

SUMMARY REPORT



Stories from the Landscapes of Southern Queensland

November 2020 - February 2021



Acknowledgement of First Nations

SQ Landscapes acknowledge, respect and seek to learn from the First Peoples of the 28 Nations in the Southern Queensland Landscapes area, and further afield. We pay our respects to the Elders: past, present and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture, science and knowledge, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Peoples across our nation.

Acknowledgement of Community

Thank you to the people who attended the Community Roundtables and shared their stories, ideas, goals and aspirations for the future.

Acknowledgement of Funding

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Disclaimer:

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Introduction

This report contains a summary of the conversations had at 13 community roundtables held throughout the southern Queensland region between the months of November 2020 and February 2021.

The roundtables were organised and hosted by Southern Queensland Landscapes (SQ Landscapes) to provide the community with an opportunity to input to a plan for the custodianship of the natural and cultural assets of the region.

The roundtable format was adopted to provide everyone with an equal opportunity to put forward their views and aspirations in a supportive and safe environment.

SQ Landscapes is a new entity formed by the amalgamation of three Regional Natural Resource Management organisations - South West NRM, Queensland Murray Darling Committee (QMDC) and Condamine Alliance (CA). SQ Landscapes is a non-government organisation owned by its members. The organisation exists to work with landholders to understand their landscapes, adapt to challenges and be stewards of their country. SQ Landscapes aims to attract investment, innovate, trial and develop approaches to sustainable and regenerative agriculture across the region.

SQ Landscapes is only one organisation of the many that have a role in the stewardship of the natural and cultural assets of the region. These assets are the basis of a future where landscapes and communities can flourish in tune with the rhythms and capacity of the natural world.

SQ Landscapes will synthesise and develop knowledge that helps Southern Queensland to balance high productivity and local value-adding with biodiversity, waterway and landscape health.

At the centre of this knowledge are First Nation Peoples who hold the key to learning how to bring landscapes back into balance given their 40,000 plus years (over 1,600 generations) of stewardship of our lands. SQ Landscapes respects and will learn from the Nations and work with them to develop pathways to a sustainable future including sustainable businesses to ensure First Nation Peoples have employment and growth opportunities.

The resultant plan will contain a list of jobs that have been agreed to by the community, government and industries seeking a future in the region. SQ Landscapes will not own this plan. SQ Landscapes is committed to achieving its organisational objectives on behalf of its members including to attract investment, innovate, trial and develop approaches to sustainable and regenerative agriculture across the region. SQ Landscapes as a regional entity is in a unique position to assist government, industry and the community across the region to coordinate programs that represent value for investment expressed in terms of social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes.

The following stories are presented as the foundation for further discussions on how we can all work together to do things differently to ensure a future that is based on flourishing landscapes.

The stories provide a snapshot in time from people able to attend the roundtables and will be combined with previous feedback, plans and knowledge to build a picture of the future based on learning from the past. The community will continue to guide the development of the plan during 2021 with a final version available in early 2022.

Charleville and Morven – Bidjara Country

The People of the Bidjara Nation are the First People of this Country with the Elders responsible for the stewardship of these landscapes over thousands of generations past. Current and emerging Elders and future generations of Bidjara People have ongoing connections to the landscapes of this region.

Charleville, Morven and surrounds

The community has a strong connection to the landscape and each other - some landholders are fifth generation working on family properties.

A recent example of community cohesion and capacity is the reopening of the Morven Hotel after it burnt down in the early hours of April 26, 2016. Eight local families pitched together and invested in building the Saddler's Pub. The new pub has a heritage aesthetic modeled on a shearing shed with wide verandahs.

Morven has a rail hub under construction, and it has created a new buzz in town. The hub is to be operated by Watco supported by Australian Government investment. It will function as a collector point for cattle to be transported by road or rail to feedlots and meat works and will also allow for A-B double truck loadings for NSW destinations.¹ It is hoped the hub will make it easier to move stock by streamlining paperwork involved with moving stock between shires and states.

There are concerns that facilities like TAFE are under resourced in the area. The Charleville High School is also about to lose their agricultural science teacher and there are concerns this role will not be replaced.

The opportunity to include land management/environmental studies into the Pastoral Care element of the school system was raised.

The value of Mulga country in times of drought is recognised by land managers using properties with Mulga south of Morven to assist with drought proofing.

There is good bore water in many places in the area while permanent water holes are less frequent.

Exclusion Fencing

There are some of the original clusters of exclusion fencing in the area. A trapper has caught 2-300 dogs in a 30-property cluster.

Dorpers, goats and beef are reared in the exclusion areas. Stock is exported from the area including to a feedlot at Dulacca.

Tourism

Tourism is a valuable industry for the area.

Murweh Council are considered progressive and helpful including support for tourism. Morven has a new information centre and there are hopes to start a Mulga Museum. A creek walk is also being considered.

The challenge for tourism in Charleville and beyond is to get visitors to go further west from Morven to Charleville rather than turning north to Longreach.

¹ Queensland Country Life (30 Jun 2020) Livestock interchange takes shape at Morven - viewed at <https://www.queenslandcountrylife.com.au/story/6812227/massive-morven-livestock-hub-moving-ahead/>

The Tregole National Park has re-opened to people with the ancient and rare Ooline Trees an attraction (see Box)². There are opportunities to provide further infrastructure to attract people to the Park and the area in general.

Tregole is a national park in South West Queensland, Australia, 603 km west of Brisbane. Until the gazettement of the park in 1975, the area was a grazing property. The park is located where the brigalow and Mulga biospheres meet and has a representative sample of semi-arid ecosystems.

In semi-arid, south-western Queensland, Tregole National Park straddles the boundary between two of the state's natural regions, the brigalow belt and the Mulga lands.

The park protects a small, almost pure stand of ooline *Cadellia pentastylis*, an attractive dry rainforest tree dating back to the Ice Ages and when Australia was wetter than it is now. Ooline has been extensively cleared and is now uncommon and considered vulnerable to extinction. Tregole's ooline forest survives in the less than ideal semi-arid conditions.

Mulga grows on the ridges while poplar box woodlands cover the alluvial plains, brigalow woodlands grow on areas with heavy clay soils and Mitchell grasslands are found on the park's undulating plains.

The park contains almost pure stands of the vulnerable Ooline tree. The Ooline stand in Tregole is unusual as the climate is hot and dry.

The park has no camping facilities. A day-use area is 10 kilometres south of Morven on the Morven-Bollon Road. There is a short (2.1 km) walk in the day-use area.

In general, there could be more signs and information around to explain the story of the region. The Sargood Sign south of Charleville is a good example and people stop to read it.



Figure 1 The large sign out the front of Scott Sargood's property, Halton, at Charleville, which aims to raise the awareness of tourists about mulga management.

The late Scott Sargood a Charleville beef producer had a giant sign, endorsed by local councils and landcare groups, constructed in front of his property in a bid to educate travellers on correct management of the mulga lands. Sadly, Scott Sargood was killed while mustering cattle on a property near Charleville in 2019.³

² <https://parks.des.qld.gov.au/parks/tregole>

³ Queensland Country Life (29 Jun 2018) Vegetation manag

Quilpie – Mardigan Country

Mardigan Country is situated in South West Queensland with the Bulloo and Paroo Rivers flowing through its boundaries. Mardigan Country includes the township of Quilpie.

The Mardigan People are the Traditional Custodians for Mardigan Country and they play an important role in taking care of Country, the water ways and to preserve and maintain areas of cultural and spiritual significance.

Many Mardigan People now live away from Country because of past practices that resulted in removal from country. Despite this, Mardigan People have always maintained their connection to Mardigan country and their knowledge and recognition of cultural heritage.

The Mardigan people believe it is essential to collaborate and consult with the local community, landholders and other stakeholders so they can increase their involvement looking after country.⁴

Quilpie and surrounds

The town of Quilpie has a stable population but would benefit from a boost in the wool industry so as to support a locally based shearing team. The region is short of workers with not enough people to undertake seasonal work. Quilpie Council is good to work with.

COVID 19 was good for the backend of the tourist season in 2020 with people holidaying in Queensland. There has been a noticeable increase in younger families coming through in addition to the ubiquitous Grey Nomads.

The area around Quilpie has properties that spill over the Grey Range into channel country. Properties have dams and some deep bores in an effort to secure a supply of water. Creeks and lagoons are important parts of the landscape with some waterholes having only been dry once in the last 5 years. There is interest in water monitoring to better understand the quality of different sources of water.

Properties are a mixed range of sizes with 40 000 acres considered small. Size and productivity often requires off farm income to help fund the property's purchase and operation. This can see families separated for long periods of time as members work in other regions such as those with active mining operations.

There has been a move away from cattle in recent years while sheep are still a fixture. Lambing rates have been good in places despite the drought.

The Quilpie Wellspring project is an important initiative in the region (Box 1).

Box 1: Quilpie Wellspring

Quilpie Wellspring is a regional vision for an integrated brewery, aquaponics farm, training centre and boutique motel, based on circular economic principles. Through the Wellspring project, Quilpie Shire aims to deliver a sustainable, scalable investment that brings new employment opportunities to a community experiencing population decline and the increasing effects of climate variability on regional industries. This project is designed to use advanced agriculture and permaculture technologies to support a community hub that can supply nutrient-dense produce while creating opportunities for market diversity. The Wellspring project is a its partnership with the Queensland Government, Quilpie Shire Council and Climate KIC Australia. https://quilpie.qld.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/1357_001.pdf

⁴ Collins, R. (2018) Mardigan Country Strategic Plan for NRM Outcomes 2018-2021 - 3 year plan, South West NRM, Charleville.

Mulga

Mulga is a valuable resource here especially in dry times when it is used as fodder for stock. Mulga can take up to 12-15 years to regenerate after grazing depending on rainfall. It is felt that government do not fully understand the issues with mulga harvesting in dry times; it can be difficult to understand the government documents and it would be good to see them simplified as part of a more flexible approach.

Goats

Goats have been an important part of the farming economy here for a number of years. People are learning about goat husbandry as they go and are starting to add to the feral wild goat herds with formal breeding stock to improve productivity. Information is required for the introduction and management of different breeds verse wild goats including stocking rates. The Charleville office of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) has provided some good technical information sheets. Of particular interest to landholders is worm control, diseases and what lick to provide and why. Another observation that requires understanding was goats sometimes die when they have to start eating grass over mulga trees (browsing).

There is interest in knowing what equipment is available for the husbandry of goats e.g. crush for handling stock.

The market for goat meat is expanding and there appears to be no end in sight. Goat meat can be consumed by a number of different religions, whereas pork or beef might not appropriate for some religions. Charleville meat works is the main taker of stock but there is another buyer in Charleville now and Brisbane Valley Meats at Esk is also seeking stock.

The Charleville abattoir opened in 1995. People saw the change in the town from the day it moved in and it is considered by some to be the backbone and future of the town.⁵

Goats make a lot more money for a lot less work in a shorter amount of time and provide faster returns than other stock. The goat industry has huge potential; however supply is an issue with 80% of goats sourced for the Charleville abattoir coming from NSW.

There was a lot of research carried out into goats on the Croxdale Research Station near Charleville previously operated by the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries. SQ Landscapes are now trustees of Croxdale. A Business Plan is being developed and the aim is to establish an external campus, partnering with a Faculty of Agricultural Science from a tertiary institution. There will be a focus on rangelands management.

Carbon Farming

Lots of properties have been sold and permanently leased back to previous owners. This is often for the purposes of carbon farming. Corporate carbon brokers have different models with the commitment being typically 25 years or 100 years. However, there are concerns that there is generally no or very little management of the country that gets locked up to accumulate carbon over these time frames. Of particular concern is fire and pest management.

⁵ Queensland farmers looking to goats to turn a profit in tough times
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2020-03-26/goat-farming-pest-profit-outback-queensland/12090460>

Exclusion Fencing

Exclusion fencing involving clusters of properties working together is common. Those outside or adjacent to clusters can see the need to fence to be viable. Some individuals are doing this under their own steam without grant funding or as part of a cluster.

Land Management

Land managers are interested in a stewardship program where people doing the right thing looking after the land are recognized and rewarded.

There is concern that properties are being amalgamated into larger land holdings. There has been a huge land price increase in the last 6 months. These factors combine to create a barrier to new buyers entering the market in particular it discourages/limits the younger generation from returning to the land.

Landholders have been working with SQ Landscapes to explore ways of slowing the flow of water across the land in a bid to rehydrate the landscape. Field days on properties with technical experts have been popular with good results achieved from carefully planned and placed spreader banks. These subtle interventions in the landscape are designed to prolong the time water from rainfall events lingers thereby supporting the growth of grass and herbage (Figure 1).

A diverse range of vegetation sprouts forward in these areas including Mitchell grass. The aim is to extend the productivity of the landscape, increase biodiversity and the all-round health of the soil. The excess water moves slowly off the landscape reducing soil erosion or enters the groundwater profile with potential longer term benefits for the water table.



Figure 2: Spreader bank

Tourism

An example of the innovation in business is a property that has diversified into tourism providing camping facilities while running a small number of sheep and goats in the better country. It is felt that this form of agritourism allows the good news stories to be told to people visiting from cities

and towns. The property has a range of attractions and activities including survey trees, a picturesque lake (Figure 3) with abundant bird and animal life and an historic Chinese Weir. During shearing time visitors can witness a working shearing shed. Accommodation includes renovated shearers quarters. Guests on average stay for 1 to 3 days. Powered and unpowered camping sites are available with more powered sites currently being installed.



Figure 3: Lake Houdraman adjacent to camping area at Quilpie

Thargomindah – Kullilli Nation

The People of the Kullilli Nation are the First People of this Country with Elders from thousands of generations past responsible for the stewardship of these landscapes. Current and emerging Elders and future generations of Kullilli People have ongoing connections to the landscapes of this area.

Of particular concern is the common carbon farming model that locks up country for long periods without adequate land management. There are also flow on effects to the community from having less people actively living and engaged on the land. This impacts on the towns with a reduction in business and families with school age children.

The Big Red Bash brings a lot of people to the area. The Bash takes place on the edge of the Simpson Desert (Munga-Thirri National Park) about 35 kms west of Birdsville. Situated close to the towering 30+ metre high Big Red Dune, it offers music lovers a spectacular backdrop to enjoy some of Australia's best loved musicians while visually feasting on breathtaking views of the vast desert expanse and remote starry night skies.⁶ People travel through the Cunnamulla and the South West on their way to the Bash.

Businesses in town respond to demand and then there is a tipping point where there are too many of one service and then it tips the balance and people go out of business e.g. coffee shops.

Carp are an issue in the Paroo River not so in the Bulloo River.

Mining of opals in the area is becoming harder as regulations tighten.

⁶ <https://birdsvillehotel.com.au/events-near-birdsville/big-red-bash/>

Bulloo Council had the Creek Doctor visit and were happy with how that worked for them. Would like him to come back again to advise on creek management work. In general funding for riparian works would be welcome.

Participants requested that the results of consultation (such as the roundtable) come back to them sooner.

It was suggested that Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) could do more to help with fencing to manage pest animals that often frequent national parks.



Figure 4: On the banks of the Bulloo, Thargomindah

Cunnamulla – Kunya Nation

The People of the Kunya Nation are the First People of this Country with the Elders from thousands of generations past responsible for the stewardship of these landscapes. Current and emerging Elders and future generations of Kunya People have ongoing connections to the landscapes of this region.

The prevailing carbon farming model is fencing off mulga country with limited hands on management. In general, these properties don't contribute a lot to land management except some wild dog baiting. This model of carbon farming started in 2012 with a peak in 2015. Contracts involve locking up the land for 25 or 100 years. Limited grazing is allowed. Many of the carbon farms are associated with absentee landlords based in Sydney. Some properties have caretakers but not as heavily involved in the community as other landholders. The decrease in people and on site managers has disrupted social networks and the viability of towns.

Tourism is a major industry for the town and shire with grey nomads and now light greys i.e. people retiring early or seeing if the grey nomad lifestyle is for them before they take the plunge in retirement.

"Live like a local" tourism campaign has been a focus for the shire. The campaign invites visitors to immerse themselves in the community. Council are keen to support Indigenous Tourism.

A number of major events are held in the Shire including Music in the Mulga and Cunnamulla Fella Festival.

Council are keen to establish a marquee attraction so people stay and spend money in the local economy. The Australian Government is investing nearly \$5 million in developing the Cunnamulla

Artesian Hot Springs and the Warrego River Walk. This will build geothermally heated hot baths for tourists and locals. The Warrego River walk will include a raised boardwalk and viewing platforms to give visitors easy access without damaging the riverbank, plants and animal habitat.^{7 8}

The area south of Cunnamulla is known as the Salad Bowl. The area has not been as productive during recent times. The drought has not helped. Predominately sheep and cattle production.

When the wool price dropped in the 1980s the State Government supported South West Strategy recommended amalgamation of smaller properties in a bid to improve economies of scale. This has made it difficult for younger generations to get a start with affordable sized properties rare or very expensive.

In general it is observed that the wild dogs drift south following water.

The Paroo Shire Council manage the stock routes with limited resources available from the State Government. The stock routes were last used in 2017/18.

Repair work and building the resilience of the shire to flooding has been keeping the Council busy. Council are also supporting the construction of a new water reticulation system.

The South West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (SWQROC) was established in 2020, bringing together the South West Local Government Association (SWLGA) and South West Regional Economic Development (SWRED). Comprising approximately 320,000km² across the local government areas of Balonne, Bulloo, Maranoa, Murweh, Paroo and Quilpie.



Figure 5: Your guide to the Paroo Shire, Cunnamulla

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<https://minister.awe.gov.au/littleproud/media-releases/community-package-to-boost-cunnamulla>

⁸ <https://www.paroo.qld.gov.au/hotspringsriverwalk>

Roma – Mandandanji Nation

The People of the Mandandanji Nation are the First People of this area with Elders from thousands of generations responsible for the past stewardship of these landscapes. Current and emerging Elders and future generations of Mandandanji Nation have ongoing connections to the landscapes of this region.

Roma cattleyards major trading point in the region. Recent expansion to make it biggest in Queensland. Visitors come to see the operation and visit the interpretation centre. Guided tours conducted of the yards explaining the activities.

Grazier from south of Charleville buying and selling cattle at Roma operates 34,000 acres with 300 head of cattle. Mulga is good fodder and doesn't need pushing over for grazing especially when bull dozers cost a lot of money to run. This grazier leaves mulga as standing fodder. Keeps his breeders through droughts. Can't afford property in Roma where country is considered as good. Son is a diesel fitter working in mines but keen to get back on the land. Pigs and dogs are issues. Cluster fencing nearby keeps pests down.

General

Social issues in some border towns however Goondiwindi is vibrant and the local government there works well. Communities are all different.

There were koalas in trees around Roma in the past.

Stock routes and roads in the region often follow First Nation original pathways.

The opportunity for Indigenous Rangers to be employed in carbon farming programs should be promoted. There are three Commonwealth Land Restoration Fund (LRF) LRF Projects funded in the southern Queensland region through a company in Sydney.

The Agforce young rural leaders program is a good connection for discussing the future of the region.

QFF and SQL are signing a Memorandum of Understanding to work together for flourishing landscapes.

There is interest from land holders in reestablishing Koalas in the area.

Pests need to be managed.

SQ Landscapes are exploring options to reestablish Croxdale property at Charleville as a rangelands research and extension centre.

Last good rain received in the Roma area was 2009/10.

Miles - Iman Nation

The People of the Iman Nation are the First People of this area with Elders down thousands of generations responsible for the past stewardship of these landscapes. Current and emerging Elders and future generations of Iman People have ongoing connections to the landscapes of this region.

Miles and surrounds

Recent arrivals to the area noted a different community feeling compared to Bollon. For example, in the west (Bollon) there is limited return of children to the farms, whereas in the Condamine area many are returning. It has been noted that young people seem to prefer cropping to grazing enterprises.

There are two shearing teams based in Bollon. None around Miles due to low numbers of sheep.

There is a Local Rural Aid Officer in the area. However, the loss of agricultural extension services has created a large hole in on ground support.

Solar farms are springing up around Chinchilla and a wind farm is being established at Dulacca.

Many people still prefer direct mail rather than social media like Facebook. Existing local community newsletter and school newsletters could be used to get information out about up-coming events.

Weeds and Pests

Many creeks have denuded landscapes up stream and go from extreme dry to extreme wet quickly. The area experienced a flood on 25th January 2020.

Floods spread weeds and scours out the creeks. There is tiger pear in upstream areas. Rubbish also comes down streams.

Weeds are also spread along roadsides.

African lovegrass *Eragrostis curvula* (there are at least 2 different varieties) is a big issue as it has no grazing value. Landholders want to know more about the new variety that has been seen and to confirm which variety is the biggest issue. A better understanding of love grass in general is needed including control, spread and management.

There has been a push in the Jackson area to remove harrissia cactus *Harrisia martinii*. A local group at Jackson did control work and local government supplied the chemical.

Landholder is removing sabi grass however it is good as a colonizer.

Pigs are not a big problem where there is limited cropping although wild dogs occasionally appear.

The large populations of kangaroos are an issue for managing grazing pressure.

Council pay a bounty for wild dogs, but the system has issues with monitoring the numbers and types of dogs managed.

Land Management

There is interest in learning about pre, during and post drought land management practices including what type of pastures, what mix, how to graze it, when to graze it particularly in these times of sporadic weather events.

Some feel there are times when there are too many animals grazing the landscape. Rotational grazing is practiced on a number of properties so that country can be rested and restored.

Natural grasses are being reestablished in some areas. Old cultivation has been rehabilitated with exotic species such as bambatsi, rhodes and buffel. Native Mitchell grass is regenerating over time with good management. Native Queensland blue grass is around but tends to die during drought.

Introduced Biloela buffel which is a mix of species is grazed in the area.

Erosion prevention practices are being applied but landholders can find it difficult due to the fast flowing flood water. Contours are still used.

Changing management approaches to the landscape is a generational thing.

There is interest in knowing more about natural sequence farming.

Yuleba forestry was recently logged and there is stock in the forestry areas to keep the grass down.

Wilga died in places during the recent drought as did cypress. Grass is now coming back up under the dead trees. Will require ongoing management.

Landholders particularly those newer to the area are looking to attend field days on properties.

Landholders particularly newer to the area are looking to attend field days on properties.

Many landholders are unsure of how to thin trees under current legislation.

Fire

There is a recognition of the need for fire management rather than hazard reduction. However, landholders are often reluctant to burn grass as they might need it for feed later. Need to be confident fire managers who know when to burn for broader landscape outcomes.

There is interest in fire workshops on a landholder's place.

Water

Landholders want to know more about how to conserve water in dams especially reducing water evaporation to increase water security. Rely heavily on surface water in some areas as the cost of bores is prohibitive e.g. \$200,000 for a shallow bore and up to \$500,000 for a deep one.

The permit process for water is onerous and the legislation is hard to understand.

Fencing

Landholders have considered exclusion fencing however the cost can be a deterrent.

Some landholders looking at funding for exclusion fencing so they can run sheep.

Stock

Licks are an important part of management.

Hay can bring weeds into an area from all around Australia. Feed imported hay in an area that can be managed for weeds rather than spreading the hay around the property.

Some graziers agist stock in other localities which can involve a lot of travel, costs and coordination of transport.

Native Wildlife

Simple things such as using plain wire strategically in fencing can reduce impacts on wildlife populations e.g. glider possums.

Landcare

Murilla Landcare group recently ceased to operate.

Would like a workshop on who to contact for grants.

Carbon farming

The arrangements for carbon farming further west in the region are not good. The land is sold to companies and locked up. There have also been issues with the contracts for landholders with carbon plots on their properties which has seen some getting paid in the first year but not much after that.



Figure 6: Chinaman's Lagoon at Miles

Dalby- Western Waka Waka Nation

The People of the Western Waka Waka are the First People of this Country with the Elders from thousands of generations past responsible for the stewardship of these landscapes. Current and emerging Elders and future generations of Western Waka Waka People have ongoing connections to the landscapes of this region.

The comment was made that the approximate return from agriculture (cropping) in the region is 10 cents/m². This accentuates the cost price squeeze as a result of the increasing cost of inputs and the price received for agricultural products.

Land Management

Water is now sheeting off the land more than it did in the past. People are interested in looking at how water infiltration to soils can be enhanced. There is interest in learning more about capturing moisture and alternative cropping options.

Soil conservation is important but there is limited knowledge being passed on as experienced people retire. Reducing the amount of soil erosion is still a major priority.

There has been a decline in nutrient levels in soils including grazing lands.

Enhancing ground cover is important so that the soil can rehydrate. When you improve soil health for production you also get improved environmental diversity.

Change is hard. Making the farm sustainable is a challenge when economic viability is a challenge. There are a lot of elements to juggle and many variables. There is financial pressure to achieve a cash flow.

The new normal is “Dry” interspersed with large rainfall events.

Restocking after extreme periods of dry takes time.

Farmers are seeking support and follow-up chats on how to apply new knowledge to their own circumstances.

Information such as what plants are desirable in different situations particularly grasses for pastures.

Rangelands make up 85% of Australia and we have a lot of them in southern Queensland – need ongoing work to understand rangelands management as the climate changes.

The community want to learn more about appropriate burning as climate changes.

Need to develop a way to measure change in vegetation condition not just vegetation extent.

Extension

The community see the provision of extension services as being very important.

The community are interested in seeing research undertaken on farms and field days – also important to identify the gaps in the research including how to conservatively stock and still make it financially viable.

Private consultants provide valuable extension and support services to the community.

Information coming out of the United States of America is helpful.

Need to find a way to find and encourage “Champions” of the region and support them in attending events and doing research.

In general, there needs to be more information getting to farmers who are requesting it.

Carbon

Carbon farming has people’s ears pricked but they are concerned about being locked into long term contracts with no room for maintenance of areas and flexibility.

It is important to tell the carbon management story but need a clear message for the community to understand and know the need and opportunities available for carbon farming.

Cropping

It was agreed that “cropping country needs love”.

Double cropping is decreasing due to changing climate and other factors.

In general, there is better management of the use of pesticides now than there has been in the past.

Some big farming enterprises are still pushing the soils hard.

Millmerran and Warwick utilising Wagner’s airport to fly out vegies to Asia.

Water

Condamine Balonne Water Committee (CBWC) have been measuring water quality since 1981. Data is available and has been stored in the State Government’s Hydsys database.

Water quality in the Condamine River is currently the best that it’s ever been.

The CBWC are funded by Western Downs Regional Council and Toowoomba Regional Council. Active members include Dr John Stanley, Tony Dunn, Mr Wockner and Geoff McIntyre. There is a knowledge gap in that no water testing is being done west of Bollon.

There is a need for a report card that can inform responses at a property level.

The management of salt produced from CSG activities is an ongoing priority.

Dalby has a desalination plant for domestic and industrial water supply.

The Rocky Creek Dump above Chinchilla takes the salt from the gas plants concern about how close it is to the Condamine and the risk of spills.

There has been an increase in iron and aluminum at Yarralong – coming from cultivation from above the Queen Mary Falls.

It would be good to expand water quality testing in the west of the region.

Waste management

SQ Landscapes are looking at opportunities for converting waste to energy and the output of biochar for enhancing soil health.

Need to explore the opportunities of for taking appropriate kinds of waste from the eastern seaboard out to western Queensland for use in agriculture.

Landcare

North East Downs Landcare is active and works in partnership with SQ Landscapes. The Landcare group has been active for 20-30 years but as money has decreased so has the amount of activity.

Volunteering has dropped off over recent years.

The young of the area have different views and aspirations.

For the charrettes – important to get different ag consultants involved for their different perspectives.

Fencing

There is concern about restricted animal movement associated with exclusion fencing.



Figure 7: On the road to Dalby

Goondiwindi – Bigambal Nation

The People of the Bigambal Nation are the First People of this Country with the Elders from thousands of generations past responsible for the stewardship of these landscapes. Current and emerging Elders and future generations of Bigambal People have ongoing connections to the landscapes of this region.

Goondiwindi and surrounds

The area only received 6 inches of rain in 2019 – the average rainfall for a year is 24 inches. The last good rain was received in 2016. Some areas have access to sub artesian water. A lot of the area is on the edge of the Great Artesian Basin. Good summer rain is required for good pasture growth.

There is a good team in Goondiwindi Regional Council.

The area sees Wellcamp Airport as vital infrastructure for the region to allow better flow of goods to market.

The importance of seeking out local knowledge when you are new to an area was recognised.

The disconnect between urban and rural communities has been noted with limited focus on rural needs. The Great Dividing Range acts as a figurative political divide between city and country.

There is interest in knowing more about government programs such as the Regional Land Partnerships (RLP) program and how the region can work together to achieve the aims and objectives of the program.

Sheep and Cattle

Cattle are grazed on natural and improved pastures. Sheep were once a large industry but not so much now. Properties are moving back to natural pastures. Mitchell grass grows on the cracking clay plains of the area.

Cropping

Minimum/no tillage is used widely. A range of technology is used in agriculture e.g. GPS is used as an aid to guide the planting of crops. Contractors are also engaged for farm work. The aerial seeding of pastures has been undertaken.

A range of crops are grown (including chickpeas, barley, sorghum and faber beans) depending on a range of factors including markets and climate. People also move between grain and crop to beef as required.

People are diversifying into horticulture in the east of the shire including broccoli, pumpkins and lucerne with more potential to expand.

Goats

Rangeland goats have been actively managed to sell for meat.

The equine industry is also big in the area including polo, polo cross, racing and camp drafting.

Fire was used initially to help develop land but is not used as much today. Modern machinery has changed fire practices e.g. no longer harrow with fire. This generation has needed to change from their father's practice due to changes in the landscape, markets and climate. However this can be difficult as there is not a lot of money in cattle so can't afford to change.

Soil health

Soil and pasture health is important. Important to get soil condition correct at the same time. An adage that holds true is that “sometimes it’s important to feed the pasture instead of the cattle.”

The positive role that the rotation of animals through the system using different animal species can play is recognised.

There is interest in soil health including the role and management of carbon and soil organic matter/humus.

Carbon

Concerns were raised about the model of carbon farming out west where large areas are locked up with minimal management while the carbon sequesters over 25 – 100 year timeframes.

There is interest in workshops from different traders providing different views on carbon to give a rounded awareness/education on carbon and carbon farming. There is currently some carbon farming near Texas.

Land Management

It has been observed that soils don’t hold water like they used to and water flows faster than it did before. Need ways to improve the infiltration of water into the soil.

Sam Skeat from the Mulloon Institute has presented at field days in the area – more people would like to know about this work.

The hydrology of the area has changed with McIntyre Brook deeply eroded reducing its capacity to hold water.

There is interest in having demonstration sites that show farmers/graziers how different practices work or do not work to help with the risk of changing practices.

The importance of trees in the landscape was recognised. There is interest in obtaining native trees along with information on what to plant and when.

One farm is planting trees in strips around the farm. This gives rise to another important adage “A wise man plants a tree that he doesn’t sit in the shade of” which captures the vision and long term view needed to enhance the health of the landscapes. A good question to ask yourself and others is “visualise what you want the property to look like”.

People have used Resource Consulting Services (RCS) to inform grazing practices.⁹

Fire

Goondiwindi Regional Council and Southern Queensland Landscapes have worked together to run field days such as fire management with Victor Steffensen. There is interest in Victor coming back to do a case study on fire management for people to see the advantages. Council happy with the work

⁹ From the website - <https://www.rcsaustralia.com.au/> - RCS is Australia’s leading private provider of holistically-integrated education, training and advisory services to the agricultural sector, both nationally and internationally. We work with individuals, families, corporates and government groups, empowering them to grow productive, profitable agricultural businesses within regenerative landscapes.

that he has done in the past. Council would like to enhance the management of the town common which could include the careful use of fire.

Fencing

Concerns have been raised about the impenetrable nature of the exclusion fencing especially for the movement and safety of native wildlife. Temporary electric fencing and working dogs was suggested as an alternative to exclusion fencing.

Stock Routes

The stock routes in the area are actively used for grazing. Graziers pay a fee for grazing rights on the stock routes.

Pest and weed management of the stock routes takes a lot of time and resources. A recent program spraying cactus has had success. Fire management is also an issue on the stock routes.

Willow and Harissa Cactus are other weeds of concern. Community is interested in pest and weed control (mimosa and box thorn) along with technical support to manage them.

Landcare

The membership of land care groups goes up and down.

The key is to get passion back into the community and be involved in the stewardship of the “bush”. Need to recognise that the environment is the centre of everything. The opportunity is for everyone to work together to join all the dots, bring all the information together to build our capacity to enhance stewardship of the landscape.

In general, the passion has to be there to do the right thing – it can be a reward and a driver. Need to fire up the passion of the younger generation.

There are good collaborations between groups for example Macintyre Ag Alliance works with Millmerran Landcare for field days and other activities. Groups listen to what members want and then organize field days. The services and reach of groups like this are limited by human resources.

There is a lot of value in building capacity to build business cases for funding applications. An evidence base is required for funding applications.

Field Days

It is recognised there needs to be a different approach to get people to attend meetings and workshops. There is an option to hold events at the smaller community club venues on a Friday evening.

Farmers want to do good but do not have the money and awareness to support what they want to achieve. For this reason (also that each property is different, different soils, stocking rates etc.) it is important that they get support with individual approaches rather than a group approach to farm planning. Each individual has a different capacity.

Maps

There is a lot of interest in the mapping products being developed by SQ Landscapes. There is interest in purchasing maps including the stock route map and satellite mapping of Goondiwindi, land types plus others. Landholders were interested in mapping for property planning.

Tourism

Domestic tourism has increased however people pass through Goondiwindi going south and other places. Town is going along well except the drought. Lots of connections between town and country. Primary industry and town intermeshed and well connected.

Goondiwindi is not considered a destination town like Yelarbon has become (Silo Artwork). Texas has a rabbit museum. Cotton Farm and Art tours are offered in Goondiwindi along with the opportunity to visit lavender and olive farms. The established river walk could provide signage with information about cultural heritage and natural resource management.



Figure 8: McIntyre River Walk at Goondiwindi

St George - Bigambul Nation

The People of the Bigambul Nation are the First People of this Country with the Elders from thousands of generations past responsible for the stewardship of these landscapes. Current and emerging Elders and future generations of Bigambul People have ongoing connections to the landscapes of this region.

St George and surrounds

The population in St George has decreased from 5,000 to 4,500 in the last 5 years. There are however shortages of houses to rent in St George.

There has been a marked decrease in rainfall in recent times. Paddle steamers used to come all the way up the rivers towards the NSW Queensland border.

St George is not on the railway line but all major towns in Balonne Shire are on a river. Thallon has the railway line and some engineering works.

Balonne Shire Council employs 95 people. Queensland Health is a big employer. In general the number of State Government employees based locally has reduced substantially.

There was interest in the creation of a map that shows all the different locations of clubs/community groups – does one already exist? This could be a capacity building venture if shared with the community. The task of maintaining the correct details on the map was identified as a challenge.

There is a need to develop partnerships to build opportunity, this includes First Peoples.

Automation in agriculture has impacted on jobs. There are fewer shearing teams too; there used to be 52 shearing teams in the area, now there is only 8.

The introduction of dorpers and goats has meant that there is not the need for shearing; these skills are being lost. Expertise for general sheep husbandry has been lost. Increased exclusion fencing has resulted in increased number of people running sheep that require shearing /crutching and there are insufficient teams/shearers in industry to meet the demand – nationwide issue, there is a lot of interest in running shearing training schools particularly around Dirranbandi.

A Country University is planned for St George and Dirranbandi. The University would allow residents to study remotely and access a library and study hub at a \$6M facility. Roma are also looking at a similar opportunity.

Rural Financial Services provides mentoring services for agriculture, tourism and small business.

There is a micro abattoir operating called Maranoa Meats.

Landcare

Dirranbandi Landcare group has 60 members. Dirranbandi is an inland delta, with grasses that can withstand flooding. Culgoa Wetland south of the border in New South Wales is fed by the rivers around Dirranbandi. Narran lakes (RAMSAR Listed) is fed by Narran River running through Lower Balonne floodplain from Dirranbandi)

There is no longer a landcare group in St George due to lack of funding.

Extension Officers

The community is missing the support from extension officers of the past. Cotton growers have an extension officer but soil, pasture, farming and grazing support are lacking. The cotton extension position is funded by the cotton industry. It is important for the community to expand their knowledge base and the extension officers were able to assist with this.

Land Management

There is interest in finding out how regenerative agriculture plays out in drier climates – a case study would be good. It works in the wet but needs to be demonstrated in the dry.

Farmers feel let down by the government. Rural areas have asked for assistance to keep staff on the pay roll during drought and other events. COVID-19 came along and the Government gave instant financial assistance to the greater community.

Genetically Modified (GM) cotton has meant that 90% of sprays are now not required for pests.

Most farmers are aiming to leave the land in a better way.

There are benefits in retaining stubble to increase carbon levels in the soil.

There is interest in seeing trials of compost teas and what Haggerty's in Western Australia are doing with their properties (see <https://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/natural-intelligence-farming-ian-dianne-haggerty/>).

Southern Queensland Landscapes have run field days with Ray Thompson on managing claypans and retention of water which were well received by the community. The community are interested in similar field days. Glen Lansberg from Charleville Southern Queensland Landscapes is also working on ways to enhance the retention of water.

Would be good to go and visit David Hill's place.

Interested in replanting and management of riparian areas including fencing. Prefer incentive funding with say 20% towards work rather than full funding models.

Would like to see research on appropriate land use for land type.

Mitchell grass needs a full profile to be successful.

Mulga used to be pulled in big rings to put less pressure on the landscape. Now it can only be pulled in lines which increases risk of erosion.

Tree cover at 30% allows for grass to grow underneath particularly in cypress pine country.

People like Col Payton have researched grazing management (see Ecorich Grazing <https://www.ecorichgrazing.com.au/>).

There have been field days where Victor Steffensen has discussed fire management with the community. Important to understand how to manage pasture post burning.

Peer to Peer learning is the way that locals learn. Want to see more case studies on the issues raised. More mentors are needed for farmers.

More agriculture and environment needs to be covered in education curriculum.

Interested in fodder management workshops.

Exclusion Fencing

Exclusion fencing gives more time to do other things rather time and resources spent protecting stock from wild dogs.

Positive impacts of fencing have been noted – nature comes back when predators are excluded and managed including land repair and an increase in pasture/ground cover when total grazing management is controlled.

Balonne Council took out a loan to help fund cluster fencing for the region. The Council provides loans to landholders for fencing (see Box 1). There is also funding available under the Murray–Darling Basin Economic Development Program (MDBEDP).

The cost of fencing is \$13,000 per km including \$7,000 for materials. Costs vary depending on the type of soil.

It is believed that wild dogs regularly come in from the Thomby Ranges north of St George and spread south.

NSW are putting a dog fence along the NSW/QLD border, with the fence to go on the northern side of the Culgoa National Park (<https://www.lfs.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/our-major-projects/nsw-wild-dog-fence-extension-project>).

Dog fencing on the border will create a barrier to the movement of wildlife.

Also need to identify the unintended consequences of cluster fences – e.g. no corridors for migratory animals, animals getting stuck in fences and pressure on farms not within the cluster.

Dog issues increase where there are no cluster fences. Need to address outside the clusters for pests too.

There was interest in seeing research on retention of calving either side of dog fencing.

The Balonne Shire Council (BSC) in conjunction with rural landholders aims to construct approximately 170 kilometres of Wild Dog Exclusion Fencing (WDEF) over a one year period protecting approximately 300,000 hectares of grazing land which is best suited to small stock (e.g. sheep and goats) from wild dog predation. This project will have a total cost of \$1.6 million which will have both direct and indirect input into the local economy of the Balonne Shire. The end result of this project will see a revival of the sheep and wool industry as well as expansion into similar activities (i.e. goat production) in South West Queensland, strengthening and diversifying the economic sector of our region. This project will conclude all construction by November 2020." <https://www.balonne.qld.gov.au/wdef-scheme/communities-combating-pest-wed-impacts-drought-program-ccwi/1>

Cattle

Hydatid worm in cattle can cause loss of condition and impact the productivity of stock.

St George disease or pimelea poisoning is also prevalent still (see Box 2). 2,000 head of cattle have been lost in the St George area.

Pimelea poisoning is potentially fatal for cattle but also affects sheep and horses. It is most common in south-west Queensland, north-west New South Wales and northern South Australia. It is also known as St. George disease, Marree disease, big-head and flaxweed poisoning.
(from <https://www.mla.com.au/research-and-development/animal-health-welfare-and-biosecurity/poisonings/toxic-plants/pimelea/#:~:text=It%20is%20also%20known%20as,dust%20can%20also%20cause%20poisoning.>)

Tourism

There is tourism potential for the region and there have been tourism campaigns. There is a manager of tourism at Balonne Shire. There is a cotton and winery tour that is quite popular. There is a tour of Cubbie Station run out of Dirranbandi Caravan Park.

There is interest in cultural tours led by First Nations.

Bird watching is an activity that visitors are interested in.

Carbon Farming

Need to identify the unintended consequences of carbon farming – e.g. fire risk and reduced population from absentee landholders and the follow on into the broader community.

Soil in the Dirranbandi area has a very deep profile – it is hard to retain carbon in deep soils. Carbon runs off in wet conditions. Other soils produce different outcomes. It is hard to measure increase's in carbon in deep soils- self mulching cracking clays loams.

Nature Conservation

Australian Zoo has a property (140,000 acres) in Thomby Ranges to conserve the woma python and the little known yakka skink (<https://www.australiazoo.com.au/support-wildlife/properties/#:~:text=In%20St%20George%2C%20Australia%20Zoo,the%20little%20known%20yakka%20skink>). Council has some connection with Australian Zoo.

Private properties with suitable habitat for northern hairy-nosed wombats are being sought as sanctuaries for a release program similar to that in other places (see <https://environment.des.qld.gov.au/wildlife/threatened-species/featured-threatened-species-projects/northern-hairy-nosed-wombat/xstrata-project/design-methods>).

National Parks in the area include Thurston and Alton. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services (QPWS) rangers work well with the community.

Pests

1080 baits are used to manage for pigs. Dirranbandi Landcare conducted aerial shooting with Round 1 in February and Round 2 in October. Timing for pig shooting is important. The pigs like chickpea crops.

Different pest schemes – some work some do not. There is a *pestsmart* app that can assist with pest management.

The Council received \$200,000 in funding on behalf of the community from Communities Combating Pest and Weed Impacts during Drought Program (CCWI).

Stock Routes

Balonne Shire Council use a coordinated approach to management of stock routes with DNRME (Department of Natural Resources Mines and Energy).

Community

Participants were keen to see the community come together – different groups usually keep to themselves. Different community organisations including health, ambulance, police, landcare etc. should band together to create a united approach for land management and community cohesion. Events bring the community together.

Interest in putting together an NRM Conference – a range of speakers that can connect the dots.

The importance of stewardship, storytelling, consumer education and practice change was recognised.

Want to see jobs on the ground as a result of assistance for COVI-19 recovery.

Mitchell - Gunggari Nation

The People of the Gunggari Nation are the Traditional Custodians of this area with the Elders from thousands of generations responsible for the past stewardship of these landscapes. Current and emerging Elders and future generations of Gunggari People have ongoing cultural obligations and connections to the landscapes of this area.

Mitchell and surrounds

Roma is a major shopping and business hub for the area.

Young ones are now coming home as the cluster fencing allows for the businesses to be more viable. Some of the new enterprises are going back into sheep.

There has been an increase in house prices in town.

There is no oil and gas activity in the area.

The area had a lot of sheep once. There is government support for reinvigorating the wool industry to promote increased business and community activity.

Town provides more services for those moving in from outside the area.

There is concern that lots of available information has been ignored and there should be more attention paid to using the data and knowledge already collected.

Suggestion that planning focus on catchments as an area of management. A plan for the region could be based on different sub regions that join to form a coordinated plan.

Concern that waste management needs to be more of a focus. Compost could provide a valuable resource.

People interested in native plants for food and fibre etc. such as native finger limes. Lavender also of interest.

Some residents filter the town water to improve the quality and for particular individual needs.

Fencing

Exclusion fencing has been erected and dams have been fenced to manage grazing pressures. The fencing provides benefits for wild dog control. Thirty dingoes were trapped inside the fence last year.

12 years since the fencing started.

Landowners do fence for land types to allow different and appropriate management for each type of land.

Pigs are largely under control and kangaroo numbers are low. There is an opportunity to eradicate pigs inside fences. There is a Feral Pig Action Plan for the area.

Properties within cluster are now fencing internally to further assist with managing grazing pressure.

There is concern that Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads are removing the grids. Main concern is that this will open up the exclusion fencing where these grids stop pests entering the clusters - this becomes a particular problem when the sirens that discourage the wild dogs from entering fenced areas don't work on these openings.

Dingo fence on the border with NSW will provide further management of grazing pressure.

Some landowners on the edge of exclusion fencing are finding that it acts as a funnel for pushing pest animals into areas where they might not have been a big problem in the past. Some evidence that exclusion fencing has moved the grazing pressure problem to other areas that aren't fenced.

One management option suggested is to leave the big kangaroo bucks as they naturally manage kangaroo numbers by keeping the younger bucks in check which keeps the breeding in check.

There is a market for kangaroo meat which is targeted by the Kangaroo Co-op in Mitchell. The Co-op returns 10 cents per kilo to property owner through a financial lease arrangement. Australia exports kangaroo meat to 69 countries.

Goats and kangaroos are harvestable with minimum management if they are harvested lightly.

More available water through stock troughs and dams etc. provides the opportunity for kangaroos to spread across the region.

Pests and Weeds

Dingoes prey on older kangaroos and joeys particularly.

Regrowth needs to be managed particularly box and ironbark after recent rains.

No cane toads south of Mitchell.

The management of feather top grass (*Nassella tenuissimia*) and *Eragrostis* sp. is an issue.

Can more weeds be declared locally to promote management before they get out of control and become a bigger issue? Hard to get investment support for weed control and it is costly for landowners to undertake.

Castor oil plant (*Ricinus communis*) is now present above the weir – the fruit is toxic to animals.

Parthenium is also an issue and it is said that it's a matter of "when" you are going to get parthenium not "if".

No success with bio controls (Rusts) for weeds as it is not humid enough to be effective in the area.

Harrisia cactus is an issue.

An option could be to fence off areas to stop weed spread.

Buffel grass can also be a problem where it is a monoculture and reduces diversity of pastures.

Need to be coordinating with council and main roads- not in silo – for controlling Weed Spread

Pasture

Having a diversity of grass species and not just buffel grasses is good due to different maturing times and extended feed availability. Buffel can form a monoculture which is hard to break. Buffel does not

grow well in the sandstone country as conditions are too hard. It will not dominate Mitchell grass country in this region.

There has been some pasture dieback from mealybug attack.

One property has 35 paddocks to allow cattle to be rotated for enhanced production but to do this more effectively requires more fencing. The rule of thumb is to feed a 1/3 of the grass before the cattle are moved on (rotated).

Important to fence off the different types of native grasses so stock do not prioritise one over another and upset the balance of grasses.

Cattle and some goats including boer infused goats can be found south of Mitchell on Neebine Creek.

Goats take the grass first before they go to other sources of feed.

Stock

Pimelea affects cattle, loves winter when there is nothing to compete with; research for control and treatment not yet successful.

The breeder herd of a cattle operation is extremely valuable; breeders are hard to keep during drought when they have to be fed and hard to buy back after a drought when everyone is looking to restock.

Landcare

Mitchell Landcare has been operating for 15 years. There is currently limited to no money available for on ground works. Mitchell Landcare is a volunteer committee and is still working out where they fit in to the new regional arrangements. The group promotes best practice land management.

Water and waterways

Amby Creek is silting up fed by silt from gully head erosion in waterways feeding the creek.

There has been a general increase in creeks silting up in the area.

Weeds in waterways are an issue with more weeds coming down the creeks than in the past.

Water retention in the areas with hard ground can be a challenge.

Ground water is too deep to drill down to for bores and therefore are few and far between; have to drill 1,000m plus to find ground water.

There are fewer permanent waterholes and less water in old springs than in the past.

Mulga

Retaining ground cover is important for mulga country. The aim for fodder management is to keep mulga low by grazing and resting.

Land Management

Burning is not a simple management tool. Complicated to find the right time and conditions and landowners need information to be confident to use fire as a common management tool.

There has been good grass recovery following summer rains and silver box suckers have grown one foot since Christmas. A slow moving burn with a hot fire kills the lignotuber below ground.

Is it cheaper to get fodder delivered here or grown here?

Carbon and soil health

Soil carbon is important.

Need to start with the health of the soil to maximise water infiltration and retention. The quality is in the ground and ground cover for carbon. The harder country creates a barrier to water infiltration.

There is next to no carbon farming as there is no return on investment for this area.

Tourism

The Neil Turner Weir at Mitchell on the Maranoa River is popular for free camping with 50 to 60 vans sometimes at the weir on a night.

Not many farm stays as they take a lot of time to manage (this limits ag-tourism).

Mitchell Spa facility – COVID-19 doubled the numbers visiting in July, August and September.

The Yumba limited visitors during COVID 19 but is still very active. The Yumba is a 23 hectare property on the Maranoa River, just to the east of the town of Mitchell. The Yumba was home to generations of Gunggari People for decades until its inhabitants were forced to move off the property by the Booringa Shire Council in 1968. The Yumba hosts the old schoolhouse which has been adapted to house a museum upstairs and a place for gatherings and reunions.

There is a general interest in more tourism opportunities for the area.



Figure 9: Mitchell St George Road

Toowoomba - Western Waka Waka Nation

The People of the Western Waka Waka Nation are the First People of this area with Elders from thousands of generations responsible for the past stewardship of these landscapes. Current and emerging Elders and future generations of Western Waka Waka People have ongoing connections to the landscapes of this region.

“There is no one answer to all the issues. But the answers we develop must be in context and appropriate to the landscape, community and experience and include the First People’s Knowledge.”

The community have identified the need for a Knowledge Hub/Library that can help tell the story of the landscape and the community of southern Queensland highlighting what works and what doesn’t.

Information could be shared via:

- Newsletters
- Youtube/tik tok
- Social media: LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, facebook
- Podcasts
- Apps – weed identification etc. Region specific app
- SQL Physical and online library
- Webinars – live and video bank of webinars (open access)
- Communication channels – zoom etc. (webinars)
- Face to face

With the relative overload of available information from many sources, it may be worthwhile having an index with a summary of an item on a topic, and then a link to the full article, etc. (This could include articles, etc from other sources).

There is a need to provide open access to existing information but there is no substitute for on ground experience. A major issue is how do we access all the existing information much of which has not been digitised.

Better communication is required to connect theoretical/scientific information with on ground activities.

Need people who can tell a story well.

For changes in practice this may be well supported by demonstrations in the field.

The creation of a social learning network or community of practice could assist sharing of knowledge for on ground outcomes.

Collaboration can be enhanced by facilitating knowledge. Maybe a step towards addressing the IP challenges of industry bodies that keep a lot of information locked up for their members.

Enhanced climate forecasting would assist planning. The Northern Australia Climate Program could support this through workshops, property visits, website, Facebook, etc.

Need to enhance grazing management. There are situations where overgrazing with horses has resulted in little ground cover leading to erosion. Could include links to Grazing Land Management workshops, etc.

Build on previous successes and knowledge. This is extremely important (do not try to reinvent the wheel; and could include what doesn't work). Could canvas for "what works, and what doesn't" from primary producers, service people, extension officers, etc and link these with new practices. Document this, keep it updated and make it available for online access.

Need to retrieve and maintain existing knowledge and experience from department soil conservation staff and make it accessible.

Reviving soil conservation/land management officers is a popular idea.

A Regional Ecological Master Plan is needed to maintain and enhance biodiversity and ensure gene pool diversity in the into the future

Robotics could be used more in feral pest and weed management.

Robotics are used in dairy industry - barriers include initial costs and servicing/maintenance - downtime when problems occur.

Drones could be used more to support management activities.

Coordinated/landscape scale activities (not only at individual farm level).

On ground action and success can be promoted by more demonstrations of success stories by trusted farmers/colleagues with clear information on costs and benefits

There needs to be a better understanding of the hydrology of the region by a wider audience.

Need management officers and training schools to help share knowledge.

The power of the community is important - the Felton Food Festival built the community through collaboration, as a response to fighting the Felton Coal Mine development.

SLQ could develop ongoing links with tertiary institutions project work by students.

Stanthorpe - Githabul Nation

The People of the Githabul Nation are the First People of this Country with the Elders from thousands of generations past responsible for the stewardship of these landscapes. Current and emerging Elders and future generations of Githabul People have ongoing connections to the landscapes of this region.

Find resources (ongoing 5 years minimum or permanent) so that Southern Downs region can be networked both at a community level and council. Community need to be connected and supported to create flourishing landscapes. Requires a budget with access to dollars and a minimum of two on ground staff. Action must be practical.

A Landcare Coordinator is needed to support on ground activities. Need to show how SQ Landscapes fits in to avoid overlap and enhance coordination with landcare groups.

Vegetation corridors need to be mapped and enhanced.

Create and promote case studies that are local related to on ground trials that are visible to land managers and the community. University of Southern Queensland (USQ) could assist with case studies. Need to show that undertaking landcare can provide productivity gains.

National Parks require a user pays system which will engender ownership of the parks at “point of sale”. National Parks provide important recreational activity which needs to be valued. The proceeds must be fed back into environment.

Introduce recycling systems with user pays. Could start with introductory schemes using point of purchase levy. Proceeds invested back into the community. Initially government investment then move through to private funding. Monitoring of recycling efforts and outcomes important.

There needs to be additional support and labour for nature refuges. Assistance with the cost of maintaining refuges and insurance for volunteers and rate rebates.

The riparian zone needs to be better managed. Fire management needs to be better. Cluster fencing groups could work together on this. A Landcare Officer would be a good resource. Landowner engagement is crucial for these outcomes.

Land managers need to be connected to knowledge and conversations about and management. Need to find a representative in the community to talk to the rest of the community (unengaged).

Training is needed to enhance skills in longer term including traineeships on the ground. Skilling Queensland etc. may be able to assist.

The requirements for many grant programs are biased towards land managers who have the resources and insurance coverage which often requires an incorporated association.

Explore the option of green bonds to get new money into the system.

The cost of producing food needs to be reflected at the consumer end; pay what food is worth.

Carbon

The carbon market comes with its own costs and is complicated to operate in. Carbon sequestration requires a coordinated approach; single properties hard to measure etc. Carbon sequestration programs could be organised in groups to coordinate costs, efforts and outcomes. Reward custodians as stewards of the landscape. Ironic that carbon is not recognised until knocked down and vegetation replanted. Funding is needed to measure carbon credits through enhanced soil management. Get carbon markets going based around the target of 2050 Carbon neutrality to increase funding. In this way the environment becomes a business; just need the business case.

Waste to energy

There is an opportunity for converting waste to energy by using waste fruit to generate electricity. Business representatives in the area are looking for supplies of waste fruit.



Figure 10: Stanthorpe Community Roundtables

Millmerran

We acknowledge, respect and learn from the First Peoples of the 28 Nations in the Southern Queensland Landscapes area, and further afield. We pay our respects to the Elders: past, present and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture, science and knowledge, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples across our nation.

A healthy landscape starts with soil health – need to describe what a healthy landscape is.

Landholders want to know what they need to do to get knowledge and examples of best practice. Case studies could assist to provide this information.

Good soil health grows plants which protects waterways and nurtures insects which sustain animals. This can address erosion, improves water quality and feeds bees.

Establish an incentive scheme for getting healthy landscapes – investment and action should be independently assessed. Scheme should be scientifically based and include community knowledge (brains trust) which leads to implementation and monitoring and evaluation to continuously improve practice.

The scheme needs to have financial benefits based on a cost benefit analysis. Need someone to do the paperwork and help with applications. Use existing networks and groups to get a program in place.

The program needs a definite timeline for action.

The community need a set of apps to help decision making. This could help create a resource hub with easy access to resources.

Peer to peer change process amongst landowners works the best.

Consumer preferences need to be influenced and their understanding raised of the environmental cost of perfect looking food produced with chemicals.

Shared vision recognizing that the reason for production relates to consumption.

Better marketing based on the following steps:

- identify market
- define product.

Primary industry needs to be a stronger price setter not price taker.

Farmers could be more proactive in marketing:

- Use collective knowledge
- Enhance individual's knowledge – production, profitability, sustainability

Manage for climate - variability - trends

- Need enhanced prediction accuracy and understanding of weather and climate
- Entomology links – Indigo Jones.

Example actions:

- Understanding our footprint

- Benchmark our footprint
- Shared vision
 - Scale – local/region/wider
 - Theme – pests/agronomy
 - Desirable species

Where do we start?

Better and more consistent communication and sharing of knowledge.

Better awareness of hydrology and water issues and use of available information.

Improve policies to improve our landscapes

- Use of herbicides and pesticides
- Farming practices
- Incentives to improve use of natural resources

Everyone needs to work together with responsibility for our actions.

Project/Actions:

- Clean out creeks/waterways and vegetate banks
- Stop ploughing near creeks/waterways
- Direct communication – mailouts – on latest information and more face-to-face information “on the ground”
- Could SQ Landscapes get funding and take on the old DPI extension role?

Are there too many groups – how many are there?

Cultural burning:

- Landcare groups working to get a team of rangers in Millmerran
- Looking for funding from a variety of sources.

Koala/Biodiversity

- Build up suitable habitat
- Take in rescued koalas from urban areas.

Education:

- Youth
 - They become consumers or work on the land
- Change curriculum or local knowledge holders get involved with local schools

Collaboration – we are more effective together including:

- SQ Landscapes
- Agforce
- QFF
- Others

Need accurate information to be available to all e.g., finding plant species for a local area

- Showcase successes/good news stories and share their knowledge.