

Using crowdsourcing to connect people with soil in the creation of a soil map art installation

Bradley Costin¹, Jodie Harrison¹, Darryl Pearl¹, Richard MacEwan¹, Ivanah Oliver^{1,2}, Grant Boyle¹, Wayne Harvey¹, Mark Imhof¹, Sally Cunningham¹, Jonathan Hopley¹, David Rees¹, **Miss Rebecca Mitchell¹**, Ms Melissa Cann¹, Nathan Robinson¹

¹Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, ²University of New England

Crowdsourcing is obtaining information or input into a particular task or project by enlisting the services of a number of people, either paid or unpaid. A crowdsourcing project was planned to create a soil map art installation, for the International Year of Soils, in which a soil map would be populated with physical samples. The installation was repeated through the year at three major agricultural field days and World Soil Day (WSD) celebrations in Federation Square, Melbourne.

In 2015 Agriculture Victoria research staff developed the first state-wide Soil Order map of Victoria. The map, overlain with a 10 km grid, was printed at 1:250,000 scale, laminated onto marine ply and supported by an iron frame. This formed the base on which over 400 crowdsourced samples of soil were placed onto corresponding grid locations.

A promotional campaign was organised through the Victorian branch of Soil Science Australia, the Soils Community of Practice newsletter, Agriculture Victoria and the Geography Teachers Association of Victoria. Using flyers, radio, mail outs and word of mouth, attendees were encouraged to bring soil from their land to be included in the map installation at each event. Agriculture Victoria staff, Catchment Management Authority and Landcare groups also collected samples from their regions. More broadly, the general public were invited to register samples through a webpage and mail soil to a central location.

Over WSD weekend, the spatially-referenced samples were placed onto the map by volunteers and members of the public. Creating a soil map as an art installation, made from crowdsourced soil samples, is an effective way to engage people and raise awareness about soils and their diversity. Public participation in the map construction provides an attractive alternative to conventional poster displays and can more readily stimulate discussion about the importance of soils, their differences, and their management.