



**LANDHOLDERS
DRIVING CHANGE**
BURDEKIN MAJOR INTEGRATED PROJECT



POLICY ENGAGEMENT TWO-YEAR UPDATE

THE Policy Engagement program facilitates landholder engagement in policy development, review, and implementation relevant in the Bowen Broken, Bogie (BBB) catchment, near Bowen and Collinsville.

It supports graziers to better understand regulatory requirements, and works with the government to explore opportunities for reviewing how regulations and policies operate.

This program area also supports graziers to comment on proposed regulations during public consultation opportunities, and coordinates engagement between landholders and government on policy and regulatory issues.

Graziers asked, LDC responded

Landholders Driving Change's (LDC) Policy and Engagement program has played a key role in facilitating meetings and forums between BBB landholders and senior government department officials to discuss policy and regulations relevant in the BBB.



REEF REGULATIONS

BBB graziers have had significant and meaningful input in the design of the draft reef regulations before they were passed as law in September 2019. (The Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019).

In late 2017, LDC hosted a workshop with BBB landholders and Office of the Great Barrier Reef (OGBR) representatives to discuss the draft reef regulations package. Following this meeting, LDC submitted a response to the draft regulations on behalf of the grazier representatives, expressing concern the proposed 12-month implementation time-frame of the reef regulations was unreasonable.

The Queensland Government listened, and as a result, the regulations are being staged during three years across the reef regions. The new laws came into effect on 1 December 2019, with grazing minimum standards commencing in the Burdekin on 1 December, 2020.

LDC hosted another workshop in Bowen, attended by landholders and OGBR representatives, to discuss the proposed 'grazing minimum standards', under the reef regulations. Discussion focused on the graziers desire to see the regulations and compliance effort focus on landholders who were not doing the right thing.

As a result of this feedback (and feedback from other consultative workshops across the state), the minimum standards were updated to focus on:

- Maintaining land that is in good or fair condition.
- Implementing measures to improve land in poor or degraded condition.

BBB landholders were

consulted again during the development of the guidance material. Landholders wanted the guide to acknowledge that not all land and soil types respond the same way throughout the reef catchments at different times of the year, and that some gully systems were too large for landholders to remediate by themselves.

This was acknowledged, and was incorporated into the Grazing Requirements fact sheets as follows:

"It is recognised that:

- For some land types it may not be possible to achieve 50 per cent ground cover at 30 September each year even when taking all reasonable steps.
- It may be impractical and cost prohibitive to improve some areas of very degraded land, e.g. severe gullying or scalded areas. If so, measures must be taken to prevent these areas from further degrading or expanding".

During the consultation process, graziers also questioned whether there would be an acknowledgement of grazing properties that had participated in accredited programs.

The reef regulation fact sheets have been updated to include this information.

The LDC has made a commitment to provide information about the regulations to landholders in the Burdekin region, including the BBB.

At the BBB catchment catch-ups, held at Gumlu, Bowen River and Exeale, in December 2019, LDC grazier team members presented LDC project updates, reef regulations updates and distributed the fact sheets, as well as the Grazing Resilience And Sustainable Solutions (GRASS) program update.

POLICY ROUNDTABLE

AN LDC roundtable was conducted in Townsville (February 2019) to:

- provide a platform to explore opportunities to influence existing and *proposed regulations to better support water quality outcomes; and
- to discuss the intent of existing and proposed regulations, and the impact of these regulations on grazing operations.



It brought together graziers, representatives from NQ Dry Tropics, the Department of Environment and Science (DES), the Office of Great Barrier Reef (OGBR), the Department of Natural Resources Mines and Energy (DNRME) — including directors from relevant government departments (Vegetation, Reef, Water and Protected Plants).

A number of actions were prioritised, which led to two key outcomes:

- Improvements to the 'blue dot' Protected Plants Trigger map associated with the Protected Plants legislation, and including information about protected plants in the Vegetation Management Property Reports.
- Obtaining DNRME agreement to explore options for meeting reef protection measures and vegetation management requirements

Changes to the Vegetation Management Property Reports.

At graziers' request, DNRME has also included protected plant information in the Vegetation Management Property Reports, to help landholders understand the process if they have threatened plants on their property.

DES released a new version of the Protected Plants Trigger map in June 2019, as part of a regular review process.

At the request of graziers, the blue dots were changed to green dots.

Exploring options to test an alternative approach for landholders to meet reef protection measures and vegetation management requirements.

BBB landholder, Bristow Hughes, of Strathalbyn Station, near Collinsville, who attended the LDC policy roundtable, subsequently submitted a proposal to OGBR highlighting challenges associated with improving land condition (weed control) to meet reef protection regulations at the same time as meeting vegetation management obligations.

DNRME agreed to investigate.

Representatives from DNRME, OGBR, Queensland Herbarium and NQ Dry Tropics will meet with Mr Hughes on-property, to better understand the problem and look for solutions.

The on-site investigation will be conducted as corona virus restrictions permit, and the outcomes will be communicated to the BBB community and roundtable participants.

This is an excellent example of how LDC is facilitating landholder engagement in policy development, review, and implementation in the BBB



Negotiating a practical outcome

STRATHALBYN PROPOSAL

Goal: To eradicate high density invasive, non-native plants and declared pest plants on a 400 ha site by way of an integrated management approach; and to improve conditions that will allow the native vegetation to be rejuvenated to restore ecological function to the regional ecosystem.

The landholder wants to improve land condition, in line with grazing minimum standards, but considers that weed control required to restore the land is not possible as a result of vegetation management obligations that require mature native vegetation be retained.

The landholder presents the case that the ecological function of the landscape is compromised and that provisions under the Vegetation Management Act 1999 do not allow for adequate weed control to maintain or improve this function.

The landholder asserts that this poses subsequent implications for complying with reef protection regulations as it limits the ability of the landholder to

improve degraded land condition and achieve 50 per cent ground cover at the end of September.

This further raised the threat that if not sufficiently treated, the weed infestation will continue to worsen having implications for sediment run off and productivity, as well as spreading to other properties downstream.

Weed species target: Rubber vine, Bellyache bush, Lantana, Parkinsonia, Chinee apple.

Management outcomes: Improved biodiversity of regional ecosystems and improvement in the water quality and habitat of waterways and wetlands.



Strathalbyn grazier, Bristow Hughes



Grazing Resilience and Sustainable Solutions (GRASS) program

THE LDC project has committed to be a key contact for BBB landholders who are interested in accessing the GRASS program.

The GRASS program supports landholders in the Burdekin, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions to deliver one-on-one support and tailored land-management plans to address land in poor, or degraded condition.

A key component is to support landholders to understand the:

- requirements of the reef protection regulations; and
- associated minimum standards for grazing in catchments that flow into the Great Barrier Reef.



* The Environmental Protection (Great Barrier Reef Protection Measures) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 was passed on 19 September 2019 with the new laws to come into effect on 1 December 2019. The roundtable was held in February 2019, seven months prior to the Bill being passed.



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