintaining a fixed recovery period regardless of plant recovery rates, rather than matching speed of moves to actual plant recovery periods, utilising the Minimum-Maximum guidelines found in Column 4 of the *Holistic Grazing Planning & Control Sheet*.
- ✓ Failing to adjust stock numbers at the start of the non-growing season, especially when the feed assessment process tells says there is insufficient forage to carry the animals now on hand for the planned period.

- ✓ Always placing stock in a particular paddock at the same time/date each year (for instance immediately after shearing, or as part of the annual autumn muster process).
- ✓ From year to year, you never adjust the number of paddocks that the animals are moved through.
- ✓ Rarely or never adjusting the sequence of moves between paddocks. For example, the stock are always moved in the same direction, or they are always moved from the same paddock to the same next paddock.

Use the *Grazing Planning & Control Sheet* to plan to avoid these and all of the other issues that the *Aide Memoire* prepares you for.

No. 1 big hint for this suggestion: If you find the planning process difficult, find a friend or neighbour who does it very well. Trade something you do well for what they do well, or pay them for their time. Whichever way you go, always make sure there is a genuine commercial transaction involved, so all parties have some 'skin in the game'. If you do this there will be a very high return on your investment.

Above all though, do not give that little voice in your head (*the lizard brain*) any opportunity to slip into thinking that because you are moving stock around in some fashion that you are managing holistically. You are managing holistically when the animals are being used as a tool that creates movement towards your written *holisticgoal*.

Suggestion No. 14 - Assuming you could be wrong is the right thing to do.

Why: Being 'wrong' is not wrong, but an indication that you must make more decisions.

How: When dealing with complex situations like a farm, or a human relationship, there is always the chance of unexpected and even undesirable outcomes. So, rather than fight the possibility beforehand, accept that these things might occur and be looking out for the earliest evidence of deviation from plan.

Resources: This step brings you back to basics, which in this case is the proven decision-making framework that governs 'managing holistically'.

Things to look out for: Watch out for the trap of inflexible or impossible contractual obligations; excessively optimistic yield, weight gain or sale price expectations; timetables that are too tight (be aware that Murphy will always make his appearance at the most difficult time for you); or the belief that people will always deliver as promised. They won't.

No. 1 big hint for this suggestion: Every time you make a decision, note down what you think the first indication of a problem might be, so that you are looking for it, rather than it finding you. You have at least two choices here: 1) be looking for the tap on the shoulder, or 2) be surprised by the blunt instrument over the head. The second is more painful than the first!

Suggestion No. 15 - Pay it forward!

Why: If you are onto a good thing, then be prepared to help others as they start adopting the change. That is ‘paying it forward’.

How: There are a number of ways you can pay forward the good information, advice or outcomes that you have enjoyed. Being open to people who enquire about what you are doing is important. Some people find it is important to engage with their professional advisers – such as their bank manager – so that these people understand the management process and will stand by them when required. (Note: this is different to enrolling the bank manager in the actual decision-making process. I wouldn't do it).

Resources: You have a large amount of resources at hand. Regular photographic records taken at your monitoring points are a huge visual, empowering and non-confronting resource. In the age of digital cameras it is almost cost free. Just snapping three photos at each monitoring point whenever you feel the urge is all that is required. Don't forget your annual detailed monitoring. Being able to discuss the impact that the change to new decision-making has made on your cost of production is another point to raise with people, but don't dwell on it.

Things to look out for: Don't try to tell people everything you know in one go! Dribble it out – and don't forget that you have probably taken years to get to where you are now. Just answer the question that people ask, then wait for them to ask another question! Remember: If the next question is not being asked, the next answer is not yet needed! Avoid the politician response of answering the question you wish they had asked!!

No. 1 big hint for this suggestion: When people begin to experience success, they tend to fall into one of two groups. They either close up, not wanting to talk to anyone, or they bore everyone to death by talking too much. When that happens, they are effectively saying to others, “I am great, you're not”. Not surprisingly, people become offended at this. That is why you need to take note of the comments immediately above, in the section headed “How”. You cannot push with a piece of string; you can only be the change you desire.

A few more points

There are a number of things that inhibit all of us, as well-intentioned as we might be, from committing fully to managing holistically. That *lizard brain* in the head tries to persuade us that we should “keep our options open”. It’s a nonsense of course, because one the great strengths of managing holistically is that NO option is ever excluded.

When you see the list you will realise that each is essentially a form of head noise, but because of our individual past experiences, one or more of them will be very real to us. What is more, we all tend to believe (or at least tell ourselves we believe) that these things are all too hard to change. Here are some beliefs and habits you might recognise:

- ✓ “We can’t stop doing what we are doing – we are too far committed with what we are doing.” This is code for: “By the way, we are seen by others as being busy.”
- ✓ “Every body is doing what we are doing, so it must be right.”
- ✓ “We feel panic when we are not doing what every body else is doing.” This is code for, “We feel concerned that we are not being seen as busy,”
- ✓ “We thought we were doing the right thing adopting high input agricultural methods. (The research seemed to support it)”
- ✓ “We wouldn’t want our kids to do what we are doing, so we will just keep going until we sell out.”

So, what is required to overcome these inhibitors? I have found there are five questions you can ask and answer for yourself that kick start the change. Try these out:

1. What are our current forms of activity doing for us, financially, socially, and ecologically? (Are we really advancing on all three fronts at the same time?).
Yes / No / Don’t know

2. Do we actually enjoy doing what we are doing, or truthfully, are we attached to a habit?
Yes / No / Don't know
3. Do we really need to go through life paying money to others in exchange for the energy inputs we would get for free once we change our ways?
Yes / No / Don't know
4. Are all the excuses we make about not committing really only illusions?
Yes / No / Don't know
5. Would our kids enjoy the opportunity to do the job differently, if we gave them the chance, and got out of their way?
Yes / No / Don't know

Finally, there is one more question I want to ask of you. When you put this book down, will you go back to your previous ways? If not, what will you commit to now that will help you to manage your life or business holistically, with even more determination, Who will you tell the answer too, so they can hold you accountable?

Bruce Ward
Holistic Results Pty Limited
www.holisticresults.com.au

Bruce Ward helps farming families and their businesses, to innovate and redesign themselves by managing holistically. After more than 40 years of hands-on experience in agriculture, his passion remains seeing individuals, families and businesses restore the health of their land and finances.

Holistic Results was founded in 1987. It assists clients in some of the most 'brittle-tending' environments of Australia and New Zealand, and others in so called 'safe' or non-brittle environments, to manage their businesses in these diverse locations. He brings them a unique set of skills which come to the front when he is adapting the various planning processes they need, to fit their location

Bruce is also co-founder and a director of Soil Carbon (Australia) Pty Limited, a company dedicated to raising community and political awareness about the national importance of healthy landscapes, and the effect of management on landscapes.

