

PURPOSE OF YOUR ROLE

Oversee the soil, water and plant tissue testing laboratory. This includes making sure turnaround time for getting results to clients is short while maintaining accuracy, looking for external contracts for analytical work, supporting research projects and making sure that we have the staff and the equipment to do the analysis required.

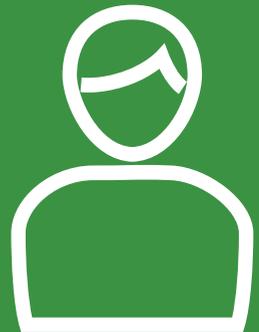
How does that help build stronger primary industries?

The information that analytical testing provides helps the Department of Primary Industries and producers improve agriculture, improve crop production and improve sustainability.



A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR ROLE

My days vary a lot; some days my role is taken up with people management, other days I'll be in the lab analysing samples, sometimes I might have meetings with researchers about some upcoming analysis, or compiling big tenders for large projects of work. It's quite varied which keeps it interesting.



PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES THAT ARE USEFUL IN THIS ROLE?

- For a laboratory role it's really important to be meticulous and methodical.
- You need to be comfortable with dealing with large amounts of data
- Able to troubleshoot and think outside the box when needed so an analytical mind is beneficial.
- It also helps to be really curious, wanting to know 'why' all the time.



TRAINING / EDUCATION

I have an analytical sciences degree, but other staff have different degrees including pure chemistry or environmental science and some of our staff have completed a Laboratory Skills course through providers like TAFE NSW.

Quote

"Science is a really broad field and a science degree can give you so many different options. If you enjoy science follow your interest and see where it leads you! "

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

Technology plays a huge role in what we do already, 80% of this work is automated and there is more coming. You still need to understand what the instrument is doing, why it is doing it and how so that if things go wrong you can fix it. Some days we have to do the analysis manually while a piece of equipment is repaired. Technology is amazing in the laboratory, it speeds up the work and keeps our results repeatable but you definitely need to have the understanding behind what you're doing.



I love that I get to work with a lot of really interesting people with really varied backgrounds, every day you're surrounded by people with amazing knowledge so there's always something to learn when you come to work.



Helping people understand the limitations of analytical testing can be difficult.

DOES CREATIVITY PLAY A PART IN THIS ROLE?

Definitely, when you know the results are wrong and you need to work backwards to figure out why, you will quite often have to think outside the box to solve it. There is not as much creativity in the analysis because for laboratory testing to be really accurate it has to be done in the same way every time to have repeatability.



Staff Profile

BACKGROUND

Sarah grew up in Christchurch, New Zealand and completed her science degree at Southern Cross University in Lismore. She moved to the north coast of New South Wales to make the most of the lifestyle and the beaches. Sarah is passionate about the marine environment being a surfer and has been really lucky to be able to combine her science knowledge and love of the ocean while working on the NSW Department of Primary Industries' Shark Management Strategy.

Sarah was appointed to the role of Coordinator of Analytical Services for her experience and previous roles in water sampling for an environmental laboratory, including river sampling and reticulated water systems (drinking water) sampling, Beach Watch sampling and as a laboratory technician and customer service at the Wollongbar laboratory.

