Building Resilience in the Burdekin grazing industry
NQ Dry Tropics

The Queensland Government is committed to increasing agriculture activity within the state. The current challenges facing the grazing industry are many, including high rural debt levels, increasing input costs, labour shortages and limited market access. In order to meet the goal of doubling production by 2040, Queensland will require a beef industry with the capacity to raise cattle on low cost, low input and sustainably-managed grazing systems. There is a requirement for graziers to implement changes to their business to improve their economic, social and environmental performance.

96% of the Burdekin Dry Tropics region is used for grazing cattle. The Building Resilience in the Burdekin Grazing Industry project involved a group of three landholders (managing over 56,000 hectares between them) trialling a holistic management approach to improve their economic, social and environmental performance. The project trialled innovative practices on demonstration properties and encouraged the sharing of improved knowledge through extension.

This approach involved developing a decision-making framework to help graziers improve their performance and importantly, supported practical, cost effective and innovative approaches to land management and restoration issues. The project demonstrated these innovative approaches in the priority Bowen Broken Bogie basin to improve land condition, water resources and other environmental assets.

The project has already experienced a number of positive outcomes including the development of detailed property plan and management frameworks for each grazier. The broader grazing community will continue to be engaged throughout the project using existing networks, Landcare groups and industry bodies to disseminate key learnings and messages through field days, media and presentations.

The commitment of graziers to transformational change in management practices through the implementation of the Holistic Management approach will ensure future long term outcomes including: the development of practical, cost effective sustainable land management solutions; building landscape resilience to extreme events; building industry skills, knowledge and engagement; improving water quality runoff to the GBR; and increasing productivity and profitability of the grazing industry across the Burdekin rangelands. The expected outcomes will drive further change through clear demonstration of positive results.

A thorough monitoring program is underway to provide supporting evidence of outcomes, including the cost-effective resolution of poor land conditions through high intensity grazing of large herds of cattle. The demonstrated scientifically robust results will provide graziers throughout Australia with the tools to make informed decisions around management practices for landscape resilience and production outcomes.
Images

*Image 1 – Graziers discuss the plan to use high density stocking rates followed by rest to rehabilitate a gully on Glenalpine.*

*(Image courtesy of Colleen James)*

*Image 2 – Sonoma weaners watch on as NQ Dry Tropics staff collect soil health data*

*(Photos courtesy of Colleen James)*