

# From students to teachers

**M**any of the postgraduate students who started their studies with CRC Salinity are now finalising their PhDs and moving on to further research.

Two of these are Alison Southwell and Graeme Doole (below right) who have made the transition from student to lecturer at Charles Sturt University and the University of Western Australia (UWA) respectively.

## ➤ Graeme Doole

Graeme is now with the School of Agricultural and Resource Economics at UWA, as well as working with Dr Michael Robertson and CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems. He is also involved with the Future Farm Industries CRC.

It's been a big change for Graeme since arriving from New Zealand with a scholarship to UWA to study under Professor David Pannell

and Dr Clinton Revell. His project explored the value of different pasture species, particularly lucerne, for recharge management and the control of herbicide resistant weeds and was co-funded by the CRC Salinity and the CRC for Australian Weed Management. His PhD dissertation was recently awarded a Distinction at UWA, placing it among the top theses submitted at this institution.

Today he's involved with the CSIRO on introducing dual purpose



wheats into the farming systems of Western Australia and with FFI CRC on improving the adoptability of perennial pastures in the central Western Australian wheatbelt.

This is combined with teaching agricultural extension and applied statistics and supervising six students – two of whom are working on integrated weed management strategies for rice farming systems in the Philippines.

“It’s been a big change, but I’m really enjoying the teaching, particularly agricultural extension,” Graeme said.

“My background is not in that area, but I’m finding I’m interacting more with farmers rather than being purely theoretical – it’s consolidating my work.”

#### Alison Southwell

Alison (above right) came to CRC Salinity from the family farm at Yass and studied at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, under Dr Jim Virgona,




so it was perhaps natural that she worked on the water use and grazing management of native grasses, which are a mainstay of the NSW southern tablelands grazing systems.

She now lectures in agricultural systems and extension at CSU which Alison describes as a broad approach to analysing the complex problems involved in agriculture.

“Agricultural issues are becoming more complex and are being influenced by social and political factors beyond the farm gate,” Alison said. “Therefore, on top of their education in ‘hard’

science, we need to teach students about the bigger picture, how to better understand agricultural systems and communicate with farmers to improve outcomes and livelihoods.

“My PhD was very much a hard systems study, so it’s been a step up in scale to teach at this level, but it’s something I enjoy. I think being involved with the CRC Salinity helped enormously by introducing me to scientists from such a diverse range of disciplines.

“The interaction with students is great and it’s a challenge to work with a diversity of issues from environmental concerns through to the political and sociological aspects of agriculture.” 

#### More information

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