



# BCCA

BURNETT CATCHMENT CARE ASSOCIATION

# Building Resilience in the Agricultural North Burnett

## Final Project Report

THIS PROJECT IS PROUDLY FUNDED BY THE COMMONWEALTH AND QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENTS THROUGH THE 2017-18 NATURAL DISASTER RESILIENCE PROGRAM

PREPARED BY: BURNETT CATCHMENT CARE ASSOCIATION

Final Project Report for "Building Resilience in the Agricultural North Burnett"

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Catchment Care Association

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This Project is proudly funded by the Commonwealth and Queensland  
Governments through the 2017-18 Natural Disaster Resilience Program



**Australian Government**



**Queensland  
Government**



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- Peter Crawford - Climate Mate
- QDAF
- QFF
- QRIDA
- Red Earth Community Foundation
- RFCSSQ
- Rob Cook
- Rural Succession Solutions
- Suncorp
- WBBROC

# Abbreviations and Acronyms

BCCA	Burnett Catchment Care Association
BIEDO	Burnett Inland Economic Development Organisation
CRO	Community Resilience Officer
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
MLA	Meat and Livestock Australia
NDRRA	Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements
QDAF	Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
QFF	Queensland Farmers Federation
QRIDA	Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority
QRA	Queensland Reconstruction Authority
QRFCS	Queensland Rural Financial Counselling Service
QSDR	Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience
RCS	Resource Consulting Services
RFCSSQ	Rural Financial Counselling Service - Southern Queensland
RIC	Regional Investment Corporation
WBBROC	Wide Bay Burnett Regional Organisation of Councils



# Executive Summary

“Building Resilience in the Agricultural North Burnett” is a program delivered by Burnett Catchment Care Association (BCCA) as part of the 2017-18 Natural Disaster Resilience Program funded by the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments.

The project aimed to build & enhance natural disaster resilience of the agricultural North Burnett regional communities at a grass-roots community directed level. Through the employment of a skilled and experienced agricultural Community Resilience Officer (CRO), the project aimed to assist agribusinesses examine their operations and determine ways to mitigate the impact of natural disasters/flooding events and facilitate change to build resilience and prosperity post disaster. The agricultural industry is the dominant employer in the North Burnett region and by far the largest contributor to gross regional product but the industry has been severely impacted by natural disaster events within the Burnett Catchment over the past decade.

This project focused on building the resilience of the agricultural sector of the North Burnett. Proposed outcomes were:

- increasing landholder engagement in the areas of planning and risk management
- better functioning rural businesses with less reliance on government support after natural disasters
- increased community connections with a focus on the importance of social capital
- events and activities facilitated under this project provided assistance to agriculturalists to build meaningful and long lasting resilience for their business.

Over the 17 events hosted, a total of 157 individuals attended to acquire extension advice and education that will positively influence their respective agricultural businesses and increase their resilience to natural disasters. Several events were hosted as collaborations with other relevant organisations and subsequently, BCCA and the CRO were able to deliver the needs of North Burnett landholders holistically by collaborating with like-minded organisations to ensure that resources were used to best effect. For those events that entailed one-on-one extension, the CRO noted how comfortably landholders were able to connect with extension providers and accept their advice.

Resilience is often described using terms such as adaptability, flexibility and adversity however, for the purposes of this project, resilience was measured using four key attributes - Communication; Attitude to Change; Planning; and; Effective Decision Making. Data collected to gauge the level of long-term learning amongst attendees clearly showed that communication based events hosted within this program contributed positively to landholders' communication skills which will ultimately help them to understand their disaster risk.

The topic of planning was addressed in many events throughout both the Economic and Environmental themes identified in this program with enthusiastic feedback received regarding many planning topics whether they were property planning, erosion management planning, animal nutrition planning, financial planning, or succession planning. Landholders had many opportunities to increase their business resilience through planning ahead as per Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience (QSDR) objective: continuous improvement in disaster preparedness response and recovery.

Stakeholders involved in this project identified decision making (along with risk management) as a significant need under the economic theme. Events hosted in this category saw landholders show a willingness to interact, share with and question the presenters/consultants. Attendees left these events energised and motivated to take further action following the interactive session which will certainly contribute to strengthened disaster risk management as per the QSDR.

Landholders' attitude to change was undoubtedly influenced by the degree of positive personal development noted amongst event participants. This growth from a position of great fear of change to understanding strategies to deal with change will inevitably be modelled in their agricultural (and often family) businesses and prepare them for disaster response and recovery when unchosen change such as natural disaster arises.

BCCA is proud to have delivered this program with excellent results and ideally would like to see the role of Community Resilience Officer (CRO) continue. Maintaining relationships developed in this program, building further relationships throughout the North Burnett (and potentially further afield) and providing additional disaster-preparedness education will ultimately maximise agribusiness resilience to natural disasters such as fire, flood and drought well into the future.

# Introduction

“Building Resilience in the Agricultural North Burnett” is a program delivered by Burnett Catchment Care Association as part of the 2017-18 Natural Disaster Resilience Program funded by the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments.

The program was designed to specifically assist agribusinesses to strengthen their resilience to natural disaster by leading and facilitating connection with those who effect change, to build capacity and educate on practical, applied and realistic solutions to the impacts from natural disasters affecting agriculture and the local economy. The North Burnett region unequivocally relies on the agricultural industry to sustain its existence but the industry has been severely impacted by natural disaster events within the entire Burnett Catchment over the past decade.

This report provides background information regarding the North Burnett region and associated natural disaster history as well as describing the methodology followed throughout the 31 month program facilitated from August 2018 to conclusion in March 2021. The program funded a total of seventeen (17) events that are described in the following pages. Feedback received throughout the program has been included along with a detailed case study, key findings, including how these findings align with the objectives of the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience (QSDR) and evidence of the success of the project.



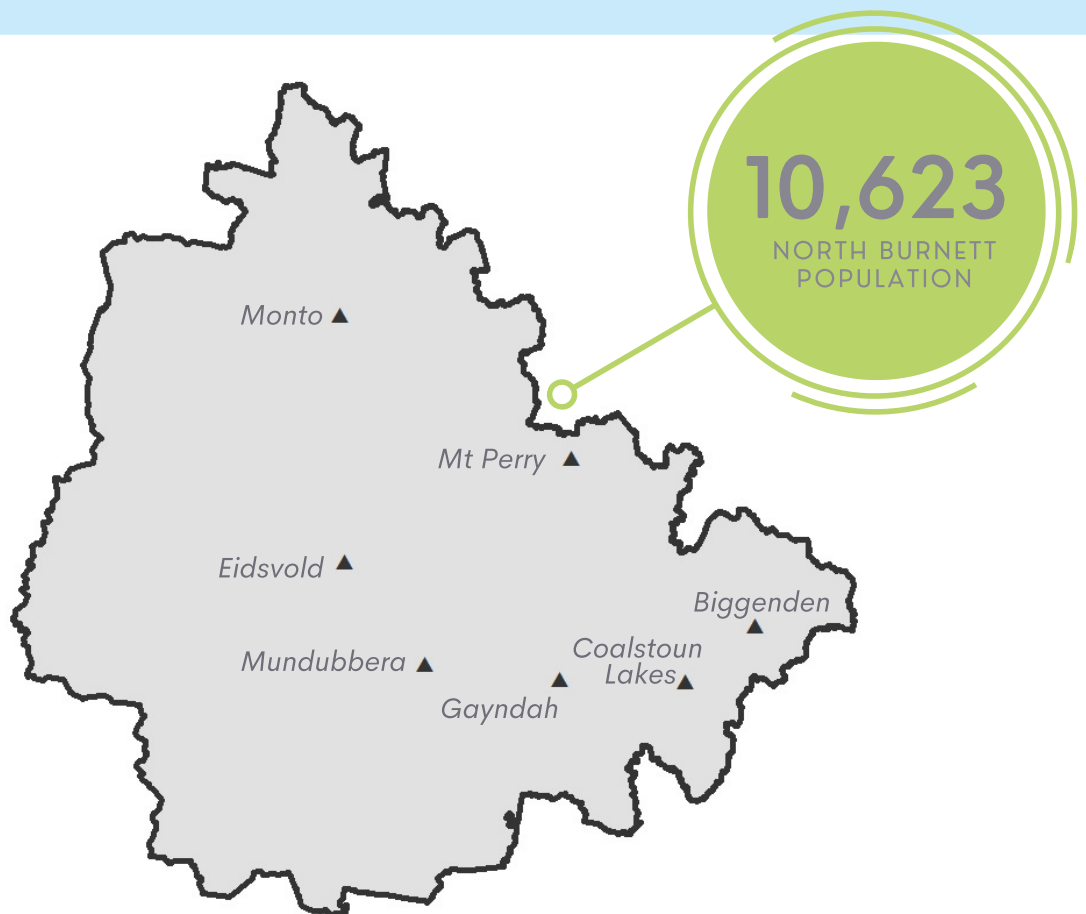


# Background

## NORTH BURNETT REGION

The North Burnett Regional Council area comprises of six districts – Monto, Eidsvold, Mundubbera, Gayndah, Biggenden and Mount Perry. Named after the Burnett River that flows through the area, the North Burnett region covers 19,708km<sup>2</sup>, with a population of 10,623. The Burnett River begins in the Dawes Ranges, North East of Monto and flows South in a U-shape, through Mundubbera and Gayndah, some 400km before reaching its estuary and mouth at Burnett Heads, near Bundaberg.

Agriculture in the North Burnett region is both abundant and diverse and is also the leading employment sector in the region. The value of agriculture in the region is estimated at approximately \$220.9M and represents 2.5% of Queensland’s total agriculture. On a broad scale, this is comprised of crops \$87.3M, livestock \$126.2M and livestock products \$7.4M. Other major industries include; citrus, pork, dairy, broad acre crops and timber.



Map 1: Location map North Burnett towns

## NATURAL DISASTER HISTORY

The North Burnett Region has been the most severely impacted by natural disaster events within the entire Burnett Catchment over the past decade. Flooding in the Northern part of the catchment is usually in response to the volume of rain received in the Dawes Ranges, North of Monto. Significant floods generally result from large rainfall events that occur in the Northern zone of the catchment. As rainfall patterns move further into the catchment – the river starts rising from the headwaters located near Monto.

Flood inundation of crop and grazing lands can occur, resulting in long-lasting impacts on both primary producers and the local and regional economy. Widespread inundation can cause isolation of properties and entire communities as road connections across the catchment can be cut for hours, days and sometimes weeks and months. The nature of these impacts signals the value in being prepared well in advance of annual disaster seasons.

In the past decade, the region has endured 7 severe weather/flooding events, 3 drought declarations (currently ongoing), several bushfires, as well as being preceded by 8 years of drought conditions. Consequently, the region is considered vulnerable to the cumulative effects of these and future events. Considerable vulnerability lies within the area of agriculture, of which the region's economy and communities rely. This is particularly prevalent in the agricultural community of Monto in the region's far North, with significant financial and emotional stress resulting from repetitive personal and business losses.

Whilst previous reports and recovery programs have focussed on recovery principles and plans, community and industry consultation has identified the need for specific targeted assistance in building long-lasting resilience to natural disasters, through developing methods, plans and changing behaviours to mitigate the impacts of these events.

*In the past decade, the region has endured seven severe weather events*

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

Economic impacts following natural disaster events in the North Burnett agricultural community have been widespread and in many cases long lasting. Locations across the North Burnett can be isolated for several days during flood events. From an economic perspective, this can create significant impacts throughout various supply chains, as a result of isolation and loss of road connectivity.

Information provided by Mr. Brendan Egan, Director of Business Development and Engagement, Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA) identified in 2017 that “over the past 7 years for primary producers within the North Burnett Region, there have been a total of 770 applications for Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA) assistance (Category B, C and D) from primary producers in the Monto area that have been approved for a total value of \$8.5M”. This does not include all data from the latest October 2017 event.

Collaborative research between BCCA and North Burnett Regional Council (NBRC) revealed that the most recent severe weather and flooding event of October 2017 resulted in approx. \$4.5M loss in income, along with approximately \$1M in infrastructure damage alone.

Whilst other industries may have the capacity to recover quite quickly from natural disaster, the impact on agriculture can be significant due to the broad spectrum of loss and damages. These impacts can have severe implications on agribusinesses and have the potential to cause significant financial cost and losses to individual producers, but also more widespread to regions, communities and industries.

This further highlights the importance of being aware, informed and prepared for any potential future events, in order to reduce impacts of such.



\$4.5M

INCOME LOSS  
FROM 2017 FLOOD  
EVENT IN MONTO



770

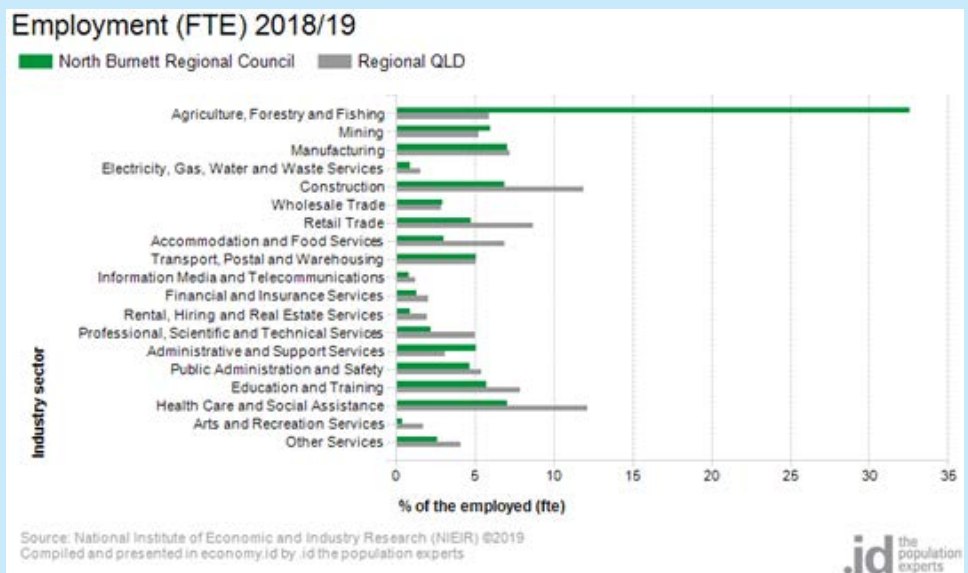
APPLICATIONS FOR  
NDRAA ASSISTANCE  
FROM MONTO  
PRODUCERS FROM 2010-  
2017

# DROUGHT

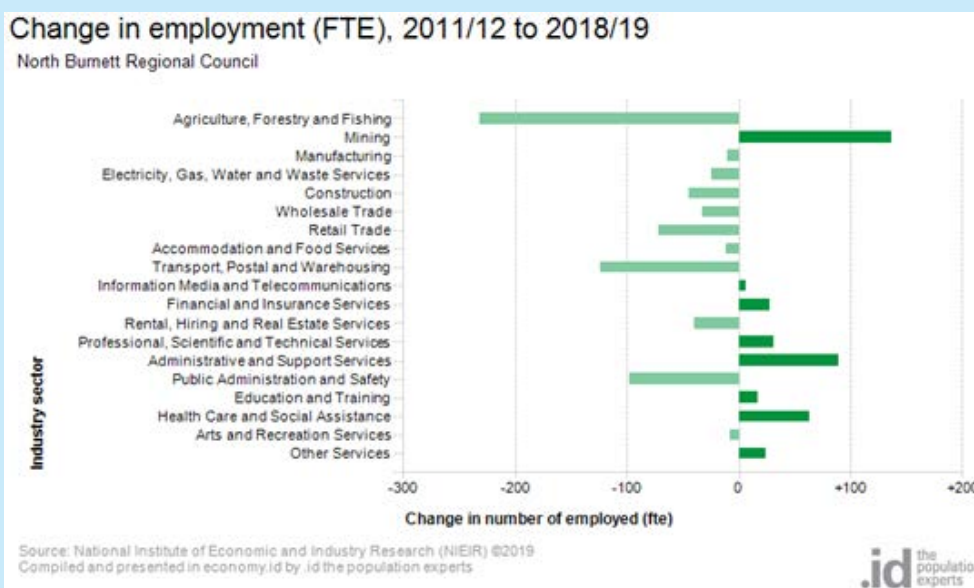
Although not classed by the Commonwealth Government as a natural disaster since 1989 ([www.agriculture.com.au](http://www.agriculture.com.au)), drought has a significant impact upon the operations and profitability of primary producers and the effects of drought are just as devastating as flooding although they usually endure over longer time frames. The Climate Council of Australia state “Drought affects agriculture, tourism, employment and livelihoods in Australia, with severe economic repercussions” and cite Carroll et al.’s estimation that the predicted increase in future drought frequency will cost the Australian economy \$5.4 billion annually, reducing GDP by 1 percent per annum.

Previous droughts have shown that crop yields decline, sometimes to the point of complete failure, reducing agricultural income, employment and export dollars whilst food prices increase by several times the Consumer Price Index (Commonwealth of Australia 2005; Quiggin 2007).

The North Burnett Regional Council area is one such rural community feeling the devastating effects of drought. With Agriculture being the dominant employer in the region by a great margin, the region is especially sensitive to downturns in the Agricultural industry. On an FTE basis, Agriculture Forestry and Fishing makes up 32.6% of NBRC employment compared to the nearest industries of Manufacturing and Health Care at a mere 7.1%.



The flow on effect of the repetitive natural disasters can also be seen in the decline in employment during 2011 and 2018. The number of people employed in North Burnett region decreased by 231 (based on FTE's) and the number unemployed showed an increase of 61. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (the largest industry employer) was the most severely affected. In a low populace, regional area, these are alarming statistics that apply directly to the years when the region was disaster declared.



**61**  
FTE INCREASE IN  
UNEMPLOYMENT  
FROM 2011 TO  
2018



# Resilience

According to the “Good Business Guide – Organisational Resilience” (Commonwealth of Australia 2016), organisational resilience “refers to a business’ ability to adapt and evolve as the global market is evolving, to respond to short term shocks – be they natural disasters or significant changes in market dynamics – and to shape itself to respond to long term challenges, including the ability to ultimately prosper from adversity”.

In an agricultural sense, resilience and adaptability are becoming increasingly important, particularly in response to natural disasters and ongoing changes in weather and climate.

Australia is recognised as having the world’s most variable climate. and whilst Australian agriculture is considered to have a strong and proven history of adapting practices to a range of external factors, it is also suggested that going forward, impacts may be more severe and incurred more rapidly. Resilience is about changing attitudes towards such agricultural risks and developing a willingness and capacity to adapt to change.

As described in the original plan, this project focused on building the resilience of the agricultural sector of the North Burnett.

Proposed outcomes were:

- increased landholder engagement in the areas of planning and risk management
- better functioning rural businesses with less reliance on government support after natural disasters
- increased community connections with a focus on the importance of social capital



*Australia is recognised as having the world’s most variable climate.*

In order to measure the success of the project and whether the above outcomes were successfully achieved, an effective way to measure resilience had to be determined. As a result, and based on research carried out by the CRO, it was determined that resilience could essentially be dissected into four key attributes: Communication; Planning; Effective Decision Making; and Attitude to Change.

Subsequently, feedback was sought on these key attributes along with individual producer responses to each project activity offered. The results were recorded, the data analysed and the results included in this report.



# Methodology

This project commenced with the employment of a skilled and experienced agricultural CRO whose first task was to produce a draft Situation Analysis Report.

The Situation Analysis Report described the state of the local agricultural community at the outset of the project including the types of losses suffered as a result of natural disasters such as damaged infrastructure, loss of vegetation and soil degradation. It also discusses previous recovery programs administered by catchment organisations such as BCCA or other similar organisations.

This process ensured that resources provided by the 2017-18 Natural Disaster Resilience Program were not allocated to activities that were covered under alternative Commonwealth and Queensland Government funded programs. The analysis established that this project would focus on providing education opportunities and proactive on-ground solutions to assist producers to stabilise and strengthen their agricultural businesses.

With the current situation well understood and the general direction for the project ascertained, the next step in the process was to collect the necessary data from as many stakeholders as possible and complete a thorough needs analysis. Stakeholders included local landholders, community groups, agricultural industry representatives, financial professionals and local government. The data collected revealed that producers needs fell into all three segments of the triple bottom line approach – Economic, Environmental and Social.

However, the greatest needs identified were in regard to Economic and Environmental security and sustainability. This data formed the basis of the needs analysis that identified gaps in local knowledge and services as well as providing guidance as to the type of engagement required by landholders to increase resilience and mitigate against future risks (refer to References and Links for the link).

A majority of the project duration was dedicated to the actual facilitating of various events, be they educational, consultative, relationship building or developing strategic partnerships. From August 2018 until the completion of the project, the CRO was able to develop a schedule of events and consultations that would best meet the needs identified while keeping in mind the four objectives of the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience.

*The data collected revealed that producers needs fell into all three segments of the triple bottom line approach*



The schedule had to take weather conditions into account and remain flexible in order to maximise participation and cater for consultants' schedules. At all times the CRO was mindful that all participants throughout the program were unique and consideration was given to factors such as different styles of learning, varying levels of business and agricultural experience and diverse attitudes to change.

Consideration was also given to the physical location where events were hosted to ensure that participants across the North Burnett were given opportunities to attend events within their local area covering topics relevant to their specific agricultural sub-industry. Information in the needs analysis allowed for funding to be allocated based on accurate needs across the region. Please refer to Map 1 of the North Burnett Local Government Area showing workshop locations.

Unfortunately, completion of the project was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions imposed. None-the-less, progress continued as soon as restrictions eased sufficiently to allow events to continue.

The final activity associated with "Building Resilience in the Agricultural North Burnett" is the production of this report. Feedback received throughout the program has been included along with key findings and assessment of the success of the project.

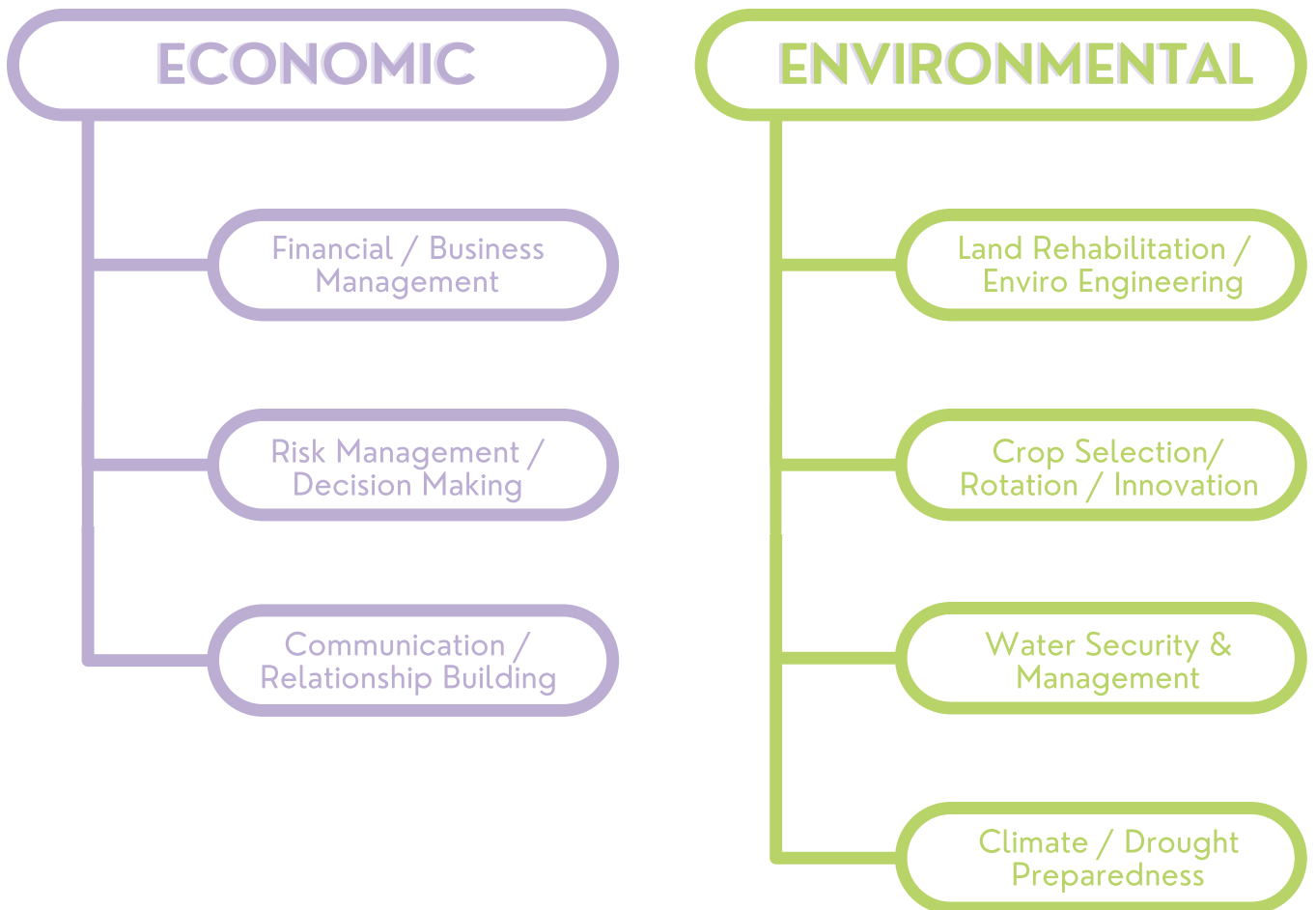
*The CRO was able to develop a schedule of events and consultations that would best meet the needs identified*



# Events

Events and activities facilitated under this project provided assistance to agriculturalists to build meaningful and long lasting resilience for their business.

The needs analysis conducted at the beginning of this project identified the most common and /or significant themes. Those themes were categorised as either economic or environmental and are shown below:



## EVENT LOCATIONS

There were 17 different events or activities provided under this project and they distributed across the North Burnett region. The majority of the events occurred in the northern section of the region as this was where the most natural disasters have impacted the community and also where we received the most interest.

Map 2 below show the location of the events and activities held throughout this project.



Map 2: Location map of support events provided under this project

17  
ATTENDEES

## EVENT 1: BUSINESS EDGE WORKSHOP

Theme: Financial/Business Management

29-30  
APRIL 2019



Facilitated by Bush Agribusiness on behalf of MLA, the Business Edge workshop taught producers how to understand their business financials and use that knowledge to make sound business decisions. Subsidised positions were provided to North Burnett producers to make the workshop more affordable. As a result, the workshop was booked out and feedback was positive.

### Significant Stats:

- With regards to understanding and measuring whole of business performance, attendees reported an average increase in knowledge of 1.5 points (on a scale of 1 to 5).
- Both the content of the workshop and the quality of the presenter scored an average > 4.5 points out of 5 points.

“ Thank you for the financial support ... it was a great investment back into the community for building resilience ”

“ A fantastic course for the financially uneducated like myself ”

“ Thank you for the subsidy, without the subsidy, I would not have considered attending ”



15  
ATTENDEES

## EVENT 2&3: MANAGING RISKS IN AGRICULTURE

Theme: Risk Management / Decision Making

7 & 8  
APRIL 2019



With multiple presenters speaking on the topics of Risk Management, Insurance and Climate, this half day workshop addressed Risk Management from several angles. Attendees represented a good mixture of the grazing, cropping, horticultural and pork industries with the Central Queensland Climate Mate representative, Peter Crawford piquing the interest of many. Information on up and coming insurance options and strategies by Ross Henry of Queensland Farmers Federation proved very popular.

### Significant Stats:

- 66% of attendees planned to implement new management practices following the workshop.
- With regards to Rural/Crop Insurance, attendees reported an average increase in knowledge of 1.8 points (on a scale of 1 to 5).
- Relevance of the workshop content and the quality of the presenters were both rated an average of 4 points out of a maximum of 5 points.
- With regards to Climate Risk, attendees reported an average increase in knowledge of 2 points (on a scale of 1 to 5).

“[Skills obtained from this workshop] will reduce the anxiety associated with decision making”

“Now we both have a much better understanding [of] how to use climate forecasts”



**31**  
ATTENDEES

## EVENT 4: MONTO AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY LAUNCH

**Theme: Risk Management /  
Decision Making**

**29 AUG  
2019**



In collaboration with another program facilitated by BCCA, this program funded guest speaker, Rob Cook at the launch of the Monto Agricultural Strategy (where the strategy development was funded through the Australian Governments Building Better Regions Fund). The launch attracted a sizeable crowd from a wide sector of the agricultural industry and provided an opportunity for Rob to tell his story and address personal resilience, business resilience and overcoming adversity to succeed.

### Significant Feedback:

Individual feedback was not collected from this event. However, in the official press release following the event, it was reported that “a highlight of the night was listening to guest speaker Mr Rob Cook. Rob humbly led guests through his life journey and included an insight into his multi-faceted and successful agricultural business”.





## EVENT 5: EROSION CONTROL ADVICE

**Theme: Land Rehabilitation/  
Environmental Engineering**



Expressions of Interest were sought from interested landholders in the North Burnett who required advice on the control and rehabilitation of erosion as a result of one or more natural disasters. Seven landholders received one-on-one, specialist advice from erosion and soil conservation expert, Mr John Day including an Erosion Rehabilitation Guide specific to each individual scenario.

### Significant Stats:

- 66% of those that provided feedback rated their previous knowledge of soil erosion, land types and land conditions as 5 or lower out of 10. After consulting with John Day, the same respondents rated their knowledge as an 8 or 9 out of 10.
- 100% of those providing feedback listed time and money as limiting factors to implementing John Day's advice.

*“In time [John’s advice] will benefit our pastures by slowing the speed of water entering our property and enable us to capture that water more effectively”*

*“We better understand our underlying geology and hydrology systems and have tools to assist”*



11  
ATTENDEES

## EVENT 6: BUILDING COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Theme: Communication/  
Relationship Building

29-30  
OCT 2019



This two-day workshop provided participants with communication and leadership skills and assisted in education around understanding personality types and how to interact together. Facilitators tackled some tough topics such as having difficult conversations, understanding intent and deep listening skills.

### Significant Stats:

- 100% of attendees planned to make changes after attending the workshop. Some examples of intended changes include improved listening, and not being afraid of difficult conversations.
- 100% of attendees were interested in further personal development and leadership opportunities.

“Any workshop offered is a fantastic opportunity for country people who are unable to travel to network and learn new skills”

“People are the most important part of any business”

“[Skills learnt in this workshop will] definitely help with communicating with staff”





14  
ATTENDEES

## EVENT 7: RCS GRAZING CLINIC

Theme: Climate/ Drought Preparedness

9 - 11  
NOV 2019



The Resource Consulting Services (RCS) Grazing Clinic is a practical, hands-on workshop aimed at developing landholders pasture management. Subsidised positions were provided to North Burnett producers to make the workshop more affordable. RCS is a leading provider of holistically-integrated training services to the grazing industry and this particular workshop covered principles and practices of grazing management and using grazing charts as a decision-making tool. It is interesting to note that several attendees had completed the same workshop previously and wanted to refresh their knowledge.

### Significant Stats:

- The quality of the presenter scored an average greater than 4.5 points out of a maximum 5 points.

“A strategic way to manage my cattle and paddocks when it doesn't rain as expected”

“[The workshop allowed me to] review information that I forgot or didn't understand”

“Gave me tools to assess my paddocks and to understand the grass cycle/soil”



**32**  
ATTENDEES

**EVENT 8: NUTRITION, SUPPLEMENTS & DROUGHT FEEDING WORKSHOP**

**Theme: Climate/ Drought Preparedness**



This workshop was presented by Roger Sneath, Senior Beef Extension Officer with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and provided practical information for producers in understanding the nutritional requirements of cattle and alternative feed sources available during drought conditions. One-on-one assistance was also provided by local veterinarian, Hayley Webster. With the highest attendance of all the events in this program, this workshop achieved a rare balance between landholders' needs and availability, timing and expert presenter.

Significant Stats:

- Both the content of the workshop and the quality of the presenter scored an average greater than 4.25 points out of a maximum 5 points.
- 86% of attendees believed that knowledge gained from the workshop will contribute to the resilience of their business.
- 100% of attendees intend to apply new skills and knowledge acquired from the workshop in their agricultural business.

*"[As a result of this workshop I will] vary feed regime for breeder vs young stock. It helped me to understand [supplement] products"*

*"[This workshop] helped me to make cost effective supplementing decisions"*

*"[As a result of this workshop I will] "change from dry lick to wet as feed runs out as a trial"*



2  
ATTENDEES

## EVENT 9: RED EARTH COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Theme: Communication/  
Relationship Building

FEB &  
MAR 2020



This program sponsored two positions at the annual Red Earth Community Leadership Program - a leadership workshop series that is held over two sessions (during February & March 2020) in the Bunya Mountains. The program aims to create competent and well-equipped leaders across regional areas of the Burnett Inland and includes self-development and group cohesion activities.



“ I found the course to have positively affected my communication skills and it touched on all aspects of resilience ”

“ This course has given me skills to help adapt to change ”

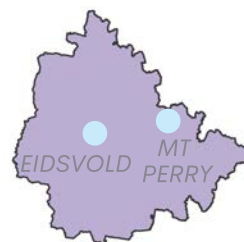


9  
ATTENDEES

## EVENT 10&11: SPRING YOUR FINANCES BACK INTO SHAPE

Theme: Financial/Business  
Management

11 & 12  
MAR 2020



Presented by BMO Business Centre, this short workshop was designed to deliver an 'introductory' workshop for producers on the topic of managing their finances. Unfortunately, attendance was particularly low, however, the workshop coincided with heightened uncertainty around Covid-19 and associated restrictions at the time. The smaller numbers allowed the presenter to tailor their program to those attending and encouraged robust discussion.

### Significant Stats:

- With regards to performing a SWOT analysis to assist with business management decisions, attendees reported an average increase in knowledge of 3 whole points (on a scale of 1 to 5).
- With regards to understanding how to select a bookkeeping program, attendees reported an average increase in knowledge of 2 whole points (on a scale of 1 to 5).

“[After attending this workshop I will] investigate different loan opportunities that are available”

“There was a lot of information gained that improved my decisions at this workshop”

“[After attending this workshop I will] look into upgrading my accounting program”



**3**  
ATTENDEES

## EVENT 12: RCS BUSINESS FUNDAMENTALS

**Theme: Financial/Business Management**

**4 - 6**  
**AUG 2020**



This program partially sponsored three positions at an RCS Business Fundamentals Workshop - a three day course presented by David McLean covering various business topics including basic business principles, budgeting, benchmarking and working in your business vs working on your business.

This workshop aimed to give practical, actionable steps to be taken to enable more effective use of office time and quicker, more confident decision-making, so producers can spend more time doing whatever it is that they love – quality time with family, being out in the paddock or maybe contributing to community.

*“This workshop highlighted the need for good communication skills with not only business partners but external parties like banks, accountants, solicitors etc.”*

*“The strength of the RCS workshop is that it is all about improving business decisions using solid business financial data”*



7  
PRODUCERS

## EVENT 13: EROSION CONTROL ADVICE

**Theme: Land Rehabilitation/  
Environmental Engineering**

AUGUST  
2020



Due to the success of the first round of erosion control advice and numerous, subsequent enquiries from Central Burnett landholders, expressions of interest were again invited erosion control advice with John Day. A total of nine expressions of interest were received and seven landholders qualified to receive expert advice. John completed Erosion Rehabilitation Guides for each landholder that was tailored to their unique scenario.



“ Thanks very much [we] got a lot out of the visit. Greatly appreciated ”



17  
ATTENDEES

## EVENT 14: CHOOSING FARM BUSINESS OPTIONS

Theme: Financial/Business Management

7 OCT  
2020



This workshop was a collaboration with Rural Financial Counselling Service South Queensland (RFCSSQ) and provided landholders an opportunity to visit with various business specialists that they may not normally have access to. Specialists engaged included representatives from Regional Investment Corporation (RIC), Agforce, Land Valuer, Lawyer, Banker, Accountant, Succession Specialist and Rural Advisor. Specialists were well attended and notably so, the Agforce representative, Rural Advisor and the Succession Planning specialist.



*“ It is great to see people engaging with the professionals in attendance and empowering their decision making for their farming enterprises ”*

*“ It’s great to have the ability to see all the professionals in one place – from those attending the event and then from some professionals who met new clients that they will engage with and develop ongoing business from the day ”*



**12**  
ATTENDEES

**EVENT 15: SOIL EROSION & FIRE WORKSHOP**

**28 OCT**  
**2020**



**Theme: Land Rehabilitation / Environmental Engineering / Climate / Drought Preparedness**

As a follow-up on John Day's one-on-one soil conservation work, a workshop was held where John explained the different types of erosion and remediation options and demonstrated these in a field visit to a property south of Monto where erosion remediation was well underway. This workshop also included a presentation by Allysa Brown, Coordinator of the Bunya Mountains Murri Rangers. Allysa explained the concept of cultural burning and cool burning techniques that aim to avoid scorching land and encourage weed control.

Significant Stats:

- Both the content of the workshop and the quality of the presenters scored an average greater than 4.4 points out of a maximum 5 points.
- With regards to cool burning techniques, attendees reported an average increase in knowledge of almost 1 point (on a scale of 1 to 5).

*"[I would like to see] a pilot study of the cool burn and weed management in our area"*

*"[I learned] how to manage erosion on my farm and when to burn grass safely"*



*"[I learned that] increasing grass coverage in erosion areas will decrease erosion"*





8  
ATTENDEES

## EVENT 16: SOIL HEALTH WORKSHOP

**Theme: Crop Selection / Rotation / Innovation**

4 NOV  
2020



A soil health and conservation workshop was facilitated by experienced agronomist, David Hall covering topics relating to the characteristics of soil and the conservation and health of soils, whether they be used for cropping or grazing. David also spent time showing landholders how to interpret soil test results to help them with associated business decisions regarding their soil structure and fertility.

### Significant Stats:

- Both the content of the workshop and the quality of the presenters scored an average greater than 4.7 points out of a maximum 5 points.
- 100% of attendees intend to apply knowledge acquired from the workshop in their agricultural business and decision making.

*“ [I now have a] better understanding of interpreting soil tests and understanding nutrient use and removal ”*

*“ [Now I will] not waste money on unnecessary fertilisers ”*



18  
ATTENDEES

## EVENT 17: SUCCESSION PLANNING

**Theme: Communication / Relationship Building**

12 NOV  
2020



After being a popular option at the Choosing Farm Business Options collaboration, Mark Westcott returned to Monto to present an evening information session on the topic of succession planning.

The evening session was well attended and Mark received several enquiries for further information regarding succession planning from numerous attendees.

*The facilitator of this workshop presented an interesting methodology on how to go about succession and estate planning with regards to bringing logistics and people together*

*This event definitely opened the communication lines in our family. Some subjects are no longer assumptions but have a clear direction*

*I now have a clear plan in mind for my children to aid our enterprise resilience*



## OTHER EVENTS

It is noted that this program did not fund any events under the theme of Water Security and Management. Another program facilitated by BCCA hosted a workshop in Monto featuring Mark Kurtz, Thinkwater. The workshop was held during the course of this program and addressed irrigation options, filtration and pumping. A further opportunity was provided to North Burnett Landholders during the course of this program to attend a site visit in Bundaberg to inspect solar powered, on-farm irrigation with irrigation specialist, Mr Pat Daley, Daley's Water Services. Also, a workshop hosted by Queensland Department of Agriculture & Forestry at Moonford (North Burnett) in November 2019, included "whole of farm mapping (digital soil water demonstrations) and the latest knowledge of contours and levels relating to soil" (extracted from the event flyer – "Dust yourself off, and come to our day about dirt", QDAF).

In order to provide events and learning opportunities in the Mundubbera area and keeping in mind the horticultural industry, BCCA scheduled a workshop around the theme of disaster preparedness and crop insurance in collaboration with Growcom. Since BCCA is not an established provider in the horticultural industry, the collaboration with Growcom was initiated to gain as much traction amongst horticulturalists as possible. This workshop was first scheduled for March 2020 and rsvp's were limited. Since the workshop coincided with heightened uncertainty around Covid-19 and associated restrictions at the time, the workshop was postponed until October 2020. Unfortunately, despite significantly more publicity than previously, interest was not sufficient to proceed with the workshop. Potentially, a conclusion to draw from this situation is that horticulturalists are well serviced by their industry representatives and funds from this project were not required.

Throughout the duration of the program, other events and subsidies were researched and on some occasions, even scheduled to go ahead. However, with the ever changing circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, some events never proceeded. The flexibility of this program allowed the Community Resilience Officer to tailor the events offered around various influencing factors while still remaining within the parameters of the project.

# Case Study - Hayley Webster

Hayley manages Webster Pastoral Holdings, a 10,000 acre, 650 head, breeding and growing cattle operation based on “Lorray” in the Yarrol district, North Burnett. As a qualified veterinarian, Hayley has a comprehensive knowledge of animal health and the results of that knowledge are evident within Hayley’s herd of Santa Gertrudis cattle. Urea based supplements, good parasite control and earlier weaning to manage cow condition are important management strategies for Hayley.

Hayley also has a strong focus on natural resource management and prioritises pasture budgeting and the use of grazing charts to match stocking rate to carrying capacity. Her strategies since moving to “Lorray” have been establishing legumes throughout grass pasture, installing additional water points, further fencing and strategic resting of pastures.



Hayley describes resilience as “being able to manage adverse conditions” and with her extensive animal health knowledge, a focus on natural resource management and regular off-farm income, one might think that Webster Pastoral Holdings has resilience covered. However, Hayley was the first to admit that she “never really understood [her] bookwork” which prevented her from seeing the “big picture for the business”.

While attending the Business Edge workshop in April 2019, Hayley learnt about profit drivers, how to setup an agribusiness financial system, interpreting financial statements and developing cost/benefit analyses. Of particular note for Hayley was how to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s) and use them to gauge current financial performance and future projections.

Attending the Business Edge workshop was a turning point in Hayley’s plans for Webster’s Pastoral Holdings and her immediate family. Armed with new financial skills and clarity with regards to economies of scale and off-farm income, Hayley made the bold decision to sell her property at a nominated time in the future.

"Having the financial know-how gave [her] confidence in [her] decision" and enabled her to prioritise property management based on what had to be done to prepare for sale.

"Essentially, [she] changed [her] whole plan which changed [her] spending priorities. In a practical sense, [her] priorities changed from increasing productivity to painting the house and treating the suckers on the flats."

*I have made short term changes to my property management so I can provide long term benefit for myself and my family*

### COMMUNICATION

Hayley believes that the Business Edge workshop "provided [her] with a toolkit to be able to communicate better with financial professionals like [her] bank manager and accountant".

### ATTITUDE TO CHANGE

Hayley generally has a conservative attitude to change, preferring to research and gather relevant information prior to making changes to her grazing business. The Business Edge workshop gave Hayley the "confidence to analyse [her] finances [her]self and make big changes to [her] business plan".

## RESILIENCE

### PLANNING

Hayley was able to use skills from the Business Edge workshop "to make and understand [her] financial plan moving forward".

### EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING

Hayley believes her "decision making skills were bolstered significantly after attending the Business Edge Workshop". So much so that Hayley used her newfound financial analysis skills to "analyse [her] business and judge [her] financial position and future with clarity".

*Hayley's responses to the key attributes of resilience*

# Findings

## IMPACT ON RESILIENCE

In order to gauge the success of "Building Resilience in the Agricultural North Burnett", a sample of participants/landholders were surveyed at the completion of the final event. One very important question asked of landholders was to define resilience in their own words. Some examples are as follows:

- "Not allowing misfortune to weigh us as a family down, preparation for worst case scenario and maintaining a positive outlook".
- "The ability to endure and even flourish when the chips are down and persevering even in tough times".
- "Being able to cope and recover from difficult conditions and situations".
- "Identification and/or management of risks to the business, both internally and externally. The ability to evaluate the outcome of decisions, good or bad".
- "To be able to remove emotion out of decision making and think calmly and rationally so as to both make the decisions and accept the outcomes of a decision".

With resilience defined earlier in this report as "a business' ability to adapt and evolve..., to respond to short term shocks... and to shape itself to respond to long term challenges, including the ability to ultimately prosper from adversity", it is interesting to note how similar the landholders' definitions above are to that described by "Good Business Guide – Organisational Resilience" (Commonwealth of Australia 2016). This is surely an indication of the impact that this project has had on its participants.

In addition to feedback collected directly after each event, a selection of participants/landholders were surveyed months later regarding the events they attended in order to gauge the level of long-term learning amongst attendees and whether there was an on-going affect, positive or negative, on the resilience of agricultural businesses in the North Burnett.

This feedback taken was gauged against how they impacted the four factors of resilience; Communication, Attitude to Change, Planning and Decision Making and subsequent alignment with the four objectives of the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience.

## COMMUNICATION

In addition to feedback collected directly after each event, a selection of participants/landholders were surveyed months later regarding the events they attended in order to gauge the level of long-term learning amongst attendees and whether there was an on-going affect, positive or negative, on the resilience of agricultural businesses in the North Burnett. The examples below demonstrate the positive affect communication-themed events had on landholders' communication skills:

*This workshop highlighted the deficit in communication in our own family business between the key stakeholders*

- "I found this course to have positively changed my communication skills. It touched on all attributes of resilience".
- "This workshop highlighted the need for good communication skills with not only business partners but external parties like banks, accountants, solicitors etc. This can fundamentally change your business by improving the bottom line through for example, decreased interest rates, improved accounting practises etc. I believe I have improved my communication skills in regard to business parties".

This qualitative data clearly represents how communication based events hosted within this program have contributed positively to landholders' personal and business communication skills which will undoubtedly contribute to increased resilience in North Burnett agricultural businesses and ultimately help them to understand their disaster risk.

*This course had a positive effect - to have confidence to communicate with the banks*

*Until this workshop, I was unaware that communication could be creative and that I could communicate creatively*

## ATTITUDE TO CHANGE

Change can be difficult for some while others embrace it. However, unchosen or forced change such as that posed by Natural Disasters can be particularly difficult for some to navigate and that can be reflected in the level of resilience in an agricultural business. When surveyed, landholders confirmed that there are varying reactions to change:

*“Change is inevitable, it doesn't mean that it's negative”*

- "I am not a fan of change, I fear it a lot!"
- "I am conservative with regards to change."

This program offered events including Building Communication Skills, Succession Planning and Red Earth Community Leadership Program that specifically addressed the topic of unchosen change and armed landholders with strategies to deal with such. Survey responses related to these events show the growth within those surveyed landholders that were initially fearful of change before attending these events:

*“Sometimes change can seem daunting, particularly if it means more work”*

- "I am not a fan of change, I fear it a lot!" → "This course has given me skills to help adapt to change and 'roll with it'."
- "I am conservative with regards to change." → "the real life examples of other family's estate and succession planning scenarios highlighted that circumstances always change and we need to be ready for change".
- "Sometimes change can seem daunting, particularly if it means more work." → A workshop like this does get you enthused about changing aspects of the business and it certainly did for me, so I have changed a few things already!"

It is gratifying to know that this program has contributed to such personal growth within North Burnett agriculturalists. That growth will inevitably be modelled in their agricultural (and often family) businesses and prepare them for disaster management, response and recovery when unchosen change such as natural disaster arises.

*“Change can be good”*



## PLANNING

Planning can be a difficult task in North Burnett agricultural businesses, especially when dealing with variable climate, ever changing commodity prices and a recent history of regular natural disasters. Some landholders resist planning for fear of getting it wrong, when in reality, planning for different scenarios can increase business resilience, help reduce the risks of disaster and prepare for both challenging and prosperous times.

*I learnt to keep an eye on equity to plan ahead with financial decisions to keep up with debt reduction*

The topic of planning was addressed in many events throughout both the Economic and Environmental themes identified in this program. Whether it was property planning, erosion management planning, animal nutrition planning, financial planning, or succession planning, landholders had many opportunities to increase their business resilience through planning ahead, as per QSDR objective: continuous improvement in disaster preparedness response and recovery. Some feedback includes:

- "Much of this workshop had to do with planning. The SWOT analysis, tax planning, succession etc. was all helpful."
- "This workshop gave me the skills I needed to make and understand a financial plan."

*I now feel I am able to plan ahead for dry weather, budget on how much hay we will need for the coming dry season and make sure we have enough on hand before deciding to offload cattle*

*This workshop made me reassess our bookkeeping and how to create more detailed reports to assist in both short and long term planning*

## EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING

Effective decision making was identified by the CRO as one of the four main factors of resilience and this was further reinforced when the needs analysis revealed that stakeholders themselves identified decision making (along with risk management) as a significant need under the economic theme. Despite this, events hosted in this category did not often attract the best attendance. However, it was observed by the CRO that those events hosted in this category with smaller numbers of attendees resulted in a greater willingness of landholders to interact, share with and question the presenters/consultants. Some attendees left these events energised and motivated to take further action following the interactive session which will certainly contribute to strengthened disaster risk management as per the Queensland strategy for disaster resilience. For example:

*“ Yes, there have been some clear decisions made for my family as a result of this workshop ”*

- Right after attending this workshop we discussed some of the subjects with our accountant including the drought loan and asset tax deductions during tax planning”.

Survey responses from other landholders on the topic of decision making are as follows:

- "This workshop definitely helped with creating reports to help with business decisions”.
- "There was a lot of information gained that improved my decisions at this workshop”.

*“ I found this workshop helpful with understanding my own personality and personal characteristics and how that contributes to my decision making. I found a greater self-awareness and now understand why I make certain choices ”*

In addition to events offered under this program, BCCA facilitated a separate but concurrent program – “Risk based decision making in cropping and grazing industries in the Burnett”, funded by the Queensland Government Reef Water Quality Program. The project was designed to assist farmers and graziers to understand risk based decision making and identify which decision support tools will assist them through the process. Two of three events hosted under this program were held in the North Burnett and the third was hosted in close vicinity to the North Burnett boundary and was attended by numerous North Burnett landholders. It was a very successful program that undoubtedly contributed to the resilience of numerous agricultural businesses in the North Burnett.

## COLLABORATION

As was described above, this program did not fund any events under the theme of Water Security and Management due to other government funded programs sponsoring relevant events under this theme. Further to this, several events were hosted as collaborations with other relevant organisations such as Rural Financial Counselling Service South Queensland and RCS Australia. BCCA and the CRO were able to deliver the needs of North Burnett landholders holistically by collaborating with like-minded organisations and other government programs with similar intentions. This has ensured that resources have been used most effectively to achieve a positive outcome with maximum reach.

A statistic of note is how event attendees rated the consultants and experts that delivered the training/workshop information. Across all events, attendees awarded an average score of 4.6 out of a total of 5 points for the quality/knowledge of the presenters (almost 92%). BCCA was able to source quality consultants covering relevant topics as a result of the clear direction provided by the comprehensive needs analysis completed early in the project. For those events that entailed one-on-one extension, the CRO noted how comfortably landholders were able to connect with extension providers and accept their advice. Also of note is how some landholders involved in this program are maintaining those connections with extension providers and seeking further advice for their agricultural businesses.

4.6

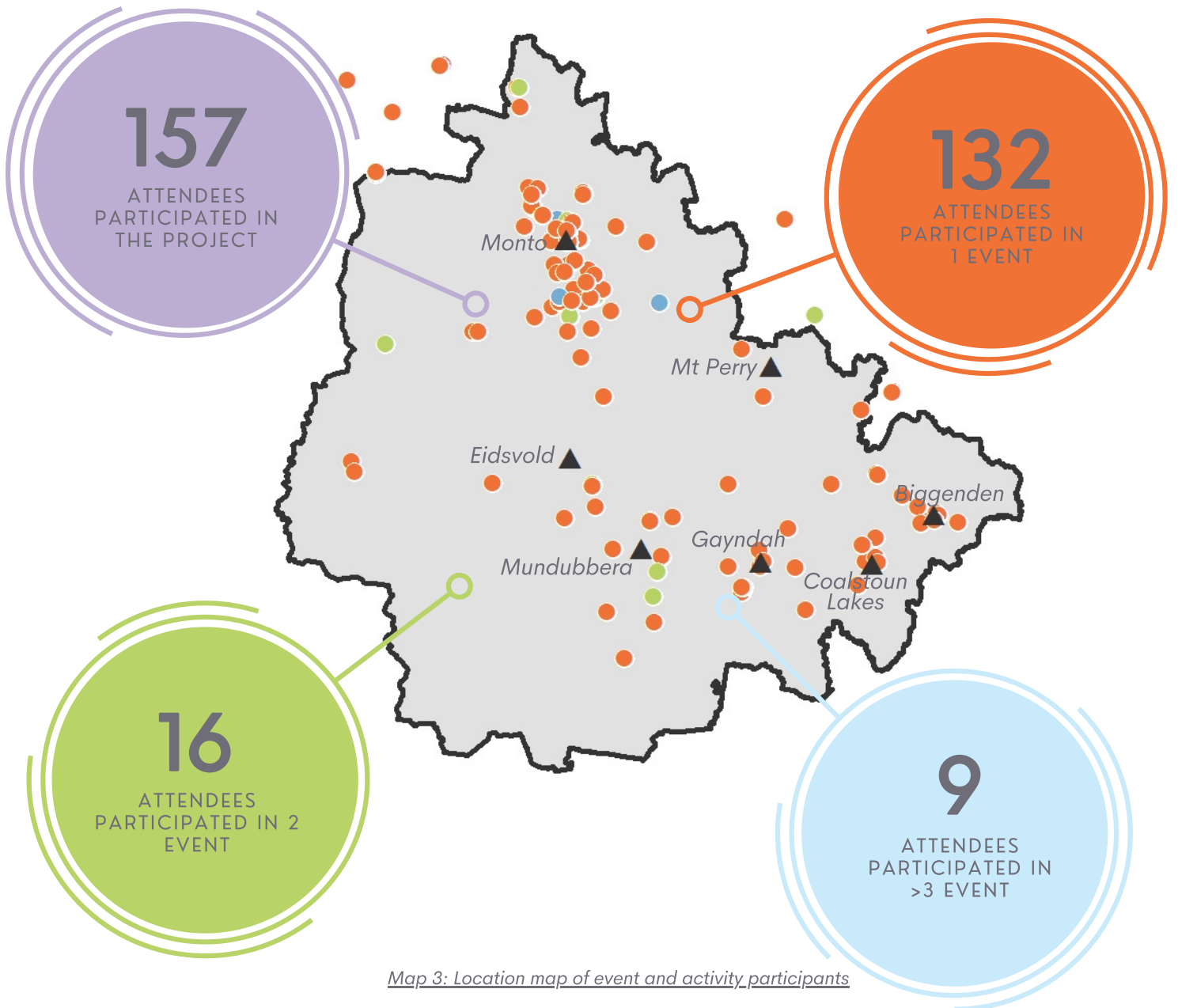
OUT OF 5 - AVERAGE  
SCORE FOR QUALITY  
OF PRESENTERS



## PROJECT REACH

While many events were held in the northern part of the region, participant engagement was wide spread across the entire North Burnett region.

Map 3 below shows the location of producers who participated in the events and activities held under this project.



*Map 3: Location map of event and activity participants*

Over the total 17 events hosted within this Building Resilience in the Agricultural North Burnett project a total of 157 individuals attended from various locations around the North Burnett region. That is 157 individuals whom have gained valuable information, extension and education that will positively influence their respective agricultural businesses located in the North Burnett and increase their resilience to natural disasters.

The project has reached landholders from all corners of the region, not to mention how much further the value will travel via word-of-mouth and peer-to-peer influence.

*Knowledge is power and I am very grateful to have been able to attend two of your events this year. Any course you attend opens your mind to information which can benefit your business*

*Always good to get updated information and new ideas to keep us feeling positive and giving us confidence that we are staying viable, working towards debt reduction, improving animal health and hopefully making a profit*

Of the 157 attendees, 16% attended more than one funded event. Some of those who attended more than one event believed that attending multiple events was of value to their agricultural business. Feedback from attendees included:

- "Each workshop had a slightly different focus... I always gain insights from workshops because there are different attendees, different questions asked, different presenters and perspectives given. Knowledge gained by attending more than one workshop means more tools in the toolbox to tackle making decisions in the business. I also think different workshop hosts present information uniquely."
- "Businesses are multifaceted and agribusinesses especially include a personal element. Attending various workshops that provide information on various topics around resilience is a definite advantage. The variety of information can assist with decision making in all aspects of the business including what is best for the family."

*No knowledge is ever wasted!*

## KNOWLEDGE GAINED

Throughout the program, statistics were collected from event attendees where possible. Although the information gathered varied from event to event, feedback forms consistently asked attendees to self-rate their knowledge on relevant topics before and after the event. Some of these statistics are reported above under the heading of each event. However, when these statistics are combined across all events, it is noted that the knowledge of participants before events hosted by this program is 2.84 collectively while the knowledge of participants following the events hosted by this program is 3.99 collectively (both on a scale of 1 to 5).

Essentially, as a result of the information, extension and education provided by "Building Resilience in the Agricultural North Burnett", participants have improved their knowledge on disaster risk management, reduction, and recovery related topics by over 1 whole point or 23%.



# Conclusion

Funded by the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments, "Building Resilience in the Agricultural North Burnett" is a program delivered by Burnett Catchment Care Association as part of the 2017-18 Natural Disaster Resilience Program.

Based on the results of a comprehensive Needs Analysis, a large majority of the project duration was dedicated to the actual facilitating of a total of seventeen (17) events varying between educational, consultative and relationship building. All events fell under either an Economic or Environmental theme and were hosted in various locations around the North Burnett to ensure that participants were given opportunities to attend events within their local area covering topics relevant to their specific agricultural subindustry.

Resilience is often described using terms such as adaptability, flexibility and adversity however, for the purposes of this project, resilience was measured using four key attributes - Communication; Planning; Effective Decision Making; and Attitude to Change. Data collected to gauge the level of long-term learning amongst attendees clearly showed that communication based events hosted within this program contributed positively to landholders' communication skills which will ultimately help them to understand their disaster risk.

The topic of planning was addressed in many events throughout both the Economic and Environmental themes identified in this program with enthusiastic feedback received regarding many planning topics whether they were property planning, erosion management planning, animal nutrition planning, financial planning, or succession planning. Landholders had many opportunities to increase their business resilience through planning ahead as per QSDR objective: continuous improvement in disaster preparedness response and recovery.

Stakeholders involved in this project identified decision making (along with risk management) as a significant need under the economic theme. Events hosted in this category saw landholders show a willingness to interact, share with and question the presenters/consultants. Attendees left these events energised and motivated to take further action following the interactive session which will certainly contribute to strengthened disaster risk management as per the Queensland strategy for disaster resilience.

Landholders' attitude to change was undoubtedly influenced by the degree of positive personal development noted amongst event participants. This growth from a position of great fear of change to understanding strategies to deal with change will inevitably be modelled in their agricultural (and often family) businesses and prepare them for disaster response and recovery when unchosen change such as natural disaster arises.

"Building Resilience in the Agricultural North Burnett" has been a very successful program, achieving intended outcomes and successfully building resilience within the agribusiness community of the North Burnett. Both quantitative and qualitative data collected throughout the program confirms that landholders have received relevant, expert extension advice and education to strengthen their personal and agribusiness resilience in accordance with the objectives of the Queensland Strategy for Disaster Resilience.

BCCA is proud to have delivered this program with excellent results and ideally would like to see the role of Community Resilience Officer continue. Maintaining relationships developed in this program, building further relationships throughout the North Burnett (and potentially further afield) and providing additional disaster-preparedness education will ultimately maximise agribusiness resilience to natural disasters such as fire, flood and drought well into the future.





# References and Links

## REFERENCES

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## LINKS

- Burnett Catchment Care Association, 2018, *Community Needs Analysis: Community-Needs-Analysis-2018.pdf* ([betterburnett.com](http://betterburnett.com))



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