



QWaLC
QUEENSLAND WATER & LAND CARERS

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2019-2020**



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QWaLC Vision

Thriving and connected Queensland communities and ecosystems.

QWaLC Mission

To encourage our members to actively participate in improving Queensland's environmental, social and economic futures.

Who are we?

Queensland Water and Land Carers Inc. (QWaLC) is the peak body for NRM volunteers in Queensland. We are an independent, non-government, not-for-profit organisation. QWaLC formed in April 2004 to fill an important need in supporting the valuable work of volunteer community groups in the Natural Resources Management sector across Queensland. We currently have a membership of over 400 groups with more than 30,000 individual members. We work on behalf of thousands of natural resource management volunteers across our vast state.

How do we operate?

The organisation is answerable to our membership, which is made up of a broad range of volunteer NRM groups. Members include Landcare, Coastcare, Waterwatch, Bushcare, catchment associations, conservation groups and subregional organisations.

The organisation is incorporated and governed by a constitution* that sets out the objectives, powers and administrative arrangements.

QWaLC's network extends across the 14 natural resource management regions of Queensland, each of which is represented by a QWaLC Board Member elected from the region.

For QWaLC's Constitution go to:

<http://QWaLC.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/2014.08.13.QWaLC-CONSTITUTION-Final.pdf>

What is our role?

As Queensland's peak body for NRM volunteers, QWaLC fulfils the following roles:

Networking—QWaLC is part of a large NRM network that encompasses volunteer NRM groups, regional bodies, government representatives and industry personnel. We facilitate the exchange of strategies, information, skills and resources. We develop and improve links between volunteer NRM groups, regional organisations and government agencies.

Promotion—QWaLC is dedicated to promoting the achievements of natural resource management volunteers across the state.

Representation—A community representative board is a core pillar to the overall make up of QWaLC – and these members ensure that community volunteers have an opportunity to participate and contribute to policies and issues that specifically relate to their region at a localised level. It is the role of your Board members to ensure that they actively engage with member groups and bring forward their views and opinions to be represented at the State and National levels.

Advocacy—QWaLC exists in Queensland to advocate specifically on behalf of NRM volunteers. The volunteer NRM sector is vital to the Queensland economy, investing many thousands of hours of volunteer's time into practical environmental outcomes. QWaLC role is to ensure that this contribution is an important consideration in any decisions made regarding the voluntary NRM sector.

Insurance—QWaLC assists groups in their practical work throughout the state by the provision of three vital insurance policies - Association Liability; Public and Products Liability; and Volunteer Accident.



*right - JAMARR
EnviroGroup maintains
the largest outdoor
labyrinth in the Southern
Hemisphere*

Our people.

QWaLC Board

QWaLC's Board plays an integral part of its role as the peak body for natural resource management (NRM) volunteers. The Board consists of a community representative from across each of Queensland's 14 NRM regions. Our Regional Board Members represent their regions and highlight the issues and achievements in each allowing QWaLC to be truly representative of the whole State and to keep in touch with on-ground volunteers.

The Board

Region	Role	Name
Qld. Murray Darling	Chair	Geoff Elliot
Cape York & Torres Strait	Deputy Chair	Jason Carroll
Burdekin/Mackay Whitsunday	Treasurer	Graham Armstrong
Condamine	Secretary	MaryLou Gittins OAM
Burnett Mary	Board Member	Phil Moran
Southern/Northern Gulf	Board Member	Mark van Ryt/John Brisbin
Fitzroy	Board Member	Shelly McArdle
South West Qld.	Board Member	Cameron Tickle
Wet Tropics	Board Member	Rhonda Sorensen
South East Qld.	Board Member	Brian Venz
Desert Channels	Board Member	Ann Ballinger
Statewide	Board Appointment	Peter Stevens (part of)

Sub Committees

	<i>Chaired by</i>
Governance and Planning	Brian Venz
Insurance and Risk	Phil Moran
Member Engagement Committee	MaryLou Gittins
Finance and Audit	Graham Armstrong

Staff

Statewide	Executive Officer	Darryl Ebenezer
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Chair's Report



This marks the completion of my fifth year as Chairman of QWaLC and, once again, it has been an extremely busy year with Local, State and Federal issues and events, not to mention the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, which completely changed the way our organisation operates and interacts with member groups.

QWaLC's Board and organisational structure continues to work well with the present arrangement of sub-committees, as opposed to an Executive Committee, undertaking all of the operational and decision-making functions.

We continue to have full Board representation across all regions. Our current Board members are:

- Jason Carroll, Deputy Chair (Cape York),
- MaryLou Gittins OAM, Secretary (Condamine),
- Graham Armstrong, Treasurer (Mackay Whitsunday),
- Shelly McArdle (Fitzroy),
- Phillip Moran (Burnett Mary),
- John Brisbin (Northern & Southern Gulf),
- Rhonda Sorensen (Wet Tropics),
- Ann Ballinger (Desert Channels)
- Brian Venz (South East Qld) and
- Cameron Tickell (South West Qld).

Acknowledgement and appreciation is extended to the whole Board for their consistent input into the effective and smooth operation of the organisation this year under difficult circumstances.

Recognition and thanks are also extended to our Chief Executive Officer, Darryl Ebenezer and contractual staff Lane Pilon (Administration), Glen Donoghoe (Project Reporting/Survey), Dorian Pozzan (Bookkeeper) and Melissa Robinson (Communications).

Operationally, meetings throughout the reporting period included only one face-to-face Board meeting in Cairns (due to COVID-19) in conjunction with the State Landcare Awards. The Board continued to meet via videoconference, as well numerous sub-committee teleconferences and phone calls.

Once again, it has been encouraging to see that our membership has continued to grow this year. As the peak body for natural resource management in Queensland, QWaLC provides key services for well over 400 groups and exceeds 30,000 volunteers throughout the State.

Through information received from the member surveys, it has been noted that the priority issues of the last reporting period are still of major concern today.

Throughout the year I have continued to advocate on behalf of the members by meeting with ministers and other departmental heads on both sides of politics to discuss a range of issues. The main topic being the need for funding for a Queensland Landcare Coordinator Program. Both Labor and LNP have provided their endorsement for Landcare in their policy statements.



On behalf of QWaLC, over the last 12 months I have continued to represent Queensland on the Board of the National Landcare Network (NLN). As well as regular teleconferences, there were a couple face-to-face meetings throughout the country. The outcome from these meetings is knowledge sharing amongst the States and Territories, and through this process the opportunity for informal benchmarking. COVID-19 travel restrictions impacted travel and all meetings have been via Zoom since April.

Again, a significant ongoing process is the proposed restructure of Landcare Australia Limited (LAL) and the NLN. These discussions are still under way and continue to move forward.

QWaLC did not sponsor any events this year since COVID-19 restrictions most, if not all, activities were cancelled. It is estimated through this our sector suffered a \$500,000 loss in revenue as notable Landcare events, as with people focussed events in all key sectors, had to be cancelled.

QWaLC continues to receive new applications from NRM volunteer groups around Queensland seeking to become members. It is pleasing to see such a broad variety of member groups representing the many hands that are needed to care for our people, flora and fauna.

The existing insurance provider continues to meet the requirements of our members and is working well.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held in Toowoomba on 5 November with some face-to-face attendees and video cast via Zoom for our members spread throughout the State.

Acknowledgement is gratefully given for the funding support received from the Queensland State Government and the Federal Government, as well as support received from the National Landcare Network, Landcare Australia Limited, NRM Regions Queensland and, most importantly, the encouragement from the many natural resource management volunteers throughout Queensland.

QWaLC is a resilient body representing grass root members. As a group, we possess a positive outlook and I look forward to being involved with this effective organisation into the future.


Geoff Elliot
Chair



Executive Officer's Report



Well, who would have thought that this year we would add something new to the usual trials, tribulations and opportunities faced by member groups around Queensland. No matter where we are, we can now add 'pandemic' to the usual fire, flood and drought. What a messed up 12 months it has been. Made up of two parts - the before the onset of COVID-19 and then, the now, COVID-19 normal. It was sad to see the cancellation of iconic events for many groups - agricultural shows, the far north bike tour, World Environment Day activities, the Maleny Wood Expo to name a few.

The rapid and innovative responses that members have made to the requirements of health directives has been great to see. Meeting in a socially distanced manner and not going out definitely has made a difference to how people can undertake their passion and make their contribution to the communities that we live in, especially hard for our colleagues living in Indigenous communities.

Our Naturally Together zoom chat each week for many months early this year was an excellent opportunity to connect for everyone who was able to participate. I especially want to thank Melissa for hosting each of the chats. It was also great to see the faces of regulars like Trevor from the Cape and Lindy from the coast each week.

QWaLC continues to support members through our five key roles: Advocacy, Representation, Networking, Promotion and Insurance. We are maintaining constructive relationships and partnerships with other groups and organisations, including the National Landcare Network, Volunteering Qld, Landcare Australia and each of Queensland's Regional NRM Bodies and NRM Regions Queensland.

The information collected via the Annual Membership and Insurance Survey allows QWaLC to advance the goals and aspirations of members and ensure that our insurance and support services are tailored to meet member needs. I implore member groups to take the time to respond to this survey next February as this data provides an important snapshot of the environmental, agricultural, advocacy and conservation work members and volunteers carry out around the State and is crucial in emphasizing to a broad range of stakeholders the importance of these activities (*see Infographic on page 30*).

AON continues to provide excellent insurance cover and service, enabling us to provide to member groups the following three insurance policies: General and Products Liability (Primary Liability), Personal Accident (Voluntary workers) and Association Liability (Protector). Our sincere thanks to the Queensland Government for their ongoing support. The safe work of members and volunteers has meant that our insurance premiums remained static – an excellent outcome.

I would like to thank all the QWaLC Board Members for their guidance and support in maintaining good governance around the activities and direction of the organisation. In addition, I acknowledge the important roles that our Subcommittee Chairs play - Graham, MaryLou, Phil and Brian. Special thanks to our Chair, Geoff Elliot, for his tireless contribution to not only the work of QWaLC but also in his role as a Director on the National Landcare Network Board. My appreciation also to Lane, Dorian, Glen and Melissa who are always there to assist when needed.

It is my ardent hope that the coming year will be better and full of different and exciting opportunities.

"We have a choice in how we think about any situation we face. Even if you weren't born an optimist, you can still learn to think like one. "Radical optimism" is the notion that there's an upside to everything. Even a global pandemic and worldwide health crisis."
Dr Natalie Dattilo

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Ebenezer'.

Darryl Ebenezer
CEO

Treasurer's Report



QWaLC's 2019/20 external financial audit was conducted by John Gosper Audit & Assurance Pty Ltd. The independent auditors have stated that QWaLC's financial statements provide a "true and fair view of the Registered Entity's financial position as at 30 June 2020 and of its financial performance for the year then ended year 2019/20". For additional detail please refer to the auditor's report and accompanying financial information.

During the financial year there was an overall increase in equity of \$47,465 with QWaLC's Total Equity standing at \$262,335 at the end of the year.

Income for the year was once again dominated by grant payments including:

- \$350,000 from the Queensland Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy;
- \$91,000 from the National Landcare Network;
- \$21,818 from Landcare Australia and
- \$33,400 from the National Landcare Program.

A further \$10,000 was received in the form as an incentive from the Commonwealth Government to deal with the effects of COVID-19.

On behalf of the QWaLC Board and QWaLC's numerous community-based member groups I extend our gratitude to these funding bodies for their essential financial support.

Major outgoings were similar to those of the previous year, the costs being incurred in achieving contract and grant milestones and in ensuring the organisation functions in line with regulatory requirements. One example of such requirements is the collection and collation of important information obtained from the annual member group feedback survey and the subsequent negotiation and provision of appropriate insurance cover for the member groups.

Employment and consultancy expense remains the highest expenditure category at \$217,143. Management Committee expense at \$94,705 were less than in the previous year due to the reduced opportunity for face to face Board meetings in line with COVID-19 19 control compliance.

During the year the role of Treasurer for QWaLC was supported by Board Members on the Finance and Audit Sub-committee and I extend my thanks for their support and participation during sub-committee meetings, particularly around discussions to establish the QWaLC budget for the coming year.

I would like to acknowledge the work of our CEO, Darryl Ebenezer and our bookkeeper Dorian Pozzan for their diligence and promptness in dealing with the organisation's financial processes and procedures throughout the year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Armstrong', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Graham Armstrong
Treasurer

REGIONAL REPORTS FROM THE BOARD

As a QWaLC representative, I have enjoyed supporting the six active Landcare groups on Cape York Peninsula. My support included advice, attending meetings and help with hosting Landcare events. I am continually impressed by the difference that a small group of people can make over such a vast area. Some highlights from each group are:

South Cape York Catchments (SCYC) continued to support three Indigenous Ranger Groups to deliver natural and cultural resource management projects. Work included rock art recording, fire management, school visits, country planning, biosecurity surveys, water quality monitoring and weed control. Isolating out on country during COVID-19 lockdowns meant that the Ranger's work programs were only minimally impacted.

Building on their ranger program, the Normanby Rangers have joined a CSIRO-led project. Working with CSIRO and the Northern Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance, the Rangers trapped feral cattle and fitted them with ear-tag trackers before releasing them. The movement of the cattle across the landscape were monitored, helping the team to better understand feral cattle behaviour.

Melsonby Ranger, Ray McIvor, was happy to discover the vulnerable ghost bat on country during a rock art survey trip - the first new ghost bat roost found in 35 years! Advice has been obtained from bat ecologists on how to best monitor and protect this special species.

South Cape York Catchments is also continuing to support graziers to improve grazing land condition, currently in the Mitchell River Basin. SCYC is the delivery partner in partnership with Cape York NRM and Northern Gulf Resource Management Group, working with land managers to develop property plans and small projects which will improve water quality and/or ground cover. This project is part of the Queensland Government's Natural Resource Investment Program (NRIP).

Western Cape Landcare have recently held their AGM and are in the process of getting back up and running to do some projects. They are keen to get the word out that Western Cape Landcare are regrouping and are looking to attract new members.

Pascoe River Landcare, as part of the Cape York Water monitoring partnership, continued their flood monitoring again this year. They collected water samples that provided valuable data on what water quality is like from waters entering the Great Barrier Reef from an undeveloped catchment.

Cape York Weeds and Feral Animal Program (CYWAFAP) - winners of Queensland Land-Care Indigenous Land Management Award 2019 - have had a quiet year due to COVID-19. One highlight was successfully completing the Bonny Glen 'Looking After Country Grant'. Work included weeds and feral animals control and early burning. They also supported the Cape York Progressive Peer to Peer Grazing Network Project which included a well-attended field day at Rivernook Farm. CYWAFAP participated in the Coastal Catchments Focus Farm Initiative-Project and helped landholders with weed control and putting in numerous grant applications for capacity building around weeds and feral animals.

During the 2019-2020 financial year, Wenlock Catchment Management Group Inc. have continued their work on a strategic Healthy Country planning process to guide the committee's work into the future. Face-to-face engagement continued throughout the catchment in November, and planning meetings were held in February and June this year via Zoom to progress the plan. The committee engaged consultants to support a 'first-pass' climate change assessment report for the catchment, and to undertake a brief literature review of the available western science knowledge producing a report of western science knowledge gaps for parts of the catchment. These reports will support planning, and future projects. This work was supported with funding from the Nature Conservancy.

This year Rossville Landcare have been active in removing seed heads from isolated Grader grass plants along roadsides in their community. Rossville has a no spray policy within the town area so hand removal of unripe seeds in this situation can reduce the spread of this highly invasive grass.

right - Melsonby Rangers - Ray McIvor, Bulla McIvor and Virginia Burns - recording rock art on their country - this photo is of some first contact rock art. Melsonby is located 450km NE of Cairns.

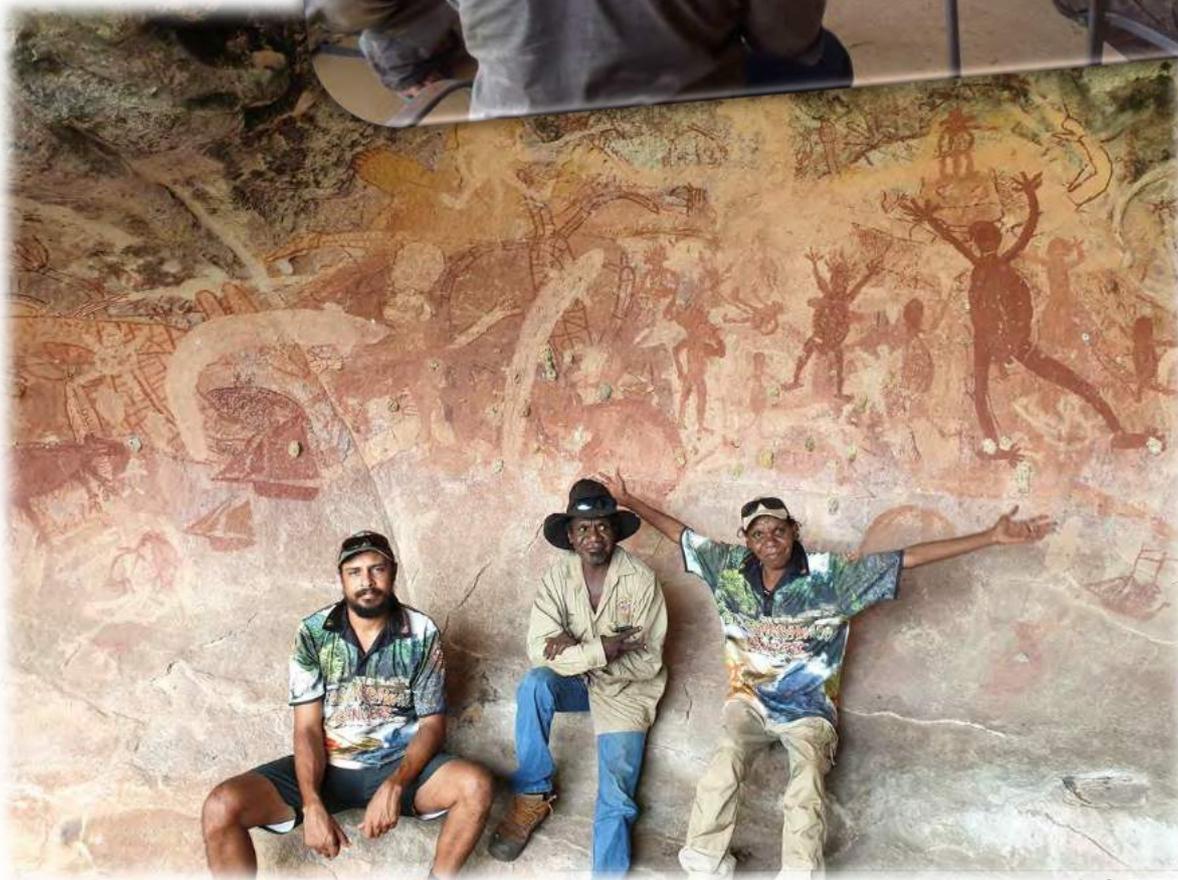
CAPE YORK AND THURSDAY ISLANDS JASON CARROLL



above - SCYC CALM trainees Ben Kegan, Angus Snell and Charmaine Hill practice social distancing during a beach clean up north of Cooktown.



above - Laura Rangers Gene Ross, Trevor Bramwell, Megan Bramwell and Christine Musgrave process water samples collected from a flood event in the Normanby River during the 19/20 wet season as part of the GBR Catchment Loads Monitoring Program.



REGIONAL REPORTS FROM THE BOARD

Following on from Mark van Ryt's enthusiastic leadership of these regions for the past 6 years, I have enjoyed the opportunity to become more involved with the QWaLC Board and member groups across the vast Gulf landscapes.

Our groups continue to face problems that most community-focussed organisations deal with including the difficulty of attracting and retaining members, fundraising, securing grants, and dealing with governance issues.

Despite a range of challenges, groups in the Northern and Southern Gulf regions have generally coped well with the turmoil of the past year. There is much to look forward to in the coming year as COVID-19 recovery programs begin to take form and roll out.

There are just eight groups in our regions and six of these are either in the far east (Mareeba area) or the far west (Mt Isa area). This roughly corresponds to population, of course, but it does raise the question of how QWaLC can add value to the management of lands away from the settled areas. I look forward to exploring this question with regional land managers in the year ahead, particularly in collaboration with the new Landcare Farming initiative led by Mick Taylor.

The Mitchell River Watershed Management Group has secured funds to assist the Traditional Owners in Kowanyama to undertake fire, feral, fencing and re-veg activities to protect the habitat of their "little red bird", or White-bellied Crimson Finch (*Neochmia evangelinae*). This project is funded under the Queensland Government Community Sustainability Action grants: Threatened Species. I was very pleased to meet long-term Kowanyama advocate Viv Sinnamon who is a powerhouse of local knowledge, cultural wisdom and historical caretaker.

Mitchell River was also successful in attracting the first ranger funding ever to be received by the Buluwai people whose country includes the incomparable Davies Creek and Dinden National Parks. This program will see a cohort of Indigenous Rangers receive Fire Crew training and undertake two months of paid landcare work on their traditional country. This is funded through the Queensland Looking After Country program.

The Rifle Creek catchment is getting some much-needed attention from the Julatten and Mount Molloy Residents association. A program funded by the Northern Gulf Regional NRM Body is facilitating water quality assessments at a critical wetland which has the potential to be an iconic citizen science location and outdoor education asset.

Out west, Mark van Ryt continues his incredible efforts with the Gregory and Mt Isa Landcare groups. Their work on coral cactus and rubbervine has been remarkable. In addition, they have been active with cultural history projects such as the protection of a miner's grave and the maintenance of shelters and interpretive signage at the Mary Kathleen historical area.

Mark achieved a great deal by facilitating an initiative to attract people from coastal areas to the more remote landscapes. He calls this "Outback Landcare Adventures". This year's initiative included a week of camping and landcare activities. Participants were sponsored by Bulimba Creek Catchment Coordinating Committee (B4C) and they also came to represent the youth group "Intrepid Landcare".

I was pleased to host our CEO, Darryl Ebenezer, for a series of meetings with local leaders in July. We spoke with the Mayor and officers of the Mareeba Shire Council, the Cairns and Far North Environment Centre, Barron River Catchment Care, and the Northern Gulf CEO, Zoe Williams.

I would like to thank our member groups for their continued efforts to nurture the living landscapes we all depend on, and for their participation in QWaLC. I am looking forward to another productive year in your service.



above - Outback Landcare Adventures always go better with a couple of dogs (Mt Isa Landcare)

SOUTHERN & NORTHERN GULF JOHN BRISBIN



right - Wetland specialist James Donaldson from Northern Gulf NRM taking water quality readings at the Abattoir Swamp environmental park (JAMARR)

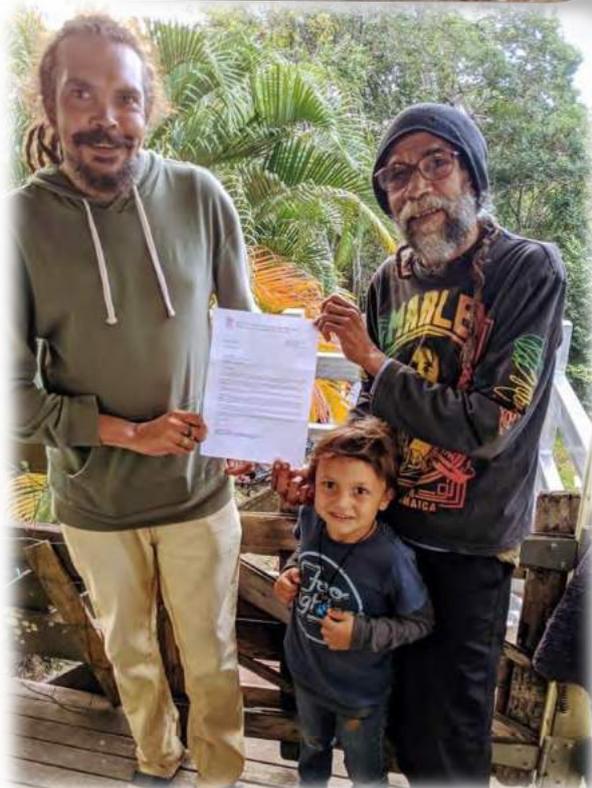


below - Ben Bruynesteyn and Ian Parsons on the rubbervine (Mt Isa Landcare)



above - EnviroGroup volunteers tending to roadside plantings on the Mulligan Hwy (JAMARR)

right - 3 generations of the Brim family, Buluwai people, celebrate funding for their first ranger program.



above - Viv Sinnamon has conserved one of the last local collections of canegrass (Mitchell River Watershed Management Group)

REGIONAL REPORTS FROM THE BOARD

Looking holistically at 'life over the range', agriculture is having its day in the sun at the moment with the nation's realisation that the inland and its people *do* matter, and are a very important cog in the big global wheel. The Custodians of today are making sure that environmental management is placed front and centre within their economic plan.

below & right – fencing in dry Western Queensland east of Winton.



DESERT CHANNELS ANN BALLINGER

Despite the varied seasonal conditions, Landcare groups continue to be an important part of the Communities.

Some that have received funding are:

- the Aramac Landcare group who, with the field team from Desert Channels and 14 properties, are clearing WONS along Reedy Creek.
- The newly formed Million Acre group have been very active in misting, burning and clearing rubber vine in the Torrens Creek area.
- There is a parkinsonia project coming up at Oban, SW of Mt. Isa. An aerial survey down the Diamantina River reveals that in 3 years the Prickly Acacia has spread 60ks.

It is so important that these groups receive financial support, to continue this work.



REGIONAL REPORTS FROM THE BOARD

Following the elections for new Directors, I was pleased to receive the privilege of representing the great South East Queensland as its regional Director for the next three years. Although the region physically encompasses less than two percent of the State by area, it does include over half the State's population and some 40% of QWALC's member organisations. This generates strong social capital which encompasses the full range of Landcare interests, being rural, coastal, urban and peri-urban, covering commercial agriculture, lifestyle land use, recreational, coastal and marine pursuits. Indigenous land management, especially on the coastal sand islands, adds to the richness of the tapestry and the accomplishments experienced in our region.

As with the rest of State, this region was impacted by adverse weather including prolonged dry (with parts of some Shires drought declared). Rehabilitation of the natural environment is a predominant theme for member organisations, and the demands of having to artificially water so many of the planting based projects was the norm. Then early bushfire season struck with ferocity with extreme fires in coastal and island areas and, in the natural vegetation of the border ranges, causing damage not only to infrastructure and homes but also to the fauna and flora populations. Even following the break in weather and late summer rain, those members who monitor birds and other parameters report that the expected migration from southern areas have not occurred or is much reduced this year.

(below - rehabilitation Lockyer Creek courtesy of Healthy Land and Water)



QWALC Directors form links with other organisations, strengthening the volunteer sector through these relationships. Four members of the Board, including myself were able to attend the annual conference for Volunteering Queensland where I was able to deliver the chief sponsors address. Participation in Volunteering Queensland helped to provide perspective on the full gambit of volunteering across the social, industrial, sporting and environmental sectors, indicating the contribution to community and gross domestic product arising from volunteerism.

SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND BRIAN VENZ



(left - Brian Venz presenting at Qld Volunteering Conference)



At the State Landcare Awards it was pleasing to see representation and winners from this region in several categories. Participation helps promote growth in the number of member organisations and, where some organisations have folded, numbers have been bolstered by new groups.

We look forward to supporting the Young Land Carer, Ros Brinkman, from Watergum at the National Awards.

QWaLC is a founding member of the Queensland branch of Australian Citizen Science Association (ACSA). Members of QWaLC punched well above their weight in being recipients of many grants under the first round announced this year. Bioblitz environmental monitoring featured well in the suite of successful grants. I was able to be personally involved in delivery of the project awarded to The Hut Environment and Community Association which monitored the impact of a Two Million Tree program planting (10 years ago) of over 140,000 native trees on 40h of previously cleared land on the river flats in the Wacol area. This project measured tree survival and biodiversity values created by the project.



In spite of the weather, member organisations were able to hold Landcare week events such as the one by Springfield Lakes Nature Care. Not only were there displays by a range of organisations, a special birdwing butterfly vine planting (left - Luise Manning and Charis Mullen) was held to celebrate the life and contributions of Lloyd Bird and Rick Natras - great contributors to the early landcare movement in this region.



REGIONAL REPORTS FROM THE BOARD

It has been a genuine pleasure to represent all of the wonderful natural resource management volunteers in our region.

Never more so than when we were able to host the State Landcare Awards in Cairns. The amazing nominees and winners are indicative of the quality work that is being done across the Wet Tropics and the event proved an excellent opportunity to showcase this to my colleagues on the QWaLC Board as well as nominees from across the State. To all the folk who were able to attend the Awards ceremony and to those who quietly watched on as they continued in their work even during this year of COVID-19, I say 'thank you' for what you are doing for our community and our environment – both would be poorer without you.

As some of you would know, I have moved away from the region to be closer to family. It was a difficult decision as I truly loved my life in the Wet Tropics, however family is very important to me and I am delighted to now have the chance to spend quality time with mine.

Call for new representative Director - this means that QWaLC now needs a new representative Director for the Wet Tropics. I urge you to contact our CEO, Darryl Ebenezer, for the details of the role.

My time with QWaLC has greatly enriched my life and allowed me to give back, above and beyond my day-to-day activities in caring for our land, flora, fauna and peoples. Not only have I been able to shine a spotlight on the excellent voluntary on-ground activities but I have brought home many learnings to add to the richness of local knowledge.

I wish each and every one of you a fulfilling year ahead. These are strange times indeed but I have no doubt that, together, we will prevail.

2019 State Landcare Award winners in Cairns



WET TROPICS RHONDA SORENSEN



*top down - Phil Staley ABC
Far North and Geoff Elliot;*

*Warren Entsch presenting
Australian Govt. Individual
Landcarer Award to Tony
Rossi from Mulgrave
Landcare;*

*Woolworths Junior
Landcare Team Award
being given to McDonnell
Creek State School;*

*Rhonda presenting the
Virgin Coastcare Award to
Molly Steer & Emily
Walker.*

REGIONAL REPORTS FROM THE BOARD

It has been a tough year for many (most really), COVID-19 being just the cherry on a very dry cake! I wish all in the region, and the State, a better year ahead.

Also, thank you for your support as I endeavour to represent our patch on the QWaLC Board – an honour and a pleasure.

My thanks to MaryLou Gittins for the photos of our region from a recent visit. Photos in order are:

- St George Weir - the St George Scheme was given the green light in 1953 promising to supply irrigation water to the Balonne Shire region in southwest Queensland via Jack Taylor Weir on the Balonne River – thankfully, there have been some good flows at the start of 2020.
- The Balonne River, part of the Murray-Darling Basin system, is a short yet significant part of the inland river group of South West Queensland. Excellent fishing site for Yellowbelly and Murray Cod.
- The brown waters of our western systems.
- At the Burke & Wills Dig tree
- Mulga - lifeblood of the west.
- Galahs and corellas doing the covid-19 thing in Cunnamulla after a few mls of July rain 2020.



**SOUTH WEST
CAMERON TICKLE**



REGIONAL REPORTS FROM THE BOARD

I have enjoyed the last year with QWaLC and continue to learn and build networks through my role on the Board in order to advocate for our local area. There continues to be wonderful work going on in our region by our members and I have put together a collection of articles that showcases the types of activities that are occurring.

Junior Landcare Butterfly Garden Disaster Recovery Project

This collaborative project, rolled out on the Capricorn Coast in Central Queensland, was a partnership between Capricorn Coast Landcare, Capricornia Catchments, Livingstone Shire Council, Keppel Coast Arts and Yeppoon State School and supported by QWaLC and Landcare Australia.

The project aimed to support school students to build resilience in the context of recent fire disasters that occurred in the Livingstone Shire by building a butterfly attracting Garden and was made up of activities that had three main themes: BEING, DOING and CREATING.

The BEING component saw Capricornia Catchments Senior Project Officer and myself as a registered Yoga Therapist run a nature themed yoga and mindfulness session that provided the students with tools that they could use to self soothe. These activities included breath work, yoga postures, exercises in introspection and components that required presence, focus and teamwork.

The DOING component was facilitated by Capricorn Coast Landcare with Malcolm Wells and Sabrina Burke working with the students to scope, plan and build a butterfly attracting garden complete with birdbath, native plants and stepping stones. Through this process, the students learned to collaborate and make joint decisions as a collective, skills that are important when it comes to individuals feeling connected and part of something bigger than themselves in a very positive way. This positivity created respite from challenges that the community faced through recent natural disasters.

The CREATE part of the project saw the team working with local artist Amber Countryman to create handmade paper shapes that were imbedded with native seeds that were then hung in the trees over the butterfly garden. This activity engages with the creative side of the brain, providing some respite from unhelpful ruminating thoughts.





Spiral Community Development Project

QWaLC teamed up with Capricornia Catchments and Livingstone Shire Council to explore the Spiral Method of Community Development with Dr Tina Lathorus and Dr Peter Westoby of the University of the Sunshine Coast. The work, that seeks to empower people to connect through stories and shared interests to create change, is part of a research project. The event attracted over 20 representatives from local community groups and together we look forward to progressing the project into 2021.

Tangaroa Blue's ReefClean Five Rocks Clean Up

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 and the less than optimal weather, members of the Surfrider Foundation Capricorn Coast together with Queensland Parks and Wildlife, Livingstone Shire Council and over 40 local community members rallied to remove around 450kg of marine debris from Five Rocks, Three Rivers and Nine Miles beaches in Byfield National Park.

Articles of interest included part of a fibreglass boat hull and two large gas bottles along with rope and a huge quantity of small plastic fragments.

The data will be uploaded to the Australian Marine Debris Initiative database and will be later used to inform local marine debris source reduction and education projects.

REGIONAL REPORTS FROM THE BOARD

Whether this is Robert F. Kennedy in 1966, or a misquoted Chinese saying, the last 12 months have been challenging, not just in Queensland but worldwide. As Landcarers we have endured extreme heat, drought and severe bushfires. The latter coming very close to residents in places unheard of previously – like Peregian Beach on the Sunshine Coast.

In the Mary catchment, some really innovative work is being done on bank stabilization. There are a number of sites earmarked for work in a partnership with Burnett Mary Regional Group [BMRG], Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee [MRCCC], Alluvium Consulting & Seqwater. The alluvial nature of the soils means that erosion is occurring at each flood event, with tons of sediment making its way to Hervey Bay and onto the Great Barrier Reef. The scope of these works requires diligent engineering and construction, far greater than any individual landholder could undertake. This involves a re-battering of the stream bank instead of the vertical cliff that occurs in parts of the river. Then large eucalyptus logs are pile driven into the ground sometimes to a depth of 5 meters. The idea is to break up the velocity of the water in flood events, and to allow accumulation of sediment and debris to build the river bank up, instead of losing soil in each event. Noosa & District Landcare [NDLG] did the planting, and in the case of the project in the photos planted 14,000 trees.

Another one of these commenced towards the end of the financial year with an additional approximately 20,000 trees going in. So far the results are very encouraging and the partnership approach is bearing fruit as each party hones their skills.

Another pleasing aspect of the last financial year was a partnership between NDLG, Transport & Main Roads [TMR, and the Kabi Kabi First Nations peoples which will see 2 x trainees employed per year for a 5 year period. The participants will receive a Certificate 3 in Conservation & Land Management [CALM], Level 2 Chainsaw ticket, First Aid, Construction White card, Agricultural Chemical Distribution Certificate [AC/DC].

During these most challenging times, groups have still managed to get stuff done - highlights...

Burnett Catchment Care Association:

- BCCA successfully created and launched the Monto Agricultural Study with funding through the Australian Government's Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF) <https://betterburnett.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Ag-Strategy-FINAL-Web.pdf>
- We were also successful in 2 further BBRF rounds to develop a Resource Audit and Strategic Gap Analysis for the inland Burnett as well as develop another Agricultural Strategy, this time for the Western Burnett.
- BCCA became a delivery provider for BMRG's Natural Resource Investment Program (NRIP) Reef Water Quality – Burnett Grazing Project that offers graziers the opportunity to undertake Property Management Planning (PMP) to help improve groundcover and grazing management practices.
- Our biggest project of the year was the continuation of our Building Resilience in the North Burnett project, which aims to build and enhance the natural disaster resilience of agricultural North Burnett regional communities. Jointly funded by the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments under the Natural Disaster Resilience Program (NDRP).



above: pile forest Mary River

below – TMR translocation





Central Burnett Landcare:

Membership has grown to 90 members (from 25 in two years) with a focus on:

- Regenerative farming practices.
- Soil health and water management.
- Grazing Management to control weeds.
- Wild dog control.
- Rural Business Futures.
- Economic and community growth in remote rural region.
- Mental health and wellbeing of rural community.

Hinterland Bush Links:

COVID-19

- During COVID-19 our weed vine contractor works continued with COVID-19-safe provisions
- Our weed vine workshop was cancelled but replaced with digital information.
- Phone, Zoom and social media were used to keep contact with landholders, volunteers and other organisations including QWALC.
- Our nocturnal bird surveys have determined new locations for the threatened Marbled Frogmouth and Masked Owl.
- We have planning underway to assist landholders with reveg through carbon farming
- Our community outreach included visits to landholders, Indigenous land management walks, ecological education at the Bunya Dreaming, wallum and forest ecology workshops, and presentations on landscape-scale conservation to a number of organisations.

Other

- We have advocated for the proposed Yabba Nat Park which would connect the Conondale NP with Wrattens NP – State Government has indicated their support for this proposal but no formal announcement to date.
- Hinterland Bush Links was the Community Group winner at the Qld Landcare Awards.

Wildlife Preservation Society Qld – Fraser Coast Branch

- WPSQ Fraser Coast Branch has not only 'survived' but in some unexpected ways actually thrived during the last 6 months. Our key activities (nature walks, Library talks and schools program) went into hibernation, and of these the nature walks are the only ones that have been able to re-start.
- We started a 'Backyard Bioblitz' at the beginning of May, as something that members and others could do in a COVID-19-safe way, with four held so far, each over a weekend. People take photos or recordings of native flora and fauna in their 'backyard' and lodge their observations on the iNaturalist website, which is linked to the Atlas of Living Australia. You don't need to know what you have observed as someone else will probably identify it for you. The Backyard Bioblitz will go to quarterly now the monthly nature walks have resumed, and people will be able to do it wherever they want within our region (Gympie to Bundaberg).

Thank you to all our passionate Landcarers, from QWalC and your colleagues around the State.



above: Indigenous trainees – Lawrie & Lee



above: roving restorers



above: Noosa Landcare planting at Hervey Bay.

REGIONAL REPORTS FROM THE BOARD

Notwithstanding the widespread challenges associated with the latter half of the year, this region's community groups have maintained a busy schedule throughout 2019/20. The most recent face-to-face time with other QWALC Board members was in early November when attending the Cairn's Board Meeting & AGM and the successful and very enjoyable Landcare awards ceremony. Face-to-face meetings, field events and plant nursery attendance by volunteers were put on hold across the region for a few months from March but activities gradually returned to the "new normal" by the end of the financial year.

In the first half of the year I was able to participate in a number of the more local events such a Nature Whitsunday Celebrations organised by the Central Queensland Conservation Council, attending a local National Tree Day, community planting at a revegetation site and helping to host the 2019 Eungella Bird Week including Eungella Honeyeater surveys which was run by QWALC member group Protect the Bush Alliance with expert support from Mackay Birdlife. This was an excellent way for community members to become involved in gathering data to further the conservation of the locally endemic Eungella Honeyeater.

During the quieter time of the year I made direct contact in person or on the phone with a number of the region's QWALC member groups including Bowen & Collinsville Landcare, Sarina Landcare & Catchment Management Association, Pioneer Landcare, Burdekin Fish Restocking Inc, Mackay Turtle Watch, Queen's Beach Action Group, Central Queensland Soil Health Systems and Magnetic Island Nature Care Association. The groups contacted indicated that activity during the onset of COVID-19 restrictions was significantly reduced but by June activities had started to return to normal levels.

below - one of the survey teams on a bleak Eungella morning.



BURDEKIN/MACKAY WHITSUNDAY GRAHAM ARMSTRONG



Naturally, a particular focus throughout the region is the health of the Great Barrier Reef and I am happy to report that QWALC is now a member of both the Townsville Health Waterways Partnership and the Mackay, Whitsunday, Isaac Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership. During the year I was able to represent QWALC in person at a meeting of the Townsville Partnership and serve as a member of the management committee for the Mackay, Whitsunday, Isaac Partnership representing both QWALC and the community member groups who are also members of the Partnership. Both Partnerships showcased their most recent reports during the year and continue to expand the amount of data being collated for the respective report cards.

Through this association with the Partnerships, in October, I was able to attend the 4th Reef Synthesis Conference, organised by the Office of the Great Barrier Reef and held in Mackay for the first time. The Conference is designed to bring together scientific experts, Reef managers and other interested parties to review progress in applied Reef science and management actions and to come up with new management initiatives to help reverse the decline of the Great Barrier Reef. This was a highlight during the year and I was pleased that for the first time QWALC had the opportunity to participate.

One of my roles is the Chair of Whitsunday Catchment Landcare and like many groups we have bounced back well with working bees, field days collecting seeds and the regular management committee meetings. There was time for some program planning and grant application, for example - working with the Whitsunday Regional Council on the prioritisation of future potential revegetation sites. Whitsunday Catchment Landcare was also successful in taking up a contract with North Queensland Dry Tropics NRM to manage weeds such as Rubber Vine in remnant areas of threatened Littoral Rain Forest, taking over the contract after Conservation Volunteers Australia withdrew from the area. From personal experience, I can say that many of our local Landcare successes are the result of our hardworking Landcare Coordinator and on ground staff, re-enforcing the need for ongoing funding for Landcare Coordinators as a cornerstone in the success of community Landcare Groups across Queensland.

Of course, many challenges remain. Two new invasive species have recently entered the Mackay/Whitsunday area. Yellow Crazy Ants have established a foothold on the coast at Shute Harbour and the Indian Miner has finally reached our region thus completing its invasion of entire east coast of Australia. Combating invasive species is a time-consuming challenge and requires relentless management actions. I have become a member of the more recently formed Bowen & Collinsville Landcare Group which is a great example of a group of Landholders coming together to tackle their collective problem of introduced Chinese Apple, which forms dense stands, overtaking pasture and reducing productivity. The group is working through and trying out a number of physical interventions ranging from excavators and other heavy equipment to the use of the specially designed Pakmor tractor attachment. While the on-ground battle goes on the group is also involved with a Local Council submission for grant funding to investigate potential biological control agents to help tackle the problem.

In all these battles, QWALC and its member groups have the potential to play an important part in delivering the management solutions necessary for tackling these problems across Queensland and I look forward to seeing increased action on the ground through the development of the many partnerships that as QWALC Board Members we continue to promote.



REGIONAL REPORTS FROM THE BOARD

I would like to recognise the strength of the groups in the Condamine region as we have moved from drought to fire to COVID-19, a shared challenge nationally and globally.



QWaLC evolves each year as does the Board. The 2018/2019 year saw the end of an era as the QWaLC Board celebrated the work of Mark van Ryt, Northern and Southern Gulf Director, who stepped down after 6 years of service and we welcomed his replacement John Brisbin. Cameron Tickell, SW Queensland cattle grazier,

also joined the Board as Director for South West Queensland. Cameron has a passion for managing landscapes and returning them to their natural state.

2019/20 has proved to be a challenging year for QWaLC's Board functions in different ways. Usually the Board meets quarterly with two face-to-face meetings and two teleconferences. This year, along with the rest of the world, we have become 'zoomers'. The strength of our Chair, Geoff Elliot, supported by the Directors, our CEO Darryl Ebenezer and the team - Lane, Melissa, Dorian and Glen - has allowed us to adapt to the current restrictions. I would like to thank all those involved in maintaining QWaLC's business during this period.

In October of 2019, QWaLC sponsored the Queensland Volunteers conference in Brisbane. Brian Venz, Rhonda Sorensen and I attended with Brian presenting on QWaLC. The sessions highlighted the importance of volunteering and highlighted how the power of volunteering has far-reaching impacts - socially, economically and environmentally. It is important to note that with so many changes and challenges facing non-for-profit groups and volunteers it is vital to know what matters, not just in terms of the day-to-day support and achievement of outcomes, but also in terms of our future roles and the kind of communities we are creating. Volunteering is critical to the Australian way of life.

Drought to fires in the latter half of 2019 resulted in many communities impacted not only within the Condamine area but statewide. Workshops and events

were rearranged whilst many people were involved in fighting the fires - thank you to those brave people for protecting our catchment. Many landcare groups have hosted 'cultural burn' workshops/webinars and 'Grazing Naturally' or 'Natural Sequence Farming' events with groups looking at local environment requirements when striving for sustainability.

Regionally, QWaLC sponsored the Gomaren & Doctors Creek Catchment Landcare group's Annual 'Focus on Farm' Landcare Photographic Competition and I was given the opportunity to participate in the proceedings. This event showcases the wonderful contribution that the local community make to the region through Landcare activities. Congratulations on a well organised event. As a Member, I am proud to report that Condamine Catchment Management Association was the inaugural winner of the Nicki Laws Perpetual Trophy for Landcare Project - a project implemented by Shane and myself on our Goomburra property.

Grant writing has become a necessity for sustainable groups and environments with different grants and forms each year, adding complexity as well as opportunity. This region has had a fair share of success over the last 12 months however, traditional channels of funding are dwindling. QWaLC endeavours to keep groups updated with current opportunities. The annual QWaLC survey completed by groups shows a variety of funding sources. Thank you to those groups who regularly participate in this survey as it provides QWaLC with information on a wide range of topics important in supporting members.

Zoom, zoom, zoom! Now due to COVID-19, this is one way we meet, workshop, conference and socialise in a safe environment. Our CEO and communication specialist, Melissa, have innovated to become leaders in the Zoom environment, establishing the 'Naturally Together' sessions which have been a huge success. These sessions in the early months of 2020 gave individuals and groups a forum to interact, learn and stay focused. Social media has come to the forefront, supporting not only our environment but the mental health of our community members.



CONDAMINE MARYLOU GITTINS OAM



I would like to encourage member groups to 'like' and follow the QWaLC Facebook page, link with Instagram and Twitter. Tag us when you upload your events, happenings or reports. The more we share our happenings, the greater the opportunity for government to recognise the strength of volunteering. Social media can be a strong tool for the improvement of support from State and Federal Government so link with your local member. Geoff and Darryl have been strongly advocating for support of Landcare at the State level, and Directors in their regions.

As the Chair of our Members Engagement Sub-committee, I believe in the importance of supporting volunteers. QWaLC's role is to strengthen the capacity of our volunteers. Membership is growing each year, ensuring the continuance of the environmental/landcare movement in Queensland. This year, QWaLC formally acknowledged our volunteers in National Volunteer Week (May 2020) with well-deserved Certificate's of Appreciation for their excellent contributions.



Landcare Week provides local groups a chance to highlight their successes. This year Landcare Australia invited Darryl and I to be part of the Landcare Week Committee.

The 2019 Queensland State Landcare Awards were held in Cairns – see page 30. The event was a great success due to the hard work of the organising committee chaired by Rhonda Sorensen (above). It provided an opportunity for QWaLC to acknowledge the work volunteers, groups and communities do to support their local environment but really, we are all winners, especially our local landscapes and communities. Due to COVID-19, the 2020 National Landcare Awards will now occur in 2021. We look forward to supporting our Queensland nominees.

The 2021 Queensland State Landcare Awards will take place in the latter half of the year and will provide a forum to recognise those who lead and 'go the extra mile' in our State as well as highlighting to the State and Federal Governments the health of our sector and the importance to the environment. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage groups to sharpen their pencils and nominate your local champion/group in a State Landcare category. We would like to see a bumper crop of nominees showing the strength of our movement even in the light of COVID-19.



Successful project for Condamine Catchment Management Association re Coalbank Boundary Road Reserve Improvement Project.

The project will involve the removal of Weeds of National Significance (WONS) from the Coalbank Boundary Reserve to help increase propagation of native vegetation, improving the habitat for flora, fauna, and the many bird varieties in this catchment.

2020 February: Morrison Government's Communities Environment Program (CEP)

REGIONAL REPORTS FROM THE BOARD

It has been a challenging year once again for the Queensland Murray Darling region, as most of Southern Queensland continues to experience the worst drought in history. At the time of writing, conditions have shown some reprieve with an encouraging forecast La Nina weather system on the horizon. QWaLC member groups within the QMD region continue to exist with limited budget and scaled down operations and are struggling to make ends meet. However, our member groups are to be commended on continuing projects over the last 12 months.

We continue to attract new member groups joining within our region. These have been predominantly cluster fence groups.

Since February this year the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on operations and projects within our region. Some of the activities our groups have been able to undertake have involved mostly pest and weed control. Within the QMD region pest and weeds of concern are:

- African Box Thorn
- Annual Rag Weed
- Cereus Cactus
- Honey Locust
- Harrissia Cactus
- Mimosa Bush
- Parkinsonia
- Parthenium
- Cats Claw Creeper
- Water Hyacinth
- Water Lettuce
- Wild Dogs
- Feral Pigs
- Mother of Millions
- Velvety Tree Pair
- Foxes and Feral Cats

Given the length of this list, it is clear our region faces continued challenges in addressing the impacts, and controlling some or all of the above.



QUEENSLAND MURRAY DARLING
GEOFF ELLIOT



left - night vision camera recording trapped feral pigs

below - treatment of Cats Claw on the Dumaresq River



2019/20 Membership and Insurance Survey Feedback



Annual Member Survey Highlights (2019/2020)



411 Members



90.29% Met/Exceeded Expectations



483 Employees



28,715 Volunteers



1,029,360 Work Hours



\$42,944,899 of Value



432,852 Participants

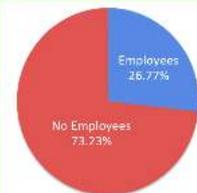
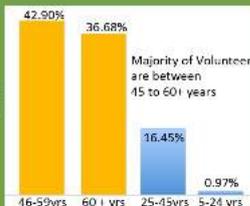


280 Project Examples

Resources & Activities

Member Group's Activities:

- On-Ground (Reveg/Rehab/Production) - 44.29%
- Educational (Workshops/Field Days/Expos) - 37.50%
- Monitoring/Surveys/Research - 7.86%
- Feral Animal Control - 6.07%
- Wildlife Rescue/Rehabilitation - 4.29%

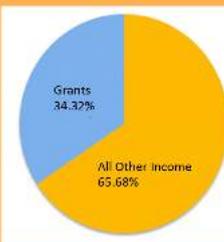


Finances

Summary All Income Amounts:

- <\$5,000 - 58.88%
- \$5,001 to \$50,000 - 31.76%
- \$50,001 to \$100,000 - 5.23%
- >\$100,000 - 4.14%

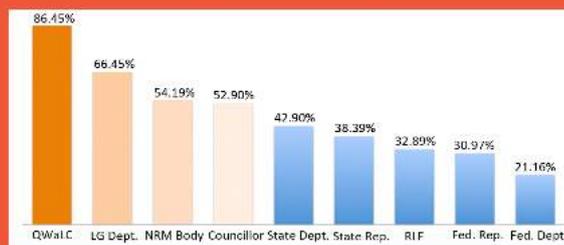
[348 Grants Received]



Needs & Satisfaction

Support Requirement Priorities:

- 1 - Funding Application Writing
- 2 - Volunteer Management Systems
- 3 - Business Development Support
- 4 - Organisational Governance
- 5 - Workplace Health and Safety Systems



Biggest Challenges for the Coming Year

Member groups were asked the following open-ended question: "What are the biggest challenges your group faces in the coming year?"

- Sufficient Members/Volunteers - 43.87%
- Financial Security/Funding - 20.97%
- Onground Work Challenges - 14.52%
- Climate Change - 10.65%
- Government Regulations - 4.84%



John Clarke contemplates devastation of feral horses on floodplain country – courtesy of the Mitchell River Watershed Management Group



2019 State Landcare Awards – recipients at the Cairns Aquarium

People we
work with:

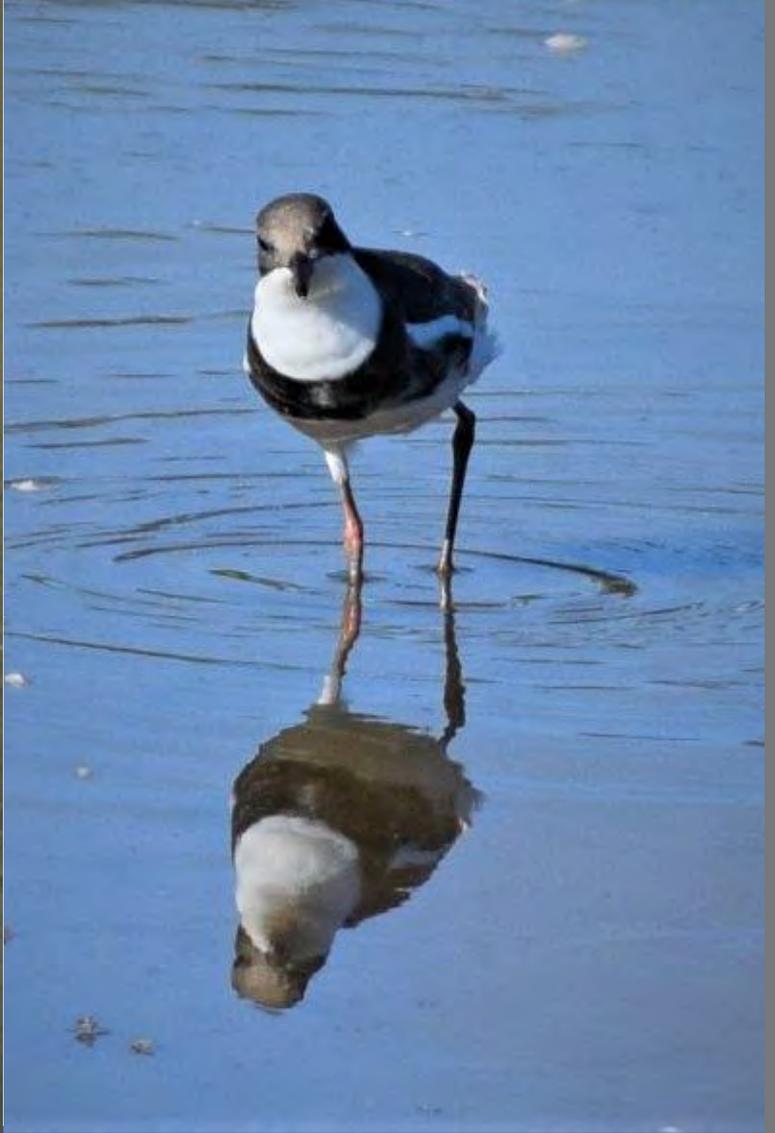


Contact us:

Darryl Ebenezer | Executive Officer
Queensland Water and Land Carers (QWaLC)
 E: darryl@qwalc.org.au
 W: qwalc.org.au



Black-Winged Stilt courtesy of Julie Reid, Friends of Lake Apex Inc.



Dotterel courtesy of Julie Reid, Friends of Lake Apex Inc.



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