



**BCCA**  
BURNETT CATCHMENT CARE ASSOCIATION

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2024 - 2025



**BURNETT CATCHMENT  
CARE ASSOCIATION**

6 LYELL STREET,  
MONTQ QLD 4630

07 4166 3898

[www.betterburnett.com](http://www.betterburnett.com)

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# Chairperson's Report

Marion Denholm

Firstly, I would like to thank and pay tribute to Paul Lobegeier, my predecessor as Chair of the Burnett Catchment Care Association (BCCA). Under Paul's care and guidance over many years, the group has met and overcome quite a few challenges. The staff have grown in their ability to deliver services to our region and we have seen many new members join. Thank you, Paul.

Secondly, I would like to thank Katie Muller (our CEO) and the rest of our staff for their outstanding and very professional contribution to educating and supporting farmers and landholders in our region. You have done and continue to do an excellent job.

The past year has seen a number of different projects and programs operating:

- Natural Resources Recovery Program, Round 3 – funded by the Queensland Government Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development. Following on from our successful NRRP Resilient Landscapes of 2023-2024, this project has allowed us to continue holding workshops on soils & erosion remediation and introducing regenerative agricultural practices. We have also been able to assist a number of farmers with fixing erosion problems on their properties.
- Community Sustainability Action Grants – funded by the Queensland Government Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation. Focusing on improving the stability and vegetation cover of waterways, this project assists farmers to provide off-stream watering and exclusion fencing for livestock.
- Queensland Resilience and Risk Reduction Fund – grant provided by the Queensland and Federal Governments. This program has allowed us to employ two experienced Extension Officers in the South Burnett region. They have conducted workshops and attended cattle sales and other community events giving advice and support to the farming community.
- Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal fund – 'Sharing Models of Successful Groups', a program run by BCCA, aimed to help people kickstart community self-help groups and keep them going long-term. Several field days and workshops have resulted in a rural women's group and an extension officer's group which are likely to continue in the future.
- Great Barrier Reef Catchment Loads Monitoring Program – BCCA are contracted by the Queensland Government Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation. This longstanding contract



sees us taking ambient and floodwater samples as directed, on behalf of the Department.

Of great interest to me was the community survey conducted by Ann McKenzie and Wendy Thorsborne (our Community Resilience Officers in the South Burnett). When starting up the Queensland Resilience Program, the survey was a first step in determining what the locals wanted and needed. There were 87 respondents who expressed their main stressors: Impact of legislation (83%), Climate change politics (78%), Risk of theft (74%), Finances (70%), Threat of drought (67%), Health (66%) and Family stresses (61%). Business assistance was needed in the areas of: Technical information from experts, On-farm demo sites, Financial management and Getting together with like-minded people. The most popular topics for events included: Regenerative Agriculture practices, Soil health and management and Water management and conservation. All this information will be included in planning for this and future BCCA projects.

Looking forward – BCCA staff continue to carry out projects and apply for grants and funding for our region. They also represent us on a variety of other committees and planning initiatives. Our passion is supporting and assisting our agricultural industries and people and the communities that call the Burnett area home.

Thank you to the other Board members and to our ordinary members for your support during the year.



# Treasurer's Report

Melinda Clarke



The Burnett Catchment Care Association's financials have been independently audited by Moore Audit Team — Chartered Accountants based in Monto.

BCCA received a total of \$465,547 in contracts for the 2024/25 financial year through contracts from the Australian Government, Queensland Government, the Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal (FRRR) and Burnett Inland Economic Development Organisation (BIEDO) through the Commonwealth State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. Grant income from contracts increased by \$213,129 compared to last financial year. Other income including donations, membership fees and interest was similar to last financial year. Last year's deferred income of \$368,624 was brought back into the current year, while unspent funds of \$409,663 were transferred to the balance sheet as Deferred Income. Current assets including cash and receivables, increased by \$69,304 and total liabilities increased by \$55,746.

The association recorded a consolidated total surplus of \$5,490 for the year compared with a \$12,087 surplus in 2024, this is due to BCCA's cash contribution towards projects, which was \$60,659 this financial year. These contributions are necessary to be successful in obtaining grant funding in this competitive funding environment.

Total expenditure has decreased by \$61,121, reflecting the costs associated with delivering projects and services. BCCA's retained earnings now sits at \$1,043,735.

The graphs below illustrate the breakdown of income and expenditure for the financial year. The income graph includes contracts, interest, membership, donations and

services. The expenses graph includes staff, projects, office and consultant fees.

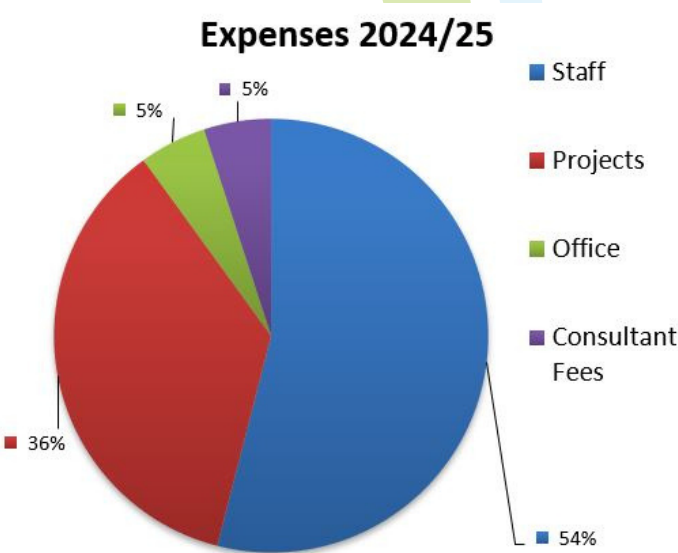
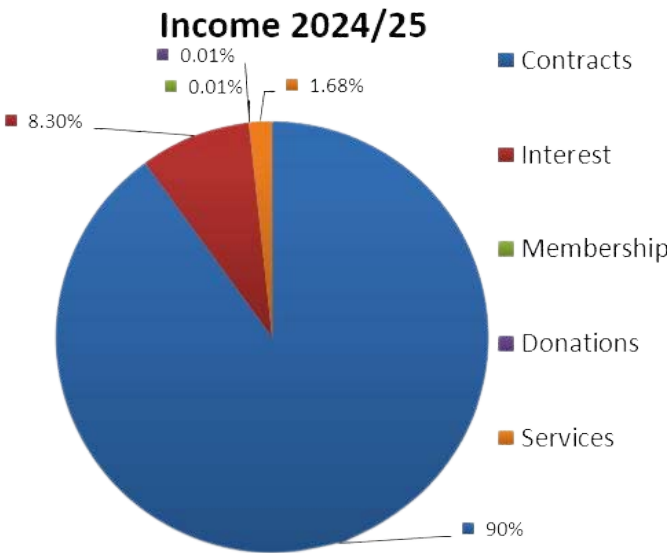
BCCA will continue to attempt to source more funding to carry us into future years. As a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) we have more funding opportunities and we have been promoting our DGR status.

I would invite any member of the BCCA who wishes to view the full financial reports of the Association the opportunity, to do so, by appointment with the Associations Treasurer/ Administration Manager.

**Audit Statement—Moore**

"We confirm that in respect of the audit of the financial report for the year ended 30 June 2025, we have maintained our independence in accordance with requirements and provisions of Accounting Professional and Ethical Standard 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)".

"The books and records were again presented to a high standard and we commend the staff for the preparation of the accounts and minutes."



# CEO's Report

Katie Muller

It has been an honour and a privilege to be part of the Burnett Catchment Care Association during its 30th year of operation across the Burnett catchment. Over the past few months, I have had the pleasure of developing our 30-Year Anniversary Book, celebrating the organisation's achievements over the past three decades. What BCCA has accomplished during this time is truly remarkable, and it has been personally rewarding to have shared in 18 of those years.

Some of the standout achievements over our 30-year journey include:

- Securing more than \$21 million in project funding
- Planting almost 20,000 trees
- Hosting 286 field days, workshops and training events, engaging over 6,600 participants
- Supporting improved groundcover management across more than 137,000 hectares

The anniversary book, to be launched at our 30-Year Celebration in November, showcases many of these milestone projects. Developing the book provided a wonderful opportunity to revisit some of our most significant initiatives — from flood recovery and Reef Rescue projects to our landmark Better Burnett Project, which established BCCA as a leading natural resource management (NRM) delivery organisation for the region. It was also a powerful reminder of the breadth of our impact across the catchment and our success in attracting funding from a diverse range of providers, both within and beyond the traditional NRM network.

The past 12 months have been another productive and rewarding period for BCCA. We successfully completed the Burnett Koala Program, which significantly increased koala sightings across the region, and wrapped up the North Burnett Extension Officer role delivered for BIEDO. Both programs made valuable contributions to local engagement, training, and on-ground outcomes.

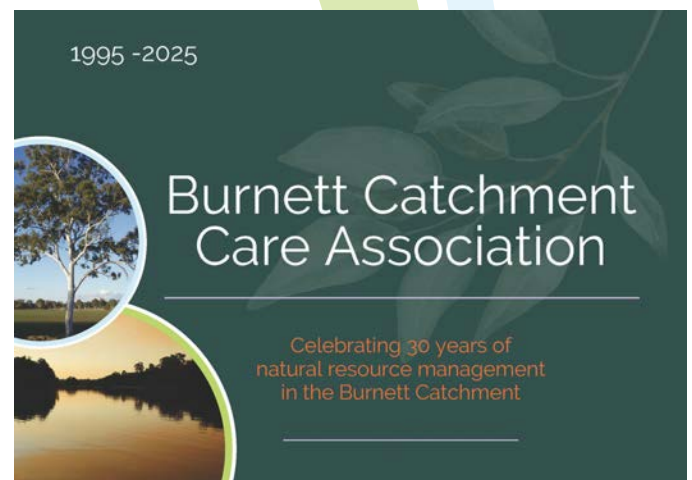
Our Sharing Models of Successful Groups project, funded by the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) and the Future Drought Fund, was another highlight. This community development initiative engaged more than 180 landholders in activities designed to strengthen communication, social connection, and collaboration within and between rural communities—essential foundations for building resilience to future droughts.



I would like to acknowledge Marion, our Chair, for her leadership and support, and note the completion of our seventh year of water quality monitoring at Mt Lawless for the Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation—another testament to our team's consistency and technical excellence.

Our two major long-term projects have also continued to be a strong focus for the team. The first year of our Sustainable Landscapes Across the Inland Burnett project has exceeded expectations, with targets surpassed and significant improvements achieved in land management practices. Similarly, the Building Resilience in the Agricultural South Burnett project has delivered a wide range of training events for producers, with the coming year set to provide even more tailored support to meet the needs of local farming businesses.

In closing, I would like to sincerely thank our Executive Committee for their continued guidance and governance, and our BCCA team for their unwavering dedication. Our staff are positive, proactive, and passionate about our region—it shows in every project they deliver and every community they support.





# Burnett Koala Program

## ESTABLISHING REGIONAL BASELINE DATA

### Misty Neilson

The Burnett Koala Program (BKP) was finalised this financial year. It was the first large-scale koala conservation initiative in the Burnett Catchment. This community-led, multi-stakeholder collaboration focused on understanding the population dynamics, health, and feed tree preferences of inland Burnett koalas. The program developed the region's first-ever baseline dataset of koala population health, using DNA testing of scats non-invasively collected by the community.

The BKP achieved significant benefits for koala conservation and broader environmental efforts in the Inland Burnett region. The program collected baseline data for koala populations, a first for the region, through over 750 observations and DNA analysis of 62 scat samples. This data provided crucial insights into koala distribution, genetic diversity, and health across the region.

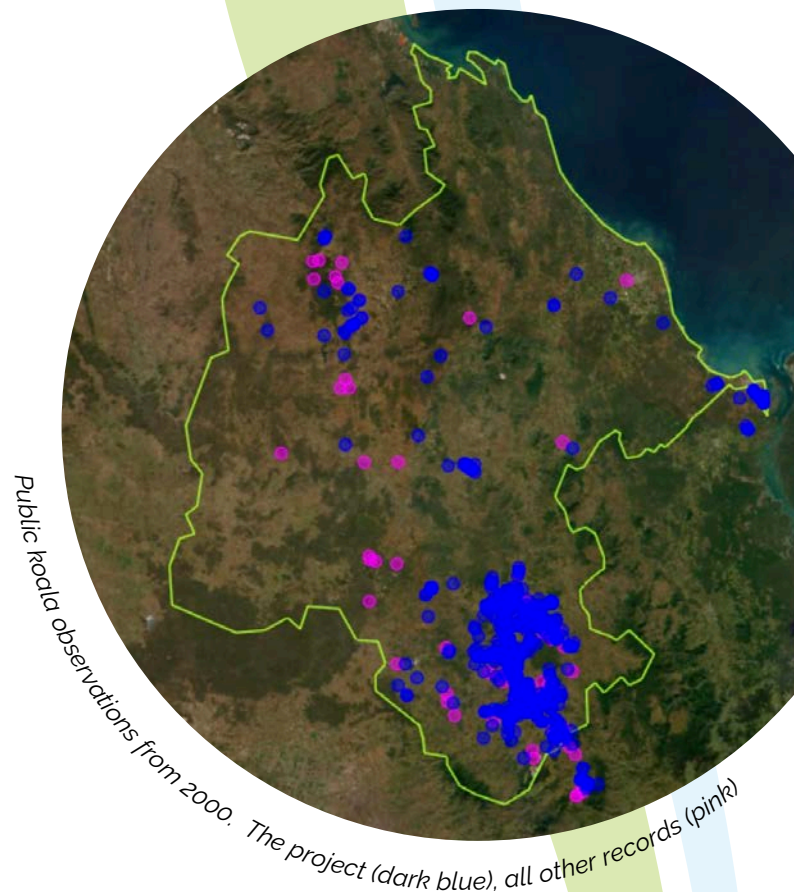
A total of 696 individual koalas were recorded over the two-year project period, significantly contributing to understanding population trends and aiding future conservation planning.

The program engaged 718 citizen scientists, training them to identify and document koala activity. Their contributions enriched data collection efforts and fostered community involvement in conservation.

Approximately 800 students participated in STEM-related activities, increasing youth awareness of environmental conservation. The program delivered nine workshops and events, exceeding the initial target of three, and reached 444 participants across three local government areas in the Inland Burnett region.

Collaboration with organisations such as CSIRO and contributions to databases like WildNet and the Atlas of Living Australia supported regional and national conservation objectives.

Findings from the Inland Burnett Koala Population Study revealed that the region's koala population exhibited unique genetic diversity and low disease prevalence, signaling its potential importance for breeding and conservation efforts. However, the study also highlighted habitat fragmentation, emphasising the need for continued habitat restoration and connectivity initiatives.



The program also facilitated the first-ever South Burnett Koala Forum, uniting community members, land managers, government agencies, and researchers to collectively improve koala conservation outcomes in the region. Supported by CSIRO, DESI, Koala Rescue Qld and Koala Action Gympie Region, this forum set the stage for ongoing collaboration.

This project was funded by the Australian Government's Department of Industry, Science and Resources and proudly supported by WildDNA, OWAD Environment, Goondicum Pastoral Co, and the Wide Bay Burnett Environment Council Inc.



Australian Government

# North Burnett Extension Officer

**Katie Muller & Marisa Young**

BCCA engaged with primary producers in the North Burnett to build disaster resilience and recovery of their business enterprise and ultimately the North Burnett region. We were able to provide this assistance thanks to BIEDO's "Building Resilience and Recovery of the North Burnett" project funded under the joint Commonwealth State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

BCCA attended local shows and cattle sales in the North Burnett region. We supplied resources on soils mapping, grants available and plenty of resources on weed and pasture identification, erosion, grazing landtypes and pasture management.

A Queensland Globe mapping workshop was held at Coalstoun Lakes in November 2024, giving participants a hands-on experience learning how to draw key property infrastructure, measure paddock sizes, calculate elevation and explore the valuable imagery layers Queensland Globe has to offer.

In September 2024 at Mulgildie, farmers learnt the basics of building and maintaining contour banks with John Day. Cam Roth from *Racam Contracting* showed the group the last technology in GPS surveying, land levelling and contour bank building. The group was lucky enough to have our host also demonstrate the building of contour bank that was surveyed.

Also that month, two 'Weeds in Cropping' information sessions were held in Mundubbera and Mungungo. Dr Michael Widderick, Principal Research Scientist in weed science with Queensland's Department of Agriculture and Fisheries discussed Feathertop Rhodes Grass and Fleabane, herbicide resistance findings and recent information on growing competitive crops to suppress weeds.

Extension Officer, Marisa Young also assisted eight producers with their Farm Business Resilience Plans (FBRP). To access Drought Preparedness Grants, primary producers are required to have a FBRP in place to apply for these grants to undertake on-farm improvements that improve their drought resilience.





# Sharing Models of Successful Groups

Hayley Webster

Sharing Models of Successful Groups project finalised in June 2025. The project aimed to establish community led producer groups which aided in peer-to-peer learning and support. The project covered the entire Burnett region.

Building capacity by increasing knowledge and understanding of drought preparedness strategies of agricultural leaders, who play a central role in facilitating change within their communities, has been a key focus. Targeted professional development through the Providers for Peer-to-Peer (P4P2P) group have upskilled these individuals provided a stronger professional network by undertaking online training workshops with Jeanette Long of Ag Consulting on peer-to-peer learning, facilitating workshops and managing groups.

This project made significant contribution to improving communication, social connection and collaboration within and between rural communities – critical foundations for building resilience to future droughts. It also assisted in the formation or facilitation of other groups including a Regen Ag group, a Rumanti Methane Emissions Group, a Rural Women's Support group and the Monto Graziers Group.

Establishment of a Rural Women's Group allowed formation of new social connections and the opportunities to exchange ideas and insights in life on the land for women in remote and regional communities.

A total of 188 participants engaged in other capacity building activities, which included – Bonnie Doone bus trip, Friday arvo with Sam & Blake, Regen Ag afternoon and a Legume field day. These events allowing producers to come together in a relaxed and inclusive atmosphere, listen to new ideas all while increasing social connectedness.

This increased social capital is now visibly leading to collaboration in practice: producers helping each other, sharing knowledge and applying drought-resilient strategies learned through the project.





# Sustainable Landscapes Across the Inland Burnett

Ann McKenzie & Marisa Young

This four year program aims to improve landscape resilience, increase implementation of sustainable grazing management practices and to increase the viability of our regional economy. The inland Burnett region is highly reliant on the agricultural industries, particularly grazing, therefore the support offered within this project will contribute to the sustainability of our rural communities.

Ten landholders have been given tailored support for the development of their Property Management Plans (PMPs). Each plan is designed to address the specific management needs of the landholder and includes detailed information on property layout, paddock land types and condition, FORAGE data, rainfall and climate insights, current land management challenges (e.g. weeds, erosion), and a prioritised action plan.

Priority Actions identified in the PMP's were developed into property specific recommendations and project proposals were developed to address specific land management challenges and support improved grazing practices. Approved projects were eligible for up to \$5,000 in grant funding. In total, 10 funded projects have been implemented, covering an area of approximately 2,453 hectares. These projects include:

- Installation of nearly 14 km of new fencing
- Establishment of 12 additional watering points

Twelve site-specific erosion rehabilitation field plans have been completed by erosion specialist, John Day during this period. The plans included a site description, catchment delivery modelling and step-by-step, cost-effective remediation options for each site. Ten have entered into formal agreements to implement works across eleven priority erosion sites. These rehabilitation activities are expected to result in measurable improvements in land condition over approximately 40 hectares.

One project has been contracted to undertake riparian fencing (650m) and the installation of one off-stream watering point that will see a threat mitigation to native riparian vegetation across nine hectares of the Threemoon Creek in the North Burnett. The fencing and watering point will restrict cattle access.



In May 2025, BCCA delivered two impactful grazing management workshops in the Inland Burnett region. These events featured internationally recognised grazing expert Dick Richardson of Nature's Equity and were held at Beeron Road, Mundubbera and Cloyna, near Murgon. The workshops aimed to build landholder capacity in regenerative grazing techniques under the "Grazing Naturally" approach. Over 50 participants from across the region attended the two workshops. The strong turnout demonstrates continued interest in sustainable land management practices and the desire among producers to improve their grazing systems in response to changing climatic conditions and land condition challenges.



# Building Resilience in the Agricultural South Burnett

Wendy Thorsborne & Ann McKenzie

This 2.5 year project aims to build and enhance the natural disaster resilience of agricultural South Burnett regional communities. Wendy Thorsborne and Ann McKenzie took on the role of Community Resilience Officers (CRO) in June 2024, to assist agri-businesses to examine their operations and determine ways to mitigate the impact of natural disasters/flooding events.

The CROs first role was to produce a 'Situation Analysis Report' to describe 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.

The next step was to collect data from as many stakeholders as possible. Stakeholders included local landholders, community groups, agricultural industry representatives, financial professionals and local government. The findings from the 81 survey respondents formed the basis of a comprehensive 'Needs Analysis' which identified the gaps in local knowledge and services as well as provide guidance as to the type of engagement required by landholders to increase resilience and mitigate against future risks.

Two beginner Microsoft Excel workshops were delivered by Rhonda Toms-Morgan (Connect-AG) at Tansey and Wondai in February 2025. Over 20 participants attended the workshops. A short introduction to AI (artificial intelligence) workshop was held with eight landholders and presented by a local landholder following the Microsoft Excel workshop at Wondai.

A landholder meeting was run in May 2025 to support a group of landholders with an emerging parthenium weed management problem at Ironpot. BCCA provided technical information and facilitated group discussion with a total of 10 primary producers present and two South Burnett Regional Council staff.

"Unlocking the POTENTIAL" workshop presented by Alejandro Carillo was held in May 2025 – seven landholders from target area travelled to Glastonbury (Mary River Catchment) to be part of the day with around 50 other participants. BCCA provided technical information, funding support, facilitated the field day and compiled feedback.



A Grazing Naturally workshop presented by Dick Richardson was held at Cloyna on 21 May with around 30 participants. The day covered soil and land management including forage budgeting.

BCCA presentation to the South Burnett Grazing Network (SBGN) members in May 2025 at Kingaroy, included the results of the Needs Analysis and planned CRO activities.

"Soil Health and Your Wealth" workshop presented by Graeme Sait was held in June 2025 at Kingaroy. Over 30 primary producers from the project area attended the session on soil health and regenerative agriculture, which was funded by BCCA, Stanwell and South Burnett Grazing Network. BCCA coordinated registrations for the event, provided funding support and compiled feedback.

Wendy and Ann will continue next financial year to delivery events and tailored support to match the needs of producers in the South Burnett.



Libby Clapperton (SBGN), Graeme Sait & Wendy Thorsborne (BCCA).



# Fence and Flow

## PROTECTING BRIGALOW BELT WATERCOURSE ECOSYSTEMS

**Katie Muller & Misty Neilsen**

This project will enhance the riparian health of the Burnett Brigalow Belt area by preventing livestock access, promoting native vegetation growth and stabilising riverbanks at six location in the region.

Landholders within the Brigalow Belt ecosystem of the Burnett Catchment, who expressed interest in our program have the opportunity to install stock exclusion fencing and install off-stream watering points to permanently control livestock access to watercourses in the Brigalow Belt.

By installing riparian fencing and off-stream watering points, the project aims to significantly improve water quality by minimising sediment, nutrient and pathogen runoff from grazing lands.

Landholders across the central Burnett have embraced the opportunity, with several now contracted to install over 12 kilometres of fencing and 14 off-stream watering points along the Boyne River and other high-value waterways.

To measure the project's ecological impact, BCCA Ecologist Misty Neilson has commenced baseline monitoring across participating sites. Her assessments include bank stability, vegetation structure, natural regeneration and water quality testing (turbidity and conductivity). This data will help track changes over the next 12 months as landholders implement their projects.



# Water Quality Monitoring - Mt Lawless

Marion Denholm

Since July 2017, BCCA has been contracted by the Queensland Government Department of Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation to take water samples from the Burnett River. This project is part of the Great Barrier Reef Catchment Loads Monitoring Program. Samples are taken from the Burnett River at the Mt Lawless gauging station near Gayndah. Each year, the Water Quality and Investigations section of the Department publishes a report card on the health of the reef, containing data gathered in previous years.

The currently available report from 2021 – 2022 shows that 68 sites within 24 catchment basins were monitored. The main pollutants of concern which are measured are;

- Sediments from dirt dissolved in run-off water, especially fine silt particles which take longer to settle out, leading to decreased light levels for marine plants & animals and an increased risk of 'clogging up' corals.
- Dissolved inorganic nitrogen, which is freely available for algae to use as an energy source to multiply quickly. This can lead to algal 'blooms' – large rafts of algae that reduce light in marine environments. Algae are vital for coral species to protect their delicate surfaces, however excess algal growth helps to feed invasive species like the Crown of Thorns starfish.
- Particulate nitrogen attaches to silt particles. Nitrogen is a necessary part of the nutrients for plant growth, but (as above) an excess can put things out of balance.
- Particulate phosphorus forms a variety of compounds with other elements. It's an essential nutrient for life, but can also cause harm when levels are excessive.
- Pesticides are of course, designed to kill – weeds, rodents, mosquitoes. Being fairly readily available and often used on large scale, once out in the environment their effects can be difficult to control.

The Burnett River as measured and calculated at the Mt Lawless gauging station contributed 370 kilotonnes (kt) of total suspended solids from the Burnett catchment area above. The whole of the Burnett catchment as measured and calculated at the Ben Anderson Barrage at Bundaberg (about 26km from the sea) contributed 426 kt of total suspended solids to the Reef during 2021-2022.



Attached to that silt were 140kt of inorganic nitrogen, 190kt of particulate nitrogen and 71kt of particulate phosphorus as measured at Ben Anderson Barrage.

Water samples are tested for twenty-two individual pesticides. The Mt Lawless site samples are not tested for pesticide presence, but the end-of-catchment samples taken at the Ben Anderson Barrage show low levels of pesticide contamination. It is expected that only 2% of aquatic species will experience any sub-lethal or lethal effects from the amount of pesticides making it out to sea from the Burnett River during 2021-2022.

What do these figures mean? To give a comparison, the Pascoe River in the far north of Cape York is monitored under this program. The Cape is mostly given over to protected areas of National Park and intensive agriculture and urban areas do not exist. During 2021-2022, the gauging station up north recorded just 49kt of total suspended solids, compared to the 426kt from the Burnett. However, the Burnett River catchment is 33,000km<sup>2</sup> while the Pascoe River catchment is 2,124km<sup>2</sup> or about 6.4% of the size. If we multiply 426kt of suspended solids by 6.4% we get just under 30kt, roughly two-thirds of the total recorded from the Pascoe River. Meaning that the relatively undisturbed land in Cape York is nonetheless losing soil at a much higher rate than the Burnett catchment, which has been farmed and grazed for over 150 years.

Of course these bare figures do not tell the whole story. The tropical Cape is subject to frequent monsoonal rains and with no weirs or dams, the Pascoe River is quite different to the Burnett.

Accurate, wide-spread sampling of water quality in the Barrier Reef catchments has only been going on since the 1970's. Some core sampling of coral reefs has been done in recent years, which gives an indication of past conditions, but there is still a lot of research needed to find long-term water quality trends.



# BURNETT CATCHMENT CARE ASSOCIATION

