



Peel Agri-innovation Ecosystem CASE STUDY

Grubs Up Australia

Growing the Peel’s agri-innovation and food production sectors is a priority for the Peel region as outlined in the Peel Development Commission’s Strategic Plan (2023-2025) and the Peel Regional Investment Blueprint. This case study highlights the outcomes of an agribusiness engaging with the agrifood innovation ecosystem, supported by the Commission’s programs, investments, and partnerships.

About the business

Grubs Up Australia is Western Australia’s first edible insect farm. The company was founded by Paula Pownall in 2016 after 2 years of researching the potential of insect production for animal feed and human food in Australia. With a background in Agriculture, Paula understood that to feed the growing global population, we need to rethink how we produce and utilise food sources.

Since starting the business, she has developed high protein insect-based food products, trailed various insect production methods, and investigated the potential for alternative proteins.

"I'm really excited by the FIPWA. It is a great space for like-minded innovative food and beverage businesses to connect and collaborate and access research for the long-term benefit of their businesses."
- Paula Pownall, Founder, Grubs Up

Engagement with FIPWA/agri-innovation ecosystem

Grubs Up started engaging with the **Food Innovation Precinct Western Australia (FIPWA)** in mid-2016 when they saw an EOI in the West Australian newspaper. This led to connecting and developing relationships with the Shire of Murray, Peel Development Commission (PDC), and the Precinct.

Grubs Up was on the lookout for a program or event where they could build on and understand the vision of the **FIPWA** and ecosystem for agri-innovation.

As a small start-up business in an innovative space of creating insects for human consumption, Grubs Up sought engagement from the PDC and Shire of Murray. They felt they needed early support to get their marketing and research correct before investing hundreds and thousands of dollars.



RED Grants

Grubs Up successfully applied for Peel Development Commission's **Regional Economic Development (RED) Grant** in 2019. The \$15,000 grant enabled Grubs Up to travel globally to research the commercial viability of producing insects for human consumption in Australia and de-risk the project.

Ms Pownall believes the grant didn't just benefit their business, but also affected other trailblazers within the region that could have been thinking about doing something innovative and different but didn't quite fit within other revenues or streams of support. The grant supported Grubs Up to take their learnings and share the information with other businesses. Grubs Up felt the support from the Commission and state government was integral in supporting and influencing change and innovation in Western Australia.

"Growing insects for human consumption is such an innovative space and there are so many opportunities, organisations, interests, and questions that could take you off track and it is quite important to stay on track and keep it simple. There are many more opportunities in the future, such as Nutraceuticals, pharmaceuticals, and integrated pest management that I find really exciting", said Ms Pownall.

The value of the **RED Grant** allowed Grubs Up to take on board the learnings on commercial viability and to share those learnings from their journey with other businesses.

Did you know...

More than two billion people from 130 countries already eat insects.

Edible insects are not only tasty, but also are a great source of high-quality protein, omega-3 fatty acids, iron, zinc, folic acid and vitamins B12, C and E (Source: CSIRO, 2021).

For more information about the Food Innovation Precinct Western Australia please visit their website:

<https://fipwa.com.au>

For further details about Grubs Up, visit:

<https://grubsup.com.au>

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peel.wa.gov.au



X-Protein Lab (XPL) program

The FIPWA's **XPL program** was vital to Grubs Up with the four mentors involved having a depth and variety of expertise, making it worthwhile. In addition, the particular cohort involved were from different areas, at different business stages, and with a breadth of expertise. The X-Protein Lab mentors provided advice and support on capital investment, start-up funding, and strategic planning. The advice was focused on keeping the business on track while understanding funding opportunities.

"The XPL was terrific for our business and for the first time since 2016, we had a mentor who had experience in this innovative alternative protein sector."

- Paula Pownall, Founder, Grubs Up

"Access to mentors with expertise in this environment enabled us to have direct contact in a non-threatening and honest environment. They shared insights from their experiences that assisted our businesses to make decisions which was an integral part in setting our business up for success over the next few years. Our experience through the XPL changed how we think about where the business should be heading away from a 'start-up founder syndrome' to having to be realistic and professional in our understanding of our financials if we wanted to achieve what we wanted to do in the future", said Ms Pownall.