

# TRIALLING A WEB-BASED 'DISCUSSION-SUPPORT' TOOL IN THE AUSTRALIAN SUGAR INDUSTRY: STAKEHOLDER RESPONSES ARE ENCOURAGING...

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## Project Background

Well designed participatory, collaborative and social learning processes which focus on supporting stakeholder discussions and conversations can lead to significant awareness raising, learning, skill development and decision making outcomes.

This research trials and evaluates a discussion support tool (web based animated Second Life machinima conversations) that could be used in a range of situations and are accessible in remote environments, without the need for technical experts or other service providers to be physically present in a discussion. Discussions in this project focus on managing climate risk in the Australian sugar industry but could be modified to address other farm management issues.

Web-based simulated discussion approaches may provide an alternative delivery method for information and tools in agriculture in an extension environment were funding and policy support appears to be declining and access to higher speed internet is increasing globally.

## Research Questions...???

**How effective are digital animations as a medium to promote discussion** about climate and risk management information in groups of Australian canefarmers?

**How effective in influencing** the way Australian canefarmers **access and use climate forecast information** are simulated farmer discussions within digital animations?

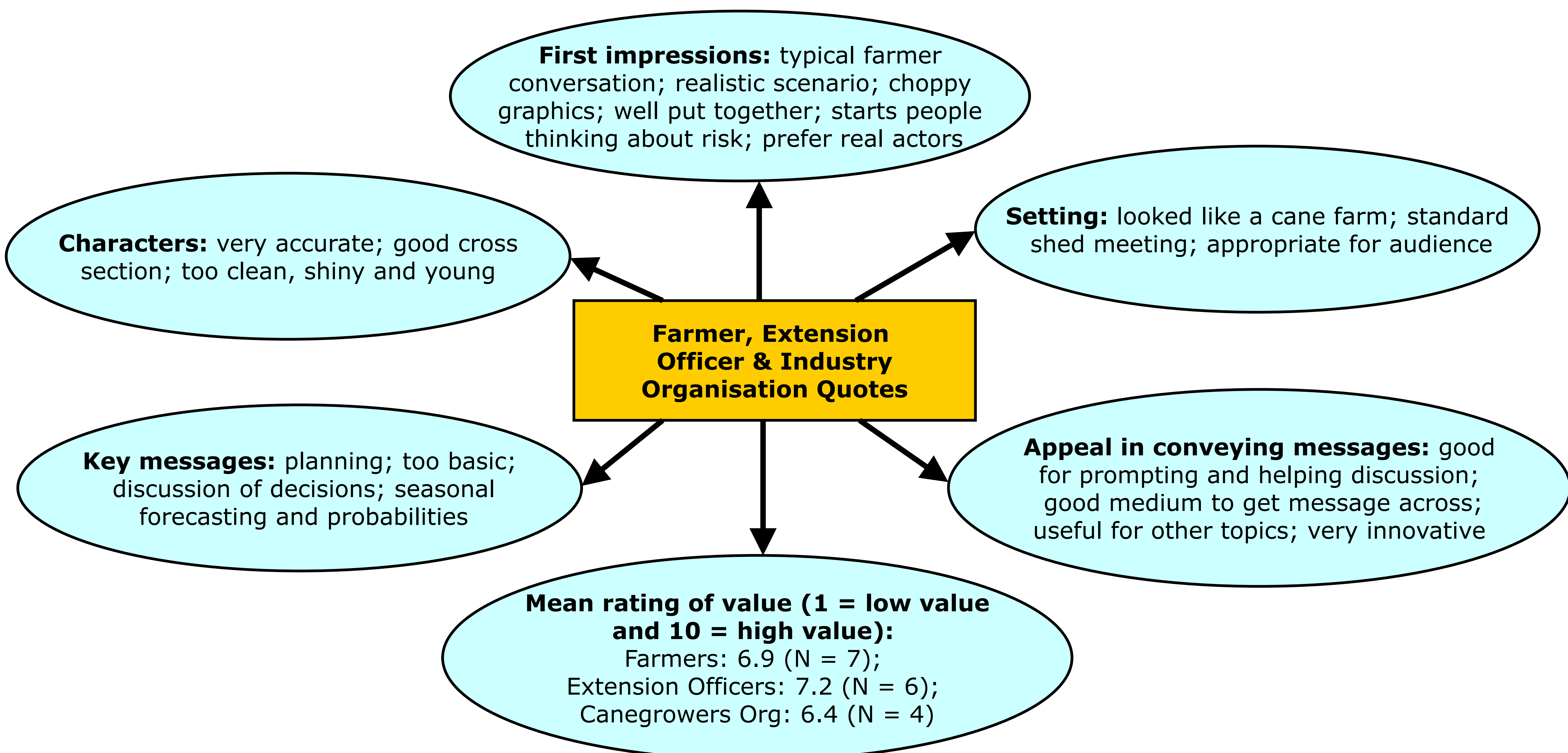
REAL WORLD



VIRTUAL WORLD

## Potential benefits from using machinima...

- Increased accessibility of information to individual farmers and farmer groups within a novel delivery platform;
- Accessibility of information to extension staff who could use the product to support their own extension activities with farmer groups;
- Improved cost effectiveness of information delivery;
- Delivery and communication of complex information in a context that users and user groups can apply to their own individual situations;
- Improved management of climate risk in the sugar industry leading to higher productivity and profitability.



## Key Issues to date...

- 1. All stakeholder groups indicated that machinima could be a *useful tool to support discussion* in the context of climate risk as well as other topical industry issues.**
- 2. Developing scripts which are appropriate to the target topics for discussion is critical in ensuring an audience engages with the machinima discussion.**
- 3. Developing a seamless link between the current climate forecasts and discussions about specific farm management decisions remains a technical challenge.**

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