

## Story from Aileron Station on Practice Change

*In 2017 the CLMA ran a number of soil workshops as part of the Territory Natural Resource Management (TNRM) "Soils: Sustaining Our Industry and Livelihoods Project". The workshops were run by central Australian Soil conservation mentor, Col Stanton at Aileron Station (May), Undoolya Station (September) and New Crown Station (December) attracting some 20 pastoralists and 6 indigenous Rangers. The following is an update on the workshop and the practice change which has come from the first workshop that was held; written by the Managers of Aileron Station, Craig and Sarah Cook.*

We ran our soil workshop on Aileron Station in 2017, where there is a lot of existing erosion in many different country types. We sought to hold a workshop because we don't ever want to create new or add to existing erosion problems.

Before the workshop we weren't certain our techniques & decisions were always right; we wanted to know the best 'type' of whoa boy and we wanted to hear an expert opinion on the best place to put them. We are also doing development on property, including roads and fence lines, and we wanted to be really sure about our choice of where to put them.

Having a workshop firstly forced us to 'down tools' and focus on our questions. We spent time walking the landscape, discussing water flow, land types, impacts and decisions. Our whole crew got an instant appreciation that using machinery wasn't just about getting in and operating; we all started looking around the landscape first. It's nearly been a year and the demonstration exercise we did during the workshop is testimony to what we are trying to achieve, water flow has pulled up and vegetation has returned to a severely washed out gully we repaired.

One of the main changes we've taken from this workshop is thinking about the country first. With that, our main aim when working on roads and fence lines is for a flat surface, so the water can run freely across it, rather than in it or down it. This was something that 'happened' before, but now we consciously aim to achieve it. We now also feel more confident dealing with existing erosion. Repair work will never stop, but our aim is to improve, not create erosion issues.

We firmly believe all pastoralists benefit from these types of workshops - even if you only learn one new thing - and we're surprised they are not more available or frequent in this industry. The cost of erosion is hard to put a value on, but good land management is in every ones interest.

We are very pleased we were able to have a workshop here, all of us who attended learnt something - and we're continuing to learn from it. We would like to hold another workshop in the future, to continue improving our knowledge and work practices. You can't learn everything in one workshop, and even with years of experience, it doesn't mean you shouldn't sit back & wonder what you don't know.

Craig and Sarah Cook, Aileron Pastoral Holdings



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## Since the Practice Change Workshop

Since the Aileron Station Practice Change workshop (May 2017), we have changed the way we grade roads on Aileron Station. We are also gradually beginning to deal with some erosion.

Fence lines and roads are now graded flat; we try to avoid creating rills or moving too much top soil.



We are also battering the sides of eroded gully's, and we better understand where we should start repairing damage around dams, so they don't create erosion. As shown in the photo below (this dam problem is a longer term project, but I wanted to demonstrate how we are thinking about what we've learned and the level of change we are aiming for).



Practice Change Workshop – demonstration site - then versus now



2017. Start of workshop.

Head of the erosion.

Road access on right side of photo; eroded gully's from the head to the left side



Head of the erosion being levelled, and wall being built

Sides of gully which flowed from the head of the erosion. Removing the sharp edges and battering them flat



11/1/18. Area received heaviest rain in November 2017, smaller showers in December 2017 and January 2018. No signs of erosion since workshop.



Sides of gully's. Water no long gushes through, vegetation has increased.



Inside gully, water used to gush from the head of erosion.

Vegetation has returned.



These two photos show the gully side of the wall built over the head of the erosion. No sign of soil movement since the work was completed (during the workshop)



More of the battered sides.



Vegetation has started to return.

