



# Chair's Report

## September 2008

### THIRD EDITION: LANDCARE

I get great pleasure to see the landcare will spreading across the natural resource management sector and the wider community each year.

I see the real strength in the overall landcare ethic. The landcare volunteers are undoubtedly the heroes and backbone of landcare, yet it is the motivations behind these people which have most powerfully resonated through the wider community looking after our natural resources.

Queensland's regional bodies recognise that landcare groups play a significant role in managing natural resources at a grassroots level. There over 300 landcare groups in Queensland who are working hand-in-hand with graziers, growers and governments to ensure a sustainable future for their communities.

Regional bodies invest resources, partly with Australian and State Government funds, into Landcare activities and groups across the state to maintain and strengthen on ground action and community capacity building.

**MIKE BERWICK, CHAIR,  
QUEENSLAND  
REGIONAL NRM  
GROUPS COLLECTIVE**



#### **Iningai Landcare Legacy**

Named after the Iningai People, the original occupants of the area, the Iningai Nature Park on the outskirts of Longreach was the result of years of passionate dedication by community member, Mr Noel McDarra. His vision was embraced by the Longreach Landcare Group and together they were able to convince the Longreach Shire Council to set aside 220 hectares of the Longreach Town Common as a nature reserve.

In an effort to make its many kilometres of walking tracks a self-interpretive experience for numerous visitors and locals, Longreach Landcare took its concept of interpretive signage to Desert Channels Queensland. The resulting

Iningai Park Signage Project saw Desert Channels Queensland working closely with the Longreach Landcare Group to develop, design, produce and site twelve signs along the nature trails that wind around the coolibah-lined channels and Mitchell grass flats of Gin Creek.

The newly constituted Longreach Regional Council provided machinery and operators to dig the holes while Longreach Landcare Group volunteers shed their sweat in concreting the signs in.

The members of the Longreach Landcare Group continue their dedication to the Iningai Nature Park by regularly performing rubbish removal and weed control as well as providing interpretive tours of the park.

#### **Mackay Whitsunday Healthy Waterway Forum**

Over 100 people attended the 5th Mackay Whitsunday Healthy Waterway Forum, this year hosted by Whitsunday Catchment Landcare at Airlie Beach. Attendees took advantage of this great opportunity to hear and ask questions about some of the activities across the region to protect our waterways. They heard from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on Climate Change; WetlandCare Australia; sugar and grazing industries; state and local government as well as community groups such as OUCH Volunteers (Order of Underwater Coral Heroes) and Seagrass Watch.

DPI&F brought a working model of a fishway to show fish attempting

to journey through different fishway designs; in the real world these allow fish to migrate past impediments, such as road causeways. Participants were also able to view many species of native fish and aquatic plants and ask questions at the interactive displays.

The region's Water Quality Improvement Plan was also launched at the Forum. Developed by Reef Catchments, this plan shows what we have and how best to protect it for future generations.

The forum was sponsored by: Reef Catchments, Great Barrier Marine Park Authority, Reef Water Quality Protection Plan, Whitsunday Regional Council, Canegrowers Mackay, Cruise Whitsundays and IESA Environmental.

## Reinvigorating Landcare in Central Queensland

The Fitzroy Basin Association's 'Reinvigorating Landcare in CQ' project funded under the National Landcare Program has greatly improved capacity of grass roots groups to spread the Landcare message.

Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. (FBA) provided around \$120,000 each year over three years to several groups for education and awareness raising activities designed to re-energise landholders and the wider community and get them thinking about how to best manage the land.

In the last six months of the project alone, ten awareness, training and education workshops were held, with a total of 1618 people attending. Groups were also supported to run 15 field days, attracting a combined total of more than 500 people.

One of the largest events funded through the project was the Environmental Expo organised by the Central Highlands Regional Resources Use Planning Cooperative (CHRRUP) at Emerald in April 2008. More than 1000 students from 15 schools in the Central Highlands region discovered what natural resource management is all about.

The Baralaba Landcare conference 'Putting grass roots under the microscope' was another major success of the project, with 165 people attending in June 2008. The great line-up of speakers provided a lot of food for thought, with presentations on topics including soil carbon, carbon trading, off-farm investing, diversification, grass-fed certification, and the latest beef industry research.

The project has enabled natural resource management and Landcare groups across the Fitzroy Basin to work closely together to deliver high quality and high interest field days and training.



*Environmental expo at Emerald*

## Landcare in the Northern Gulf

The Northern Gulf Regional Management Group (NGRMG) work with landcare groups and the wider community to share knowledge, experiences and motivation. The local community and surrounding landscapes have benefited greatly from these team efforts in a number of ways.

The condition of the native savanna grassland and woodland landscapes of the Northern Gulf region has improved, providing important wildlife habitats. Land and aquatic areas have been set aside for conservation and cultural purposes. This has helped reduce threats impacting on riparian ecosystems and freshwater resources, including protected, endangered, threatened and totemic coastal, marine and terrestrial species.

Production systems, such as primary



*Native garden in the Gulf*

industries, minerals and tourism, have been supported to continually adopt sustainable management practices to maintain adequate food supply and economic stability. Strength has also been built through community efforts to preserve, practice and protect cultural heritage in the region.

The achievements made through the various landcare activities in the Northern Gulf region continue to build strength in effectively managing the natural resources which support the wider community.

## Water quality in Burnett River

Early results of a monitoring project being undertaken by the Burnett Catchment Care Association show very low concentrations of nutrients and other pollutants.

Mundubbera based project co-ordinator, Marion Denholm, said the results were pleasing. "Until now, there has been very little water quality data collected in the Central Burnett, so we didn't really know much about the health of this part of the catchment," she said.

However, Ms Denholm said that after heavy rain, water samples showed very high turbidity, indicating soil erosion. She said that graziers, like herself, needed to manage stocking regimes to prevent the loss of topsoil. "The problem is caused not by overgrazing, but by letting paddocks become bare for too long. There are many grazing management techniques which can be used to give the grass a chance



*Improving river water quality*

to regrow, and this is the key to stopping the loss of soil," she said.

The water quality monitoring project, funded by the Burnett Mary Regional Group (BMRG), has also found species of macro-invertebrates in the water, which are very sensitive to poor water quality. "Finding these species is very good news, because we know from studies elsewhere that they won't survive in polluted water," Ms Denholm said.

She said that the project results would lead to a better understanding of how to address problems in the Burnett Catchment.

## Locals tell the Australian Government the story of significant change

The Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC) was one of 10 regional bodies across the country who participated in an Australian Government pilot to evaluate the impact of investment in natural resource management activities. This method, called Performance Story Reporting, determines the most significant changes that have occurred in a region as a result of government and community investment.

Working closely with the Landcare Coordinators and members of the Mitchell and Districts, and Maranoa Regional Landcare Groups, QMDC and Hassall and Associates consulting firm gathered scientific and anecdotal data to tell the story of change as a result of community and government investment in natural resource management within the region north and west of Roma.

This project, being one of the first in Australia, was an amazing opportunity for these groups to tell their own stories of

their own challenges and achievements, and what they have learned from working together over the last 10 or so years. It also gave these groups and their communities the chance to feed directly back to government regarding the impacts and opportunities they have experienced as a result of natural resource management and environmental funding.

QMDC hopes that, through Performance Story Reports, regional bodies and Landcare groups can better demonstrate to the Australian community the impact of the investment and the importance of funding programs such as Caring for our Country.



*Australian NRM Team interview staff and landholders at Mitchell*

## Working with Landcare in the South West

South West Natural Resource Management (South West NRM) and Landcare groups working together to achieve positive outcomes for South West Queensland.

The Upper Bulloo Landcare Group has started a campaign to control and contain the spread of Parthenium weed. The project is taking place across six properties, totalling 80,000 hectares, and approximately 40,000 hectares of medium and low density plant populations are being sprayed in a coordinated campaign. The project targets group participation to achieve sustainable grazing practices to control the impact of weed infestations in the Upper Bulloo Catchment. A coordinated campaign now means it will prevent the weed spreading further down the catchment.

The project is also enlisting the help of Quilpie, Tambo and Blackall Shires, the three Shire Councils providing support in the form of supply costs of chemical as required through the project.

The Bollon Landcare Group has also

been hard at work on an erosion control project. The project will involve 7.5 km of fencing along Wallam Creek, installation of 2 storage tanks, 6 troughs, 1.2 km of poly pipe and associated fittings in strategic locations along the exclusion fence, accessing water from an existing solar pump and existing bore line. In total, a stretch of approximately 45 kilometres of Wallam Creek is undergoing projects to control erosion. The fencing will prevent stock from grazing along the waterway, allowing vegetation to establish, mature and seed thus minimising erosion and damage to the riparian ecosystem.

These projects have been funded through South West NRM's Planscapes program.



*The Bollon Landcare group preventing erosion*

## Carbon partnership to benefit landholders

South East Queensland is set to become one of Australia's hotspots for carbon sequestration following the new partnership between SEQ Catchments and Australia's leading not-for-profit carbon trading organisation, Landcare CarbonSMART.

SEQ Catchments has appointed the state's first 'super assessor', Farm Forestry Officer Paul Daly, who will be responsible for assessing the registering carbon sinks based on biodiverse landcare revegetation plantings on private land.

"We believe the Landcare CarbonSMART model of assisting rural landholders to regenerate land parcels not being used for agriculture is excellent," said Daly. "It not only delivers the landholder an income stream from carbon credits, it also delivers the inherent benefits of revegetation including stock and crop protection, improvement of erosion and soil salinity problems and invigorated biodiversity, all of which promotes greater productivity on the land."

Landcare CarbonSMART provides financial incentives for landholders to maintain eligible carbon credit vegetation on their land. The amount of carbon absorbed by vegetation is calculated and sold to individuals and businesses to help them take responsibility for carbon emissions. Landcare CarbonSMART operates as a carbon pool with a majority percentage of sales paid to the landholder, a percentage to a recovery fund (in case of vegetation failure or unavoidable destruction cause by fire or disease) and a percentage to the management and operation of the pool.

Landcare CarbonSMART is supported by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), along with corporate supporters GM Holden, Westpac, Coles, Elders, Kraft and Freehills.



*SEQ CarbonSMART launch*

## SPIRAL in the Burdekin Dry Tropics

The SPIRAL (“Strategic Partnership Incentives for Revitalising Active Landcare”) project was a 3 year community support project which aimed to enhance the involvement of the wider community in Landcare activities in the Burdekin Rangelands. The project was led by Dalrymple Landcare Committee Inc. and funded by Burdekin Dry Tropics NRM through the National Landcare Programme. The Upper Burdekin Rangelands has a strong 20 year history of landcare activities and the SPIRAL project aimed to continue these activities through a range of on ground activities and training activities administered by a full time project officer to deliver the project objectives.

Activities funded through the SPIRAL project included 66 on ground projects. Of these projects, 33 (50%) were carried out with landholders who were not previously involved in Landcare. Likewise, 35 (56%) were carried out with small rural block holders. The on ground works achieved through the SPIRAL project were targeted at improved management practices, and included riparian fencing, land



Landholders gather to hear ideas from Peter Andrews at local field day

reclamation works, seeding of improved pastures, fencing to land type, implementing alternative watering points and woody weed control through chemical and mechanical intervention.

A range of education and training activities were also offered including subsidies for 51 landholders to participate in training of GPS/Computer mapping courses and 19 Grazing Land Management course participants. These activities were offered as a way of enhancing landholders’ abilities to establish and implement property

management plans on their properties and were delivered in conjunction with training providers such as AgForward, QDPI&F and Meat and Livestock Australia.

Leading landholders in the region were also recognised through the Good Land Management Awards held in each of the three years of the SPIRAL project. Stories of the successful Landcarers can be viewed on line through the PlaceStories website as part of the Digital Dalrymple Landcare page (see [www.landcare.placestories.com](http://www.landcare.placestories.com)).

To find out more about natural resource management projects, visit the 14 Regional Bodies directly or via the Queensland Regional NRM Groups Collective website:  
[www.rgc.org.au](http://www.rgc.org.au)

Digital Chair’s report movies are available at [www.landcare.placestories.com](http://www.landcare.placestories.com)

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