

Queensland's NRM *Rumble*

INDIGENOUS LAND AND SEA MANAGEMENT IN QUEENSLAND

Queensland's Traditional Owners have had a long and proud history of managing the state's diverse landscapes and ecosystems over tens of thousands of years, so their active involvement in the natural resource management sector comes as no surprise.

Queensland's regional natural resource management groups engage with their Traditional Owners in many ways, and this report showcases some of the land and sea management programs being managed by our regional groups, in partnership with Indigenous people from Far North to Southern Queensland. Across the state, these Traditional Owners are involved in training and education programs, coastal rehabilitation, wildlife surveys, recording traditional knowledge, policy and planning, advocacy, conservation, and community development projects that result in stronger communities and ecologically sustainable landscapes.

At a state level, the Queensland Regional NRM Group's Collective manages the Statewide Indigenous Network Coordination Project (SINC). SINC aims to support a network of Indigenous staff housed in regional natural resource management groups, and working on Indigenous

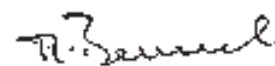
engagement programs. A formalised Murri Network, comprising these staff has met three times since February 2009, and includes representation from each of those natural resource management regions in the State, as well as the Queensland and Australian Governments. As well as supporting these officers, the SINC project also supports regional bodies to improve the way they interact with Indigenous communities, through identifying policy, information and training needs, and supporting engagement processes.

The Statewide Indigenous Network Coordinator, Patrick Mulalley, also acts as an information hub for regional groups requiring support with Indigenous engagement. Queensland's regional natural resource management bodies and the State Government have shown commitment to ensuring the Murri Network has support and that there is representation for Indigenous natural resource management at a strategic level. The RGC is currently seeking alternative funding to maintain the Statewide Indigenous Network Coordination project.

During the last nine months, the SINC Coordinator has visited all but three of Queensland's 14 regions to meet with Murri Network members in the

workplace. These visits have also been an opportunity to meet with a broad cross-section of Indigenous natural resource management stakeholders.

The Regional Groups Collective and its members are strongly committed to ensuring that our Traditional Owners have a powerful voice in natural resource management in the state. I hope the stories in this report give a good overview of some of the work being undertaken by Traditional Owners working on Country, and how those projects are being supported by regional groups, government and community partners.




Mike Berwick AM,
Chair Queensland Regional NRM
Groups Collective



Fitzroy Basin: Preserving culture and nature at 'Gawula'

GPS training for indigenous land managers is helping guide better management of a significant site in Central Queensland.

Fitzroy Basin Association Inc and Fitzroy Basin Elders Committee supported six people identified by the Gawula Aboriginal Land Trust Committee to undertake GPS training. These participants will put their new skills to use conducting a cultural heritage survey of Gawula, a parcel of land on the Central Queensland coast managed by the Trust, which will support the development of a cultural heritage plan.

Trust Chairperson, Sally Veve, said that the training and cultural heritage plan would build on an existing natural resource management plan developed by the Trust for Gawula, which was launched in early 2009. She said the Trust was committed to maintaining the natural values and environmental sustainability of Gawula.

"The natural resource management plan provides short and long-term goals, targets and objectives for the management of the property, and now we are building our skills and capacity to achieve those outcomes," Sally said. "In the future, we hope to operate a low impact environmental tourism venture with designated walking tracks and our own guides," she said.

Gawula, also known as Mt Wheeler, is a 137 hectare freehold property on the coast near Rockhampton, within

the traditional country of the Darumbal people. The area was transferred to the Trust by the Queensland Government in 2007, under the Aboriginal Land Act 1991. The trustees initiated the development of the natural resource management plan in order to protect and enhance the biodiversity, recreational and educational values of the site.

Sally said that sustainable land management activities, including controlled burning, had already started at the site as a result of the plan's development. "The plan also defines our vision of Gawula providing a sacred and ceremonial gathering place to heal, through honouring the past and present traditions and customs, reconnecting to country by working and learning together to nurture, and revitalising and preserving our culture, traditions and natural environment for present and future generations," she said.

Fitzroy Basin Elders Committee provided technical support and coordination for the development of the natural resource management plan, while Greening Australia researched, compiled and published the document. Funding support was provided by Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments Inc, a sub-region of the Fitzroy Basin Association Inc responsible for coordinating natural resource management in areas including Rockhampton and Yeppoon.

Surveying Gawula, as part of the development of a cultural heritage plan for the site.



Controlled burning on Gawula.



The sand goanna – totem of Gawula.

Desert Channels: Crossing the Bridge

A Cross Cultural program run by Desert Channels Queensland and the Longreach State High School with year eight students met with great success, with attendance rates in classes at an all-time high.

The program, funded through the Federal Indigenous Cultural Heritage program, worked with year eight students in Longreach to create a bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, said Jeff Poole, DCQ's Indigenous Engagement Officer.

"When a year eight student doesn't want to miss a class, it is a pretty good sign that a program is working," he said.

The project began with local elders visiting the students to share stories, knowledge and history. "Each week, a different elder or personality would visit the children, sharing skills like boomerang throwing, local history, knowledge on bush tucker, or whatever the students wanted to know," said Jeff.

One of the most popular topics was Indigenous art, dance and music. Students were instructed in the different traditional painting methods, with students' artwork now featuring in an Indigenous-themed native garden at the school. Well known artist, Adrian Ross, also joined the program to teach students dance and music, delving into the significance and meaning of both the sounds and movement.

The program culminated with a presentation to the community of what the children had learned. They danced and performed and shared the personal impacts of the program. "It was exciting to see students of different races excited about our Indigenous culture," said Jeff. "Understanding leads to appreciation, and appreciation leads to valuing our precious cultural heritage. It is from this position that we can cross the cultural bridge and meet in true reconciliation."



Trainees completing field work.

Northern Gulf Indigenous Savannah Group conservation graduates

Tuesday, 1 September, was a momentous occasion for the Northern Gulf Indigenous Savannah Group as they watched their first group of trainees graduate with a Certificate III in Land Conservation and Management. The course, run by the TAFE Cairns campus, was specially adapted for Indigenous conservation knowledge capture, and traditional conservation of Indigenous country.

Ricky Archer, Traditional Knowledge Project Manager for the group, mentored and assisted with on-site training. "The students of this course picked it up easier than in other training I have been involved in," said Ricky. "This is because it was tailored to be done on country, with a hands-on approach."

The 14 students that participated in the course were from six different traditional owner groups from across the Northern Gulf region. The subjects that were studied covered such topics as basic computer operation, GPS

mapping, site identification, first aid, video editing, camera operation, and workplace health and safety.

John Bethel, chair of the Northern Gulf Resource Management Group, presented the graduates with their certificates. "These young people have taken a very important step," he said.

This training will now mean that representatives from local traditional owner groups will have the skills and training to conserve culturally significant sites, and record the wealth of traditional conservation knowledge that exists in the community.



Beverly Bowyang completing assignment at TAFE.



Trainees recording traditional knowledge.



NQ Dry Tropics Traditional Owner Management Group.

Traditional owner collaboration across North Queensland

"In two years we finished 15 projects, which speaks for the relationship we have with Traditional Owners," said Leah Saltner, organiser for the NQ Dry Tropics Traditional Owner Management Group.

This Management Group represents 15 Traditional Owner groups across northern Queensland, and Leah's job is to help the Group access information and funding for land and sea activities that are important to them. When the group started six years ago, it wanted to be the hub for Indigenous people interested in managing land and sea. Since that time, it has worked well towards this objective, supported by natural resource management group, NQ Dry Tropics, and continues to enjoy strong community support today.

Some of these projects have included introducing a cultural education program to school children in Ayr, a two-day workshop of Traditional Owner women at Cape Upstart, just outside of Bowen, and weed management projects at Palm Island and Magnetic Island.

North Queensland Dry Tropics also published a very successful landholders' guide to cultural heritage in the region, called 'Healthy Land Yarn', in partnership with the group.

Recently, NQ Dry Tropics helped a Traditional Owner organisation to work with the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation to set up a team employing over a dozen people – now called the Green Army. The Green Army started in August, 2009, and will train staff to do land management jobs, like weed control.

Other projects currently underway include development of an educational DVD showing the cultural importance of turtles, traditional ecological knowledge recording, and the use of online social networking tools, like Facebook, to connect Indigenous communities.

"NQ Dry Tropics is committed to furthering these projects and partnerships in any way we can, expanding on past successes," Leah said.



Leah Saltner, NQ Dry Tropics organiser for the Traditional Owner Management Group.

New ranger program for Queensland Murray-Darling

Nine new Aboriginal Rangers will soon be on the ground in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin, helping land managers protect the environment and combat pest and weed threats.

Queensland Murray-Darling Committee, in partnership with the Federal Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, has instigated a long-term program to employ nine Aboriginal Rangers and a coordinator to deliver environmental outcomes as part of the Working on Country Regional Program.

Queensland Murray-Darling Committee's Aboriginal Program Regional Coordinator, Tim Knox, said that the rangers would carry out a range of natural resource management activities, such as the protection of riverine areas, feral animal control and threatened species management.

"Our nine new rangers will undertake a two week induction course at the end of October," Tim said. "The rangers will work with land managers, regional councils, communities and Traditional Owners to promote Landcare works and protect areas of national

environmental and cultural significance within the region. These works will all help in implementing our Regional Natural Resource Management Plan, a document that helps coordinate on-ground works across the Basin for the best possible outcomes."

Tim said that, along with the focus on on-ground works, the rangers themselves would undertake a Certificate IV in Conservation Land Management. "This is all part of Queensland Murray-Darling Committee's role to boost the viability of regional communities, in this case by providing these rangers with key skills that can be applied to any role they take on in the future," he said.

"This announcement is also an exciting one for Queensland Murray-Darling Committee, as we work to build on our own 'Caring for Country' plan, developed in conjunction with the eight Traditional Owner groups in the region. The Caring for Country plan recognises the need to protect important cultural, ecological, social and economic values within the region, and we believe the addition of these on-the-ground positions will be

vital to that work. Traditional Owners, landholders, communities, government agencies, community organisations and a range of other stakeholders all have a part to play in protecting the region's assets and securing funding for these rangers is just one way we are ensuring we can all work together effectively."

Queensland Murray-Darling Committee's Aboriginal Ranger Coordinator, Charlie Waters, started work on 5 October. Charlie will be based in Toowoomba while the Aboriginal Rangers, who will be based across the region, will commence on Monday, 26 October.

Queensland Murray-Darling Committee's Ranger program is one of a variety of Working on Country Regional projects running across Australia. The Australian Government is funding these projects to employ Indigenous rangers to manage land and sea country across a variety of tenures, in partnership with management agencies, non-government organisations and private landholders.



Back row (from left): Cedric Washington Senior Ranger, Robert Lacey (Senior Ranger), Ashley Butler (Ranger), Johnathon Bradley (Ranger), Trevor Cooper (Senior Ranger), Adam Smith (Ranger), Clem Wightman (Ranger).

Front row (from left): Tanya McKechnie (Aboriginal Program Engagement Officer), Temeka Turnbull (Ranger), Tim Knox (Aboriginal Program Regional Coordinator), Jessica Bartholomew (Ranger), Charlie Waters (Aboriginal Program Ranger Coordinator).



Indigenous protected area co-management project for Mackay Whitsundays

Traditional Owners and protected area managers in the Mackay Whitsundays region have implemented an Indigenous Protected Area Co-Management Project, running over two years (2008-2010). This is the first co-management arrangement to be negotiated in the Mackay Whitsunday region and will target several key protected areas, including Cape Hillsborough and Cape Palmerston National Parks.

The project will form a working group with Traditional Owners and relevant government agencies to manage the National Parks in partnership, and employ more Indigenous Rangers to work on country.

The working group has so far partnered with the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management to establish protocols for Indigenous use of regional National Parks, and for greater involvement in Park management.

The group has also worked with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to assess and develop zones for 'appropriate National Park activities', which will be linked to the Great Barrier Reef Zone Activities Maps.

Natural resource management group, Reef Catchments, has also been involved in the project, organising

Cultural Immersion Training camps to foster partnerships between traditional owner groups and relevant government agencies.

The Indigenous Protected Areas Program began in 1997 with Indigenous people and the Australian Government embarking on a new environmental partnership. Indigenous Protected Areas give Indigenous communities the ability to manage their land's natural and cultural values, and provides ongoing support for work to control threats such as weeds, feral animals and wildfire.





Mick McNiven, South West NRM, with Jim Hill, Yirendali Traditional Owner



Southern Gulf: Inaugural Salt to Dust Western Queensland Traditional Owner Workshop

Georgina River field trip



Colin Saltmere demonstrates his knapping techniques



Salt to Dust presentations

Traditional Owners and Indigenous land managers from across western Queensland came together recently for the Inaugural Salt to Dust Western Queensland Traditional Owner Workshop.

Held at Dugalunji Camp, Camooweal in June 2009, this workshop was the result of collaboration between Southern Gulf Catchments, Desert Channels Queensland and South West NRM, bringing together Traditional Owners and providing a forum to build capacity, network and learn from a diverse range of presenters about issues, initiatives and research that support Traditional Owners' participation in and decision-making about country, culture and community.

The concept of holding a collaborative 'one-stop-workshop' was born out of bridging challenges facing regional bodies servicing northern and remote Australia through strategic, cost-effective and culturally appropriate practices. While building upon the partnerships that have long connected and bound Aboriginal people of western Queensland in social, trade, lore and ceremonial practices and traditions.

Over 75 people attended the three day workshop, deemed a success by participants and presenters alike. Traditional Owners were presented with topical and relevant information around the four broad themes of Cultural Heritage Management, Caring for Country, Water for Life, and New

Knowledge and Research. Participants and presenters came from Giringun and Myuma Aboriginal Corporations, universities, Queensland and Australian Government departments, Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre, Lake Eyre Basin and Great Artesian Basin Advisory Committees, and the resources industry.

The agenda included 'Yarning Circles', designed to give presenters and participants the opportunity for informal yet focused discussion and question time, and cultural activities with stone tool-making, painting and field trips to Camooweal Caves National Park and upper Georgina River with the Elders that speak and care for that country.

Bringing people together and sharing experiences, issues and learning from one another was cited as being a key outcome that was most beneficial and empowering for participants. Presentations about the Delbessie Agreement, Traditional Knowledge Recording and Indigenous Protected Areas were also popular.

In western Queensland, working together for land management across vast landscapes is the Aboriginal way and the spiritual way and with the support of the regional natural resource management group process, Traditional Owners can continue to develop their connections, knowledge and practices associated with good land management.



Terrain's Traditional Owner Advisory Committee meets regularly to address Traditional Owner aspirations for managing country.

Terrain partners with Traditional Owners to improve Indigenous engagement

Terrain NRM has spent the last five years building partnerships with Indigenous communities across the region to improve Indigenous engagement and participation in conservation activities.

The establishment of Terrain's Traditional Owner Advisory Committee in 2004 has been a key component of these activities, addressing Traditional Owner aspirations for managing country in the region. The Committee's work has recently resulted in the establishment of a devoted Traditional Owner engagement program within Terrain, and the appointment of a second Indigenous Director to Terrain's management Board. This has enabled Terrain to provide significant financial and staff support to many Indigenous

projects across the region, despite a significant lack of funding from State and Federal Government programs.

Regional projects that Terrain has supported have included four Traditional Owner groups recording and storing cultural knowledge, three Traditional Owner groups implementing Working on Country and/or Indigenous Protected Area projects, two Aboriginal Local Government Councils implementing their cultural natural resource management plans, eight Indigenous groups with Indigenous land use agreements in place, and the Giringun Aboriginal Corporation, which represents nine Traditional Owner groups.

Terrain has also supported a bid to have the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area relisted for its cultural values, and the Traditional Owner Advisory Committee has provided significant input into a number of State Government policies, including the review of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003.

This is only a snapshot of the many levels of Traditional Owner engagement being worked on and developed by staff and directors within Terrain. This year, and into 2010, new area team arrangements will be implemented to further improve this work, bringing together local government, catchment and Landcare group delivery systems.



To find out more about natural resource management projects or contact details for your regional natural resource management group, visit the

Queensland Regional NRM Groups Collective website - www.rgc.org.au or ph 07 4699 5000.

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