

QUEENSLAND WATER AND LAND CARERS

Annual Report

2022 2023



QWaLC

QUEENSLAND WATER & LAND CARERS

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Vision

Thriving and connected
Queensland communities and ecosystems.

Mission

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

Our Values

- Voluntary
- Community-based
- Agile and adaptive
- Culturally driven, Solutions-focussed, Science-guided
- Ethical, engaged, empowering
- Subsidiarity, representative partnerships

About Us

Queensland Water and Land Carers (QWaLC) supports community-based approaches to managing and protecting our natural resources – creating more productive and sustainable farms, conserving and enhancing our environment and building more cohesive and resilient communities. We provide our members and communities with information and support for good governance, keeping people safe, the importance of volunteerism and by providing appropriate insurance coverage. We promote subsidiarity - enabling farmers, landowners and conservationists to work together at a local level on local issues. We are a representative body for our members – regions, networks, groups and individuals promoting and advocating for ecologically sustainable development across Queensland in partnership with governments, philanthropists, and the wider community.

As Queensland's peak body for natural resource management volunteers, QWaLC works on behalf of its membership of 460 groups and more than 38,000 members and volunteers.

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

QWaLC's network extends across the 14 natural resource management regions of Queensland, each of which has a member elected representative on the QWaLC Board.

The organisation is incorporated and governed by its constitution which sets out the objectives, powers and administrative arrangements.

Our Constitution

Our Constitution is available online [click here](#)
or contact QWaLC's CEO: Darryl Ebenezer | darryl@qwalc.org.au

Our role is to:

Promote

Ensure QWaLC is a recognised and valued entity by working locally and regionally to promote our networks, leaders and collective successes.

Acknowledge and celebrate outstanding volunteer contributions, leadership, groups and partnerships.

Recognise and build awareness by sharing practical solutions and outcomes including innovative practical skills and on-ground actions.

Advocate

Advocate for key Queensland priorities and facilitate stronger member engagement to influence decision and policy making at regional, state and national levels.

Strengthen and advocate for partnerships with First Nations that respectfully build mutual understandings and capacities to care for Country.

Share the QWaLC story to build wider community awareness, member engagement and knowledge.

Strengthen

Facilitate and support the strength of our network through building good governance, strengthening capacity, fostering financial sustainability and effective risk management.

Provide insurance solutions to appropriately manage risk for activities and our members.
Develop skills to strengthen social connection and community well-being.

Network

Connect, activate and showcase the QWaLC network of diverse member groups and communities.

Mentoring, training and sharing experience and information to strengthen:

- governance
- volunteer activities and management
- resilient, engaged communities.

Create opportunities across the network for learning from and with First Nations people about caring for Country practices and aspirations.

Represent

Ensure effective representation through active engagement, collaborative and focussed leadership and partnerships.

Be a leading voice representing our diverse groups and agricultural communities in discussion about natural resource management, environment and land use.

Represent and give voice to local and regional perspectives through leadership and advocacy on natural resource management concerns in regional, state and national forums.

Our People

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 Natural Resource Management 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.

Region	Board Role Subcommittee Chair	Name
Condamine	Chair	MaryLou Gittins OAM
Qld Murray Darling	Deputy Chair	Craig Magnusson
Fitzroy Basin	Secretary RAP Co-Chair	Shelly McArdle
Southern/Northern Gulf	Treasurer Finance and Audit C'tee	John Brisbin
Cape York & Torres Strait	Board Member RAP Chair	Temaleti Matasia
Burdekin Dry Tropics/Mackay Whitsunday	Board Member Member Engagement C'tee	Judith Wake
Burnett Mary	Board Member Governance and Planning C'tee	Maree Gillott
South West Queensland	Board Member Board Member (retired)	Craig Alison Adma Sargood
Wet Tropics	Board Member	Jeff Baines
South East Queensland	Board Member Board Member (retired)	Michael Bond Wal Mayr
Desert Channels	Board Member	Robyn Adams
Statewide	Board Member Insurance & Risk C'tee	Simon Warner

Staff Chief Executive Officer Darryl Ebenezer

"Review is essential to evaluation, which is essential to progress"

M Stegnius



Chair's Report

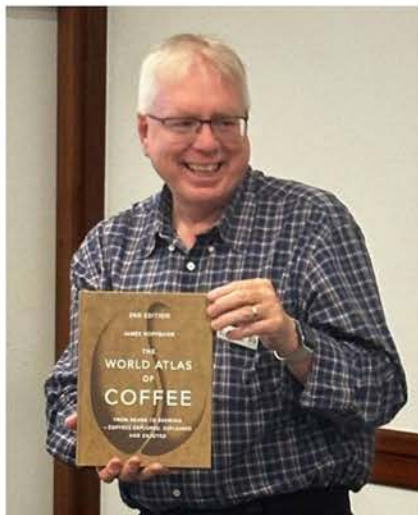
Mary-Lou Gittins OAM

This is the 19th Annual report QWaLC has published and reviewing the past reports it is impossible not to be motivated by the growth of QWaLC membership from 200 to over 500 member groups. More importantly there are approximately 40,000 volunteers that give their energy and time to strive to support 'Thriving and connected Queensland communities and ecosystems'.

10 years of Service – the Board would like to voice their appreciation, admiration and respect on behalf of QWaLC member groups to Darryl Ebenezer for the longevity of his work in the position of QWaLC CEO. Over the past 10 years Darryl has:

- ensured the safety of not only the member groups but the board of directors.
- Increased QWaLC membership numbers to current 500
- Increased the profile of QWaLC at State and National Level
- Mentored groups and individuals through many phases of development
- Developed strong relationships with those who he connects with.

Thank you Darryl and we look forward to another 10 years.



Advocacy – QWaLC Board is proud to announce our Patron Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young PSM is the 27th Governor of Queensland and representative of His Majesty King Charles III, Queensland's Head of State. The Governor is appointed by The Queen upon advice provided to her by the Premier of Queensland. Her Excellency has a strong history of supporting volunteers in the conservation area. QWaLC looks forward to developing strong relationships with Her Excellency.



Networking - Darryl and I have actively advocated for QWaLC members with different government departments where we were received with interest and regard for the wide range of members and their capacity. This is enhanced by our member groups connecting with Local, State and Federal government officials in your electorates.

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) – with the leadership of Directors Temaleti and Shelly QWaLC has developed the first stage of the RAP process – Reflect: scoping QWaLC's capacity for reconciliation and recognising the membership of our First Nations groups. Through this process QWaLC in partnership with Leah Cummins, a 'proud Mayi woman from North Western Qld', developed a graphic that depicts 'Caring for Earth' which will be adopted into the QWaLC logo. Thank you, Leah, for your time and great work.

Qld Volunteer Awards – Darryl and I attended the Awards and 40 year celebrations in May. It was great to meet up with QWaLC members who had been nominated as individuals or a group.

QWaLC acknowledges and appreciates the support through various Qld State Government programs over the past nineteen years for our member groups. In particular and in accordance with our QWaLC Strategic Plan we rely on the support and resources of the Queensland Government's Department of Resources to ensure that QWaLC member group activity risk is reduced through good governance and appropriate insurance.

At the National level I serve as a director on the National Landcare Network (who QWaLC is a founding member of). This enables us to connect with other State and Territory Chairs from around Australia to advance the direction of landcare. NLN applies for federal grants to build capacity and support State and Territory Landcare groups.

Through our partnership with Landcare Australia Ltd and the Commonwealth Government, QWaLC bi-annually strives to strengthen and promote community based volunteer groups. The 2023 Qld State Landcare Awards will be slightly delayed this year due to funding changes at the national level. QWaLC is gearing up so when you receive your invitation to nominate your group for an award please do so. Remember at the 2022 National Landcare awards our own Queenslander Wal Mayr was awarded National Individual Landcarer!

2022/2023 was a non-election year and for most of the year we had a full board although during the year Wal Mayr and Adma Sargood resigned. We wish them well with their endeavours and thank them for their time and input. We welcomed Craig Alison who replaced Adma Sargood as Director from South West Qld. You will be able to read about their regional activities over the past twelve months in the 2023 Annual Report.

Your QWaLC Team consists of the Committee, CEO and Contractors, who all ensure that QWaLC functions seamlessly on many different levels. I offer my thanks to the 12 Regional Directors who have supported QWaLC committees throughout the year and the following directors who fulfilled certain roles: Deputy Chair: Craig Magnusson; Secretary and RAP Co-Chair: Shelly McArdle; Treasury and Finance and Audit Committee: John Brisbin; Governance and Planning Chair: Maree Gillot; Members Engagement and Communication: Judith Wake; Insurance and Risk: Simon Warner; RAP Chair: Temaleti Matasia.

Darryl Ebenezer, QWaLC CEO as I have already stated, has earned his badge of 10 years of long service. Darryl works with contractors over the years that support processes that QWaLC requires to function. Lane Pilon, Andrea Mason, Glen Donoghue, Dorian Pozzan and Pamela Greet have assisted QWaLC to forge forward. Working with a non-for profit organisation is different from working with a company as sometimes it requires going above and beyond - because you have 'heart' you do it. Thank you for your continued support.

In closing on behalf of the QWaLC Team I would like to wish our member groups and their volunteers a successful 2023/2024 and don't forget to include QWaLC in your celebrations - especially your regional Director.

M. L. Gutterin





"The Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group, of the Atherton Tablelands, has many on-ground projects with lots of volunteers and we depend very much on the volunteer insurance provided by QWaLC. Without it we would not be able to contribute the conservation on-ground work and research."

*Peter Valentine,
President TKMG June 2023*

CEO's Report

Darryl Ebenezer

Another twelve months of robust activity.

QWaLC supports our diverse membership through five key roles: Represent, Advocate, Network, Promote and Strengthen.

We continue to build on our relationships and partnerships with other groups and organisations, including the National Landcare Network, Australian Citizen Science Association, Volunteering Qld, Landcare Australia, Global Landcare, Queensland Conservation Council and each of Queensland's Regional NRM organisations and NRM Regions Queensland. The many projects, sponsorships, discussions and meetings we participate in with this diverse range of groups continue to help us build a more resilient, inclusive and much needed volunteer community.

Information collected via our annual Membership and Insurance renewal allows QWaLC to advance the goals and aspirations of members and ensure that our insurance and support services are tailored to meet member needs. The information captured from across QLD 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 practical activities. Next year in late January 2024 the survey will be online through the QWaLC website.

AON, with the continued support of Vanessa, has provided us with excellent insurance cover and service, enabling us to provide to our membership three insurance policies: General and Products Liability (Primary Liability), Personal Accident (Voluntary workers) and Association Liability (Protector). Thanks to all our more than 500 member groups for being safe throughout the year.

Our thanks to the Queensland Government for their ongoing support, since 2004, of this unique support initiative. We look forward to being able to continue to support the diverse and impactful activities of QWaLC members into the coming year under the funding program, NRRP. The safe undertaking of activities by members and volunteers has meant that our insurance premiums have remained affordable - which is an excellent outcome.

Thanks to Chris (NRM Regions Queensland) for our conversations and his tireless contribution in increasing the profile of natural resource management across Queensland and nationally.

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. I want to acknowledge the important roles that our subcommittee Chairs play - Maree, Mary-Lou, John and Judith. Special thanks to our Chair, Mary-Lou Gittins for her buoyant contribution to the life of QWaLC and also in her role as a Director on the National Landcare Network board. My great appreciation also to Lane, Dorian, Glen, Pamela, Andrew and Andrea who have helped in many ways over the past 12 months and are always there to assist when needed.

Finally, this year in March I celebrated 10 years of being part of the life of Queensland Water and Land Carers. I would especially like to thank the four Chair's of QWaLC I have worked with Esma, Rhondda, Geoff and Mary-Lou for sharing their passion, commitment and wisdom with me. Hearing from, speaking with, sharing emails and learning from many thousands of committed and passionate people continues to be a great pleasure and one I look forward to over the next few years.

with thanks, Darryl

"...it is to the credit of QWaLC that the FY2023 year ended on as positive a note as it did. "



John Brisbin

Treasurer's Report

Given the ongoing challenges in the larger landcare and natural resource management space, it is to the credit of QWaLC that the FY2023 year ended on as positive a note as it did.

For example, the Commonwealth Government's National Landcare Program (Phase 2) came to a halt on 30 June 2023. This is a \$1 billion program that provides the funding lifeblood for landcare groups, regional NRM bodies, a wide range of industry and research groups, agricultural and environmental stewardship initiatives, habitat recovery funding, and the Reef Trust. For a range of reasons, the program did not secure bridging arrangements which means that Landcare and NRM organisations across the country have experienced some degree of fiscal freefall, QWaLC included.

The Board has adopted a number of precautionary measures to get through these and related challenges, and our FY2023 financial position provides a strong foundation for the year ahead.

QWaLC appointed John Gosper Audit & Assurance again this year to conduct an audit of our accounts. They have returned an unqualified opinion for the organisation.

The year closed with a net deficit of \$23,255 compared with the 2022 surplus of \$71,034. The major factors included discontinuation of project funding from the Dept of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) and Landcare Australia, as well as the pre-payment of \$76,838 from the Department of Resources for a project to be delivered in FY2024. This prepayment is taken as a liability on the balance sheet.

The major sources of income were again from the Queensland Department of Resources \$400,000 and the National Landcare Network \$76,115.

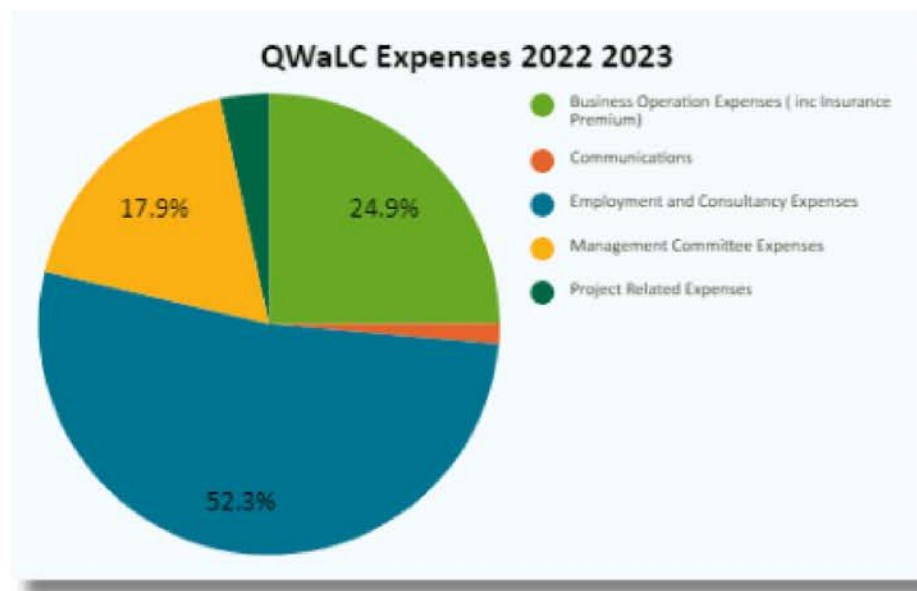
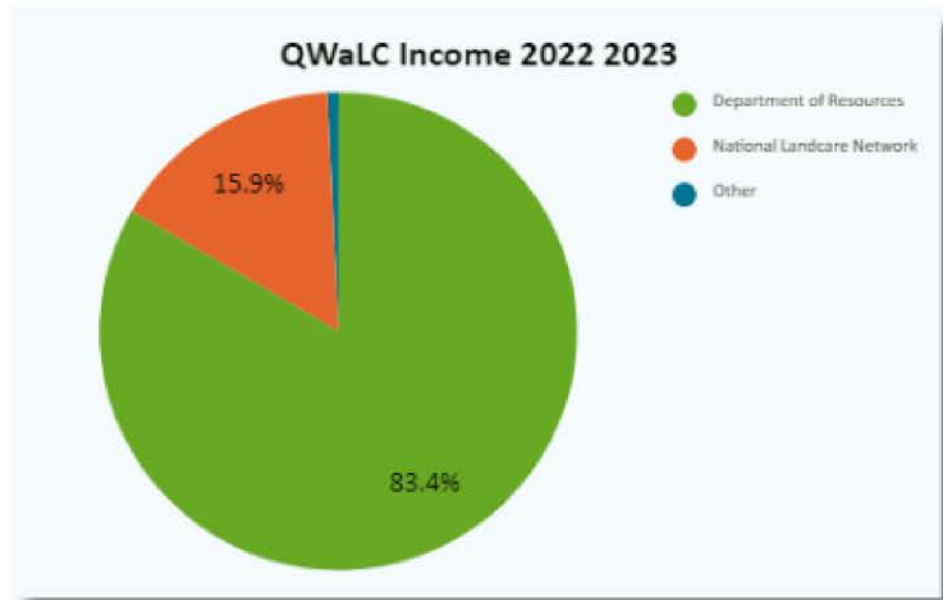
The single largest operational expense is the insurance program that serves our 500+ member groups. The premiums for this policy have increased significantly over the past several years, and we have been warned that this trend may even accelerate in the short term.

Commensurate with inflationary pressure and increased staff activity, our combined expenses for the Board and employment/consultancy rose by \$31,678 compared with FY2022. Our FY2024 budget projects a reduction of \$19,207 in these areas.

During the year I had the pleasure of working together with fellow Directors serving on the Finance and Audit Sub-committee, including Craig Magnussen, Simon Warner and Mary-Lou Gittins. The Subcommittee was ably supported by the CEO, Darryl Ebenezer. I'd like to thank them for their contribution of time and talent to help keep our financial foundations secure and fit for the role we play in the larger landcare and volunteer sector.

Financial Performance

For the full Auditor's Report 2022 2023 go to: <https://qwalc.org.au/about-2/qwalc-annual-reports/>



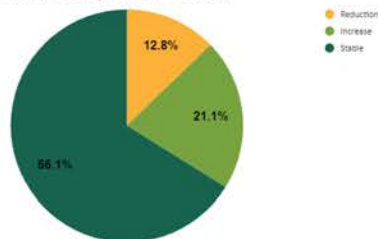
Member Snapshot

Through extensive research and engagement with its Member Groups, the annual membership and insurance survey provides QWaLC with a comprehensive picture of the overall activities and challenges in QLD, and an overview of existing resource levels state-wide and in each NRM region. See the membership and insurance survey report at: <https://qwalc.org.au/about-2/qwalc-annual-reports/>

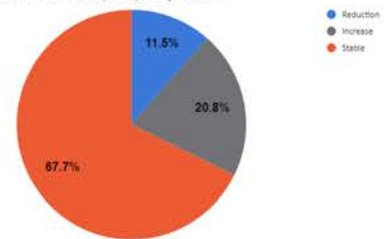


Key Survey Results

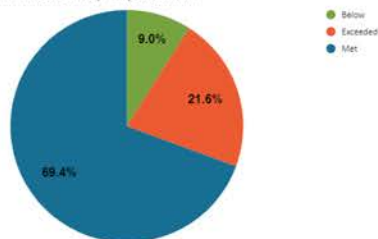
QWaLC Member Group Volunteer Levels



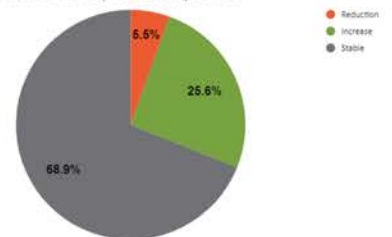
QWaLC Member Group Capacity Levels



QWaLC Member Group Expectations



QWaLC Member Group Partnership Levels



Member Group Challenges





Temaleti Matasia

"Wenlock Catchment Management Group Inc is a community conservation group made up of local people with a passion for "Caring for Country through Conservation."

Cape York & Torres Strait

As QWaLC Director of the Cape York/Torres Strait Region I would like to recognise the great work the 12 plus member groups accomplished over the last twelve months. Our country's assets range from wetlands to native wildlife which are impacted by outside interests. Our region is a community of local people with a passion for caring for country and traditions.

At a state level I have co-chaired the QWaLC Reconciliation Action Plan Working group with Shelly McArdel. We are at the stage where the Reflection plan will be lodged with the Reconciliation Australia body for consideration. This plan when accredited will be implemented over a period of eighteen months. I would like to thank the other directors for their continued support and interest in this process.

In March this year, three of our region's groups: Balnggarrawarra Normanby Rangers, Cape York Weeds And Feral Animal Incorporated and the Wenlock Catchment Management Group participated in developing a virtual message stick from our northern region to the ACT. Our messages were presented to the First Nations Landcare Working Group launched in Canberra. Mary-Lou Gittins QWaLC chair presented our messages to Dion Creek the Chairperson for Cape York Land, Barry Hunter – Chair, Aboriginal Carbon Foundation and Doug Humann AM who is chair of Landcare Australia Limited and First Nations Landcare Working Group on behalf of us. This message was one of greeting to our country and support for a pathway for First Nations people to lead the way with caring for our country.



One of the local highlights I participated in this year was in June 2023 when the Wenlock Catchment Management Group Inc conducted a GIS mapping workshop in Weipa, Mapoon and Napranum with the Napranum Wunthim Land and Sea Rangers which was a huge success.

This workshop was the perfect opportunity for both groups to gain new skills in:

- Introduction to mapping.
- Learn how to mark places of interest on maps.
- Learn how to use a GPS.
- Collect GPS points to create your own map.
- How to create a GPS data file.
- Practical theory demonstration.

The purpose of this workshop was to empower the 11 Traditional Owner groups of the Western Cape region to conduct a cultural heritage assessment to create cultural heritage maps that identify areas of significance that need to be protected from mining, commercial development, tourism, human activities, climate change and erosion.

I look forward to working with QWaLC members groups from our region towards a better future.





"It is a remarkable testament to the character of the people that they continue to generously volunteer their time and talents, bringing passion and vision to where it is needed most."



John Brisbin

Southern/Northern Gulf

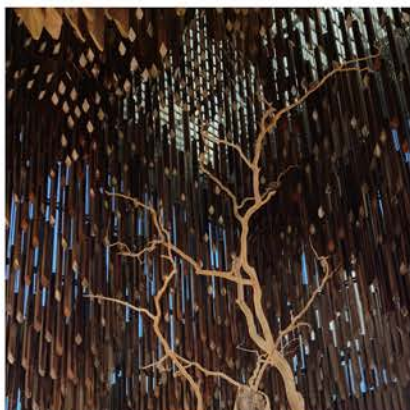
Across the Northern and Southern Gulf regions our member groups put in another big year as they deliver on the land care ethos of custodianship for the land and a regard for the mounting challenges of climate instability, ecosystem decline, and economic inequality.

It is a remarkable testament to the character of the people that they continue to generously volunteer their time and talents, bringing passion and vision to where it is needed most. It was especially encouraging this year to have two more Indigenous land care groups join QWaLC in our region.

Our groups are situated across a diverse landscape, from conserving peri-urban reserves near Mareeba to mesquite treatment at the remote Mary Kathleen mine site. Take a moment to have a look via the regional map on the QWaLC [website](#).

Our insurance scheme continues to prove an essential enabler for volunteer groups caring for all aspects of our lands and waters. This year we continued our efforts to help groups take full advantage of their coverage while still operating in compliance with the policy stipulations.

Our CEO Darryl Ebenezer has been leading a series of well-received workshops and online sessions in this regard.



As a QWaLC Director, I help represent the interests of groups in my regions at various forums and planning processes. This year I have attended a number of forums organised by the Cairns and Far North Environment Centre under the leadership of Lucy Graham.

Through my role with the Mitchell River Watershed Management Group I also maintain a watching brief on the Lakeland Agricultural Irrigation Scheme as it continues to press forward with the Palmer River Dam proposal.

I was privileged to take part in the National Landcare Network (NLN) gathering this year. Held in Canberra, this was a rare and valuable opportunity for the NLN Board, members, and Members' Council to sit down together and discuss the challenges and opportunities for land carers across the country. I remain a strong advocate for the formation of a single national organisation for the landcare movement, and it was gratifying to find that view was shared by a surprising number of the attendees. Despite a long history of dysfunction, there is always an opportunity for the NLN and Landcare Australia to form a single coherent entity.



I'd like to thank the member groups in my region for their continued efforts to nurture the living landscapes we all depend on, and for their participation in QWaLC. I'm looking forward to another productive year in your service.



"As another long dry hovers, Kati Thunda will cycle through these natural pulses as she has for eons"



Desert Channels

Robyn Adams

For KATI THUNDA - LAKE EYRE BASIN of QUEENSLAND

With consecutive wetter winters, much of our interior rangelands had the benefit of a natural rebuild. For the grasslands and woodlands, many lesser plant species had a chance to grow, set seed then repeat, creating rich, diverse meadows. The cascades followed with granavores and insects multiplying then came good times for the reptiles and raptors.

After these better seasons, the sky tap turned off early and abruptly, for most of the region's predominant beef and sheep producers. Though alas, there was severe late-wet flooding down the western Georgina River. These waters braided and greened its Channel Country, with some of it filling of The Lake by June, although most still shimmeringly dry.

With the early dry and predictions of an imminent La Nina, beef prices started contracting from record highs, as producers offloaded lesser and fat-enough stock, to hold feed for later and the best of the herd. Hence wild fires became the concern with this bulk of dry grass across most of the Basin's grazing areas.



Whilst the nuances of cluster fencing are still being realised, some early increased calf numbers at weaning is quickly repaying these significant investments. The movements of wild dogs, kangaroos and pigs across and into the Downs, and its consequences especially for the surrounding unfenced areas, is still a large landscape-scale puzzle playing out.

Tourism across the region continues to strengthen post-covid, with some new entrants at the top level opening fresh eyes to our majestic scenery. Paleo and event visitations along with the many caravaners keep the region busy over the cooler months, with continual upgrading and bituminising of arterial roads being an improvement for us all.

As another long dry hovers, Kati Thunda will cycle through these natural pulses as she has for eons.





Michael Bond

Simon Warner

South East Queensland

I am delighted to report that since joining the Board towards the end of 2022 I have averaged an activity every week. Often this has involved an online meeting, but more excitingly, it has regularly involved being out and about with our wonderful volunteer organisations.

I have travelled as far south as Carneys Creek near Boonah and as far north as Belli Creek near Eumundi. Boonah and District Landcare organised *Yarn on a Carneys Creek Farm*. This is a wonderful initiative of this Landcare group, organising tours of local farms to share experiences, successes and failures. The owners, Fred and Lisa, bought their property at Carneys Creek in 2020 to grow Australian native foods. They planted rainforest trees and native foods, specifically Black Apple (which they are developing as a commercial crop), Davidson's Plums and Warrigal greens. They opened their property to the Landcare group for an afternoon of sharing and learning.

At Belli Creek, I attended the two-day Burnett Mary's 2023 Regional Integrated Science Forum supported by the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee. It was attended by industry workers, government representatives, NRM organisations, Landcare groups, agribusinesses, and landowners. Presentations were from scientists, government agencies and landholders about the Paddock to Reef program and progress toward the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan targets.

"My greatest learning to date for volunteer organisations has been the importance of the social aspects of volunteering"

The event detailed the latest project outcomes, updates to on-ground work, and the science delivering positive environmental and local industry impacts. Speakers from the Paddock to Reef team, representatives from Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee, local landholders, Gidarjil Development Corporation, and Sunshine Coast Council updated on-ground project work and outcomes. There were field trips each day to rehabilitation sites and a demonstration of cultural burning.

My greatest learning to date for volunteer organisations has been the importance of the social aspects of volunteering. I first twigged to this at a general meeting of the Cubberla Witton Catchment Network at Fig Tree Pocket. A representative from each sub-group covering the catchment presented an update. You could plot on a graph in terms of numbers of volunteers turning up.

Numbers exactly correlated with the quality of the 'offering' after the working part of the day. Imagine 'bring your own water' = three volunteers and 'tea and scones and a hearty get together' = 30 volunteers. This was the shared realisation of the evening.

I was later to learn the science of this correlation at an event organised by The Hut Environmental and Community Association, the THECA 2023 Forum: People Reconnecting with Nature. A full day of presentations and meeting people from a range of groups. A presentation by Dr Robyn Gulliver, Research Fellow at the University of Queensland, focussed on volunteers. She spoke about how organisations can identify, support and retain environmental volunteers and volunteer leaders.

Equitable distribution of tasks and labour, seeing tangible outcomes, and recognition of volunteer efforts are factors that help volunteers take on more tasks and continue their participation. The most critical element for retaining volunteers was the presence of positive relationships with their team members.

Another highlight this year was seeing the Hanlon Park Revitalisation Project featured on Gardening Australia. This redevelopment of a storm water drain has been recognised around Australia and overseas as a leading example of waterway naturalisation. Alan Hoban, Director Civil and Water at Bligh Tanner, who led the project, presented at the Norman Creek Catchments AGM. He discussed insights from the design and construction process and explored some of the waterway health and flooding outcomes as well as social outcomes. This is a truly remarkable redevelopment instigated by the N4C over 12 years.

The project included the re-naturalisation of 800m of concrete stormwater channel in Hanlon Park, Stones Corner and redevelopment of parkland including a new nature-play area. The design included extensive geotechnical, services, groundwater, ecological and surface water quality investigations.

In addition to the new channel, design elements included new concrete paths, park and feature lighting, a bikeway under Logan Road and landscaping works. Major services (sewer, water, telecommunications, electrical) are located within the project area.

On reflection, my personal highlight for the year was presenting at the Sustainability and Science Schools Showcase. The event was held at the Edge Auditorium at the State Library of Queensland. Students from 30 schools across Queensland attended. The purpose of this event was to increase sustainability and citizen science outcomes in schools and as a part of this goal, the organisers provided the opportunity for the attending schools to network with experts across these fields. Several of the schools expressed an interest in habitat restoration and native planting. I addressed areas where I could help schools on their sustainability/citizen science journeys. I focussed on school gardens, composting and worm farming.

I look forward to my ongoing learning in the role and visiting those groups I am yet to see.

Michael Bond





"It is always good to hear the positive experiences of our members in their interactions with QWaLC"



Wet Tropics

Jeffery Baines

It has been another big year advocating for QWaLC and our members.

Throughout the year, I have attended the National Feral Pig Conference, Great Barrier Reef Water Quality Synthesis Workshop, breakfast with the Qld Chief Scientist and the Social Science Symposium - just to name a few.

These events are always excellent opportunities to promote the extraordinary value of our member groups, building confidence for investment in on ground actions with the people at the coalface. I'm encouraged by the changing rhetoric within Government and their increased interest in working, and investing, in groups that we represent to build partnerships for the adaptive management of our environment.

Invariably, I have the opportunity to liaise with members I do not get to see regularly and catch up with the familiar faces. It is always good to hear the positive experiences of our members in their interactions with QWaLC - great work team.

The support resources that the Board are working towards are well received and I commend my fellow board members on their commitment to these efforts.

I'm looking forward to another positive year and the increasing opportunities that are sure to present themselves.

Thank you to all our members in the Wet Tropics region, keep up the great work and please reach out to me if you need anything.





Craig Alison

South West Queensland

"...group insurance coverage, Landcare grant opportunities and online Toolbox for forms and information has been invaluable to our isolated groups in delivering safe and effective activities."

Representing the Mulgalands of south west QLD and continuing on the previous works by former representative Adma Sargood, I am pleased to present the annual regional report of QWaLC involvement with rural and remote communities of our area. Regionally, we are coming off the back of good seasonal conditions and no doubt entering into a dry spell as climatic variability plays out as we head into 2024.

The local industries of pastoral activity, mining exploration/extraction and ERF Carbon investments dominate our regional economies, offering an opportunity to QWaLC for further engagement and support as the peak body for NRM volunteers. QWaLC membership currently stands at 27 Incorporated groups, comprising over 150 members.



Membership ranges from specific cluster fencing entities delivering Queensland Feral Pest Initiative investments for pest mitigation across to community based environmental groups undertaking ecological repair and restoration works. The membership of QWaLC with group insurance coverage, Landcare grant opportunities and online Toolbox for forms and information has been invaluable to our isolated groups in delivering safe and effective activities.

QWaLC has been represented at events throughout 2023 being delivered by a number of organisations such as Agrifutures, Leading Sheep, Southern QLD landscapes, The South West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils, AgForce and the Meat and Livestock Association - to name a few.

Southern Qld NRM and local government have continued their ongoing investment into the region with SQL undertaking landscape hydration projects to improve soil health and groundcover. Their on grounds works in the lower Paroo included pest control adjacent to the Ramsar listed wetlands of Currawinya National Park. Local councils continue to do the same with ongoing investment into cluster fencing from QFPI for reducing feral pest predation on the pastoral industry.

Invasive weeds continue to be an ongoing challenge with the dry climate species of Mesquite, Parkinsonia and cacti still persisting - with a regional focus on the containment of Hudson pear in the Upper Paroo west of Charleville. The mapping of infestations has been crucial to our understanding of how to allocate limited resources for control. Members of QWaLC have been instrumental in providing data to both local, state and federal agencies.



Looking forward to 2024, QWaLC will continue to establish its presence and be a source of support to both established and emerging landscape managers of the Mulgalands and I look forward to sharing our story with you.



Fitzroy Basin

Shelly McArdle

"The increasing interest and focus on the perspectives of our Traditional Custodians and the Biocultural values of Country is particularly exciting"

Our Member groups across the Fitzroy Basin continue to carry out their work with the tenacity and passion that is common among land carers. With many of our funding sources wrapping up and new funding opportunities coming through, work has continued regardless.

The increasing interest and focus on the perspectives of our Traditional Custodians and the Biocultural values of Country is particularly exciting and we are also encouraged to see three more of these groups joining the QWaLC family this year.

I am pleased to be working alongside Cape Yorks' Temaleti Matasia to develop our QWaLC Reconciliation Action Plan that will help our organisation to consult, advocate and act with a focused intent on creating a culture of inclusion and co creation throughout all that we do.

I have been privileged to be able to take part in the State Government's Regional Community Forums that aim to strengthen partnerships and give those living in our regions greater access to government and better opportunities to influence government decision-making.

I would like to acknowledge the continuing work that many of our volunteers put in across the Fitzroy Basin, from caring for injured wildlife, Traditional Custodians carrying out cultural heritage Values Mapping and Coral research and restoration to large agricultural properties owners working together to reduce sediment run off to our precious reef.



As a QWaLC Director and Woppaburra TUMRA Coordinator I was able to join with Woppaburra Traditional Custodians and Hon Grace Grace Minister for Education and State Member for Keppel, Britany Lauga at the celebration of the opening of the Department of Education's largest off grid power system located at the Konomie Island Environmental Education Centre.





Burnett Mary

Maree Gillott

"I continue to be awe struck by the commitment and passion of the people in the region who seek to protect and improve the natural treasures of the Burnett Mary"

I am pleased to present this report as the representative Board member for the Burnett Mary region. Member groups in the region have increased from 44 this time last year to 50 currently.

Member groups range across a variety of interests and activities aligned with the values and mission of QWaLC, and include Landcare groups, Catchment and coastal care groups, native animal rescue and preservation organizations, community gardens, rural groups and indigenous organizations.

The Burnett Mary region, stretching from Bundaberg in the east to Kingaroy in the west and to the top of the Sunshine Coast in the south, is a treasure trove of diverse natural landscapes. This region encompasses everything from pristine coastal ecosystems to lush hinterland rainforests, agricultural plains, and thriving riverine environments. This rich tapestry of natural landscapes is a testament to the ecological diversity that our region is privileged to possess.

Our member groups are widely distributed throughout the region, and wherever you go you will not be too far from one or more groups of committed volunteers seeking to ensure the effective management and conservation of our natural resources.

Each has a specific focus area, allowing for a broad spectrum of ecosystems and habitats to be covered. They are committed to addressing local environmental challenges, advocating for sustainable practices, and fostering community engagement in natural resource management.



For those who completed the annual survey earlier this year without prompting – I say thank you To those I needed to remind/relentlessly pursue by email, phone, cyberstalking and in one case accosting you at a market stall - I apologise, but hope that you all understand that these surveys are absolutely necessary to ensure QWaLC is able to continue to provide insurance for its member groups. It also provides key data which helps QWaLC make representations to government on your behalf.

It is an absolute privilege to represent this fantastic region, and I continue to be awe struck by the commitment and passion of the people in the region who seek to protect and improve the natural treasures of the Mary Burnett.



During this year, I have had the opportunity to meet with various groups, particularly those closer to Gympie, and have endeavoured to keep all informed with semi-regular email updates on relevant matters.

A highlight of the year for me was being able to host (with Gympie and District Landcare) one of the Keeping our Volunteers Safe days which were rolled out across the state, as part of our commitment to member services. As usual, our CEO Darryl Ebenezer , presented what can be dry topics, in an entertaining and informative manner, and those who attended all found something to take back to their groups. I did observe that one group wasted no time in implementing moderators for commentary on their social media platform as a risk mitigation measure- you know who you are, and well done!

"One of the most important messages I took away from the year's activities is ensuring that the work of volunteers is appreciated and acknowledged."



Judith Wake

Burdekin Dry Tropics Mackay Whitsunday

This year, I continued to be inspired by the amazing work done by the 27 member groups in the Burdekin Dry Tropics and Mackay Whitsunday regions, to achieve a diverse range of environmental benefits. I was able to catch up in person with many of the groups and reach out to many others by phone or email. As with last year, all the groups in the region completed their QWaLC Survey by the closing date to ensure their insurance cover continues. Groups in the region continue to be challenged by the same sorts of issues concerning all regional areas in Queensland. These include the ability to recruit both volunteers and paid staff, with the shortage of affordable housing being a major issue.

One of the major environmental issues facing land care groups in my region is that of feral animals. Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association (SLCMA), received funding from the Queensland Government's Sustainability Action Plan to bring Tom Garrett (Southern Queensland Landscapes) and his conservation detector dogs Rocky and Cooper to locate feral fox dens in local National and Conservation Parks. It was great to meet all the people from local and state government agencies and volunteer organisations, working in partnership with SLCMA, but the highlight was meeting Rocky and Cooper and watching Rocky demonstrate his skills. Members of Mackay and District Turtle Watch also attended, as foxes are a significant predator of turtle eggs and the issue was discussed at their Annual General Meeting that I was able to attend.

Weed control in rehabilitation areas and natural reserves is another major and ongoing issue. In urban areas, garden plants often spread into nature reserves from dumped waste and seeds carried by birds from neighbouring gardens. Along with another member of Native Plants Queensland (NPQ) Mackay Branch, I reported on weed infestations in Morag McNicol Reserve, a Land for Wildlife Reserve for Mackay Regional Council. Weeds are also an issue for Lower Burdekin Landcare Association in their revegetation areas along Parkers Lagoon. It was amazing to see some of their achievements as they are completely run by volunteers. They run a nursery with an area showcasing the native plants that grow in their area and also partner with NQ Dry Tropics NRM and Gudjuda Rangers to revegetate dunes at Alva Beach. SLCMA also run a native plant nursery which I visited as part of their Annual General Meeting.

Propagating native plants to sell to the public to grow in suburban and periurban gardens instead of potential exotic weeds is also a very important and rewarding part of the work of NPQ Mackay Branch's Propagation Group. Landscape Architect Lawrie Smith AM provided some useful insights at a recent plant sale that I helped run. The group also propagated hundreds of plants of *Graptophyllum ilicifolium* the emblem for the NPQ group and Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens for a plant give-a-way to celebrate the Garden's 20th Birthday.



Managing native habitat for wildlife is critically important and I had the privilege to accompany employees of Pioneer Catchment Landcare (PCL) and National Parks staff setting up camera traps and doing vegetation surveys for the project Impacts of hazard reduction burns on Quoll populations, in Homevale National Park. It was wonderful to see the number of quolls resident in the area.

As QWaLC is a partner in the Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership (Mackay Whitsunday Isaac), I attended the launch of the Stewardship Report in Airlie Beach and caught up with people from member groups such as OUCH and Bowen and Collinsville Landcare Group at the associated Networking Event. Stewardship of our waterways is vital and I attended the very successful ReefClean funded marine debris clean-up coordinated by PCL, in partnership with Tangaroa Blue and funded through the Australian Government's Reef Trust. A bus load of volunteers removed a huge amount of rubbish from waterways in the Pioneer River catchment reducing the amount of debris delivered to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in rainfall events.



Some other highlights include:

- World Wetland Day Round Table Workshop and Tour of Local Wetlands event was organised by the Mackay, Whitsunday, Isaac Wetland Working Group, funded by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and hosted by PCL. A highlight was visiting De Moleyns Lagoon an area of cultural significance for the Yuwibara people and Wetland Walkabout, an important mangrove wetland.
- PCL subsequently held their AGM at Wetland Walkabout and conducted a tour of the wetlands highlighting their value in coastal water quality and biodiversity.
- Along with volunteers from all groups associated with the Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens, I was privileged to attend a luncheon with the Queensland Governor, Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM. It was a good opportunity to discuss biodiversity issues and the value of ex situ conservation with the Governor and her staff, Mackay Regional Councillors, Friends of the Botanic Gardens, Native Plants Queensland Mackay Branch and Birdlife Mackay.
- The Nature Based Solutions to Build Regional Resilience Workshop organised by Reef Catchments showcased the importance of collaboration by key stakeholders in determining the community need and future direction for a Mackay Whitsunday Isaac Streambank Management Guide.
- On a personal note, I was very honoured to be awarded the Environmental Achievement Award at Mackay Regional Council's Australia Day Awards.

One of the most important messages I took away from the year's activities is ensuring that the work of volunteers is appreciated and acknowledged not only by celebrations such as a Christmas event, but by other events throughout the year.



"The high activity in the Condamine is a credit to the QWaLC member groups as they regroup and move forward"



MaryLou Gittins OAM

Condamine

70 years of landcarers. Our catchment has a long history of groups and individuals interested in the health of our catchment as documented by Ken Keith in 2019 in a paper he presented to Condamine Catchment Management Association:

Landcare in this catchment emerged from soil conservation activity so I'll briefly recap some history pre Landcare. In the late 1940s, a soil conservation section was established in the Department of Agriculture and Stock and by 1948, twelve demonstration farms were set up for field days. I want to acknowledge these early landcarers and wonder if any of these families are in Landcare groups today: E. Apelt, (Yargullan); J. Coonan, (Cambooya); R. Devine (Finnie); H. Holthouse (Westbrook); H. Huston, (Allora); K. Langdorf, (Nobby); F.J. Nolan, (Warwick); R. Pechey, (Crow's Nest); N. Postle, (Pittsworth).

When Queensland Landcare was launched in April 1989, there were 25 groups statewide. The National Landcare Program announcement in July 1989 generated more interest. We can only be amazed at the growth of QWaLC groups to over 500 with over 20 groups in the Condamine Catchment ensuring the health and safety of our catchment.

In 2022 Condamine Catchment Management Association celebrated 30 years of great community work and engagement in the catchment area. I attended the event (in my role as secretary and QWaLC Director) which was greatly supported by the community. Guest Speaker Darren Marshall spoke on Feral Pig Management in the Condamine. This was just one of the four interesting speakers for the year including Craig Magnussen (also Murray Darling QWaLC Director) from the Rabbit Board. Our quarterly forums include a guest speaker for those groups who are involved in caring for the catchment area.



'From Little things big things grow' - is so true for the Bulloak Jewel Butterfly Control Habitat which the Clifton Landcare protected in 2020/21 with total exclusion fencing and managed on land owned by Toowoomba Regional Council. Professor Dr. Don Sands presented about the now critically endangered Bulloak Jewel Butterfly and its intimate relationship with the *inclinata* ant and a particular mistletoe. Interestingly, a newly discovered butterfly species recently named *ogirus caelestia*, has been identified on this land, also endangered and attended by the same ant.

Looking at our wildlife carers in the catchment you can only admire the dedication and work they put into caring for our native animals. At the Keeping Volunteers Safe workshop, I spoke with a volunteer carer about her job and was amazed at her energy. She received about 4 phone calls while at the workshop!

Around the catchment landcare groups have organised productive field days and workshops looking at different ways in caring for our land and water: Syntropic, Culture Burns, Regenerative, Erosion Control, Soil Health, Carbon Farming. Koala Habitat, Permaculture to name a few. Other events included the health and well being of members and their groups: First Aid, CPR, Grant Writing, Carp Buster, Project Management and guest speakers to improve knowledge.

For many groups succession planning is an issue. You can see that many of the committee members have been in those positions for over ten years and the aging of members is a concern.

If you live in the southern downs area, then you can't go past the Condamine Headwater Landcare's native nursery which has gone from strength to strength - it is great to see the volunteers that regularly support this activity.

The Allora Mountain offers another great outdoor activity if you are interested in nature and First Nations history. In April I attended Allora Landcare book launch of The 2nd Edition of the 'Pictorial Guide to the Birds of Allora Mountain Reserve'. Frank Coman, the photographer of all the birds in the book was in attendance and we had a guided mountain walk. It was great to have a chat with James Lester State MP for Southern Downs who attended with his two sons. This publication was supported by QWaLC.

The QWaLC Keeping Volunteers Safe and Engaged workshop that was hosted by CCMA was a great success and I thank those who attended. It was interesting to hear the positive feedback regarding the support QWaLC offers groups. Many groups mentioned that without this support they would not be able to function and survive in today's volunteering world due to the high cost of insurance and understanding groups obligations to their volunteers. Groups were interested in the Landcare Tool Box on the website. Some thought that because they weren't a landcare group it didn't apply to them, but we are all caring for our land so please log on to QWaLC website and explore the tool box.

The QLD State Landcare Awards 2324 are planned with QWaLC and in partnership with Landcare Australia. We may be running a bit late but please when I knock on your door seeking a nomination from your group (that is every group's door) take up the opportunity to advocate for your group. Please ask for support if required.

The high activity in the Condamine is a credit to the QWaLC member groups as they regroup and move forward after covid (which still wags its tail). The coming year though may have another 'dog' we have to contend with - drought.

In closing I encourage Condamine groups to reach out to me at any time and copy me into your newsletters. Hopefully I will see a member of your group at the next regional meeting.





"The information our member groups provide us through the annual survey...helps us shape the work we do to better support groups focus on achieving on-ground outcomes"



Craig Magnusson

Queensland Murray Darling

QWaLC supported 29 member groups in the Murray Darling Region throughout the year, through the provision of insurance, governance, information, contacts and event sponsorship. Pleasingly this included welcoming a number of new groups.

The highlights of 2023 for me included:

- Supporting the Invasive Species Queensland's Pest Animal and Weed Symposium in Dalby. The symposium was attended by some 200 delegates from across Australia and showcased innovations, research and best practice management of invasive species.
- Using my professional and local networks to promote the work of QWaLC at every opportunity.
- Membership on the National Landcare Network's Member Council.

QWaLC has supported its member groups to deliver some outstanding projects in the Murray Darling region, including:

- Progress by wild dog cluster fence groups in completing fencing projects has seen a marked decline in stock losses through predation by wild dogs, with a corresponding increase in productivity and producers' mental wellbeing.
- The Stanthorpe Regional Art Gallery Caring for Nature project saw an expo held during August which was attended by over 700 students from all primary schools in the Granite Belt district. Presenters were from the Quoll Society of Australia, Girraween National Park Rangers, Granite Belt Sustainable Action Network (GBSAN), Birdlife Southern Queensland, Stanthorpe Rare Wildflower Consortium, Containers for Change, and Boomerang Bags. GBSAN was a major sponsor of the event.

2023 saw the QWaLC Board refocusing its objectives through several strategic planning initiatives. This work was underpinned by the information our member groups provide us through the annual survey.

No other State or Territory possesses the level of member group data that QWaLC has collected. This informs us as a Board about the activities undertaken by our member groups and importantly, their challenges, and helps us shape the work we do to better support groups focus on achieving on-ground outcomes.

The pillars upon which QWaLC's Strategic Plan are based are: Strengthen, Network, Advocate, Promote & Represent. I am very keen to see this strategic work continue into 2024 and beyond to ensure we are providing our member groups the support they need to continue to the great work they do across NRM in Queensland.



Images List

Page	Image Title	Photo Credit
Front Cover	Condamine	Mary-Lou Gittins
Chairs Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Darryl Ebenezer's 10 years with QWaLC Her Excellency the Honourable Dr Jeannette Young AC PSM, Governor of Queensland and Professor Graeme Nimmo QWaLC Board 	Mary-Lou Gittins QLD Governor's Facebook Mary-Lou Gittins
CEO's Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The TKMG Committee at the 25th Birthday bash October 2022. Volunteers all. 	<i>Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group</i>
Cape York & Torres Strait	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caring for Country - Temaleti Matasia, Grace John and Gladys Wheeler Reviving Culture in the 20th Century. Balnggarwarra Normanby Rangers, Cape York Weeds And Feral Animal Incorporated and the Wenlock Catchment Management Group participated in developing a virtual message stick 	Temaleti Matasia The Nature Conservancy Temaleti Matasia
Southern/Northern Gulf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NLN Directors, Members Council and STLO CEOs 	National Landcare Network
Desert Channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desert Channels cattle Resplendent bower of the <i>Chlamydera guttata</i> (Western Bowerbird) Sprouting form Emu dung 	Robyn Adams
South East Queensland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamlin Street Park Austinville 	Michael Bond Andrea Mason
Wet Tropics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daintree Coastline C4 Queen's Jubilee planting Mission Beach 	Douglas Shire Council Jeff Baines
South West Queensland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Steel of KILLOWEN in the Nardoo Cluster at Cunnamulla Bio control site under MDB healthy rivers small grant program. Angellela creek system in Warrego catchment 	Craig Alison
Fitzroy Basin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional Custodians of the Fitzroy Basin have continued to capacity build through meaningful partnerships and successful grant funding bids. They have joined with the Reef Authority on management plans for the Southern Great Barrier Reef. The Cap Coast Eco Warriors Clean up Causeway Lake as part of Clean Up Australia Day Woppaburra TUMRA Director and QWALC Member Opens NAIDOC March in Yeppoon 	Shelly McArdle
Burnett Mary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noosa Landcare Gympie and District Landcare Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee 	Maree Gillott
Burdekin Dry Tropics/Mackay Whitsunday	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A very successful cleanup day with Pioneer Catchment Landcare's ReefClean Day Surveying vegetation in Homevale National Park for Pioneer Catchments Landcare's Quoll Project L-R: Morgan Thomas (Reef Catchments), Daniel Burndred (Department of Resources), Maria Ferraro (Mackay Regional Council), Tom Garrett (Southern Queensland Landscapes), Mike Griinke (Department of Environment and Science), Judith Wake (QWaLC Dry Tropics Whitsundays Region Representative), Saskia von Fahland (Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association Inc.) with Conservation Detection Dogs, Rocky and Cooper NPQ-Grpto-cuttings Morning tea with Lower Burdekin Landcare Association Volunteers 	Judith Wake
Condamine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1954 Tractor CCMA 30th celebrations Allora Landcare Group and James Lister MP Allora Mtn Walk 	Bruce Carey MaryLou Gittins
Queensland Murray Darling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invasive Species Queensland's Pest Animal & Weed Symposium 2023 QWaLC Chair Mary-Lou and Deputy Chair Craig meeting with Michael Watson, Director, Natural Resource Programs, Department of Resources 	Craig Magnussen

We thank you for your ongoing support of Queensland Water and Land Carers

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Global
LANDCARE



Acknowledgement

"We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands where we meet, pay respect to their Elders – past, present and emerging – and we acknowledge the important and practical role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play within communities both in Queensland and across the nation."

Queensland Water and Land Carers supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart.



This piece is called Caring for Earth.

This story is inspired by the three elements Living, Land, Water

"The interconnected earth is the respect between living, land and water and how each interconnects to bring life to the planet.

Over 65,000 years Indigenous people have been custodians of Australia, taking what we need and giving back to the environment. Our totems are connected to the animals, land and waters.

May we move towards caring for the planet in a respectful way that can bring healing of the plane.

I want to share this piece with love and harmony", Leah Cummins



Authentic Aboriginal Art by Leah Cummins

"As proud Mayi woman from North Western Queensland I want to share my culture in art"

