Cape York
Natural Resource Management

A Case Study - Strengthening Foundations: Building Capacity at Cape York NRM

NRRP Regional Coordination Evaluation (RCE) Maintaining and improving monitoring and evaluation in Cape York Peninsula

" Cape York NRM has kicked off the year with energy, enthusiasm, and a whole lot of learning! "

Embracing the quieter pace of the wet season, the team has dived headfirst into a series of organisational capacity building activities—with plenty of brainpower, collaboration, and future-focused thinking on display. Organisational capacity building is all about strengthening the backbone of an organisation - its systems, structures, processes and, most importantly, its people. It focuses on developing specific competencies but also on building a broader capacity for growth, innovation, and resilience.

To get things started, Cape York NRM staff participated in a training needs assessment at the end of 2024. An analysis of the results showed that while individuals had their own job-specific needs, organisationally there were a couple of key areas for development. These included monitoring tools and the Statewide Indicators Framework (SWIF).

Penny Scott from NRM Regions Queensland (NRMRQ) brought her expertise to the table, leading an eye-opening and engaging SWIF training session.

SWIF is a set of monitoring tools and methods used across Queensland's Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisations, among others, to collect impact data. It includes systems for analysing and bringing together data from across Queensland to tell a statewide NRM story. Developed by NRMRQ, with funding from the Queensland Government, Queensland is leading Australia with this coordinated and consistent approach to the monitoring of natural resource management.

The use of SWIF methods and systems enables all Cape York NRM projects to measure and report their impacts consistently, regardless of different funding sources and varying reporting requirements of each funder. It brings together the organisation's projects showing where they work, what they do and what's been achieved across the region. This regional information is then de-identified for confidentiality and shared with NRMRQ who produce a statewide story of all the NRM regions activities and impact.

Contracts and Compliance Officer Daniela Du Buisson thought Penny was fantastic.

"Her passion for SWIF was contagious, it made you want to be a part of it and drove home the idea that the work we do in the field is not just for the project we're doing now, it has a broader contribution to the statewide NRM effort," Daniela said.

Biodiversity Program Manager David Preece echoed Daniela's sentiments.

"It was an informative session for the organisation as a whole to understand the importance of telling a story of the good work we do across our projects. It's important not only for the public but also that our current and future funders understand the positive impact our projects are having," David said.

Consistent ongoing monitoring and evaluation is the backbone of this powerful storytelling—and essential for showcasing the real impact of on-the-ground works. The recent training needs assessment highlighted a gap in this area, and with the wet season well entrenched, many staff dove into two hands-on training sessions to learn about the Vegetation Condition Assessment Tool (VegCAT) and the Land Condition Assessment Tool (LCAT). Staff from Terrain NRM, Gulf Savannah NRM and Southern Gulf NRM also attended, making the events not only valuable for skill development but also for fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing across regions.

Investing in capacity building is crucial to ensure that not-for-profit organisations like Cape York NRM can continue to deliver high-quality, cost-effective programs. It also means the projects will contribute meaningfully to the health of the landscapes and ecosystems we all value and depend on.