

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



**NRM**  
REGIONS  
QUEENSLAND



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Queensland's Regional NRM organisations recognise First Nations People as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and work.

We pay our respects to Elders, past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the ongoing connection to Country and more than 60,000 years of stewardship of our natural resources by Indigenous Australians.

We acknowledge and value the contribution that First Nations People continue to make to the sustainable management of our natural assets as well as the value that Traditional Knowledge brings to our sector.



## WHAT IS NRM?

Natural Resource Management is the protection and improvement of the natural assets that underpin our quality of life – our soil and water, the climate, landscapes and biodiversity.

NRM Regions Queensland is the peak body for natural resource management in the state, supporting and promoting its members – the 12 regional natural resource management organisations of Queensland.

### NRM REGIONS QUEENSLAND IS SUPPORTED BY:



**Queensland  
Government**



**Australian Government**







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# CHAIR'S REPORT

**JULIE BOYD, CHAIR  
NRM REGIONS QUEENSLAND**

It has been a busy year for the regional NRM organisations across Queensland and we're finding that there are more and more pressing issues we're expected to respond to and participate in, with fewer and fewer resources available.

While we wait to hear about the outcomes of the Australian Government's NHT Regional Delivery Partners tender process we find that NRM organisations across the State are feeling the pressure. While governments continue to make commitments to threatened species, biodiversity and sustainable agriculture, these resources sometimes take many years to hit the ground where they are needed most. This has a profound impact on our ability to stay connected with our communities, deliver skills and knowledge with our land managers, and protect our most threatened species and ecological communities.

Whilst the climate has eased over the past 12 months with the percentage of Queensland drought declared reducing significantly, we are bracing ourselves for a very dry season ahead and increased fire risk. We have worked with the Departments to increase funding for ongoing maintenance to recovery sites and to continue legacy monitoring so we can highlight the impact of our work from government investment.

The Queensland state election will take place in 2024 and a federal election in 2025. So the Board is constantly considering how we look to make a strategic impact to Queensland's natural assets whilst building a resilient funding model that grows our capacity into the future.

The Board signed off on NRM Regions Queensland's new 2023-26 Strategic Plan earlier this year. The Strategy guides

how NRM Regions Queensland will influence, support and promote the work of our 12 member organisations. It's an ambitious strategy but we're confident we can deliver.

We continue to support and have input into the operations of NRM Regions Australia. I sit on the NRM Regions Australia Board on behalf of Queensland and thank both Emma Jackson as Chair and Dr Kate Andrews as CEO for the work they are doing to influence key federal government policy and funding processes and appreciate the way the state NRM organisations work so well together. Our CEO Chris Norman represents us, and NRM Regions Australia, on a number of national forums, including the National Soil Strategy, National Koala Recovery Board, and the Murray Darling Basin Authority Peak Groups. Chris attends many other meetings and delivers many presentations that benefit the national NRM sector.

Chris continues to work above expectation. He puts in an enormous amount of effort for the organisation and his connection with our member CEOs is strong – he's worked hard to build this relationship. NRM Regions Queensland is a small organisation and Chris does an excellent job of guiding the team with minimal resources.

I would like to thank Chris for his enormous commitment to NRM and to our sector, and I would also like to thank my fellow directors for their ability to work collegiately, to discuss issues openly and frankly, and for giving so generously of their time.



# CEO'S REPORT

## CHRIS NORMAN, CEO NRM REGIONS QUEENSLAND

Resilience is a theme that has its roots in the natural resource management world and now, on the back of a global pandemic and significant changes to both weather patterns and our climate, we are hearing the term used more and more around regional communities and the economy.

Just as we support our communities and landscapes to be resilient, in the past year we have also looked internally, as a sector, to build our own resilience.

To help our people continue to be resilient and to lead at all locations, at all levels and at all times, the CEOs of Queensland's regional NRM organisations embarked on a process to develop a Leadership Framework for our sector. The framework will help provide a consistent approach to leadership development across our sector. The framework and its five leadership capabilities provide a common language that will help bring leadership development into our everyday activities and conversations. The framework also complements the leadership initiatives that are already taking place at a regional level.

Because Queensland's 12 regional NRM organisations are all independent bodies with their own Boards and teams, we've also invested significantly into our Communities of Practice. These communities bring our specialists together across: Indigenous engagement, communication and engagement, monitoring and evaluation (Statewide Indicators Framework working group), Business Managers, GIS and Drone experts, Carbon Farming, as well as People and Culture. In the past year, membership of these Communities of Practice has grown to over 115 staff. These Communities of Practice are an integral part of our new leadership framework and will undergo a review in 2023-24. This review will allow us to cultivate even more leadership and resilience within the sector.

While our CEOs have driven this leadership framework, it has been the Chairs driving a new Strategic Plan for NRM Regions Queensland, which will position us as the go-to organisation for natural resource management in the State. Queensland's 12 regional NRM organisations protect and improve the natural assets that underpin our quality of life. The three themes of the new Strategic Plan: Value, Partnerships and Capacity, and the goals that underpin them, will help NRM Regions Queensland to influence, support and promote the work of our member organisations.



Partnerships continue to be critical to delivering activities that sustain our most precious plants and animals, our land and water assets and for sustainable food production. Over the past 12 months we have worked closely with many strategic partners, including the Queensland Farmers Federation, Queensland Water and Land Carers, Local Government Association of Queensland, Queensland Conservation Council, Ecosure, Planning Institute of Australia, NRM Regions Australia, Invasive Species Council and a range of government agencies, amongst others, to influence government policy at all levels, advocate for change, and deliver consistent programs to land managers.

We know Queensland continues to experience extinctions with the list of threatened species growing year-on-year. Climate change will impact regional communities and extreme weather events will impact our ability to sustainably produce food and fibre. That's one of the reasons why we're currently working on a solutions-focussed statewide program of activity to halt the decline of threatened species and help communities adapt to climate change. We will be launching this program in coming months, asking governments to invest appropriately, and working with partners to deliver a sustainable future for all of Queensland.

None of this work would be possible without the dedicated and experienced team working behind the scenes at NRM Regions Queensland. I extend immense gratitude to our staff Lee Blacklock and Belinda "Billy" Thomson and to our super valuable consultants Janelle Mohr, Samantha Morris, Stephen Berkeley and Penny Scott.

I also personally thank the Board of NRM Regions Queensland, and particularly the Chair Julie Boyd for their ongoing guidance, challenging and support as we work collectively to build a positive future for the next generation of Queenslanders.

SECTION 1

# VALUE







# NRM REGIONS QUEENSLAND STRATEGIC PLAN

Following a full 12 months of development and consultation, the NRM Regions Queensland Board adopted a new 2023-26 Strategic Plan for the organisation in (May, 2023). The Plan guides NRM Regions Queensland in how it influences, supports and promotes the work of its 11 member organisations.

The Plan has three key delivery areas: value, partnerships and capacity.

## 1. VALUE: the NRM sector knows its value and so do others

- 1.1 Strong and clear value proposition for the NRM sector
- 1.2 Resilient regional NRM organisations
- 1.3 Strong and identifiable brand for the NRM sector
- 1.4 Regional NRM Plans have the appropriate profile
- 1.5 Collective impact is measured and promoted

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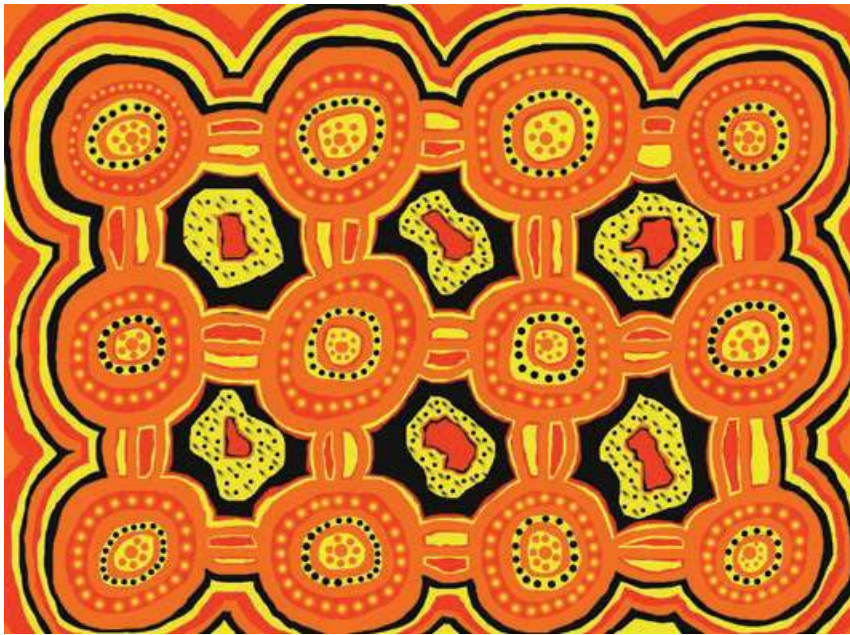
## 2. PARTNERSHIPS: the NRM sector has a solid reputation and influences where it matters

- 2.1 Strong strategic state-wide partnerships that support regional collaboration
- 2.2 First Nations knowledge is valued
- 2.3 Government policy is influenced
- 2.4 Alliances with the private-sector are built

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## 3. CAPACITY: the NRM sector is innovative and forward-looking

- 3.1 Capable Boards leading the sector
- 3.2 Collective knowledge and experiences are shared between regional NRM organisations
- 3.3 Co-delivery of strategic projects across regions
- 3.4 Strong business acumen across the NRM sector
- 3.5 Courageous leadership at all levels
- 3.6 New investment covers the true cost of delivering projects



# TELLING A COMPELLING STATEWIDE NRM STORY

NRM Regions Queensland developed a Statewide Communication and Marketing Strategy in 2021. The purpose of the Strategy is to tell compelling stories that result in action and investment in NRM in Queensland.

The Strategy identified the NRM brand as a priority focus area. As a result, nearly 12 months worth of work took place to understand our audiences and consider brand as a tool to build a stronger relationship with our most important stakeholders. Brand is about much more than a logo, but through the branding process we did refresh the NRM logo and a number of assets.

The new logo, designed by Heidi Glasson, incorporates original artwork by Glenn Barry, a Gamilaraay man living on the Gold Coast. Glenn holds a Bachelor of Fine Art and Bachelor of Digital Media with Honours. As well as being Deputy Chair of Griffith University's Council of Elders, Glenn is also on the Board of the Swell Sculpture Festival. NRM commissioned Glenn to create a piece of art representing NRM in Queensland and his piece '12 campfires' is the result.

Alongside the new visual identity, was a new website, which reinforces NRM's position as the go-to organisation for natural resource management information in Queensland. As well as sharing the impact of the work of Queensland's NRM sector it also acts as a portal for internal initiatives such as the Statewide Leadership Framework developed earlier this year.

A key component to the communication strategy has been honing our ability to reach audiences in the digital sphere and so the past year has seen effort developing our social media and content marketing. Our audiences on Twitter and LinkedIn continue to grow as a result, as do people accessing information about our impact on the ground.

One of NRM's key roles is to support the 12 regional NRM organisations in Queensland deliver for their communities. From a communication point of view this has included facilitating a Community of Practice for NRM communicators, who played a key role in our rebranding process, and catalysing a statewide media monitoring service to reduce costs for our members.

As we prepare for Queensland and Federal elections in coming years, much of our communication work will centre around helping governments understand the critical role we play when it comes to regional sustainability and prosperity. Our intention is to build on our existing partnerships to amplify this key message.

A new Communication & Marketing Strategy for 2024 – 2028 is currently under development.



# STATE-WIDE INDICATORS FRAMEWORK – MEASURING OUR IMPACT ACROSS QUEENSLAND



The State-wide Indicators Framework (SWIF) was developed to provide regional NRM organisations with consistent methods for collecting data about their impact. The first of its kind in Australia and developed for the Queensland NRM sector by Penny Scott and Lee Blacklock, SWIF delivered its first comprehensive dataset in 2022.

Since the Queensland Government’s new Natural Resources Recovery Program was launched, the platform is now also being used to track the impact of all organisations receiving funding from that program.

SWIF is unique as it was developed from the ground up, by practitioners working in the field day-to-day. NRM Regions Queensland supports these practitioners with ongoing development of the platform, training on how to use SWIF and its data collection tools and aggregating data for statewide reporting.

In the past 12 months, the SWIF team held major training events in Mackay, Mount Isa and Toowoomba. These events combined training on SWIF and VegCat. The Toowoomba event, attended by more than 30 people, extended knowledge around land condition and vegetation condition assessment tools (known as LCat and VegCat, respectively). The event was a joint initiative with the Department of Resources, and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the team who maintain LCat.

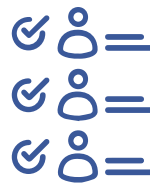
All-in-all 6 formal training events were held, both in-person and virtually. More than 56 people attended these events with another 29 people attending the SWIF Working Group meeting. An additional 35 training meetings were held over Teams with a total of 87 participants focussed on NRIP data, app installation and maintenance. 9 face-to-face training meetings also took place around GIS with a total of 51 people attending. Six regional visits were also conducted by the SWIF team.

**50**

**TRAINING  
EVENTS +  
MEETINGS**



**194+**  
**IN ATTENDANCE**



**1**

**WORKING  
GROUP  
MEETING**



**29**

**WORKING  
GROUP  
MEMBERS**



**6**

**REGIONAL VISITS**



NRM Regions Queensland also developed new regional dashboards using PowerBI, to present trend data for each of the regional NRM organisations using SWIF. PowerBI is an international Microsoft product with more power and versatility than the ESRI dashboards previously used.

A 2-hr virtual SWIF training video was also produced in 2022-23 and has gained 42 views. The SWIF team also continue to support NRM practitioners in groups and one-on-one to enhance the uptake of SWIF and its tools.



## CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFORMING LANDSCAPES

Land management and conservation organisations are increasingly adopting cutting-edge technologies to transform landscapes and monitor land condition. Queensland's regional NRM organisations are at the forefront of this work, using technology such as drones, LiDAR, satellite imagery, acoustic monitoring, camera traps and eDNA sampling to collect data about species and ecosystems, to map habitats and vegetation cover, to create predictive models and plan and prioritise restoration efforts.



# KROOMBIT TINKERFROG

At Kroombit Tops National Park in central Queensland, Fitzroy Basin Association is working with its partners to monitor a post-Gondwanan relic: the critically endangered Kroombit tinkerfrog (*Taudactylus Pleione*). As well as aerial control of feral pigs, and supporting land manager to improve their pest control efforts, more than 20 automated acoustic records have been set up to detect populations and eDNA monitoring is identifying potential release sites and verifying baseline population information. The project is funded by the Australian Government in partnership with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary.



*Kroombit tinkerfrog - Tpleione Bennie R Laredo*

# AT-RISK URBAN ECOSYSTEM

In the Southeast corner, Regional NRM organisation Healthy Land & Water is using drones to identify threats to a vulnerable saltmarsh ecosystem, at Ransome Road Reserve in Lota, bordering the Ramsar wetlands of Moreton Bay. Restoration works including revegetation and weed control are being undertaken to protect saltmarsh and woodland at the reserve. As well as establishing 300 plants the project will also control asparagus vine, lantana and pepper tree. As well as being impacted by weeds, the site is also at threat from illegal entry by 4WDs and the project team is hoping to put an end to this with the support of the local council and the community. Drones are currently being used to capture imagery at the site. "We have been able to identify where 4WDs have been illegally entering the reserve and causing significant damage to the area," a Healthy Land & Water spokesperson said.



# MONITORING PIG POPULATIONS

On the other side of the Great Dividing Range, Southern Queensland Landscapes is working with partners Western Downs Regional Council and Biosecurity Queensland to help land managers monitor pig populations using new thermal monitoring technology. Monitoring is integral to pest control programs. This new monitoring method uses an ultra-high definition video camera fitted with a thermal imager to detect and record the presence of pigs in real time. The thermal imaging technology detects heat so it allows users to see pigs when they might be hiding or in areas of thick vegetation. The team is also comparing the new monitoring methods against traditional methods such as camera monitoring and aerial surveys. It is the first time a comparison has been made between three monitoring methods in one geographical area.



*Scan here to read more about on-ground outcomes*

# NATURE-BASED ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN QUEENSLAND

Australia's natural environments give us a leg-up when it comes to adapting to climate change. Our ecosystems provide a range of services including reducing greenhouse gas emissions by sequestering carbon. In doing so, they also contribute to reducing the impacts of climate change by protecting our communities from events such as floods and storm surges.

When we refer to nature-based solutions, we are referring to all of those actions which help us protect, manage and restore these ecosystems so that they can continue to sequester carbon. And while they remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, they also provide other ecosystem services. When we invest in these nature-based solutions, we deliver many other benefits. We protect biodiversity and threatened species, we mitigate climate with carbon sequestration, communities become more resilient to climate change, we help secure our food systems and we support those business sectors that are reliant on healthy ecosystems.

Some of these nature-based solutions, like protecting existing wetlands, reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Others, like regenerative agriculture or restoring native vegetation, actively remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Queensland's regional NRM organisations work on nature-based solutions in partnership with their communities to ensure our ecosystems are helping us adapt to a changing climate.

## CARBON AND BIODIVERSITY IN THE BURNETT MARY

Burnett Mary Regional Group is delivering two projects as part of the Australian Government's Agricultural Stewardship Package and developed in partnership with the Australian National University. The Carbon + Biodiversity Pilot is a trial for farmers to provide biodiversity and carbon abatement services and The Enhancing Remnant Vegetation Pilot encourages and rewards participants for installing fencing, managing weeds and pest animals, and carrying out plantings on their land. Historically, vegetation has been cleared on farmland transforming the landscape from wooded areas to grassland. This destruction or degradation of remnant vegetation on farmland reduces biodiversity and abundance in flora and fauna species. Both pilot projects aim to put a value on remnant ecosystems and highlight the benefits associated with preserving them by providing incentives for landholders to protect and enhance remnant vegetation.



## CASSOWARY CREDITS IN THE WET TROPICS

In Far North Queensland, Terrain NRM is developing a new biodiversity market – the Cassowary Credits Scheme, which is being piloted as a way to attract more funding into forest restoration, boosting carbon sequestration and rewarding landholders for making changes for the public good. A cassowary credit is earned through rainforest reinstatement, repair, threat mitigation or enhanced protection. The scheme targets land that is unsuitable for agriculture, including sections within larger properties. While the Cassowary Credit Scheme aims to restore biodiversity, it also achieves carbon sequestration outcomes because rainforests absorb huge levels of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. – effectively helping to stabilise the world's climate.



## COMPOST, CARBON AND CLIMATE IN THE DRY TROPICS

A project being delivered by Townsville-based NQ Dry Tropics is removing weeds at Merryplains Creek, turning them into compost and applying that compost to poor soils resulting in outcomes for sustainable agriculture, water quality, soil carbon, biodiversity and ultimately the climate. By engaging land managers in the process of mechanically removing weeds from Merryplains Creek near Home Hill, the project has enhanced wildlife habitat, improved water quality to the Great Barrier Reef and improved resilience to flood impacts. By applying the compost made from these weeds to the participating properties, land managers have reduced their reliance on fertilisers which has improved soil health and carbon-retention on local farms.



In many instances, using compost on farms reduces the need for application of synthetic fertilisers and helps improve soil carbon, which in turn helps mitigate climate change. Improved carbon sequestration in soils helps with health soil function which also boost productivity and delivers other ecosystem services.



*'A creek in Daintree National Park, part of the Wet Tropics'*



# PROTECTING QUEENSLAND'S THREATENED SPECIES: NRM IN ACTION



*Queensland's regional NRM organisations are working in partnership with conservation groups, Traditional Owners and researchers to protect threatened species across the State.*

Queensland is a State of extraordinary natural diversity. From the rangelands to the Reef, we boast an incredible array of unique plants and animals. But many of these species are now threatened and despite community efforts, continue to face significant challenges, including habitat loss, climate change, and invasive species.

Queensland's regional NRM organisations have each developed a regional NRM Plan in partnership with their local community that identifies ecosystems and native plants and animals that need to be protected. With their partners, they're taking action to help stem the tide of extinctions across the country.

## COMMUNITY RECOVERY TEAMS IN THE WET TROPICS

In Queensland's Wet Tropics, community recovery teams are critical to understanding the threats to threatened species and identifying and implementing actions to halt their decline. There are eight formal groups across the region working to protect some of its highest priority species and Terrain NRM supports those recovery teams. Terrain is also focussed on understanding and protecting nine priority threatened species – coastal littoral vine forest, mabi rainforest, broad leaf tea tree, ant plants, cassowaries, mahogany gliders, northern bettongs, yellow-bellied gliders and northern quolls.



## CASSOWARIES ON CAPE YORK

In the far north of Cape York, cassowaries have been discovered living in a remote section of the Cape York Northern Area Peninsula through a survey facilitated by Cape York NRM and led by Gudang Yadhaykenu Traditional Owners with assistance from cassowary expert Wren McLean. Conducted in 2022, the five-day field survey installed camera traps at strategic sites across 28km using lures resembling fruit. On day one of this trip, a cassowary walked into base camp, confirming proof of life in the area. Over the next two months, the cameras captured 30 images of at least 10 cassowaries, identified as four adults, four brown sub-adults and two stripey chicks. The results rule out the common perception that cassowaries in the region are extinct. This northern section of Apudthama (Jardine River) National Park is not included in many formal cassowary distribution maps.



*Carpentaria Grasswren. Photo by Steve Murphy*

## CARPENTARIAN GRASSWRENS BENEFIT FROM FIRE MANAGEMENT

Southern Gulf NRM, with its headquarters in Mt Isa, is working alongside BirdLife North Queensland to protect the endangered Carpentarian Grasswren (*Amytornis dorotheae*), a medium-sized grasswren, endemic to the southern Gulf of Carpentaria. It is a small but striking brown and white bird with a moderately long tail that it flicks erect in a cheeky display. Historically, the species was known from four separate locations across Northern Territory and Cloncurry in Queensland and researchers believe populations in two of those locations have been significantly impacted by the availability of habitat following wildfires that have occurred since 2003. Fire has a significant impact on the Carpentarian Grasswren and this project aims to stabilise the trajectory of the species as well as increase awareness and adoption of land management practices that improve the condition of vegetation and biodiversity impacting the bird. To date, some 48,988ha of prescribed burning has taken place and more than 8,800 volunteer hours have been contributed to surveying the bird.



# BIOSECURITY

At its core, biosecurity refers to the measures put in place to protect against the introduction and spread of harmful pests, diseases, and weeds that can have devastating impacts on ecosystems, agriculture, and human health. Biosecurity is critical to good land management and to conservation efforts in Queensland.

Regional NRM organisations play a vital role in delivering on-ground biosecurity projects across Queensland. Our sector works closely with landholders, industry groups, and communities to identify and manage biosecurity risks, develop strategies to prevent their spread, and implement measures to contain and eradicate existing infestations.

The work of these regional NRM organisations includes a range of initiatives such as community awareness programs, targeted surveillance and monitoring, control and eradication programs for invasive pests and weeds, and the development and implementation of biosecurity plans at the regional level.

## TEN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AGREE ON BIOSECURITY PRIORITIES

In the southern Gulf of Carpentaria, ten local authorities came together with regional NRM organisation Southern Gulf NRM to plan for the collective management of invasive pest species. The end result is the North West Queensland Regional Biosecurity Plan, 2022 – 2027, whose purpose is to provide guidance to local government on how to reduce biosecurity risks associated with invasive plants and animals.

## SIMULATION TESTS CONTROL OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

If foot and mouth disease hit Australia, could it be controlled? That's the \$24 billion dollar question being put to the test by scientists and biosecurity experts leading a simulated FMD outbreak on 60,000ha. Regional NRM organisation Southern Queensland Landscapes is collaborating on the \$1.4 million simulation alongside 46 private land managers, the NSW Vertebrate Pest Research Unit and Northern Tablelands Local Land Services.

## FERAL ANIMAL ROADSHOW

In 2022, a Feral Animal Roadshow helped land managers across the Fitzroy region refresh their best practice pest management skills and work with their neighbours to collaborate on solutions. The roadshow included a series of workshops, including the Feral Animal Workshop held at Blackwater, to educate attendees about trapping and electric fencing options with the aim of reducing the impact of feral animals on the environment, agriculture and infrastructure. The event was supported by Fitzroy Basin Association through funding by the Queensland and Australian Governments.

## YELLOW-BELLIED GLIDER GETS HABITAT IMPROVEMENT WORKS

In the Wet Tropics, a Terrain NRM weed control program is providing essential habitat improvement works for the endangered yellow-bellied glider, known for its distinctive shrieks, rattles and gurgles. There are only three populations of the Wet Tropics species of the gliders left and one of those populations' habitat is infested with lantana, putting the survival of this population at risk.



# DELIVERING FOR THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S NATIONAL LANDCARE PROGRAM

Queensland's regional NRM organisations are ready to deliver on the Australian Government's new program for environmental protection – an evolution on its previous National Landcare Program. With 320 people on the ground across 27 locations including scientists, GIS experts, engineers, community engagement specialists, Traditional Knowledge brokers, ecologists and landcare facilitators, we've delivered significant outcomes for all of the Australian Government's historical programs, funded through the Natural Heritage Trust. Some highlights include:

## HEALTHY FARMING FUTURES FOR NORTHERN GULF

Gulf Savannah NRM's Healthy Farming Futures project is improving soil health in a region where intensive agriculture is worth \$72+ million to the economy. The project, funded by the Regional Landcare Partnerships program, aimed to improve soil health in the Northern Gulf, where the economy is at risk without better soil management – particularly as industries expand into new, more marginal areas where careful soil management is critical. Gulf Savannah NRM has been working with growers in the Mareeba-Dimbulah Irrigation Area – an agricultural hub for bananas, sugar cane, limes, mangoes and avocados – to improve soil health, develop adaptive capacity, and increase long-term resilience through improved whole-of-business management. The project's intensive one-on-one support program engaged more than 24 farms, 100+ participants attending a workshop to learn about transitioning to lower input farming methods. Onground works were also delivered to reduce erosion – one of the key priorities for maintaining soil health in the Northern Gulf region.

## IMPROVED ECOLOGICAL FUNCTION AT SANDRINGHAM WETLAND COMPLEX

Regional NRM organisation Reef Catchments received funding from the Australian Government's Reef Trust, delivered through the National Landcare Program to improve

the ecological function and condition of Sandringham Wetland Complex as well as threatened ecological communities within the region. Works undertaken include habitat enhancements to protect threatened and socioeconomically significant fish species through the removal of barriers to fish migration. Other onground activities included revegetation, weed and pest control, facilitating management practice change, development of site-specific management plans, and installation of fish-friendly structures to improve fish passage, freshwater retention and availability.

## BADALIA FIELD DAY FOCUSES ON LAND REHABILITATION

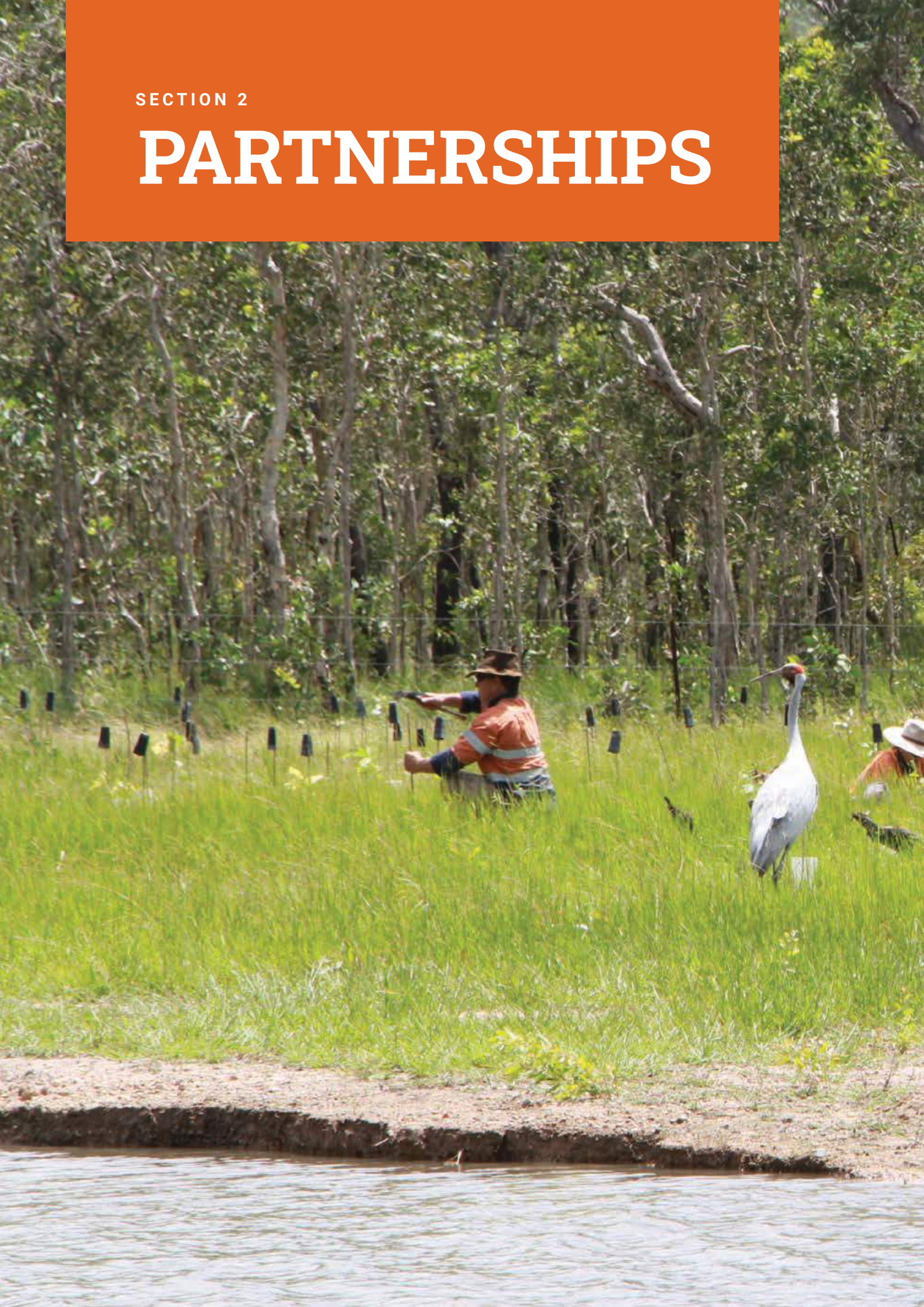
A field day funded through the National Landcare Program and coordinated by Desert Channels Queensland was attended by 13 people. Badalia Station is located on the Georgina River, 1700km north west of Brisbane. The event brought together a selection of stakeholders, including 9 landholders, all sharing a common aim: a commitment to land rehabilitation and sustainable practices.

Starting in the wool shed with station owner Brook McGlinchey sharing his plans and vision for transforming scorched clay pans into productive areas, the program also included presentations on Desert Channel Queensland's erosion projects with a focus on brick-work ploughing and seeding around ridges for effective rehabilitation. Jenny Milson also spoke about the growth cycle of Mitchell Grass and how grazing patterns can affect it. Her presentation demonstrated the importance of preserving deep roots during dry periods and offered insights into the repercussions of failing to do so. DCQ's Roxane Blackley also shared expertise on soil testing and its significance in land rehabilitation with practical demonstrations of pH and other chemical tests on a topsoil sample, attendees were given a firsthand experience of soil testing techniques, opening up new avenues to maximise productivity. A field trip also took place to inspect recently implemented brick-work ploughing and seeded with Mitchell Grass. After recent rains, the attendees could observe the outcome of his efforts.



SECTION 2

# PARTNERSHIPS











## NRM RQ BACKS CALLS FOR AN INDEPENDENT EPA

The State's 12 regional NRM organisations joined calls from the Queensland Conservation Council and other peak bodies for an independent Environment Protection Agency in Queensland. The sector agreed that an independent EPA would deliver significant benefits for regional Queensland, particularly in protecting biodiversity, safe-guarding productive landscapes and ensuring healthy communities.

There are many benefits to separating the policy development, extension and regulation activities which otherwise sit within one agency. The reality is that this approach makes it clearer for everyone and doesn't create conflicts or confusion with roles.

The compliance function that would take place in an independent EPA complements the role of regional NRM organisations that work at the coalface with land managers and environmental groups to adopt more sustainable farming practices and protect our valuable natural assets for future generations.

The Queensland NRM sector also believes it is critical for communities to see follow-up to illegal actions as this ensures that they stay motivated to continue their participation in environmental action on the ground. An independent agency will ensure that all land managers are treated equally.



## REEF CHAMPION AWARDS

NRM Regions Queensland sponsored the 2023 Reef Champion Awards with winners announced at a glittering ceremony held in Cairns on 7 September 2022. The Reef Champion Awards shine a light on farming, extension, Traditional Owners and community leaders who are working to reduce their impact on the Great Barrier Reef. Innovative nitrogen reduction practices, dedicated approaches to extension, revegetation of farms and conservation of wetlands, and native animal species were just some of the success stories honoured at the event, an initiative of Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF) in conjunction with the Department of Environment and Science.





Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Water, Tanya Plibersek joined QFF CEO Jo Sheppard in congratulating participants and thanking them for the role they play in protecting the Reef.

“Water quality is critical in protecting the Reef, and the awards showcase some inspiring people contributing new ideas and making a real difference,” Minister Plibersek said.

Queensland’s Environment Minister Meaghan Scanlon said the awards showcase the achievements of Queenslanders who are setting the benchmark for agricultural innovation to reduce run-off and deliver practical Reef projects.

NRM Regions Queensland sponsored one of the ten categories awarded on the night.

CEO Chris Norman presented the Reef Community Champion Award to CQ Seagrass Regeneration Collective based in Rockhampton who were recognised for collaboration to

restore and reinstate seagrass meadows.

Chris said the category was focussed on recognising the exemplary effort of communities to improve the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef.

“The Great Barrier Reef is iconic the world over,” Chris said, “and it must be protected. We know that the best way to achieve this is by working together, so it is an honour to sponsor this award and to recognise the achievements of those who are striving to ensure the Reef is here for many generations to come.”

“Having the Australian and Queensland Governments support these awards and the many on-ground projects taking place to protect and improve the Great Barrier Reef is testament to those collaborative efforts,” Chris said.

# LAND RESTORATION FUND

Department of Environment and Science contracted Queensland Farmers Federation and NRM Regions Queensland to conduct Land Restoration Fund (LRF) workshops during 2022/23. These workshops coincide with a third round of LRF funding for Queensland land managers to undertake a carbon farming project.

Four workshops were conducted: one virtual and one each in Gin Gin, Charters Towers and Cairns with a total of 193 people attending and some 76% of attendees saying they would consider applying for LRF funding as a result of their attendance.



# BIOSECURITY WITH LGAQ

NRM Regions Queensland joined forces with LGAQ, QFF, Growcom, AgForce and QWaLC on a campaign to address established pest plant and animals, as well as Emergency Animal Disease response. The campaign called for stronger leadership and increased resourcing from Biosecurity Queensland alongside targeted State Government action to ensure Queensland's industry, jobs and food are properly protected.

NRM Regions Queensland joined its partners to ask for Increased biosecurity investment to protect Queenslanders' way of life by: ensuring growing biosecurity costs are not unfairly shouldered by local governments and communities; and calling for a framework of genuine consultation which recognises the interests of industry, and local governments.

The strategy for the campaign involved working together to promote, magnify and strengthen our collective power and asks; a coordinated media and communications strategy; generating public support by focusing on local examples around which to partner and generate media opportunities; and preparing a joint letter proposed to send to Minister Furner, requesting a meeting with all participating partners to discuss our shared priorities.

# KOALA RECOVERY TEAM BOARD

In October 2022, the Koala Recovery Team Board held its first meeting, charged with handling high-level strategic review and coordination of koala recovery efforts. Members of the 12-person board, chaired by Australia's Threatened Species Commissioner Fiona Fraser, are representatives from key organisations involved in delivering koala conservation. This includes Chris Norman representing NRM Regions Queensland.

The Board delegates tasks to other subgroups of the recovery team, including the Strategy and Co-ordination Group which includes representatives from Reef Catchments and Healthy Land & Water. The Board is governed by the Koala Recovery Team Board Terms of Reference.

At its first meeting, the Board agreed on priorities for the delivery of actions in the first year of the Recovery Plan for the Koala (combined populations of Queensland, NSW and ACT).





## Paddock to Reef

Paddock to Reef is a framework used to evaluate progress towards Reef Water Quality Improvement Plan targets and objectives. It involves some 20 organisations who work together to measure and report on catchment management and water quality impacting the Great Barrier Reef.

NRM Regions Queensland and its P2R coordinator Belinda “Billy” Thomson play a critical role in coordination and communication around the program with a key focus being to support the six Reef NRM regions to develop targeted communications around the Paddock to Reef program.

These NRM organisations hold annual communication events as a deliverable for the Office of the Great Barrier Reef and World Heritage Regional Engagement Program. These communication events and products take different forms in each region and are guided by a Working Group. The goal is to develop tailored and locally relevant communications on the effectiveness of management initiatives to address water quality issues across the Great Barrier Reef.

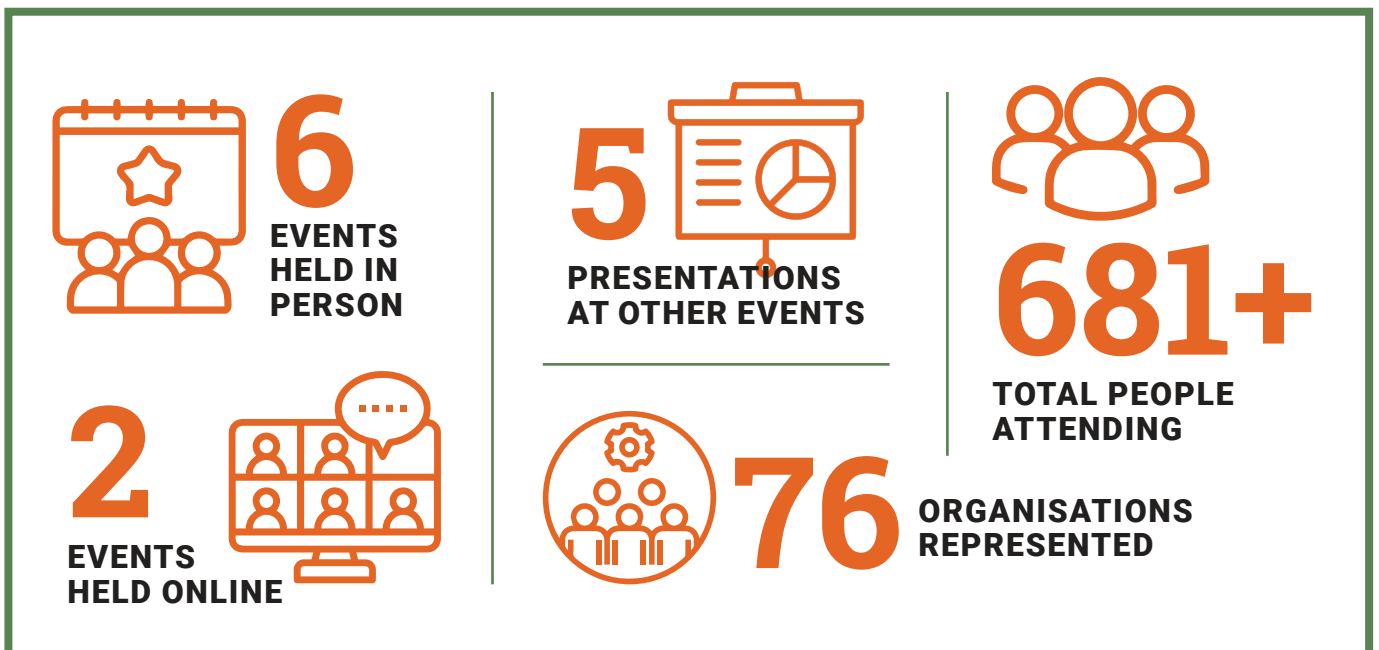
**Our Paddock to Reef work helps these communication events to:**

1. Increase awareness of improved land management practices by communicating benefits for land managers and the Great Barrier Reef.
2. Translate content (Reef science, research, report card results etc.) into tailored, locally relevant communication products and engagement activities that are easy to understand and resonate with target audiences.
3. Increase awareness and understanding of the Paddock to Reef program and Reef 2050 WQIP and the regional activities being undertaken under these initiatives to improve water quality.



The target audience is extension officers, technical officers, and industry. Invitations are also sent to landholders, community and catchment care groups, Traditional Owners groups, regional councils, and anyone with an interest in Reef science.

Over the past 12 months, the program has reached a significant number of people working on Reef water quality. Eight (8) events were held – both online and in-person with some 281 people attending, representing 78 different organisations. An additional 5 presentations were delivered at other events to more than 400 people.





# NATURAL RESOURCES RECOVERY PROGRAM

The Natural Resources Recovery Program (NRRP) is a Queensland Government program with up to \$10 million in funding available per year for projects that promote sustainable outcomes and innovation for land resources.

The program builds on the success of the Natural Resources Investment Program (NRIP), which was delivered solely by Queensland's regional NRM organisations. That program had a focus on sustainable land management and regional prosperity by investing in our land and vegetation resources, our regions, and science. The NRRP will ensure that funds go to regions and activities not completely supported by other grant programs.

To date the program has delivered two rounds of funding, amounting to more than \$14 million invested in 31 projects.

A third round is expected to open in December 2023, following an internal review of the first two rounds of funding.

Ten regional NRM organisations are among those sharing in this funding for projects as diverse as cultural heritage, promoting native trees in agricultural landscapes, protecting vegetation at re-emerging Great Artesian Basin springs, and upskilling land managers enabling them to engage with emerging markets such as Biodiversity Stewardship Payments.

NRM Regions Queensland also receives support to provide consistent, accurate and timely reporting through the State-wide Indicators Framework (SWIF) and to communicate NRRP outcomes.

# PRIVATE PROTECTED AREA PROGRAM: NATURE REFUGE LANDHOLDER SERVICES DELIVERY

A key action under Queensland's Protected Area Strategy 2020-2030 is to facilitate the

effective management of private protected areas through innovative partnerships. In supporting this action, in 2021-22 the Queensland Department of Environment and Science (DES) funded a two-year contract with Ecosure to collaborate with NRM Regions Queensland to deliver a range of services and products to assist landholders managing their nature refuge through the Private Protected Area Program (PPAP).

The Department called for ideas and innovative delivery of nature refuge landholder services that increase the

effective management of the significant natural and cultural values of nature refuges, establishment of a program of monitoring and evaluation to support effective nature refuge management, and facilitating meaningful and well-considered experiences that foster positive landholder engagement with the Private Protected Area Program.

Ecosure is now working with NRM Regions Queensland and six pilot regions: Healthy Land & Water, Fitzroy Basin Association, Terrain NRM, NQ Dry Tropics, Desert Channels Queensland and Cape York NRM to deliver tools and resources to support nature refuge landholders. The work is underpinned by a gap analysis which was completed last year.

SECTION 3

# CAPACITY





# LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK FOR QUEENSLAND'S NRM SECTOR

Queensland's NRM sector has a new leadership framework and leadership capabilities with a number of initiatives now rolling out to support the sector's 12 regional NRM organisations.

The CEOs of the regional NRM organisations identified the need for the sector to build its capacity to lead at all locations, at all levels and at all times. After 9 months of data collection, consultation and the exploration of leadership capabilities, a Leadership Framework was finalised, along with a number of leadership learning opportunities which NRM organisations and their staff can opt-in to.

The leadership framework was launched in March 2023 with some 100 NRM staff across the State attending the virtual launch. A panel of special guests including Queensland's Chief Entrepreneur Julia Spicer spoke about their experience of leadership and their reflections on the sector's new leadership capabilities.

The framework and its five leadership capabilities provide a common language that will help bring leadership development into the NRM sector's everyday activities and conversations. The framework also complements the leadership initiatives that are already taking place at a regional level.

Leanne Kohler is a member of the leadership working group as well as the CEO of Desert Channels Queensland – one of 12 regional NRM organisations around the State. She said the leadership framework will help the sector better deliver outcomes for communities.

"The five core leadership capabilities we've developed are considered key success factors for delivering NRM across Queensland," she said. "We're expecting them

to provide a framework to shape discussion and guide future leadership initiatives across our sector."

NRM Regions Queensland CEO Chris Norman said leadership is something incorporated into every action at every level within the sector.

"Our people lead every day," Chris said, "from the paddock to parliament and everything in between."

"Our new leadership framework simply puts some structure around what leadership means for natural resource management, and how we can continue to grow new leaders to ensure we are making the biggest possible impact where it matters most."

A series of recommendations were also made by the Leadership Working Group and three of those recommendations are now being implemented. These three initiatives allow regions and their staff to opt-in to a range of statewide learning opportunities including a monthly program of virtual skill-building called Lunch & Learn; a pilot mentoring program; and a review of the NRM sector's Communities of Practice.

184 staff from across Queensland attended the first two Lunch & Learn events which are scheduled to take place monthly and are hosted by a regional NRM organisation. The first event in May, saw Healthy Land & Water lead a panel discussing the Nature Repair Bill and the second, hosted by Southern Queensland Landscapes honed in on remote sensing tools for NRM outcomes.

In the weeks following these sessions, 100 staff viewed the Leadership Capabilities document on our website and 63 people watched a workshop recording on YouTube.

# NRM Leadership Framework



# Building Our Capacity to Lead

## LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

These five Core Capabilities (and associated descriptors) are considered key success factors for delivering natural resource management across Queensland and have been sourced from those developed for public sector organisations/Not-for-Profits (and relevant commercial organisations) across Australia and the UK capturing contemporary thinking and approaches to leadership capability appropriate to the NRM sector.

Their purpose is to:

- Define what leadership should look like in the NRM sector so we have common language.
- Create a tool used to assess (benchmark) our current capabilities and identify areas for improvement/development.
- Provide a framework to shape discussions and guide the development of future leadership initiatives across the NRM sector.

### THINKS STRATEGICALLY

- Set a clear sense of purpose that connects and inspires others.
- Realises organisational goals by setting direction that considers the big picture.
- Identifies data to inform strategic decisions and measures impact.
- Builds capacity, including commercial acumen, and systems to meet the future needs of the organisation.
- Anticipates and responds to future trends and challenges.
- Encourages innovation and divergent thinking

### BUILDS PRODUCTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

- Creates and supports a safe workplace where views and opinions can be openly shared.
- Forms diverse teams with a mix of styles, perspectives and experiences to achieve organisational goals.
- Fosters a positive team environment that builds trust, shares ideas and recognises everyone's contribution.
- Facilitates effective networks and partnerships, bringing stakeholders together at all levels to achieve organisational goals.
- Applies sound engagement principles when working with stakeholder

### ACHIEVES RESULTS

- Recognises the importance of data and information and uses this to support day to day decision making.
- Develops initiatives to deliver on strategic objectives that create new opportunities.
- Selects and utilises relevant resources to do the job.
- Evaluates and reviews systems and processes to ensure continuous improvement.
- Invests in and supports the development of individual and team capacity through education, experience and exposure to achieve organisational goals.
- Seeks to achieve multiple benefits from work activities.

### DISPLAYS PERSONAL DRIVE & INTEGRITY

- Leads by example through continuous self-awareness and modifies behavior through reflection and feedback.
- Keeps perspective, maintains composure and focus whilst adapting to change.
- Is accountable and takes responsibility.
- Shows initiative and takes on challenges.

### COMMUNICATES WITH INFLUENCE

- Practices self-awareness in the moment, observes responses to communication and adapts accordingly.
- Respects diversity, tailors' communication style and delivers clear and consistent messages.
- Enters negotiations with clear understanding of key issues and listens to different perspectives and explores solutions.





# COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE



NRM Regions Queensland facilitates seven communities of practice (CoPs). Each meets 3–4 times a year with a focus on skill-sharing, knowledge exchange and developing leadership around each theme.

Each CoP has a CEO sponsor, a consistent Terms of Reference and an annual workplan – although this is loosely implemented. NRMHQ holds the membership register of each group as well as hosting four of the CoPs, and provides administrative support as needed. The Communities tend not to be decision-making forums but rather focus on sharing best practice in the fields of member expertise. They do however provide a summary of recommendations, actions and progress to each CEO meeting.

#### The seven communities of practice are:

- Indigenous Engagement, sponsored by Katrina Dent
- Communications, sponsored by Chris Norman
- State-wide Indicators Framework, sponsored by Chris Norman (and transitioning in 2023/24 to a MERI CoP to be sponsored by Scott Crawford).
- Business Managers, sponsored by Paul McDonald
- GIS Managers and Drone Network, sponsored by Chris Norman through Lee Blacklock
- Carbon Farming, sponsored by Chris Norman
- HR (People and Culture), sponsored by Julie McLellan

## CoP REVIEW

A review of the effectiveness and efficiency of our Communities of Practice is a planned initiative under the NRM Leadership Framework, set to occur in 2023-24. The review is based on our understanding that these Communities are where much leadership is demonstrated and fostered across the NRM sector.

Attendance in CoPs is voluntary and more than 115 people participate in these Communities of Practice across the State.

### FAST FACTS



**115**  
MEMBERS

**7**  
COPs



**6**  
CEO SPONSORS



# ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS



In 2022, NRM Regions Queensland commissioned EDO Queensland to provide an overview of legislation that may have an impact on the NRM sector in Queensland. The 200+-page guide sets out each piece of legislation that may need to be considered by regional NRM organisations, and also discusses the possible implications each piece of legislation may have for NRM organisations using a range of case studies. This document will form a critical piece of induction material for new staff as well as helping with succession planning.

The report details 32 pieces of Queensland and Commonwealth legislation that may impact the work of NRM organisations.

# ENVIRONMENTAL MARKETS

Environmental markets are market-based instruments that generate financial benefits in exchange for environmental gains. These new emerging markets provide an opportunity for private investors to participate in solving climate change and biodiversity loss – both significant environmental challenges that governments and not-for-profits cannot tackle alone.

In 2022, NRM Regions Queensland, on behalf of the CEOs of all the regional NRM organisations, commissioned research into the opportunities presented to the sector as a result of these emerging markets. The report provides an overview of some of the environmental markets currently available, and the potential roles and opportunities for regional NRM organisations to supplement traditional sources of government funding.

The report, written by Guillaume Lefebvre and Christopher Warner from Terrain NRM and published in November 2022 described sustainable finance enablers, the size of Australia’s carbon market, the potential future for regional NRM organisations, and issues for further exploration. It also analysed roles and considerations for regional NRM organisations to participate in environmental markets and raised questions for Boards to consider in positioning their organisations in this new emerging space.







*NRM Regions Australia CEO Chris Norman presents at the National NRM Knowledge Conference in 2022*

# NRM KNOWLEDGE CONFERENCE 2022

Australia's regional NRM organisations gathered at Margaret River, WA from 31 October to 2 November 2022 for their biannual Conference under the theme of 'Resilience through Transformation'. More than 280 participants from all over Australia attended the event.

The event was co-hosted by NRM Regions Australia and South West Catchments Council.

NRM Regions Queensland members were well represented at the Conference with 12 presentations by Queensland's regional NRM organisations (approximately 30% of the total talks presented) amongst a program that had a strong focus on optimism, First Nations partnerships, and emerging markets for regional NRM organisation participation.

Queensland is excited to be hosting the 2024 NRM Knowledge Conference under the leadership of NRM Regions Australia in the Wet Tropics region of far north Queensland.



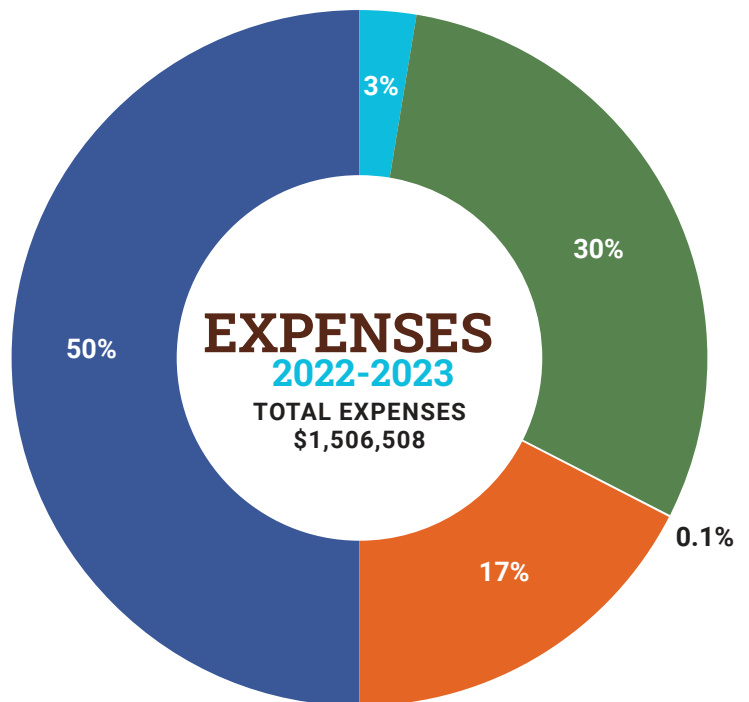
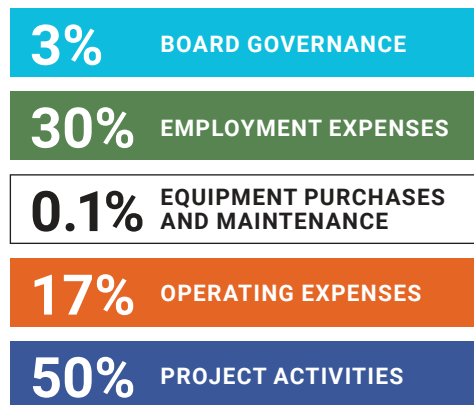
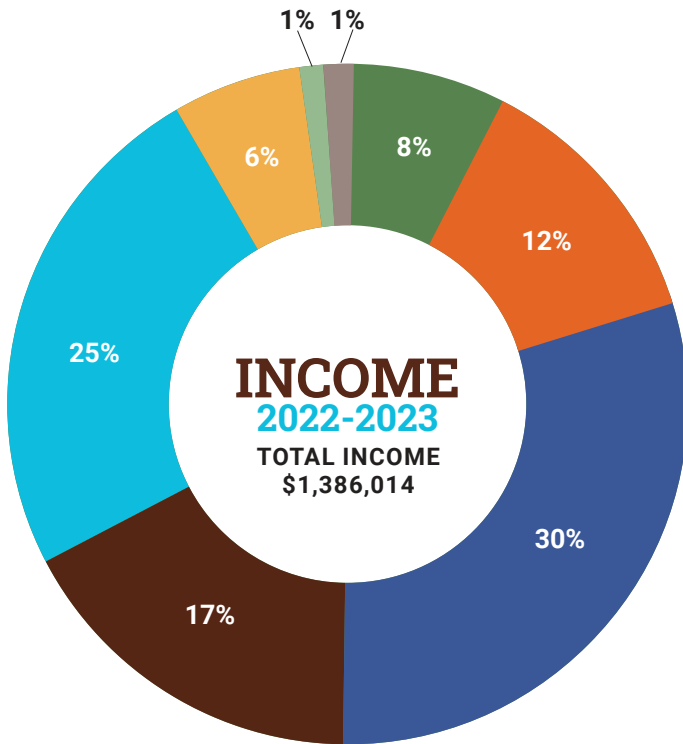
# FINANCIALS







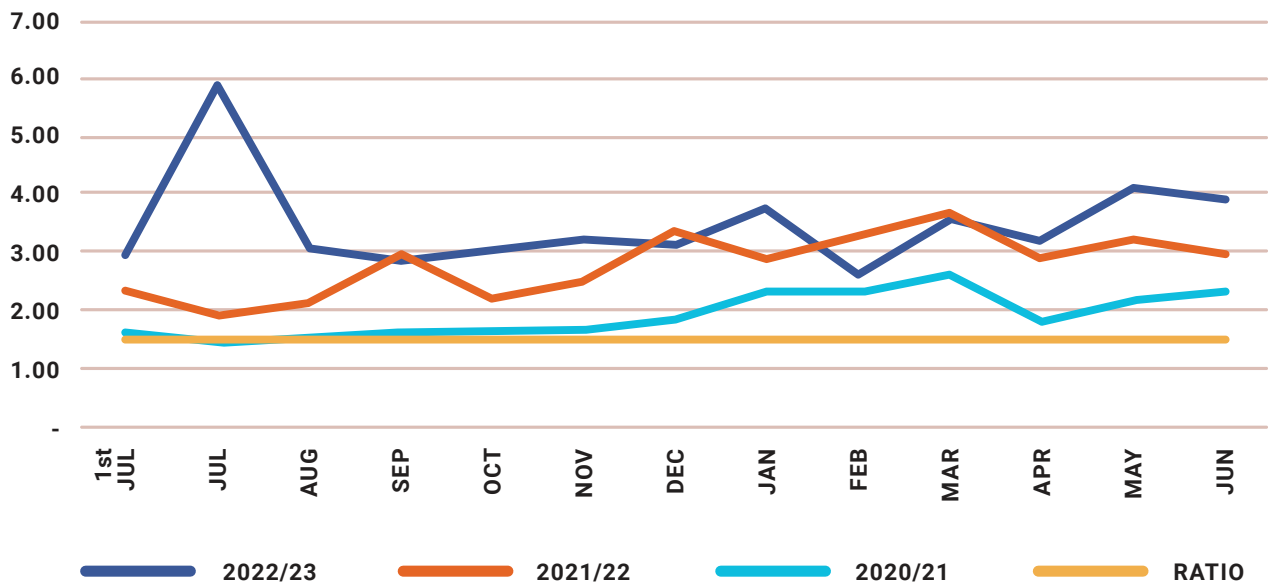
# FINANCIALS 2022 - 2023





# FINANCIALS 2022 - 2023

## SOLVENCY RATIOS





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