

*Proactively shaping & creating a prosperous future  
for Outback Queensland*

# ANNUAL REPORT 2015 - 2016

RAPAD

Incorporating Central Western  
Regional Organisation of Councils



**REMOTE AREA PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD**  
*Annual Report 2015 - 2016*

**PUBLISHED BY THE CENTRAL WESTERN QUEENSLAND  
REMOTE AREA PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD 2016**

© CWQ RAPAD 2016

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia Licence.  
To view a copy of this licence, visit [creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au)



CWQ RAPAD asserts the right to be recognised as author of the original material in the following manner.

**CONTACT US**

**Mail**

PO Box 592  
Longreach Qld 4730

**Email**

[rapad@rapad.com.au](mailto:rapad@rapad.com.au)  
[gm@rapad.com.au](mailto:gm@rapad.com.au)

**Website**

[www.rapad.com.au](http://www.rapad.com.au)

**More information**

Enquiries regarding this report may be directed to:  
CEO RAPAD - [gm@rapad.com.au](mailto:gm@rapad.com.au)

# Contents

Chairman's Report .....	4
RAPAD Board .....	4
Board Meeting Register .....	7
Organisation Chart.....	8
CEO's Report .....	9
RAPAD Staff.....	11
Key Highlights 2015-16.....	12
Sponsorships .....	13
Weeds Symposium .....	13
Capacity building activities.....	13
Digital Champions .....	14
Far West Tourism Action Plan Implementation .....	15
Pathways to the Future.....	15
Queensland Feral Pest Initiative .....	16
RAPAD Skilling.....	20
Small Business and Individuals Financial Counselling Service .....	26
RAPAD Employment Services Queensland .....	30
Central Western Regional Pest Management Group .....	31
Outback Regional Water Alliance .....	32
Outback Trailblazer 2015 .....	35
Drought Resilience Funding .....	36
Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland .....	38
 Appendix 1: Far West Tourism Development Action Plan.....	 40
Appendix 2 Pathways to the Future Report .....	56
Appendix 3: RFCSNQ Annual Report 2015-16 .....	88

## Chairman's Report

IT IS WITH PLEASURE I OFFER MY REPORT TO THE BOARD, COUNCILS AND COMMUNITIES OF CENTRAL WESTERN QUEENSLAND FOR THE 2015-16 PERIOD.

As I prepare this report, I am hopeful we are at the start of the end of one of the worst droughts in our history of white settlement here in the Central West. This drought has impacted on the region significantly and has affected not only the agribusinesses but also the towns businesses and communities as a whole. We have seen large areas of Central West agricultural land completely destocked, in some cases for the first time in those properties existence. Town businesses in some cases have experienced up to 40-50% decline in turnover, and in some town's, sizable percentages of the population have left in search of employment and other opportunities.

Despite these hard times the Central West region still survives and thrives just as it has for decades, and a century beforehand, and I have no doubt our communities will come out of this drought smarter than before.

As an agriculturally dependent region, drought will, for the foreseeable future, impact on the regions economic and social well-being and it is for this reason I am pleased to say we have finally brought funding to the region through the Australian and State governments Queensland Feral Pest Initiative (QFPI) funding program.

The wild dog fencing debate has gone on for years and with that has come frustration and angst as the differing views clashed, all while the dogs kept coming in greater numbers. I am pleased to say however that consensus was finally reached on an optimum outcome and this calendar year we have now seen funding hit the ground and fences being erected.

At present RAPAD, through the QFPI funding has rolled out dollars to eighteen clusters. Further on in this report there are more details on the facts and figures regarding the cluster fencing however needless to say, with the rain that has occurred and hopefully with more to come, this fencing will facilitate a sizable boost to the regions economic activity through greater sheep numbers. As we all know sheep have a greater flow on effect to communities than cattle and while it may be presumptuous to think Australia will ride on the sheep's back again, I'm confident in saying this region will potentially be riding on the sheep's back over the coming years. This is just the start, and I, and the Board have been advocating to government for this funding to increase, so we can continue to fund more fences with the ultimate aim of strategically fencing the Central West through a mix of cluster and strategic linear fencing.

While I'm confident in my belief of the economic returns from fencing, at the other end of the spectrum we must equally engage in the digital economy if we are truly to become a diversified regional economy that attracts and retains people, business and industry.

For that reason in June 2016 the Board endorsed the development of regional digital strategy. Under the guidance of passionate 'digital economy' Mayor, Cr Bruce Scott, this digital strategy will be a cornerstone of RAPAD's activities in this sector over the coming years.

In some ways this is not new ground for us, just an ongoing commitment to this focus area. RAPAD for many years has been active in promoting and facilitating discussion in the digital arena, having undertaken, amongst many things, social media workshops many years ago.





RAPAD is also active in supporting the regions under and unemployed through our involvement in RAPAD Employment Services Qld (RESQ). RAPAD CEO David Arnold and I are directors of RESQ, along with two external directors. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet held a scheduled yearly audit of RESQ, and I'm pleased to say RESQ is considered one of the top performing Community Development Program (CDP) providers in Australia, and here I recognise RESQ General Manager Mr Tony Rayner and his staff for their outstanding work.



Operating through the business name RAPAD Skilling ([rapadskilling.com.au](http://rapadskilling.com.au)) and under the management of Kristine Arnold, RAPAD is also an Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) accredited Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

ASQA is the national regulator for Australia's vocational education and training sector and regulates courses and training providers to ensure nationally approved quality standards are met.

---

*Despite these hard times the Central West region still survives and thrives*

RAPAD Skilling was set up several years ago and commenced in the tourism and hospitality field but quickly moved to provide training and education opportunities to our member local governments given there was no locally based RTO offering these needs.

RAPAD Skilling has branched out from the civil and construction based courses to include courses in business administration and conservation and land management. It is also one of a few providers in Australia that offers the Diploma of Financial Counselling. We put this on the RTO's scope due to our involvement in the rural financial counselling service program and we can provide education here to our own staff through our own skilled trainers.

As stated, RAPAD continues its delivery of the Australian and State government's Rural Financial Counselling Service Program. RAPAD through the registered business Rural Financial Counselling Service Qld Central Southern Region (RFCSQCSR) delivered the RFC service from 2006-7 to 31 March 2016 across much of Queensland. In late 2015 the Australian Government called an open grants process nationally, and at the same time they split the state neatly in two with a northern and southern service region.

RAPAD applied for and was granted the new northern region and on 1 April the new business, Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland (RFCSNQ – [rfcsnq.com.au](http://rfcsnq.com.au)) came into being and now delivers the service across our Central West region and also the North Queensland region.

To oversee the governance and administration of RFCSNQ, the Board appointed a project management committee (PMC) and this has four RAPAD directors on it including me, Cr Rick Britton who is the Chairman, Cr Bruce Scott, Cr Ed Warren and three external members. You can read the biographies of those three members; Alison Larard, Dr Chris Capel and Shan Delany on the RFCSNQ website, and all provide that PMC with a great depth of skills.

RFCSNQ 2015-16 annual report is also attached for readers' reference.

---

*RAPAD is recognised widely as a leading example of local government collaboration.*

This period we have also brought on a Small Business and Individuals Financial Counsellor.

In response to the drought and with limited support available for small business, the position was advocated for by the Central West Rural Wellness Network, which is chaired by Barcaldine identity and now Central West Hospital and Health Service Chair, Jane Williams. Funded by the Queensland Government and RAPAD, and contracted through the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the SBIFC is proving a valuable contributor to the region as we come out of drought. I will be particularly keen to commence the conversation with government to see how we can keep it funded well past its initial 14 month term.

RAPAD also received drought funding in the 2014, 2015 and 2016 calendar years through the Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

This funding, which was passed onto member local governments, funded a large range of community projects focused on community resilience and capacity building to aid and support communities through the drought and beyond. Here I would like to again thank the Queensland Government for supporting the region in these tough times.

RAPAD also worked with Professor John Cole from the University of Southern Queensland's, Institute for Resilient Regions. Professor Cole worked in five of our communities and with RAPAD during the worst of the drought to explore and discuss opportunities for the Central West. Those reports form the basis for councils and RAPAD to drive forward with projects and ideas, and for RAPAD the progression of the digital strategy captures a large number of actions arising from the consultations feeding into the report.



RAPAD is recognised widely as a leading example of local government collaboration. Apart from the activities and projects outlined above which present a portion of RAPAD's activities, local government in the region collaborate extensively in our traditional areas of roads, water and sewerage, and pest and weeds to name but a few areas.

Through the Outback Regional Roads and Transport Group (ORRTG), the Outback Regional Water Alliance (ORWA) and the Central West Regional Pest Management group (CWRPMG), the regions local governments work extensively on joint projects, which aim to optimise the outcomes for councils and communities alike. Local government is continually under-resourced from the national taxation pool but delivers many services to the communities we serve. These local government collaborative models like ours bring about efficiencies and innovative solutions to the issues we face.



Since the local government elections in 2016 and my re-election, I have taken on a role on the policy executive (<http://lgaq.asn.au/lgaq-policy-executive>) of the Local Government Association of Queensland, representing the views of our Central West councils. The Policy Executive is responsible for the determination of the Association's policy on behalf of member councils. The Policy Executive consists of 15 district representatives and the President. To allow me the time to devote attention to this I have stepped down as RAPAD's representative on the Outback Queensland Tourism Authority Board but I am capably replaced by Cr Andrew Martin from Blackall-Tambo Regional Council.

In the following pages you can read a cross section of the activities RAPAD engages in and I would encourage every reader to make contact with either a RAPAD director, the CEO or me if they want to know more about RAPAD.

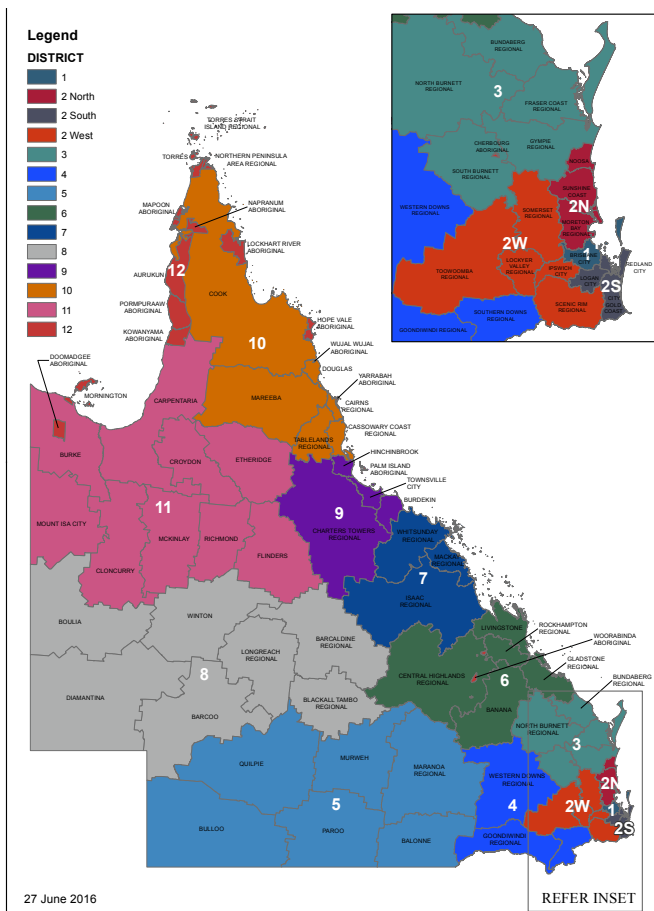


I'd also like to congratulate Cr Geoff Morton (pictured above, first in back row) on the receipt of his Order of Australia award; a well deserved recognition.

In closing I would like to acknowledge the outgoing directors of RAPAD, Cr Joe Owens, Cr Julie Groves and Cr Barry Muir who departed in early 2016, and welcome on board new directors Cr Ed Warren, Cr Bruce Scott and Cr Andrew Martin who have jumped in full of passion for their own region and the greater Central West region.

I also acknowledge continuing directors Cr Butch Lenton, Cr Rick Britton and Cr Geoff Morton OAM, and CEO David Arnold and his staff for another successful year at RAPAD.

Cr Rob Chandler  
Chairman



Policy Executive Districts



No liability accepted for any loss or damage which may arise from the use of or reliance upon this information.



## RAPAD Board

### Cr Rob Chandler - Barcaldine Regional Council



Rob Chandler has lived and worked in the Barcaldine area and in the wider Central West of Queensland all his life. He is married to Deb and they have three children, Phoebe, Emily and Mac.

Rob has experience through his life in primary production owning and running an 80,000-acre sheep and cattle enterprise. He has vast experience in public administration through sixteen years in Local Government, and is a very successful small business owner and operator through his various motel and tourism related ventures.

### Cr Bruce Scott - Barcoo Shire Council



Bruce Scott has extensive governance, leadership, community consultation and community development skills along with demonstrated experience in small business, primary production and public

administration.

Bruce resides at his channel country region property, Moothandella. He has been self-employed and an employer for more than 30 years in his own businesses. He has extensive experience living and working with very remote communities and understands their unique social needs. He has experience in probity and governance, financial monitoring and budgeting in cash and accrual standards as well as asset management and capital depreciation.

Bruce also brings to the organisation extensive experience in ICT consultation, communications infrastructure planning, network development and telecommunications services rollout to regional and remote areas.

### Cr Rick Britton - Boulia Shire Council



Rick Britton and his photographer wife Ann own and operate cattle breeding enterprises in Queensland's far North West, residing just outside of Boulia, at Goodwood Station. Rick has significant demonstrated

experience in public administration, leadership and governance, along with a lifetime of knowledge of primary production in some of Australia's harshest climate.

He is a passionate community advocate and through his role as Boulia Shire Council Mayor he has developed an intimate understanding of the needs of communities, both rural and non-rural.

In both his local government, RAPAD and business interests, Rick actively pursues professional development opportunities and to further this knowledge of governance and administration, he has completed the Australian Institute of Company Directors course.





### Cr Ed Warren - Longreach Regional Council



Ed Warren has a diverse background which covers small business ownership in agriculture and non-agricultural areas.

Ed was the Chairman of the Central West Health and Hospital Board; a position he held since its inception in 2012 through to his resignation in 2016. Previously he was Mayor of the Winton Shire Council and a councillor on the same for over ten years, and he is currently the Mayor of Longreach Regional Council having been elected in the 2016 elections.

Ed has worked through Queensland in the agricultural services sector between 1976 – 2007 and from 2008 to 2015 owned a rural enterprise near Nyngan in New South Wales. Ed has lengthy experience in governance and public, not-for-profit, and private administration. Ed has recently undertaken the Australian Institute of Company Directors course funded by RAPAD. His leadership and strategic thinking skills have been developed through his roles in local government and public health governance, along with his own successful small business enterprises.

Ed is passionate about supporting not only his own community but also the entire region. His networks are extensive throughout the greater region.

### Cr Butch Lenton - Winton Shire Council



Butch Lenton was born and raised in Winton and attended Winton State School until grade 10. Butch completed his motor mechanic apprenticeship at the Winton Shire Council workshop and now, with his wife Ros, have a mechanical business in Winton.

Butch and his wife Ros have 1 child, married daughter Carly, and a grandson Ethan. Butch and Ros's youngest daughter Lindsay passed away at 8 years old in 1995. Lindsay was born with Spina Bifida.

Butch loves his rugby league and is one of Central Wests most passionate advocates for the sport. Butch is a past President of Winton Rugby League for 22 years and involved in Central West Rugby League.

Butch is a keen motorcycle rider, having raced and ridden motorcycles from a young age. Butch was first elected to Winton Shire Council in 1997 to 2008, and was Deputy Mayor from 2004 to 2008, elected Mayor in 2012 and again in 2016.



## Cr Andrew Martin - Blackall-Tambo Regional Council



Andrew Martin is the Mayor of Blackall-Tambo Regional Council having been elected at the 2016 local government elections. Andrew is well known through agribusiness and agri-politics given the many roles he has been

involved in over the years.

Andrew, with his wife Louise own and operate Macfarlane Station near Tambo in Central West Queensland. Andrew holds Diplomas in Agriculture and Rural Business Management and has completed the Australian Institute of Company Directors program. Andrew was one of the early adopters of wild dog cluster fencing which has enabled him to run a far more profitable enterprise while enhancing land and environmental management.

Apart from his agricultural interests Andrew has had interests in many businesses and is well versed in directorship. Andrew's interests in the past have been:

- Director, Sunshine Gas Ltd, 2000-03,
- Director, Ord River Resources Ltd, 2003-08,
- Director, New Guinea Energy Ltd, 2004-15,
- Sole Director, Outback Sands Pty Ltd, 2000-12,
- Partner, Charleville Hardware Pty Ltd, 1991-2000.

Andrew has been:

- Executive member, National Farmers Federation, 1993-4,
- Executive member, Wool Council Australia, 1989-94,
- Vice President, United Graziers Association, 1994-95,
- President, Sheep and Wool Council Queensland, 1990-94,
- President, Warrego Graziers Association, 1988-91,
- Chairman, Qld Govt Land Use Consultative Committee, 1994-96.

## Cr Geoff Morton OAM - Diamantina Shire Council



Geoff Morton OAM was born in Adelaide in 1954 and schooled through correspondence until he was 10 years old and then went onto school at Scotch College in Melbourne where he completed senior.

Geoff has been a stockman, drover, rodeo rider, grazier, councillor and pilot.

Geoff is a fourth generation 'Morton' from Rosberth Station where he currently lives with his wife Bev and they have two sons. Geoff owns Rosberth Station taking it over in 2010, but managed it prior to that from 1991.

Geoff was first elected to council in 1979 and has served two terms as Mayor. Geoff has always been heavily involved in all aspects of life in his home country. Geoff has been:

- 27 years President, Betoota Race Club,
- 15 years president, Birdsville Social Club,
- 5 years Assistant Secretary, Birdsville Race Club,
- 5 years Treasurer, Birdsville Race Club,
- 4 years executive member Federal Inland Development Organisation,
- Awarded Diamantina Citizen of Year, and Diamantina Sports Administrator of Year three times.

# Board Meeting Register

## 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016

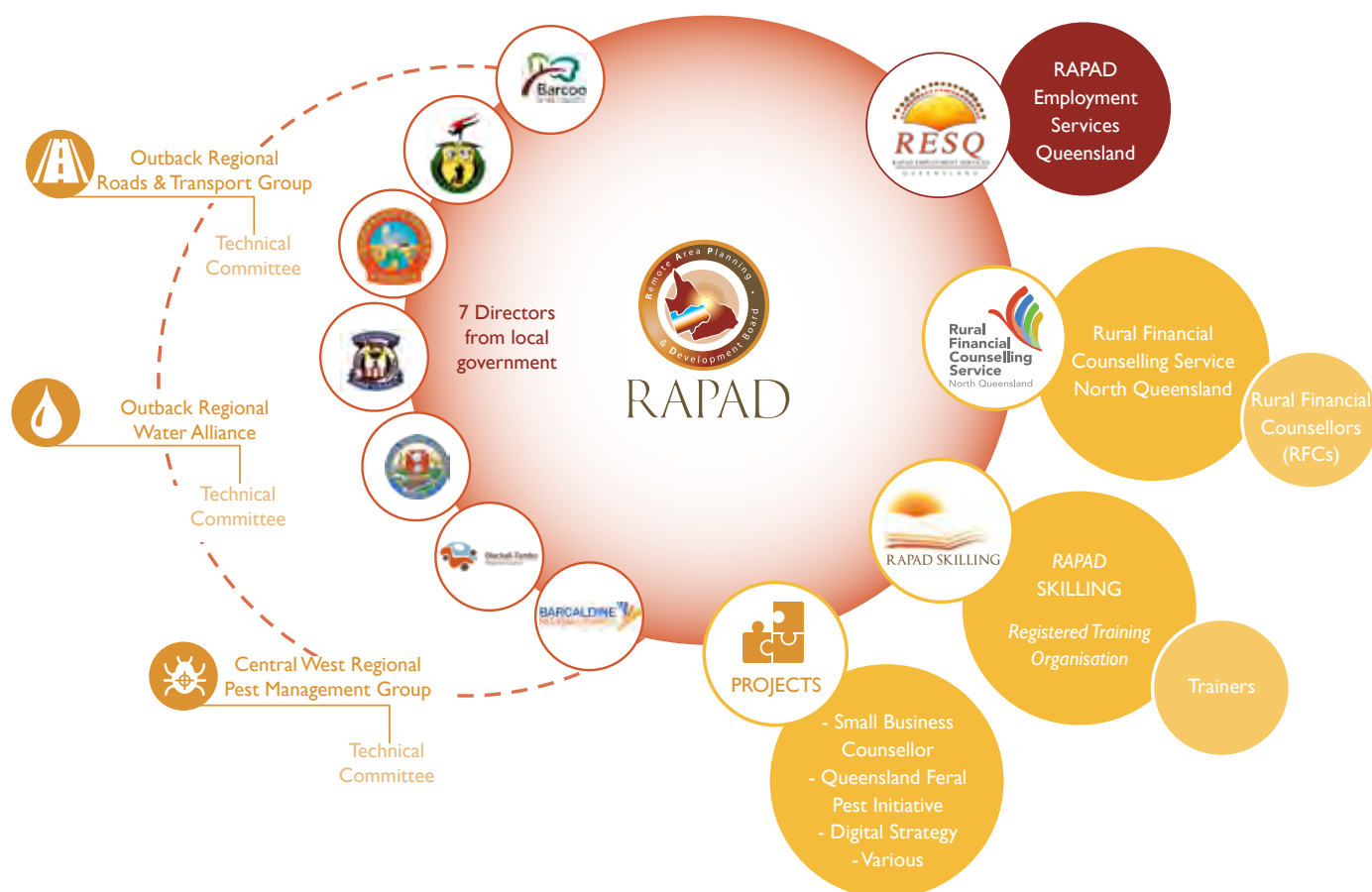
(Board members listed only)

Meeting date	Cr Chandler	Cr Groves	Cr Muir	Cr Lenton	Cr Britton	Cr Morton	Cr Owens	Cr Warren	Cr Scott	Cr Martin
3 Jul 2015	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓			
7 Aug 2015	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
4 Sep 2016	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
11 & 12 Nov 2016 Including AGM	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
4 Feb 2016	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
6 Mar 2016	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			
27 Mar 2016	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
1 Apr 2016	✓	✓ <sup>^</sup>	✓ <sup>^</sup>	✓	✓	✓	✓ <sup>^</sup>			
20 Apr 2016	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓ <sup>#</sup>		✓ <sup>#</sup>
3 Jun 2016	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓ <sup>#</sup>	✓
28 & 29 jun 2016	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

<sup>^</sup> Directors who no longer were elected representatives following the local government elections but remained as directors until resignation.

<sup>#</sup> Directors who were nominated and appointed following the local government elections.

## Organisation Chart



### We often get asked, 'what is RAPAD?', or 'who owns it?', or 'how does it operate?'

RAPAD is a not-for-profit company owned exclusively by the seven local governments of Central Western Queensland, i.e. the local governments are its shareholders / owners. RAPAD's governance is provided by a board of directors (7), which is made up of an elected representative of each member local government. Currently the board of directors is the mayor of each member local government and this board operates under the same law as any other NFP company.

RAPAD is not unique and many, if not most, local governments nationwide form regional organisations to progress regional initiatives specific to their area.

As a legal entity, RAPAD can enter into contracts to deliver projects of regional value, an example being the current QFPI cluster-fencing project. RAPAD can tender for projects and an example here would be the rural financial counseling service through Rural Financial Counseling Service North Queensland. RAPAD is also a Registered Training Organisation delivering training to its member local governments and other private sector customers.

Acting regionally facilitates collaboration, innovation or brings economies of scale and RAPAD's local governments undertake collaborative activities through other regional groups such as the Outback Regional Roads and Transport Group, the Outback Regional Water Alliance and the Central West Regional Pest Management Group. The attached diagram offers an overall schematic of RAPAD, along with its member local governments regional collaborative activities.



## CEO's Report



WELCOME TO THIS 2015-16  
PERIOD ANNUAL REPORT.

It has been an eventful eighteen months and another period, which I'm pleased to say, has brought results in many areas.

The Chairman raised the QFPI exclusion fencing funding, and like the Chairman I am glad this has come to fruition. The debate that raged over fencing proposals certainly evoked emotion and passion and this is understandable given peoples livelihoods, and an industry, were at stake. Despite the eventual outcome being the cluster fencing, it's important to recognise those people who brought the issue to the public discussion. People like Jenny Keogh, Mike Pratt and Harry Glasson who pushed for a regional fencing outcome and who advocated passionately for wild dog fencing. I also recognise the role of RAPAD. RAPAD provided support to the regional check fence concept over a period of approximately 14 months both with cash and in-kind support.

Ultimately when the majority of RAPAD's councils, and the Board, elected to pursue the cluster fencing policy our advocacy followed that path. I consider the role RAPAD took, in the face of some harsh and sometimes vitriolic feedback, was one of leadership in bringing the issue to a head and ultimately reaching an optimum outcome, however I appreciate not everyone will agree.

Apart from the QFPI exclusion fencing, RAPAD in this past period has completed the Far West Tourism Action Plan Implementation and its final report is attached. The Far West Tourism plan implementation follows on from the same type of project undertaken in the four eastern council areas.

---

*It has been an eventful eighteen months and another period, which I'm pleased to say, has brought results in many areas.*

Russell Lowry came across from the State government and commenced as the Small Business and Individuals Financial Counsellor (SBIFC). RAPAD has delivered the Australian and State governments rural financial counselling (RFC) service for approximately 18 years, to rural agribusiness clients and during every industry downturn the rural financial counsellors get approached for assistance from town based business however the mandate of the program does not allow that. I was then, particularly pleased when it was proposed by the Central West Rural Wellness Network that funding be obtained for such a position, and given our background in that field we were able to transfer the broad guidelines and charter of the RFC service across to that required of the SBIFC.

Attached at the back of this report is the annual report for Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland, which delivers that RFC service across not only our Central Western Queensland region but also the Northern Queensland region.

RAPAD Skilling continues to operate in the very difficult economic time in the training and education environment, as a Registered Training Organisation. For good reason the regulatory body overseeing the RTO environment expects sound compliance and I'm pleased to see that in some circumstances the regulatory body has moved on some RTOs not adhering to these compliance requirements. At RAPAD Skilling we pride ourselves on this meticulous adherence to compliance.

I'm excited that the Board endorsed the progression of a regional digital strategy. Currently that project has just commenced and I look forward to the implementation stage when the strategy is finalised.

Equally exciting for the Barcoo and Diamantina Shire councils is the realisation of a decade of planning and advocating and strategising and lobbying for the delivery of optic fibre cable to that region. RAPAD supported this project operationally over the years.

As a part of my report I would like to recognise those partners and funders who have contributed to RAPAD's activities. On behalf of myself and the Board I thank:

- The Australian Government:
  - for its support through the feral animal control funding and the present QFPI funding,
  - for its continued support of the Rural Financial Counselling Service program which RAPAD administers.
- The Queensland State government:
  - for its role in both those funding rounds above,
  - for its support through the drought resilience funding which has gone to local governments, via RAPAD, over the 2014, 2015 and 2016 calendar years,
  - for its continued support of the Remote Area Boards (RAB) funding,
  - for its in-kind support for the digital strategy development,
  - for its funding support of the SBIFC role in conjunction with the Royal Flying Doctors Service,
  - for its funding support of the Skilling Queenslanders for Work funding.
- The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) ongoing support of RAPAD as and when required, and for its involvement in the Industry Development Fund which is providing funds towards the digital strategy,.
- Qantaslink, George Bourne and Associates for their major sponsorship of the 2015 Outback Trailblazer.

Attached as an appendix is the full report from the workshops conducted by from Professor John Cole OAM on behalf of the Board. I'd really encourage everyone to read the report as it provides every community and RAPAD with a plethora of strategic areas we can all focus on to move our region forward.

On a personal level I've been reappointed for a second term as Deputy Chairman of the Central West Hospital and Health Service.

In closing I'd like to thank all staff for their commitment, and also the past and present Board and a special acknowledgement to Cr Geoff Morton, now OAM. As the Chairman noted, I also would like to recognise former directors Joe Owens, Julie Groves and Barry Muir who departed at the 2016 local government elections.

David Arnold  
CEO, RAPAD



Pictured (L-R): RAPAD CEO, David Arnold, Marcello Massi, Community Affairs Manager, NBN, and Steve Knight Principal Digital Economy Officer, DSITI.

## RAPAD Staff



**DAVID ARNOLD**  
Chief Executive Officer



**SALLY GRAHAM**  
Administration/  
Finance Officer



**NICOLE AVERY**  
Administration



**MORGAN GRONOLD**  
RAPAD Special Projects



**RUSSELL LOWRY**  
Small Business &  
Individuals Financial  
Counsellor



**KRISTINE ARNOLD**  
RAPAD Skilling Manager



**JILLIAN SINGLETON**  
Payroll, Trainer and  
Assessor RAPAD Skilling



**BROOKE BALLARD**  
RAPAD Skilling



**STEPHEN ROSSBERG**  
Trainer and Assessor  
RAPAD Skilling



**DIANNE WINTER**  
RAPAD Skilling



## Key Highlights 2015-16





## Sponsorships

RAPAD HAS SPONSORED A RANGE OF REGIONAL EVENTS OVER THE LAST 12 - 18 MONTHS.

### Weeds Symposium

RAPAD was the platinum sponsor for the 13th Queensland Weed Symposium held in Longreach in September 2015.



### Capacity building activities

RAPAD has a keen interest in capacity building activities and this period RAPAD along with the RAPAD business Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland Central Southern Region sponsored Vision 21's 'Leading in the Central West' program conducted in Blackall and the Queensland Rural Regional and Remote Women's Network, Outback WOW project held in Longreach in October 2015.

For both these programs, RAPAD's sponsorship was devoted to travel and accommodation support for any participant needing to travel to attend.



RAPAD also worked closely with the Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation (DSITI) to bring Helen Milner to the region. Helen was able to come to the region where she met with many groups and presented at functions in Longreach. Helen is the CEO and founder of the Tinder Foundation in the United Kingdom. The Tinder Foundation is a charity which supports digitally and socially excluded people to improve their lives through digital.



## Digital Champions

The Advance Queensland Community Digital Champions program aims to encourage Queenslanders to explore and enjoy the benefits of the digital age – through the stories and activities of inspirational champions.

Champions come from all walks of life and may represent an industry, community or demographic group in Queensland.

The Department of Science, Information, Technology and Innovation asked RAPAD to nominate and support suitable candidates, from the Central West region, to be part of the inaugural champions. The department was looking for individuals who were passionate digital advocates, wanting to give back to their community by helping others become digitally savvy.

RAPAD nominated Joy McClymont from Longreach and Ann Britton from Boulia and both were accepted. RAPAD has supported both Ann and Joy in several of their champions roles.



Pictured above (L-R): RAPAD CEO, David Arnold with Digital Champions Ann Britton and Joy McClymont.



For more information on Digital Champions visit the department's website at:  
[godigitalqld.dsiti.qld.gov.au/godigitalqldchampions](http://godigitalqld.dsiti.qld.gov.au/godigitalqldchampions)

## Far West Tourism Action Plan Implementation

With the support of RAPAD, in 2014 representatives of the Far West councils (Barcoo, Diamantina & Boulia) developed a tourism action plan. It was consistent with all Outback and Queensland tourism planning documents (as applicable) and its aim was to:

**Ensure repeat visitation, attract new markets and extend length of stay through continual development and promotion of the Drive and touring experience.**

Its strategies are to:

- Align touring route development and promotion with the overall Drive Strategy for Queensland,
- Expand distribution of themed drive routes and related product,
- Ensure marketing and promotion of regional events, experiences and regions is undertaken in a coordinated manner to maximise visitor expenditure on drive and touring routes,
- Leverage existing Outback Education tourism strategies (specifically the Outback Queensland Education Subsidy Scheme) in the development and distribution of suitable product,
- Reinvigorate local tourism products by leveraging the distinctive characters, stories and heroes synonymous with the region,
- Expand profile of the region for Adventure touring market and fly/drive market

Experienced tourism consultant Anita Clark undertook the implementation in close conjunction with representatives of the Barcoo, Diamantina and Boulia councils.

Refer to Appendix 1 to read the final report – ‘Implementation of Far West Tourism Development Action Plan 2014-2106’.

## Pathways to the Future

Pathways to the Future: building local strategies for regional resilience and sustainable development in Central Western Queensland.

In Central Western Queensland the drought emergency stimulated a range of responses including the Community Drought Leadership Groups with their toolkits enabling communities to develop drought response plans and make the most of existing resources. Building on these initiatives and recognising the importance of assisting regional communities focus on longer term thinking and planning, in August 2015 the Remote Area Planning and Development Board invited Professor John Cole OAM, Executive Director of USQ’s Institute for Resilient Regions to conduct a series of workshops to engage community participation in a creative process structured around the following questions:

1. What is the longer term future for central western Queensland?
2. What are the options for sustainable development in our region?
3. How do we make our communities as resilient as possible?

By working cooperatively across the region with key stakeholders in each local authority district the aim of the workshop series was to assist in strengthening community resilience by elevating leadership focus beyond the current drought emergency to the opportunities that might be developed sustainably and which inevitably would involve innovation of some form or another.

The synthesis report from that series of workshops is attached in Appendix 2. RAPAD will continue to use the findings as strategic direction for its activities going forward.



## Queensland Feral Pest Initiative

In 2016 RAPAD, operating through the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative (QFPI), was successful in its bid to deliver a project under the Australian Government Pest Animals and Weeds (AGPAW) program for cluster fencing arrangements in areas with high wild dog density.

The project's long term goal is for the RAPAD QFPI project to be the catalyst for achieving significant improvement in profitability of regional businesses (both rural and non-rural) through the demonstration of the economic, social and environmental benefit of cluster fencing.

For the RAPAD region this funding is about more than just a fence, it is about:

- empowering people and giving them back control of their time, finances and wellbeing;
- delivering regional prosperity through reduced credit problems;
- growing employment opportunities and full sporting teams; and
- enabling people to become better equipped to manage total grazing pressure and withstand future drought events.

As part of the project the RAPAD YouTube channel was launched allowing people to hear from the cluster members themselves on how much of a difference the project is making to them and their families via [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=rapad+cluster+fencing](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=rapad+cluster+fencing) or go to YouTube and search "RAPAD cluster fencing".

The RAPAD QFPI project received 36 applications representing over 250 producers from across the six priority one council areas in the Central and North West region. Nearly \$10 million was requested, equating to approximately 3500km of fencing or 2 million ha protected from wild dogs, matched by nearly \$20 million of private money.

The funding was significantly oversubscribed as RAPAD was allocated \$5.25 million for fencing (including 7.5% administrative and monitoring evaluation costs) meaning only around 50% of applicants could be funded.

RAPAD paid the maximum allowed by the state to clusters: \$2700 per km. RAPAD did not dilute the \$2700 per km, to try and ensure all applicants were funded as this was considered the minimum amount of funding required to encourage clusters to fence and, if this was reduced, it would actually result in less kilometres of fencing being constructed due to it being less economic. All cluster applicants were made aware of this and agreed with this position.

An independent technical committee of industry leaders was engaged to provide recommendations to the Board. The technical committee, chaired by independent Chair, Cr Rick Britton also consisted of Greg Mifsud, National Wild Dog Facilitator, Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre and Brett Carlsson, Queensland Wild Dog Coordinator. The technical committee was supported by Jenny Milson, Senior Project Officer, QDAF Longreach.

The technical committee found of the 36 applications received 17 were considered eligible and were recommended for funding; 2 were considered eligible but could not be funded 100% funded as all funding had been allocated; 8 were considered ineligible until further information was received and changes made; 9 were deemed completely ineligible.







Agriculture and Environment Committee

The 17 applications recommended for funding were the clusters of the Four Mile, Clifton, Moonbria, Mekaree, Fysh-Rae, Yaraka (both east and west), Lagoon Creek, West Alice, Barcoo South, North Aramac, Bellabad, Clover Hill, McGavin, Beaconsfield, Katherine Creek, Northern Barcoo and Summer Hill. Barcoo South voluntarily withdrew from the round and were replaced by South Ilfracombe 12 Mile cluster. Way out West Cluster was able to be funded 71% in this round bringing the total cluster number to 18. Under this arrangement Way out West is committed to building its entire fence with only 71% funding however it is hoped the remaining funding will be allocated from any future funding made available.

The \$4,850,000 of funding allocated to RAPAD delivered:

- 18 clusters (including 1 co-funded in partnership with SWNRM);
- Equalling 95 individual properties and 1823km of fencing;
- Enabling 1,192,186 ha to be protected from wild dogs;
- Realising a private contribution of \$11,272,168.50; a 234% ROI on funding;
- Each cluster on average will receive \$269,444.44, supporting 101km of fencing, to enclose approximately 5.28 properties and enable 66,233 ha to be protected from wild dogs. This funding would be matched by a private contribution of \$636,231.58, a 234% ROI on funding;
- 44% of those funded are in the Longreach RC (7 out of 18), 33% in Barcaldine RC (6 out of 18), 11% in Barcoo Shire (2 out of 18), 11% in Blackall Tambo RC (2 out of 18)



Project community meeting Longreach





Proponents advise as a result of fencing, sheep numbers across the 18 clusters can expect to rise from 270,925 to 509,372. That's an additional 238,447 sheep being farmed in the central west as a result of this fencing.

Each cluster proposes on average to go from running 15,051 head to 28,298 head, an additional 13,247 head per cluster once fencing is completed, and increase their individual sheep numbers as a percentage of their total stock numbers from 46% to 68%.

These additional sheep will generate \$2,861,364 in shearing, crutching and lamb marking wages for the region and see each cluster deliver \$158,964.67 in shearing, crutching and lamb marking wages for their local community. Each cluster will provide a 59% ROI for the funding received through wages into the local community from these additional sheep in the first year and will exceed a 100% ROI in approximately 1.5 years.

The new total sheep numbers for the region being, 509,372 head, will inject \$6,112,464 in shearing, crutching and lamb marking wages into the region or \$339,581.33 per cluster.

Before fencing the average clusters' stock consisted of 46% Sheep, 53% Cattle and 1% Goats. As a result of fencing proponents advise the average clusters' stock will consist of 69% Sheep, 28% cattle and 3% Goats.

*RAPAD acknowledges AgForce and Noel Brinsmead for their significant mapping support throughout this project.*

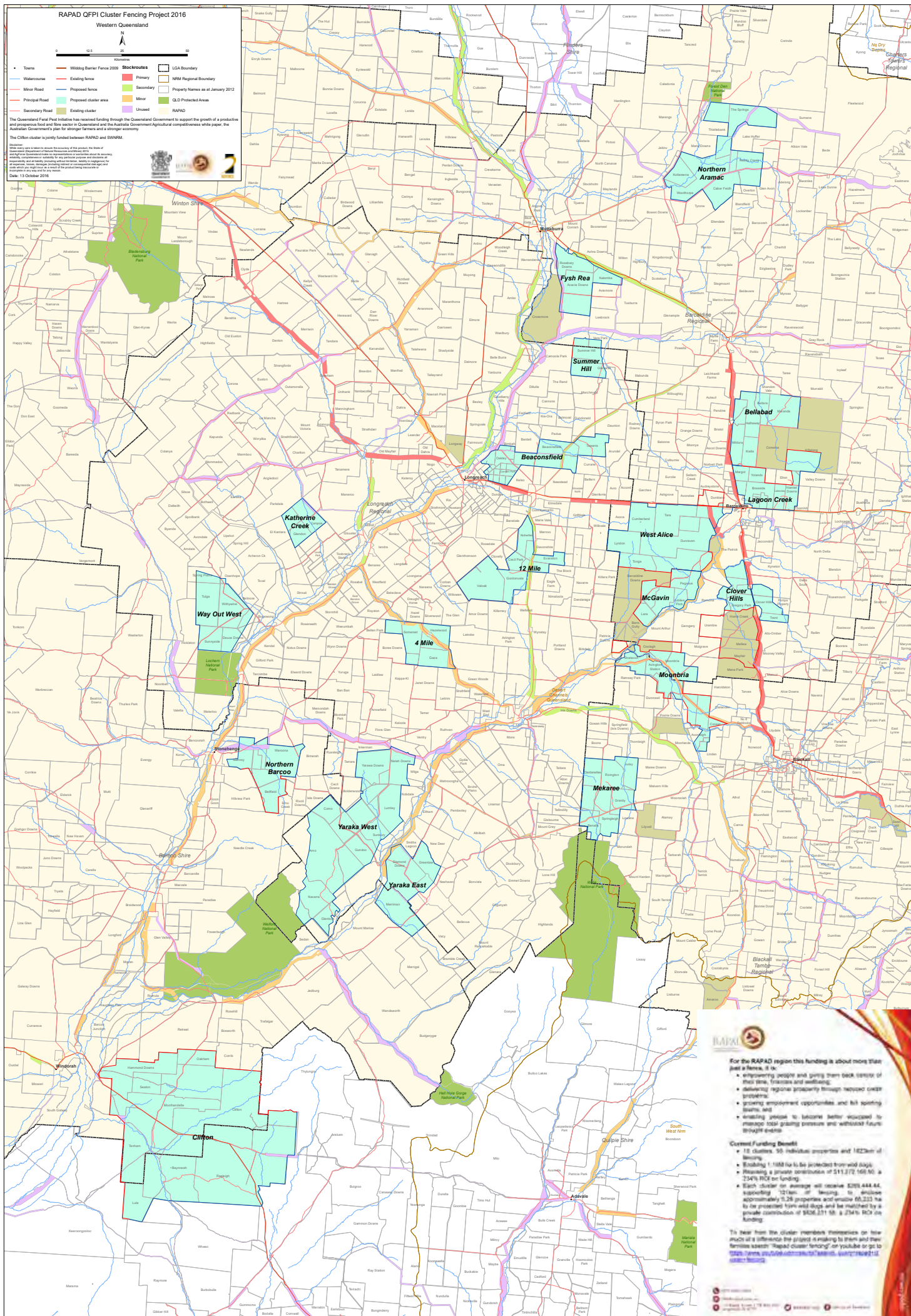
11 applications are yet to be funded. The overall funding required by those 11 eligible applicants, who missed out and need further information, is \$3,502,582.90. The RAPAD Board continue to seek additional funding in an effort to get more fencing completed across the region.

Cr Rob Chandler, RAPAD Chair was asked to present at the 2016 National Wild Dog Action Plan (NWDAP) meeting in Sydney. Below he is pictured with (from left) Greg Mifsud, Invasive Animals National Coordinator, Geoff Power NWDAP Chair and Jane Littlejohn, NWDAP Coordinator.



Central West Fencing Commissioner Vaughn Johnson inspecting a cluster fence outside Barcaldine with owner Ben Chandler





**RAPAD**

For the RAPAD region this funding is about more than just a fence, it is:

- empowering people and giving them back control of their time, finances and wellbeing
- delivering regional prosperity through reduced credit problems
- creating employment opportunities and job spinning
- enabling people to become better equipped to manage their grazing pressure and increased farm income

**Current Funding Details:**

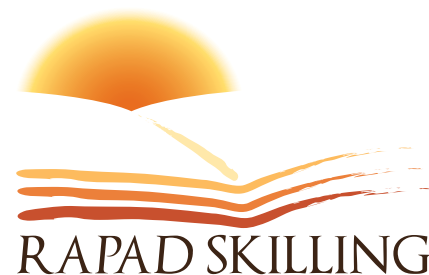
- 18 clusters, 50 individual properties and 182km of fencing
- Estimated 1,100 ha to be protected from wild dogs
- Releasing a private contribution of \$11,372,500.00, a 25% ROI on funding
- Each cluster on average will receive \$285,444.44, supporting 121 km of fencing - to deliver approximately 15.28 properties and enable 60,333 ha to be protected from wild dogs and be matched by a private contribution of \$506,211.68, a 25% ROI on funding

To hear from the cluster members themselves on how much of a difference the project is making to them and their families search "RAPAD cluster fencing" on youtube or go to [www.rapad.com.au](http://www.rapad.com.au)

**Contact:**

- Phone: 08 9422 1111
- Email: [info@rapad.com.au](mailto:info@rapad.com.au)
- Website: [www.rapad.com.au](http://www.rapad.com.au)

## RAPAD Skilling



This reporting year has been an exciting year of growth for RAPAD Skilling with increases in the number of qualifications and courses offered and an increase in student enrolments.

As a fee for service, nationally Registered Training Organisation under the Australian Skills Quality Authority, RAPAD Skilling is the training arm of RAPAD, and coordinates training and skilling programs to communities across Central West Queensland. Following the successful renewal process in August 2015, RAPAD Skilling is approved to deliver training until 2022.

While tourism and hospitality were the initial area of focus for RAPAD Skilling, through industry and regional consultation RAPAD Skilling has diversified into training in the civil construction, business, retail, community services, conservation and land management and other skilling programs to prepare workers for employment.

The RAPAD Skilling team is managed by Kristine Arnold, and includes full time Trainers and Assessors Stephen Rossberg and Jillian Singleton, Student Liaison/Program Coordinators Brooke Ballard and Dianne Winters and Enrolments and Awards Officer Nicole Avery all whom assist with delivery of accredited and non-accredited training and skilling programs across the region.

RAPAD Skilling continues to develop as proactive responses to the regions current training and skilling needs and works with industry and key stakeholders to ensure these are met at the local level.



Currently RAPAD Skilling is registered to deliver qualifications:

- Diploma of Financial Counselling (Rural)
- Certificate I, II and III in Conservation and Land Management
- Certificate I, II, III and IV in Business
- Certificate III and IV in Business Administration
- Certificate II and III in Retail
- Certificate II and III in Community Services
- Certificate I, II and III in Hospitality
- Certificate II and III in Tourism
- Certificate II and III in Civil Construction
- Certificate I and II in Foundation Skills

as well as individual units:

- Responsible service of alcohol
- Responsible gambling services
- White card
- Food safety
- Traffic control / Traffic management
- Machinery plant – roller, skid steer, grader, forklift, front end loader
- First aid - new in 2016

---

*Following the successful renewal process in August 2015, RAPAD Skilling is approved to deliver training until 2022.*



## RAPAD Skilling Case Studies

### Workforce Development and Training

RAPAD Skilling collaborated with Longreach Regional Council HR Coordinator to provide a customised training program to up skill administration staff across the council area.

The cohort was diverse in experience and previous study, so a training needs analysis was conducted and a suitable training program devised. From here, eligibility for funded training under Certificate III Guarantee was investigated. Approximately 50% of the cohort were eligible for the subsidised training.

The group came together monthly for face-to-face training with trainer Jillian Singleton. This provided an opportunity to revise the assessment from the units since the previous cluster day and to commence the next unit of study. Between clusters, students work on assessment and additional self paced units.

Working through the training as a cohort has provided a collegial support network for the group and incentive to maintain timeframes for assessment.



The Eagle Street RAPAD Skilling Training Room hosts formal training sessions in civil construction and conservation and land management, while the expansion to the RAPAD SKILLING Swan Street Annex has provide trainees and other students with a variety of formal and informal study and meeting areas.

RAPAD Skilling has five trainers and assessors who have third party contracts to deliver training under our scope of registration in Central and North West council areas and private trainer and assessors in regional centres.



## Skilling Queenslanders for Work: Business Administration & Conservation and Land Management

Skilling Queenslanders for Work is a Queensland Government initiative which provides participants the opportunity to reskill in areas that could provide better employment opportunities. Funding was provided for 10 participants in Certificate III in Business Administration and 15 in Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management.

The Business Administration cohort attends weekly face-to-face training with self-paced home study. The Conservation and Land Management cohort undertake a combination of theory and practical cluster days on a monthly basis.



Jeffrey Newton - Trainer and Assessor for  
Conservation and Land Management







RAPAD Skilling has been working proactively with local councils to assess and deliver training in region

## Industry required training

Core training has continued for local government and industry/contractors in the civil construction and hospitality areas.

The major training focus in Civil Construction training has included:

- Certificate III in Civil Construction Plant Operations
- high risk Forklift
- traffic control/traffic management implementation
- roller
- with other machinery plant training in grader, skidsteer, front end loader, backhoe.

Hospitality short courses have included:

- provide responsible service of alcohol
- provide responsible gambling service
- food safety supervisor



## Workplace-Based Trainees

In 2016, RAPAD Skilling has provided training to full-time and school based trainees across several industry areas including: Civil Construction, Conservation and Land Management, Hospitality, Tourism and Business Administration. These trainees are within local governments and businesses.





## Pre-employment training in Civil Construction – RESQ clients

In conjunction with RAPAD Employment Services Queensland (RESQ), RAPAD Skilling developed a pre-employment program to provide eleven long-term job seekers with training and practical experience in civil construction. The full time, intensive, six week program offered a blend of face-to-face classroom based theory and on-the-job practical experience for the eleven participants. The program also provided the participants with valuable skills in teamwork and workplace etiquette.

All eleven participants successfully completed the theory and practical aspects of the course and were awarded a Certificate II in Resources and Infrastructure Work Preparation. Following further machinery plant training, they were all awarded a Certificate III in Civil Construction Plant Operations.

Several participants from this program have secured employment since completing the course.

## Industry Engagement

Civil construction trainer, Stephen Rossberg has been actively involved in the review of the Transport and Main Road training programs for Traffic Control and Traffic Management Implementation through attending the monthly meeting of the TMR Working Advisory Group.

This has provided CW region a voice in at the table highlighting our regional traffic control/management worksite situations are vastly different to that of the city road construction/maintenance. It has also Stephen with valuable professional development.





## coHUBitate 247 Swan Incubator hub fostering local entrepreneurs and micro businesses

Following several requests for short term office / hot desk hire and creative meeting space for local entrepreneurs, the Swan Street Annex spaces have been reorganised to provide collaborative working ecosystems, meeting hubs, and virtual meeting technology and space available for hire. These incubators provide access to RAPAD Skilling office equipment, Internet and spaces for entrepreneurs to meet, collaborate and grow their business.



## RAPAD Skilling Sponsorship: Queensland Training Awards

For the first time this year, RAPAD Skilling was proud to be involved in the annual Central Queensland Regional Training Awards held in Yeppoon, sponsoring the VET Teacher or Trainer of the Year category. This category was for outstanding achievement by a teacher or trainer providing nationally recognised training to students at, or in partnership with, a registered training organisation.



## Small Business and Individuals Financial Counselling Service

The Small Business and Individuals Financial Counsellor (SBIFC) program is an initiative of the Central West Rural Wellness Network supported; administered and hosted by RAPAD, and funded by Queensland Health, RAPAD and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

The purpose of the program is to provide free financial counselling to non-rural business operators who are suffering financial hardship and to manage the challenges presented by the current drought and ongoing economic conditions across the seven local government areas of the RAPAD catchment in Central Western Queensland.

The objectives are to:

- provide clients with access to financial information, options, decision support and referrals to other sources of industry, professional and government assistance,
- empower clients to make their own decisions on how to most effectively manage change and adjustment issues
- deliver effective, flexible, and responsive financial counselling services to those in need of assistance.

Russell Lowry fills the role and Russell brings over 25 years' financial and operational management experience to the region, gained working in small and medium sized businesses predominantly within the Central and Central Western Queensland region. "I am really excited to be joining the RAPAD team and working with Central Western businesses to improve their financial position"

Utilising his extensive experience working in multiple facets of a business including finance, human resources, administration, business systems, marketing, customer and supplier relationships, Russell assists owners and individuals in various areas.



*"My main drive and passion is to work directly with business owners in the small and medium business sector ensuring that the business owner focuses not just on the day to day but are able to work on their business establishing longer term goals for its future success."*

### Major focus of activity within the reporting period

The program kicked off on 21 March 2016. The first issue was to let the business communities of the RAPAD region know that the service was available. Advertising and marketing collateral was developed and distributed to local councils for their newsletters, members of parliament, local media outlets including The Longreach Leader, ABC radio, and business and tourism organisations across the region.

Visits occurred to many local communities introducing the service face to face to business owners within their community to understand what directly challenges the town or community were encountering.

Also, an initial priority was to develop relationships with government funded business and industry groups including AusIndustry, Outback Queensland Tourism Association, Regional Development Australia Fitzroy and Central West, The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, The Department of State Development amongst others so that any opportunities for assistance were referred to the relevant agency to assist the business owner.

### New or unusual activities/trends within the reporting period

The one disturbing finding is that sales turnover across a broad range of industries had declined 40-60% over the previous 2 financial years with most impact felt in the summer of 2015/16 as the drought entered it's fourth year.





“

*Russell has been exceptional in his ability providing out of the box ideas and suggestions that when implemented were effective in growing my business and helping my staff achieve great things!*

*Russell has been very active in our community not only with my business but all the four businesses in Muttaborra. I have found him very helpful with business reports, which I had not looked into before, which is obviously a big part of running a business. Times are tough at the moment so it has been nice having Russell there with help and support.*

”

#### **SBIFC's views about what might happen over the next 12 months**

With the extensive June winter rains that occurred across the region there is a hope that follow up rain will occur into Spring.

Business owners are reserved in their optimism about a turnaround in fortunes, as it will take a few years before the agriculture money starts to flow back into the local economies. Their needs to be a continued focus on developing diversity within the region so that the region is not so reliant on 'what drops out of the sky' to provide prosperity. There is a need to develop access to the latent capacity of the professionally trained expertise that is available across the region that cannot be accessed due to connectivity and availability of services.

There needs to be a continued focus on what can be done to attract young families back to the region to support local schools and essential services.

#### **Community events or promotional activities undertaken by the SBIFC**

- Attendance at Council meetings introducing and explaining the SBIFC Service,
- Attendance at business and industry group meetings across the region including:
  - Windorah,
  - Longreach,
  - Blackall,
  - Tambo,
  - Barcaldine,
- Facilitating meetings with business owners where business groups didn't exist, at:
  - Boulia,
  - Muttaborra,
  - Aramac,
- Longreach Show in conjunction with Royal Flying Doctor Service & the Rural Financial Counselling Service,
- Developing a financial literacy package for business owners to further develop financial knowledge.



*'We're really pleased that this position is now filled by Russell Lowry, who is out and about in communities in the Central West, assisting individuals and businesses. We thank the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, Cameron Dick for the provision of funding, for this much needed support role.'*

*Jane Williams  
Chair, Central West Rural Wellness Network.*



“

Russell has been to our small community a numerous of times, and held meetings, as a group, also one on one. He is a true asset, and professional in the ideas and interest he shows in his ability to think outside the square, which i have been unable to do, until Russell came along. He is always so positive, bubbly and available, either via phone, email, or in person. I would certainly recommend Russell to all.

#### Client outcomes, including adjustment, within or outside

To 30 June 2016, there had been 41 direct inquiries to the service with 12 of those being referrals from other services including solicitors, accountants, MP's and rural financial counsellors. There have been no closures, sales or adjustments to the 20 clients that are directly engaging with the service. There have been referrals of five clients to external providers for advice to assist with their ongoing operations.

However, there are a number of business owners contemplating transitioning out their business within the next 2-3 years looking for other challenges.

For the last few months Russell Lowry has been visiting my business, Tambo FoodWorks and helping me tidy my accounting system. I had always thought I was an ok bookkeeper but have learnt this was not the case. He has given me a great deal of assistance with MYOB and sorting out which accounts I delegate payments to, and helped out with my BAS a couple of times. Russell has also assisted us out with writing staff contracts and tidying our pay system. We have rung Russell numerous times for assistance and he is always able to give immediate help. I really appreciate everything Russell does for my business and don't really know how I coped without his assistance.

”

ABC NEWS >

#### Small business financial counsellor aims to reinvigorate central west Queensland

ABC WESTERN QLD – ASH MOORE

UPDATED WED APR 27 13:05:39 EST 2016



PHOTO Small businesses are set to benefit now that Russell Lowry has been hired to help them.

ABC WESTERN QUEENSLAND; ASH MOORE

Small businesses in Queensland's central west are set to benefit from free financial counselling thanks to a mental health initiative.



*People don't buy  
what you do  
they buy why you  
do it.*

Simon Sinek

# SMALL BUSINESS AND INDIVIDUALS FINANCIAL COUNSELLOR PROGRAMME

The Small Business and Individuals Financial Counsellor Programme provides assistance to Central West Queensland small business owners who are suffering from financial hardship to manage the challenges of industry change, adjustment and sustainability as the result of drought and ongoing adverse economic conditions.

## FACING FINANCIAL HARDSHIP? HELP IS AVAILABLE.

- FINANCIAL INFORMATION
- DECISION SUPPORT
- OPTIONS
- REFERRALS TO OTHER SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE

The objectives of the SBIFC Programme are to:

- provide clients with access to financial information, options, decision support and referrals to other sources of industry, professional and government assistance
- empower clients to make their own decisions on how to most effectively manage change and adjustment issues
- deliver effective, flexible, and responsive financial counselling services to those in need of assistance.

## ABOUT RUSSELL.

Russell is proud to be serving the Central West bringing more than 20 years' experience in Finance and Administration focusing on the SME sector in regional Queensland. He started as the Small Business and Individuals Financial Counsellor with RAPAD in March 2016. Based in Longreach, his service area covers the seven local government areas of the Central West Queensland.



## CONTACT.

Russell Lowry  
M: 0499 755 233  
Email: rlowry@rapad.com.au

The Small Business and Individuals Financial Counsellor Programme is an initiative of the Central West Wellness Network, and is supported by the Queensland Government, the Remote Area Planning and Development Board and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.



Find out more  
**RAPAD.COM.AU**

## RAPAD Employment Services Queensland



RAPAD Employment Services Qld (RESQ) has completed its third year of delivering the Employment Services Contract for Western Qld on behalf of the Federal Government. In the last 12 months RESQ successfully implemented the Federal Governments new Community Development Program (CDP) whereby job seekers fulfil their mutual obligation of completing 5 hours a day for 5 days a week of an approved structured training and work experience activity.

RESQ delivers the Community Development Program over one of the largest regions in Australia and has averaged a caseload of 250 job seekers across 15 regional communities. Job seeker numbers vary throughout the region and the bigger towns of Winton, Longreach, Barcaldine and Blackall have the most unemployed whilst the smaller communities vary from 10 to one job seekers. The average percentage of unemployed people for RESQ is about 2.8 % which is well below the national average of 5.8%.

RESQ has successfully worked with job seekers to place approximately 38% of people into paid employment over the last 12 months into a mix of casual and permanent employment. The majority of job placements have been with the region and have included the following businesses:

Bakeries, Roadhouses, Fencing Contractors, Shearing teams, Tourism museums, Contract mowing services, Retail Shops, Groundsmen, Pharmacies, Rural properties, mechanical service centres, Livestock Transport depots and Food outlets.

RESQ has partnered with all six Regional Councils under RAPAD that fall within the RESQ region to deliver projects that provide community benefit whilst delivering valuable practical training skills for job seekers.

In Winton job seekers have eradicated Weeds of National Significance along stock routes and highways and assisted pensioners and those with disabilities to maintain gardens and clean up overgrown yards.

Job seekers have camped out on remote properties spraying Parkinsonia in Diamantina Shire whilst assisting Indigenous elders in Birdsville through voluntary Home and Community Care.

Barcaldine Regional Council has worked with job seekers in Muttaborra to eradicate Parkinsonia, Prickly Acacia and Rubber Vine preventing its spread into the Lake Eyre Basin region. Job seekers have also undertaken painting and grounds maintenance at the Barcaldine Historical museum.

In Barcoo Shire at Windorah the RESQ teams partnered with both the Barcoo Shire and the Windorah Development board to transform the tiny Catholic Church into a functional Church again with polished timber floors and new cladding on the exterior.

RESQ undertook a major refurbishment of the Sheep and Wool Pavilion at the Longreach Showgrounds in partnership with the Longreach Regional Council. Jobseekers gained experience and training in welding, painting, concreting and woodwork skills as they prepared the Pavilion for both the Longreach Show and the State Sheep Show. At Ilfracombe and Isisford work teams painted the Machinery Museums enhancing the numbers of tourists visiting these towns.

Blackall Tambo Regional Council and RESQ work teams eradicated areas of cactus infestation and carried out refurbishment of community facilities at the Blackall Gun Club.

The Community Development Program is funded through the office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and RESQ is one of 60 providers delivering the program across Australia. Following an Annual Performance Review RESQ was rated as good to excellent across fourteen of the fifteen KPIs placing RESQ in the top two providers in Australia.

## Central Western Regional Pest Management Group

RAPAD has continued to facilitate the development of the CWRPMG and act as secretariat and support base for the group. A RAPAD initiative and currently chaired by Cr Rick Britton; the CWRPMG vision states: The Central West Regional Pest Management Group (CWRPMG) will take a leadership and advocacy role in the effective regional planning controls and management of animal and plant pests in the RAPAD group of councils.

In late 2014 the CWRPMG was successful in attracting funds from the Australian and State governments for additional control of wild dogs. \$600000.00 was obtained, and this project was finalised in early 2016. The Central West councils through the CWRPMG are the only region in Queensland where a common regional biosecurity plan exists.



---

*The Central West councils through the CWRPMG are the only region in Queensland where a common regional biosecurity plan exists.*

*Following an Annual Performance Review RESQ was rated as good to excellent across fourteen of the fifteen KPIs placing **RESQ** in the top two providers in Australia.*



## Outback Regional Water Alliance



The Outback Regional Water Alliance (ORWA) was established in May 2013 as an evolution of the Outback Regional Water Group (ORWG) which was formed from members of the Remote Area Planning & Development Board (RAPAD) and its decision to collaborate on urban water and wastewater services.

The ORWG local government members, who have been working together since 2010, recognised they are faced with a number of significant issues in delivering urban water services including: skill shortages, drinking water quality management and human health protection, aging infrastructure and funding shortfalls, financial sustainability, increasing regulatory requirements, climate variability and affordability.

Guided by the Queensland Water Directorate and under the Queensland Water Regional Alliances Program (QWRAP), the ORWG was transformed into the ORWA, **the first of its kind in Queensland.**

The ORWA consists of seven (7) local government members: Barcaldine Regional Council, Barcoo Shire Council, Blackall-Tambo Regional Council, Boulia Shire Council, Diamantina Shire Council, Longreach Regional and Winton Shire Council and three (3) non-local government members: the Department of Energy and Water Supply (DEWS), Queensland Water Directorate (qldwater) and the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ). The ORWA is governed by a Constitution and a Memorandum of Understanding which sets out the Structure, Governance and key functions of the Alliance and represents the strategic and operational guidelines for the ORWA.

The aim of the ORWA is to assist its member councils to achieve the following key functions:

- strategic planning for both regional priorities in relation to service delivery and for the delivery of management systems, plans for regulatory compliance (environmental, public health) and effective business management (demand management, pricing, customer service agreements);
- regional advocacy, inter-government relations and promoting the region to State and Federal agencies with roles in infrastructure and service delivery;
- provision of a forum to share and leverage the technical skills of the region more broadly; and
- joint procurement initiatives, especially in relation to achieving the points above.

The ORWA's activities are designed to take advantage of the potential benefits established as part of QWRAP, which have identified opportunities and savings that could be achieved through cooperative action on water and waste water matters.

The ORWA have selected and prioritised a range of joint activities and developed a coordinated work plan, often partially funded through QWRAP. A number of joint procurement projects have been undertaken on training, independent operational investigations of water and sewerage schemes, updating regulatory reporting arrangements, a review of the region's Drinking Water Quality Management Plans (DWQMPs), joint approaches for asset management and asset maintenance works. A key part in delivering these projects has been to assess the benefits and financial savings generated through cooperative action.

---

*A key part in delivering these projects has been to assess the benefits and financial savings generated through cooperative action.*





As a result of the councils working collectively through the ORWA a recent joint procurement project for Reservoir Cleaning and Condition Assessment resulted in cost savings of approximately \$60,000. The cost for establishment/disestablishment alone resulted in savings of more than \$50,000 and when taking into consideration QWRAP funding of \$22,000, member councils of the alliance significantly reduced their costs compared to working alone. Various joint procurement projects are currently in progress, such as Water Main Air Scouring, Disinfection and Monitoring Rationalisation and a Regional Water Security Strategy Investigation.

Regional advocacy and promotion by the ORWA has resulted in a recent visit by the Director General (DG) of the Department of Energy and Water Supply, Dr Paul Simshauser. The visit enabled the DG to observe first-hand the challenges facing Outback Queensland, particularly in relation to water security.

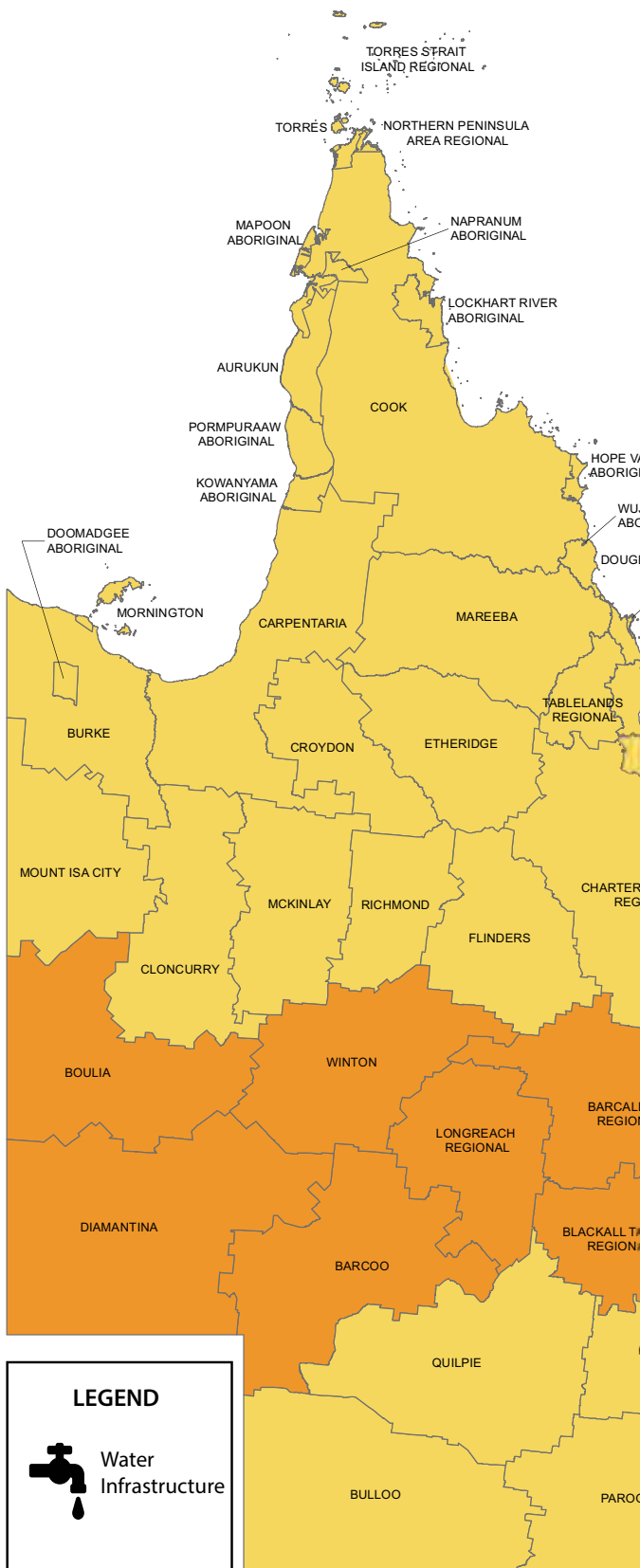
The ORWA has received recognition for its support in helping with the establishment of other similar alliances across the State. In September 2016, the ORWA Regional Coordinator was invited to present at the Queensland Water Directorate Innovation Forum in Brisbane to share key learnings about the ORWA and specifically the outcomes of the Reservoir Cleaning and Condition Assessment project. The positive results of the Reservoir Cleaning Project also highlighted the benefits of collaboration resulting in two new councils joining the alliance, which will only strengthen the position of the ORWA into the future.



*Guided by the Queensland Water Directorate and under the Queensland Water Regional Alliances Program (QWRAP), the ORWG was transformed into the ORWA, the first of its kind in Queensland.*



## Outback Regional Water Alliance Map



### LEGEND



Water Infrastructure



Sewerage Infrastructure

### Boulia Shire Council

Area: 61,092 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 451

Water Source: Great Artesian Basin

Communities: Boulia and Urandangie



Connections: 168  
Length of Mains: 27 km  
Bores: 6



Connections: 113  
Length of Mains: 7 km  
Pump Stations: 2

### Barcaldine Regional Council

Area: 53,677 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 3,411

Water Source: Great Artesian Basin

Communities: Alpha, Aramac, Barcaldine, Jericho and Muttaborra



Connections: 1,631  
Length of Mains: 89 km  
Bores: 6 GAB, 6 sub GAB



Connections: 930  
Length of Mains: 33 km  
Pump Stations: 13

### Barcoo Shire Council

Area: 61,974 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 336

Water Source: Great Artesian Basin

Communities: Jundah, Stonehenge, Windorah



Connections: 187  
Length of Mains: 40 km  
Bores: 4 (river intake)



Connections: 0  
Length of Mains: 0 km  
Pump Stations: 0

### Diamantina Shire Council

Area: 74,832 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 327

Water Source: Great Artesian Basin

Communities: Bedourie and Birdsville



Connections: 210  
Length of Mains: 21 km  
Bores: 2



Connections: 140  
Length of Mains: 11 km  
Pump Stations: 5

### Longreach Regional Council

Area: 40,638 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 4,263

Water Source: Thomson River and GAB

Communities: Iffracombe, Isisford, Longreach and Yarka



Connections: 1,975  
Length of Mains: 99 km  
Bores: 16



Connections: 1,605  
Length of Mains: 57 km  
Pump Stations: 8

### Blackall Tambo Regional Council

Area: 30,489 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 2,020

Water Source: Great Artesian Basin

Communities: Blackall and Tambo



Connections: 960  
Length of Mains: 59 km  
Bores: 5



Connections: 880  
Length of Mains: 34 km  
Pump Stations: 4

### Winton Shire Council

Area: 53,935 km<sup>2</sup>

Population: 1,320

Water Source: Great Artesian Basin

Communities: Winton



Connections: 611  
Length of Mains: 32 km  
Bores: 3



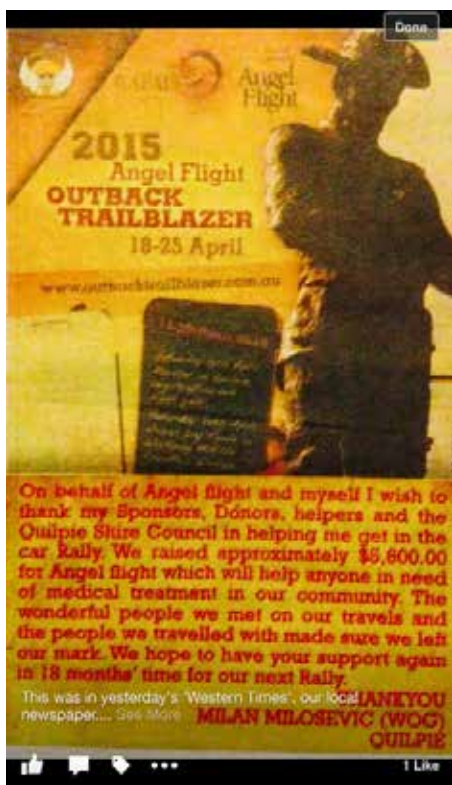
Connections: 559  
Length of Mains: 15 km  
Pump Stations: 3



## Outback Trailblazer 2015

Since 2015, Outback Trailblazer has been operated by RAPAD. The goal of the event is to showcase the beauty and character of our small communities and to inject welcome funds into their towns. Every year, it's a different itinerary, so we are inclusive of all communities.

In addition to the enormous economic benefit to these communities, the Outback Trailblazer program brings a lot of fun and entertainment to towns with a program of key town events - coordinated by an artistic director!





## Drought Resilience Funding

In 2015, RAPAD received funding from the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services. This funding was part of the State governments response to the drought, which was impacting on the Central Western communities. These funds were in turn passed onto RAPAD's seven member councils who used them in the best manner that suited their communities.

The purpose of the funding was to strengthen the resilience of drought affected Queenslanders by revitalising existing community support mechanisms and utilising community events to increase access and participation in direct support services and undertake community resilience consultation and planning.

Across the Central West this funding was put towards 67 community events spread over:

- Barcoo Shire Council – 10
- Boulia Shire Council – 5
- Barcaldine Regional Council – 11
- Blackall-Tambo Regional Council – 5
- Diamantina Shire Council – 9
- Longreach Regional Council 13
- Winton Shire Council – 14

In 2016 RAPAD received further funding, again on behalf of its member councils, and these project are in the process of being completed and acquitted.



These activities were made possible through funding from the Queensland Government.





## Droughtbusting performances a winner for Yaraka

MORE than 100 people crowded into the Yaraka Hall on Friday for a free concert of song and bush poetry.

Organised by the Yaraka Sports and Progress Committee Inc., the show brought together popular bush poet Marco Gliori and the comedy cabaret "Divas of the Outback" Helen Everingham and Josephine O'Rourke with accompanist Brendan Murtagh.

The show was provided with drought relief funding from the Department of Communities, distributed through the Remote Area Planning and Development (RAPAD) Board.

Normally locals would do the catering, but the evening was a BYO event, so everyone could enjoy the show.

The Yaraka Hotel offered pizzas and made over 40 for the audience which included people from Longreach, Isis-

ford, Muttaborra, Barcaldine, Blackall, Quilpie and Jundah.

The were not disappointed with the witty and wise poetry of Mr Gliori and the gorgeous voices of the Divas.

Mr Gliori has been performing poetry for nearly 25 years and has published books of verse and audio recordings of his work. He won the Tamworth Country Music Festival Poetry Performance Award four times and the Spirit of Matilda Poetry Award in 1995. He will be back in the region for the Winton Outback Festival in September.

Ms Everingham came from running a successful voice workshop in Longreach while Ms O'Rourke, an agency nurse, travelled from Mt Isa to be part of the show.

Neville Dolinski of Outback Sound provided the sound system.



Josephine O'Rourke and Helen Everingham in full voice. \*



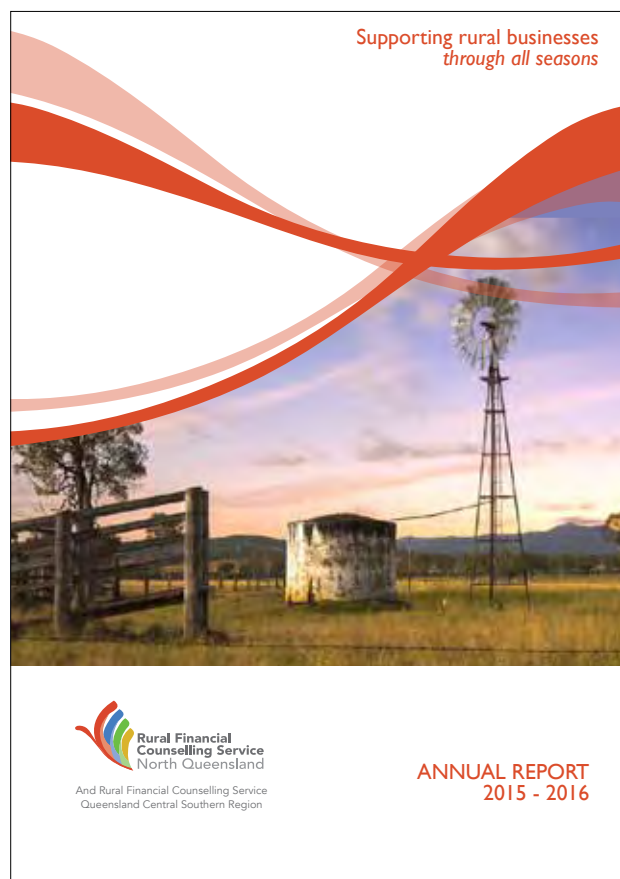
## Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland



In 2015, RAPAD submitted an application to the federal governments open grants process for the delivery of the rural financial counselling (RFC) service in Queensland. RAPAD had successfully delivered the RFC service through the registered business, Rural Financial Counselling Service Qld - Central Southern Region (RFCSQCSR) since 2006/7, and prior to that, for approximately eight years as a provider in the Central Western Queensland region.

RAPAD was awarded the new North Queensland region and from the date of awarding in late December 2015, through to 31 March 2016, RFCSQCSR entered both a wind-up and transition stage. RFCSQCSR had to be wound up and it transitioned into the new Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland, which took effect on 1 April 2016.

Read the full report for Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland at Appendix 3.







Appendix 1: Far West Tourism Development Action Plan .....	40
Appendix 2 Pathways to the Future Report .....	56
Appendix 3: RFCSNQ Annual Report 2015-16.....	88



# Implementation of Far West Tourism Development Action Plan 2014 – 2016

Final Report – March 2016



Birdsville Hotel



This project was proudly funded  
by the Queensland Government



## CONTENTS

Note from the Chairman .....	3
Project Overview .....	4
Project Goals and Strategies .....	5
Implementation of Actions .....	5
Action Plan Results and Recommendations .....	6
• Action Tasks 1.1a, 1.1b, 1.2 – 12 New Self Drive Itineraries .....	6
• Action Task 1.3 – Cooperative Marketing with TEQ and OQTA .....	7
• Action Tasks 1.4 – New Far West Outback Qld Education Tours .....	8
• Action Task 1.5a – 6 Self-Drive Videos .....	10
• Action Task 1.5b – 6 Story-telling Vignettes .....	11
• Action Task 1.6a – Soft Adventure & Tag-a-long Tour Packaging .....	12
• Action Task 1.6b – Wholesale presence for Central West Region .....	14
Summary .....	16



*Boulia Camel Races*



*Little Boomerang Campsite, Welford National Park*



## NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Tourism is a vital contributor to the Far West and Outback Queensland economy. Behind the all-important agricultural sector, which is still the economic mainstay of our region, tourism's contribution continues to grow.

RAPAD was approached for support by Far West representatives to develop a collaborative action and implementation plan to develop new products and grow tourism markets. Through the support of the Qld State Government's Remote Area Board's funding program, we were able to offer this support, which ensured the plan was put into action.

I would like to thank the Qld State Government, and the Department of State Development, for their assistance in this regard and for their continuation of the RAB funding program. It is an important program that allows groups such as RAPAD to implement important economic development initiatives.

I also recognise Anita Clark who has undertaken the task of project managing the creation of the Far West Tourism Action Plan and its subsequent implementation in cooperation with tourism representatives from Boulia, Diamantina and Barcoo Shires.

The outcomes achieved from this project have and will continue to enhance the development of the regions tourism sector.

Yours Sincerely



**Cr Rob Chandler**

Chairman

Central Western Qld Remote Area Planning and Development Board



This project was proudly funded  
by the Queensland Government



4WD adventures near Birdsville

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

With the support of RAPAD, representatives of the Far West regions have identified an opportunity to align new tourism development with existing regional tourism priorities. The majority of this project work focused on the Far West regions with some ongoing trade distribution work for Central West supporting the work initiated in the CWOQTA Tourism Development Action Plan. The primary goal for the project and subsequent actions is to ensure repeat visitation, attract new markets and extend length of stay through continual development and promotion of the drive and touring experience.

Funds were used to undertake phone and on site consultations with representatives of Boulia, Barcoo and Diamantina Shires in the development and implementation of the Far West Tourism Development Action Plan. The plan (released in July 2014) supports the Drive Tourism Strategy for Queensland; Outback Queensland Education Strategy; Outback, Gulf and Western Downs Region Destination Tourism Strategy; Queensland's Outback, Gulf and Western Downs Tourism Opportunity Plan; Outback, Gulf and Western Downs Experience Development Strategy; and CWOQTA Tourism Development Action Plan.

In the completion of these actions, consultation and cooperation was sought from a range of industry contacts to include: local and regional tourism operators; tour wholesalers; motoring organisations; local and regional council tourism organisations; Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing; tourism distribution partners; and industry specialists.



# FAR WEST TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

## GOALS & STRATEGIES

### Goal 1

**Ensure repeat visitation, attract new markets and extend length of stay through continual development and promotion of the drive and touring experience**

### Strategies

- 1.1 Align touring route development and promotion with the overall Drive Strategy for Queensland
- 1.2 Expand distribution of themed routes and related products
- 1.3 Ensure marketing and promotion of regional events, experiences and regions is undertaken in a coordinated manner to maximise visitor expenditure on drive and touring routes
- 1.4 Leverage existing Outback Education tourism strategies (specifically the Outback Queensland Education Subsidy Scheme) in the development and distribution of suitable product
- 1.5 Reinvigorate local tourism products by leveraging the distinctive characters, stories and heroes synonymous with the region
- 1.6 Expand the region's profile in the Adventure touring and fly/drive markets



## IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIONS

An agreed number of specific, achievable actions were drawn up for completion within the project timeframe. A coordinated approach was undertaken for completion of these activities. Individual results were reliant on the level of participation by industry and regional stakeholders. Actions included:

- 1.1 Research existing road trip itineraries for the Far West region on RACQ Virtual Tourist Information Centres website to identify gaps and opportunities for drive itineraries and tourism information;
- 1.2 Distribute new themed drives via both traditional and digital channels to include: ATDW Journeys; RACQ Virtual Tourist Information Centre; Targeted Tour Operator databases; Education Tourism Operator databases; Participating operators, LTO's, RTO websites and collateral;
- 1.3 Align marketing and promotional activities for new product to OQTA and TEQ tourism strategies to include: TEQ Cooperative Marketing Campaigns; Consumer Shows; Trade Shows; Online Marketing; Travel Trade & Media Fairs;
- 1.4 Conduct an audit of available Far West product which may be suitable for educational itinerary inclusions. Develop education tour itinerary packages, which are suitable for distribution to Education Tour Specialists and schools;
- 1.5a Enhance region-wide tourism experiences with a focus on storytelling and distinctive regional experiences
- 1.5b Organise extra filming of the Far West region with the crew already contracted for the Outback Trailblazer 2014; and
- 1.6 Develop itineraries and activities through business development with targeted tour operators to attract new adventure touring groups e.g. 4WD tag-a-long and soft adventure tours.



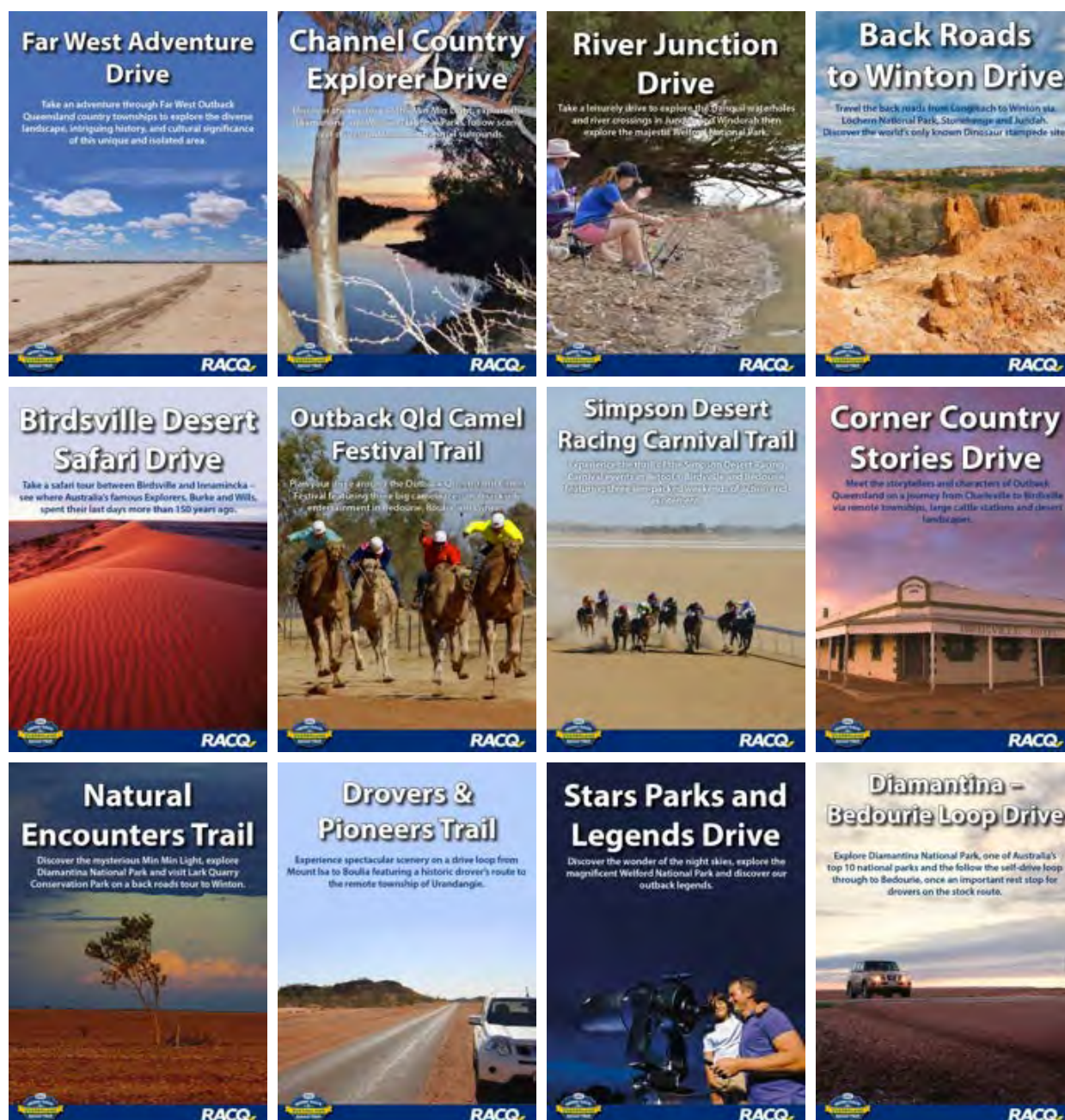
## ACTION PLAN RESULTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### Action Task 1.1a, 1.1b, 1.2 – 12 New Self Drive Itineraries

Research was undertaken on the RACQ Virtual Tourist Information Centres website, Journeys (ATDW) and the Outback Queensland Tourism website to identify gaps and opportunities for drive itineraries and tourist information. The Far West regions of Barcoo, Boulia and Diamantina were under-represented in both self-drive itineraries and tourist information.

Across all of the Far West locations currently supported by the RACQ Virtual Information Centre website, there were primarily only generic outback information brochures and the local tourism information brochure. Product gaps identified include experiences, events and self-drive itineraries.

The targeted ten plus additional self-drive itineraries have now been developed with the aim of attracting new markets and growing exposure for the Far West region. These new itineraries have been distributed through RACQ, Queensland Holidays (via ATDW Journeys) and Outback Queensland websites. A number of these drives have already been featured on blogs by Outback Queensland Tourism, linking to their RACQ drive campaigns. New drives include: <http://tourism.racq.com.au/qld/outback>.



RACQ has a total membership reach of 1,207,882, including 28,000+ Queenslanders who have been members for 50 or more years. Their substantial membership base plus the range of online, print and direct marketing activities undertaken by RACQ throughout the year emphasizes the importance for Far West tourism operators to maximize distribution opportunities through them. The Action Plan strategies align with and support the promotional activities undertaken by OQTA, in particular, the RACQ/ VTIC (Virtual Tourist Information Centres) partnership. The VTICs are hosted on the RACQ website, promoted on RACQ's Trip planner and promoted when members request maps, guides and tourist information. Organic growth is also anticipated via Google SEO activity and RACQ communications.

### Action Task 1.3 – Cooperative Marketing with TEQ and OQTA

The new Far West self-drive itineraries have been developed to leverage TEQ and OQTA marketing activities in relation to the Drive Strategy for Queensland. All of these drives are loaded to ATDW under the Journeys category so they can be easily accessed by TEQ and OQTA.

Already, these drives have been picked up and included in a number of Outback Queensland Tourism marketing activities with a focus on self-drive holidays e.g. recent blog

<http://www.outbackqueensland.com.au/news/6-road-trips-thatll-have-the-kids-forgetting-the-beach/>

Drives have been pulled onto the Outback Queensland Tourism road trip and itineraries pages

<http://www.outbackqueensland.com.au/outback-roadtrips/>

<http://www.outbackqueensland.com.au/suggested-itineraries/>

They are gaining additional exposure by being pulled onto the Qld Holiday App and social media channels.

Below is an example of event themed self-drives being used in a recent Outback Queensland online promotion.



## Action Task 1.4 – New Far West Outback Qld Education Tours

Five new education tourism itineraries have been developed with a focus on activities within the Far West regions of Barcoo, Boulia and Diamantina. Given the distance to be travelled from South-East Qld to these regions, itineraries have been developed using a combination of flights and coach travel. Extensive consultation has been undertaken with Outback operators using key Airports (Desert Edge Tours Birdsville and Outback Aussie Tours Longreach) in relation to touring routes and timings.

Education tourism product module forms have been received from Barcoo, Boulia and Diamantina tourism officers – offering valuable itinerary content ideas. Each itinerary has been linked to relevant fact sheets already set up by TEQ under their Outback Education Products, however there is now a need to create additional fact sheets to profile more Far West attractions/experiences.

Recent discussions with Barcoo and Diamantina Shire indicate that they recognise the benefit in including education tourism business development in their regional tourism strategies. These new itineraries will be a valuable tool in attracting schools to their region. It would be hoped that by 2017/18 we are seeing schools and coach operators include these itineraries or part thereof in their excursion programs. View all new itineraries on the TEQ Outback Education Tour webpage <http://teq.queensland.com/en-IE/Destinations/Outback-Queensland/Outback-Education-Subsidy-Scheme/Outback-Itineraries>

### Desert Edge Tours

*Birdsville Desert Safari – accommodated & camping safari*

**6 Days/5 Nights ex Brisbane – price on application**

Journey to the **Diamantina** where the **desert meets the channel country**. Meet the traditional owners and Elders of the local **Wangkangurru Yarluyandi Tribe**. Follow the **Burke and Wills trail** to Innamincka and **cruise the Cooper Creek**. Swim in the Birdsville Billabong, stand atop **Big Red sandhill** and visit a historic cattle station.

### Far West Adventure - accommodated & camping safari

*Longreach – Jundah – Welford National Park – Birdsville – Boulia – Mt Isa*

**7 Days/6 Nights ex Brisbane – price on application**

Journey from the Central West heartland of **Longreach** to the Far West regions of **Barcoo, Diamantina** and **Boulia**. Explore the magnificent **Welford National Park** with its red river gum and coolibah-lined waters. Hear local **Aboriginal stories** and understand their deep connection with the land. Sleep under the stars, climb **Big Red Sandhill** on the edge of the **Simpson Desert** and hear inspiring stories of our **pioneering heroes**.



## Channel Country Explorer - accommodated & camping safari

Winton - Boulia - Diamantina National Park - Windorah - Jundah - Stonehenge - Longreach

8 Days/7 Nights ex Brisbane

Discover the world's largest collection of **Australian dinosaur fossils**, learn the mystery of the **Min Min Light** and see the last recognized **Corroboree tree** of the **Pitta Pitta** tribe. Explore Diamantina, one of Australia's **top 10 National Parks** and climb the stunning red dunes at Windorah. **Experience a working station** in Longreach.

## Stars, Parks & Legends - accommodated & camping safari

Charleville - Quilpie - Windorah - Welford National Park - Jundah - Stonehenge - Longreach

6 Days/5 Nights ex Brisbane - price on application

Discover the wonder of the night skies at **Charleville's Cosmos Centre**. Tour the Quilpie Powerhouse Museum and enjoy **historic Ray Station**, a living museum. At **Welford National Park**, dine on a claypan and track critters at the sandhill. Visit Windorah's Solar Farm and climb the red sandhills. In Longreach, join a guided tour of the **Qantas 747 and 707 jets** and ride an authentic **Cobb & Co. coach** through the scrub.

## Desert Edge Tours

Corner Country Stories - camping & accommodated

6 Days/5 Nights ex Brisbane - price on application

Meet the storytellers and **characters of Outback Queensland** on a journey from Charleville to Birdsville. Be mesmerised by the **Cosmos Centre Twilight Show** and visit the **Save the Bilby Experience**. Hear tales of local larrikins and the **Eulo Queen**. Learn of the **Geo Dynamics Hot Rock Installation** and spot birdlife on a **Cooper Creek cruise**. Retrace **Burke and Wills'** final days in the harsh and beautiful environment where the Channel Country meets the desert.

## Action Task 1.5a – 6 Self-Drive Videos

Filming for the self-drive videos was completed over the period 23 September to 03 October 2015 with a film crew from TPD media and Anita Clark. New footage was filmed for the following self-drive routes: Back roads to Winton; Drovers and Pioneers Trail; Diamantina – Bedourie Loop; Outback Queensland Camel Festival Trail; River Junction Drive; and Channel Country Explorer Drive. These are all in the process of being linked to the written itineraries in ATDW Journeys and RACQ Virtual Tourist Information Centres (both of these online portals are undergoing technical updates). Diamantina, Boulia and Barcoo Shire will be encouraged to load these itineraries and videos to their tourism websites as well.

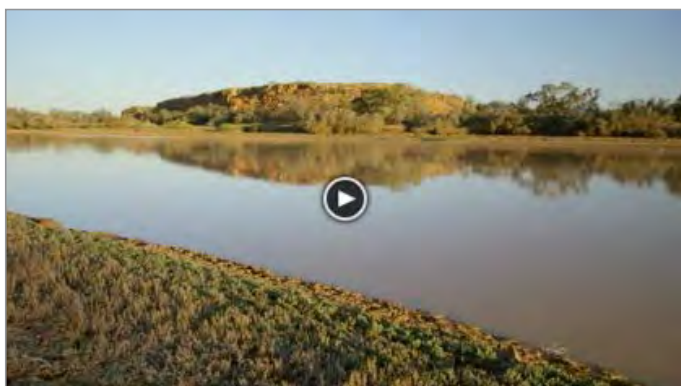
Backroads to Winton Drive



Channel Country Explorer Drive



Diamantina – Bedourie Loop Drive



Outback Camel Festival Trail



River Junction Drive



Drovers and Pioneers Trail



## Action Task 1.5b – 6 Story-telling Vignettes

Footage for a selection of storytelling vignettes was also completed over this period with the crew and Anita Clark spending five nights in Boulia. The Story-telling videos were completed and have been approved by Boulia. It should be noted that Boulia had originally hoped to have more Indigenous participation, however only two members of their original list agreed to be filmed. A third Indigenous resident agreed to participate when approached by the team on arrival in Boulia. Following a substantial editing process at the TPD Media studios, six themed story-telling vignettes were created through the coordination of participant interviews, high quality film footage and background music. The themes included Challenges; Family Life; Min Min Light encounters; Rural Life; Work and Play plus a general promotional video for Boulia.

The next step lies with Boulia in making the best use out of these videos as a tourism activity. City folk are very curious as to why people live in the Outback. These new digital stories give a candid insight into why people live in Boulia – their passion for their region, what they do for work and play, the importance of community (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous), challenges, family and life on the land. From a tourism perspective, most visitors are looking to engage in authentic local interactions and local experiences. These stories will offer Boulia visitors a consistent, authentic, 'local' experience.

Platform to promote....

The most obvious location for visitors to access these stories is the Min Min Centre, specifically the blank wall on the inside RH side of the centre. Providing a comfortable padded seat with access to head phones would enable visitors to select the stories based on the themes that most interest them. Ideally having two screens on this wall would mean that multiple people could be viewing stories at the same time. Having the headphones would help block out the announcements from the Min Min Experience.

*Note: These videos will not be uploaded to Youtube. Please contact RAPAD to view copies of these.*

### Challenges



### Family Life



### Min Min Light encounters



### Rural Life





## Work and Play



## Boulia promotional video



### Action Task 1.6a – Soft Adventure & Tag-a-long Tour Packaging

Discussions and negotiations have been underway with an international soft-adventure operator G Adventures since June 2015. G Adventures are a Canadian-based tour operator looking to grow their destination offering – specifically Birdsville. Working closely with local operator, Outback Aussie Tours, a new itinerary was developed and submitted to G Adventures for their consideration for their 2017 program. G Adventures have since made the decision to keep their existing destinations for 2017 and look to expand in 2018. A face-to-face meeting is scheduled with G Adventures at the upcoming Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) on the Gold Coast in early May 2016.

Following recent updates by G Adventures, we have begun new negotiations with David Thomson of Adventure Tours, with the view to attracting an additional soft-adventure operator to Birdsville. Negotiations will continue beyond the conclusion of this contract with the goal to securing a new partnership for 2018.



Outback Aussie Tours has scheduled 6 departures for their Birdsville Desert Escape tour for 2016. An exciting development for this season is that AAT Kings have agreed to brochure this tour in their International program. See page 75 on the below screen grab from their 2016 Australia brochure and view full brochure here - <http://www.aatkins.com/assets/Brochure-PDFs/1617-Australia-AUD.pdf>

# Birdsville Desert Escape

6 days

It's an adventure across dusty open plains, winding rivers and breathtaking sand dunes, paired with iconic outback hotels, ghost towns and tales of survival in the intriguing Channel Country where Queensland and South Australia meet.

**'Big Red' sand dune**

6 days from

## \$1989

Per Person Twin Share Land Only

**Longreach return**

Code: Q8L

<p><b>\$1989</b> Per Person Twin Share <b>\$2299</b> "Single"</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="3">2016</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Start</th> <th>End</th> <th></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Apr 13</td> <td>Apr 18</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>May 23</td> <td>May 28</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jun 06</td> <td>Jun 11</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Aug 10</td> <td>Aug 15</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sep 28</td> <td>Oct 03</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Oct 09</td> <td>Oct 10</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2016			Start	End		Apr 13	Apr 18		May 23	May 28		Jun 06	Jun 11		Aug 10	Aug 15		Sep 28	Oct 03		Oct 09	Oct 10	
2016																									
Start	End																								
Apr 13	Apr 18																								
May 23	May 28																								
Jun 06	Jun 11																								
Aug 10	Aug 15																								
Sep 28	Oct 03																								
Oct 09	Oct 10																								

\*Single traveller must pay the single price.

Adventure Australia Treks and Tours has confirmed that they have scheduled multiple 4WD tag-a-long tours to the Far West region in 2016. They have two departures scheduled plus a dedicated Birdsville Races tag-a-long planned for 2016. Adventure Australia Treks and Tours is a new 4WD tour operator targeting the high end and corporate traveller. An added bonus for the Far West is confirmation that Adventure Australia Treks and Tours have contracted with the two major domestic wholesalers (Infinity Holidays and AOT Sunlover Holidays). This allows for a much greater reach for these new tours, which in turns grows exposure for the Far West region.

In addition, discussions are currently underway for Adventure Australia Treks and Tours to base one of their vehicles in Birdsville (between departures of their scheduled Central Australia tours) with the aim of running a series of fly-in 7 night tours which start and finish Birdsville. The Diamantina Shire tourism team have been researching suitable 4WD locations which may be included in these itineraries.

[http://www.aatt.com.au/tours/central\\_australia/](http://www.aatt.com.au/tours/central_australia/)



*A Central Australia  
Experience like no other!*  
ALICE SPRINGS TO BIRDSVILLE

The journey to the centre of Australia, with its big blue skies and breathtaking landscapes makes driving a visual pleasure. Your senses will peak as you travel, you'll feel what it's like to be Australian and you'll understand some of the connection that those who came before us have with this land. It could be the isolation of Birdsville or the timeless dunes of the Simpson's red desert sands that makes the hairs on your neck stand up. Perhaps it'll be that overwhelming sensation of your first views of Uluru or the spectacular chasms of Kings Canyon that makes you feel small in the sheer vastness of this ancient landscape. Whatever your perspective, the centre of Australia is very definitely where the heart beats

Adventure  
Australia  
treks+tours





## Action Task 1.6b – Wholesale Distribution for Central West Region

Work has continued in the Wholesale distribution space to ensure Central West operators, who signed up to the Infinity Holidays program in 2014/15 (as part of the CWOQTA Tourism Action Plan), continued their commitment.

The following Central West products were once again included and brochured in the Infinity Holidays program for 2015/16 season, representing a 4-page spread for Outback Queensland products: Outback Aussie Tours (multiple products); Kinnon & Co. (multiple products); Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame (entry & packages); Qantas Founders Museum (entry & packages); Australian Age of Dinosaurs; Waltzing Matilda Centre; Dinosaur Stampede at Lark Quarry; Albert Park Motor Inn; and North Gregory Hotel. Training for Infinity agents for this year's program was completed on 10 March 2015.

Contracting has now been finalized for 2016/17 and it's pleasing to see that Outback Queensland Tourism operators are now participating in two major wholesaler programs – Infinity Holidays and AOT Sunlover Holidays. This trade participation is now being supported by OQTA as part of a new Trade Distribution initiative. In order to be selected for the program, operators needed to be trade ready and already contracted in a wholesale program. The groundwork carried out in the CWOQTA Tourism Plan and the first year of the Far West Tourism Action Plan has ensured that there was sufficient depth of product ready for this program – a fantastic result.

### Infinity Holidays 2016/17: Outback Qld products page 47 - 52

#### Tours & Experiences

**Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame**  
There are 5 stories galleries at the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame, each representing an important aspect of Australia's pioneering history. The Outback Stockman's Hall tells the story of men, women and children who took on the land.

**INCLUDES:**

- Entry to Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame, Mack Stanley Art Gallery & Outback Queensland City Show

**DEPARTS:** Tue-Sat from Longreach – Sun to Sun (Apr-Oct)

**INCLUSIONS:** 1 day

Accommodation	Adult (over 18)	Child (12-17)	Family (2 adults & 2 children)
Longreach	47	21	115

**NEW:** October 9-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)

**Australian Age of Dinosaurs**  
Take part in the only tour of the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum (Laboratory and Collection Room), the guided tour will include hearing about the history of Victoria's dinosaur discoveries and also, something that's waiting in our dinosaur bones, will be the collection of amazing dinosaur bones.

**INCLUDES:**

- Guided tour

**DEPARTS:** Daily from Winton – Mon to Mon (Apr-Oct) – Mon-Sat from Winton – Sun to Sun (Apr-Oct)

**INCLUSIONS:** 1.5 hours

Accommodation	Adult (over 18)	Child (12-17)	Family (2 adults & 2 children)
Longreach	12	6	24

**NEW:** October 9-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)

**Outback Aussie Tours**  
The award winning Smith's Outback Dinner & Live Show is a not-to-be-missed event on the banks of the Thompson River. Enjoy tasty ribeye steaks and relax with local wine and beer. The show is a must-see for all visitors to the Outback with Smith's Live entertainment on the River Stage under the stars.

**INCLUDES:**

- (Apr-Oct) (Apr-Oct)
- (Apr-Oct) (Apr-Oct)
- (Apr-Oct) (Apr-Oct)

**DEPARTS:** Mon & Wed-Sat from Longreach – 6:15 pm

**INCLUSIONS:** 2 hours

Accommodation	Adult (over 18)	Child (12-17)	Family (2 adults & 2 children)
Longreach	12	6	24

**NEW:** October 9-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)

**Longreach Legends Attraction Park**  
Get your adrenaline fix at the Longreach Legends Attraction Park. Enjoy the thrill of the roller coaster, the excitement of the water slides and the fun of the playground. The park is a must-see for all visitors to Longreach.

**INCLUDES:**

- Entry to Longreach Legends Attraction Park

**DEPARTS:** Tue-Sat from Longreach – Sun to Sun (Apr-Oct)

**INCLUSIONS:** 1 day

Accommodation	Adult (over 18)	Child (12-17)	Family (2 adults & 2 children)
Longreach	12	6	24

**NEW:** October 9-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)

**Dinosaur Stampede**  
Experience the thrill of the Dinosaur Stampede at Lark Quarry. The show is a must-see for all visitors to Longreach.

**INCLUDES:**

- Entry to Dinosaur Stampede at Lark Quarry

**DEPARTS:** Tue-Sat from Longreach – Sun to Sun (Apr-Oct)

**INCLUSIONS:** 1 day

Accommodation	Adult (over 18)	Child (12-17)	Family (2 adults & 2 children)
Longreach	12	6	24

**NEW:** October 9-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)

#### Extended Tours

**3 Days of the Brisbane River**  
Experience the beauty of the Brisbane River over 3 days. The tour is a must-see for all visitors to Longreach.

**INCLUDES:**

- 3 nights of accommodation
- 3 nights of breakfast
- 3 nights of dinner

**DEPARTS:** Tue-Sat from Longreach – Sun to Sun (Apr-Oct)

**INCLUSIONS:** 3 days

Accommodation	Adult (over 18)	Child (12-17)	Family (2 adults & 2 children)
Longreach	12	6	24

**NEW:** October 9-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)

**Outback Aussie Tours - 5 Days/4 Nights**  
Experience the beauty of the Outback over 5 days. The tour is a must-see for all visitors to Longreach.

**INCLUDES:**

- 5 nights of accommodation
- 5 nights of breakfast
- 5 nights of dinner

**DEPARTS:** Tue-Sat from Longreach – Sun to Sun (Apr-Oct)

**INCLUSIONS:** 5 days

Accommodation	Adult (over 18)	Child (12-17)	Family (2 adults & 2 children)
Longreach	12	6	24

**NEW:** October 9-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)

**Brisbane Desert Escape - 8 Days/7 Nights**  
Experience the beauty of the Brisbane Desert over 8 days. The tour is a must-see for all visitors to Longreach.

**INCLUDES:**

- 8 nights of accommodation
- 8 nights of breakfast
- 8 nights of dinner

**DEPARTS:** Tue-Sat from Longreach – Sun to Sun (Apr-Oct)

**INCLUSIONS:** 8 days

Accommodation	Adult (over 18)	Child (12-17)	Family (2 adults & 2 children)
Longreach	12	6	24

**NEW:** October 9-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)

**Longreach Legends Attraction Park - 6 Days/5 Nights**  
Experience the beauty of the Longreach Legends Attraction Park over 6 days. The tour is a must-see for all visitors to Longreach.

**INCLUDES:**

- 6 nights of accommodation
- 6 nights of breakfast
- 6 nights of dinner

**DEPARTS:** Tue-Sat from Longreach – Sun to Sun (Apr-Oct)

**INCLUSIONS:** 6 days

Accommodation	Adult (over 18)	Child (12-17)	Family (2 adults & 2 children)
Longreach	12	6	24

**NEW:** October 9-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)  
Nov 1-2 pm-4 pm (FREE) - 11 am-4 pm (paid) (Apr-Oct)

APPENDIX

53



We have been advised that all product included in the Infinity Australia brochure program will be duplicated in the Infinity New Zealand brochure program. Additionally, the Sunlover Holidays Australia brochure will be duplicated and re-wrapped as Air New Zealand Holiday packages for the NZ market. The reach for Outback Queensland product has increased substantially since the start of the CWOQTA Tourism Action Plan.

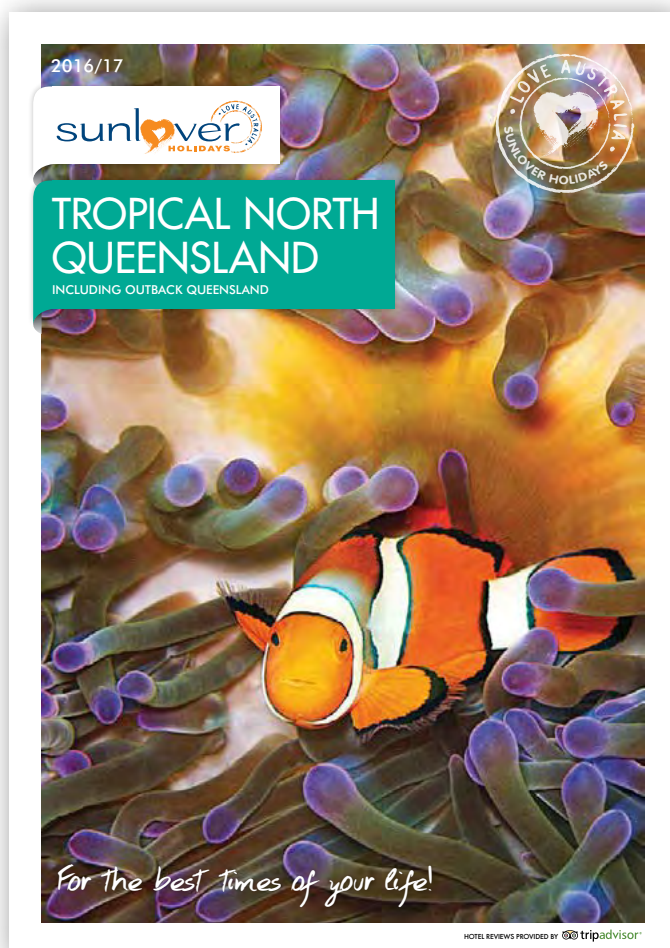
As part of a TEQ/OQTA marketing strategy to attract more visitors from NZ, Outback Queensland will once again be participating in the 'Queensland on Tour' Trade Workshops in Queenstown from 06 – 08 April 2016. Only trade-ready product is eligible to participate in these workshops.

As an added bonus to the existing trade distribution, another separate project (between Southern Qld Country Tourism and Outback Queensland Tourism) targeting the NZ self-drive market has been underway since late 2015. This has resulted in four new self-drive itineraries ex Brisbane created with trade ready product. These new itineraries and related industry resources have been distributed under the banner Queensland's Big Sky Country Drives. View the Trade website here: <http://trade.queenslandbigskycountry.com/>

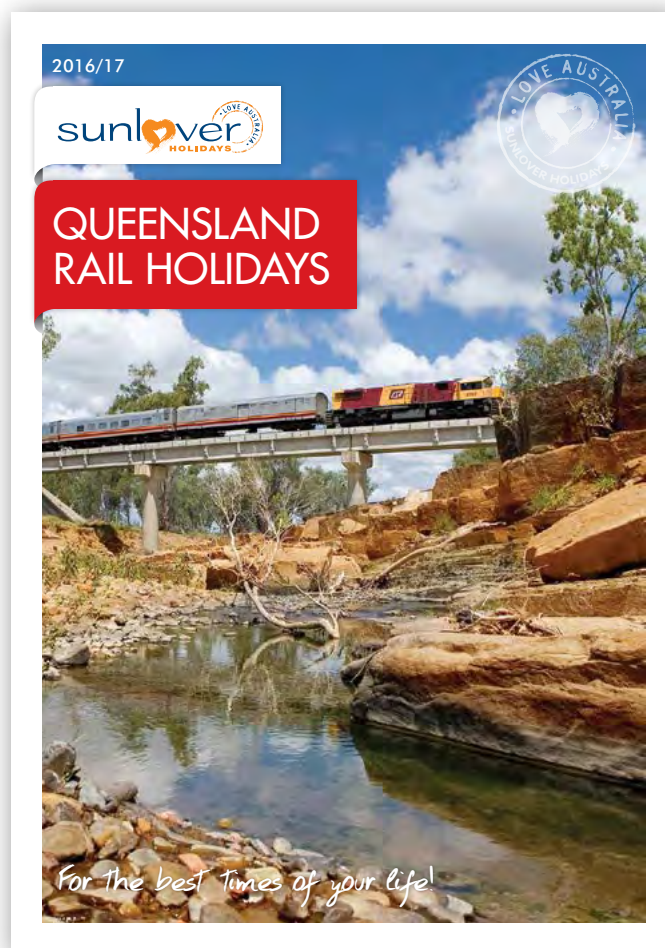
Moving forward, there is opportunity for Far West operators to be included in these new trade itineraries and both Barcoo and Diamantina Shires have indicated that they will be including this work as a strategy in their Tourism Action Plans for 2016/17.

#### Sunlover Holidays 2016/17:

##### Outback Qld packages pages 77 – 81



##### Outback Qld packages pages 16 - 25



## SUMMARY

The successful implementation of the Far West Tourism Development Action Plan has benefited from a collaborated approach to grow exposure through new distribution partners, product development and enhanced visitor experiences.

By aligning marketing activities with OQTA, TEQ and the Drive Strategy for Queensland, the Far West operators are able to leverage promotion of their new self-drive itineraries. These 12 new self-drives which link Far West touring routes to major Outback centres (Longreach, Charleville and Mount Isa) offer visitors fresh ideas and new adventures in Outback Queensland. The added benefit of video promotion for 6 of these self-drive itineraries will provide opportunity for a much wider reach in the digital space to include Youtube, FaceBook, Twitter and Vimeo. As part of a new web enhancement for RACQ, Far West will soon be able to link the self-drive videos with itineraries already being promoted on the RACQ Virtual Tourist Information Centres. Video links are currently being loaded to the relevant itineraries listed on ATDW Journeys.

TEQ will continue to promote the Outback Queensland Education Subsidy Scheme to teachers and educators as one of their key Outback marketing campaigns. The Far West Tourism Development Action Plan strategy to create five new education itineraries has enabled Far West Shires to leverage this activity. It is exciting to know that the Far West operators are now in a position to plan their own Business Development activities and grow this new market.

The creation of six new story-telling vignettes for the Boulia Shire has allowed them the opportunity to offer visitors a consistent, authentic, 'local experience,' something that connects visitors on an emotional level to special places, people and culture. It will be important that the platforms and environment used to display these vignettes are designed to create a quality visitor experience. Boulia Shire should ensure that they promote the availability of these new story-telling assets in all of their tourism promotional activities.

Given its reputation as the 'real' Outback, the Far West Outback region is perfectly positioned to attract soft-adventure tour operators. Considerable work has already been carried out to identify suitable operators, present Far West as a 'new' destination, package suitable 'soft adventure' activities and secure local operator partners. Negotiations are continuing with international soft-adventure operator G Adventures – now considering Birdsville for their 2018 program. Discussions are also underway with Adventure Travel, a tour operator with close links to Qantas Holidays. Continued support from the Diamantina Shire in removing unnecessary obstacles and providing valuable destination advice will benefit these negotiations.

The Far West Shires have been packaged by local operator, Outback Aussie Tours, for a number of years as part of the Birdsville Desert Escape tour. Through Outback Aussie Tours' distribution partnership expansion, this tour is now distributed through all major Australia and NZ wholesalers as well as major tour operator AAT Kings. This activity alone has greatly increased exposure for the Far West region. It is exciting to see that another local operator Desert Edge Tours is poised to expand their distribution and work more closely with the tourism trade.

Through the new partnership with Adventure Australia Treks and Tours, the Far West now has the ideal channel for targeting the lucrative corporate incentive market. Diamantina Shire has confirmed that they are keen to explore this new market pending the completion of new accommodation in Birdsville. They have also indicated that they are keen to work closely with Adventure Australia Treks and Tours in growing the number of tour departures of the new Central Australia Tour.

Seeing how trade distribution has grown for the Central West operators since the implementation of the CWOQTA Tourism Development Action Plan should give enormous confidence to Far West operators beginning the same journey. It is important for all Far West Shires to continue to educate their tourism team on working with trade, experience development and attracting new markets. It would be recommended that all Shires formalise a Regional Tourism Action Plan which details specific strategies for moving forward from achieved outcomes of the Far West Tourism Development Action Plan.





## **Pathways to the future: building local strategies for regional resilience and sustainable development in central western Queensland**

### **Synthesis Report of Community Workshops Barcaldine, Boulia, Barcoo, Blackall-Tambo, Longreach**

**October 2015 – February 2016**



**Professor John Cole OAM**  
**March 2016**



# Table of Contents

<b>1. Background</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.1 The Workshops</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.2 Expectations of Participants</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. Valuing the best of the region</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.1 Identity, values, community, belonging</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.2 Success and achievement</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.3 Life in central western Queensland</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3. Imagining the region making the most of its strengths</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3.1 A Regional Vision for the Future</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3.2 Regional Vision for CWQ</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3.3 Regional Vision: Place and Community</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4. Designing how the vision for the future will be realised</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>4.1 Central Western Queensland Future Vision – 7 pathway planks to build it on</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4.2 How do we do it? Detailed feedback from workshops</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>5. Next Steps: what to change and how best to work</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>6. Reflections on the Workshop Process as Community Development</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>7. Acknowledgements</b>	

## 1.0 Background

In Central Western Queensland the current drought emergency has stimulated a range of responses including the Community Drought Leadership Groups with their toolkits enabling communities to develop drought response plans and make the most of existing resources.

Building on these initiatives and recognising the importance of assisting regional communities focus on longer term thinking and planning, in August 2015 the Remote Area Planning and Development Board invited Professor John Cole OAM, Executive Director of USQ's Institute for Resilient Regions to conduct a series of workshops to engage community participation in a creative process structured around the following questions:

1. What is the longer term future for central western Queensland?
2. What are the options for sustainable development in our region?
3. How do we make our communities as resilient as possible?

By working cooperatively across the region with key stakeholders in each local authority district the aim of the workshop series was to assist in strengthening community resilience by elevating leadership focus beyond the current drought emergency to the opportunities that might be developed sustainably and which inevitably would involve innovation of some form or another.

There are many possible or plausible futures for the region. Regional development is the outcome of a complex interplay of a myriad of factors, reflecting in part the capacities of local leadership and decision-making as well as community understanding and involvement in developing the narrative and exploring the possibilities. Compounding these considerations is the magnitude of innovation happening more generally in the world which bears directly on the future for regional communities.

Sustainable development means development that takes account of the needs of future generations as well as today's. 'Sustainable' means 'able to continue indefinitely'. So by definition, sustainable development for central western Queensland will be long term in its ambition and capacity, resilient, and anchored in contemporary communities.

The human capital factor is crucial to building sustainable development, making regions resilient and achieving a preferred future for the people. In itself resilience is not an end, but is actually a function of a thriving regional system. To build resilience, crucial enabling factors in a region or community have to be assured and developed.

The Institute for Resilient Regions views regional human systems as encompassing an array of characteristics across the psychological, sociological, economic and technological spectrum. Strengthening the resilience of a regional system requires all core elements of adaptivity to be applied through regional learning, innovation and knowledge (technological) functions - as they apply to personal and social health and well-being, community and cultural capacity, and business enterprise - reflected in the IRR schematic below:



As has been identified by the Rockefeller Foundation these process are based in a number of key factors underpinning resilience propensities and they include<sup>1</sup>:



**5 critical elements of regional resilience**



## 1.1 The Workshops

Day long workshops involving in total approximately 100 community participants from across the central west region (most under the age of 40) were convened between 24 October 2015 and 29 February 2016 in Barcaldine, Boulia, Jundah, Blackall and Longreach. Scheduling difficulties prevented the proposed Winton workshop from proceeding and Diamantina Shire elected not to proceed after surveying likely participation. Each workshop was introduced and opened by the local Mayor.

Workshops started with an outline of the aims of the day and the key assumptions behind staging a series of community meetings to discuss the intermediate and longer term future of the region. The principles and protocols behind using a methodology called Appreciative Inquiry Framework were also outlined. Key themes likely to shape the future over the coming decades at the global, national, and regional levels were also canvassed and the function and character of resilience in regional development was explained.

Participants were shown how the workshop would be framed around a recognition that human systems “grow and construct their future realities in the direction of what they most persistently, actively, and collectively ask questions about”<sup>ii</sup> and that “...people [communities] and organisations are full of assets, capabilities, resources and strengths that can be located, affirmed, leveraged and encouraged.”<sup>iii</sup>

In that context each workshop focussed on three strategic questions:

1. Where are we now?
2. What do we want to go for?
3. How will be the best way to get there?

Positive or appreciative inquiry was explained as working in community planning and development by:

- Choosing the positive as the focus of inquiry.
- Inquiring into stories that give life to the region.
- Locating themes and drilling deeper into causality and linkage creating shared images of a preferred future.
- Applying knowledge of what works and what’s possible.
- Imagining boldly and finding innovative ways to create that future.
- Collaborating and building collective capacity by sharing insights, information and resources.

Participants were informed that the purpose of the day was to gather information, formulate some positive ideas, and plan some desired beneficial actions. The mantra was collaboration rather than competition and working as a team.

## 1.2 Expectations of Participants

The primary process expectation of participants in the workshops was to

- Learn from others and share ideas.
- See what others thought.
- Achieve better understanding of their region/community and of its possibilities.

Strengthening community cohesion and connectedness through strategic conversations also emerged as a secondary and quite strong theme in participant expectations.

Workshop participants want to see stronger community integration, better social connectedness and cohesion, and constructive collaboration within and across the community. How to work together more effectively was a key interest at all five workshops.

Some attended with quite specific intentions, like ensuring “the future sustainability of the region” or helping the community “to progress and be productive, so that our kids can stay, or come back, if they want to”.

Achieving higher levels of regional self-sufficiency, smarter use of existing skills, opportunities for economic development and diversification were also strong drivers of participant interest at all five workshops.

### Workshop Facilitator: Professor John Cole

Professor John Cole OAM is recognised internationally for leadership in sustainable development, innovation for sustainability and regional resilience planning. Joining USQ in 2009, he has more than 30 years’ experience in senior government, industry and community roles and was recognised in the Australia Days Honours List in 2016 for services to the environment, higher education and the community. He grew up in rural Queensland and has a PhD in Australian social and demographic history. He is a member of the Queensland Plan Ambassadors Council.



## 2. Valuing the best of the region

Workshop participants were encouraged to consider a range of questions aimed at building a positive narrative while attuning the thinking to positive appreciation. The aim was to tell stories that appreciated the best about life in region while creating group awareness of “our region, our community – its strengths, values and enablers”.

Participants were asked to make observations on the following:

1. What really defines us as a region and a community?
2. How did we get this far?
3. What’s great about the region?
4. What’s unique about our communities?
5. Why do we like living where we do?
6. What are the advantages of living in CWQ?
7. Why is our history remarkable?

### 2.1 Identity, values, community, belonging

When asked to discuss the positive things about living in central western Queensland, invariably participants highlighted the local people and their communities.

Strong recognition of the defining impact of personal values, heritage and behaviour came through in repeated references to resilience, self-reliance, dealing with hardship, heritage, gritty pioneers, and personal stoicism in the face of adversity. This was the initial and most evident regional profile participants had of central western Queenslanders, a collective self-image magnified possibly by the stresses of dealing with the current drought.

There was also an appreciation of the unique life experiences that came with living in the outback and the life skills learned living there. “We are connected to the land and the community” was a statement that resonated in different working groups. Rurality also was promoted in the description of regional identity: “We are a rural-based town”, they would say in Longreach.

Beyond the personal characteristics of the local people themselves, the most important thing about living in central western Queensland was the community context of life itself – “We’re all in it together”.

Place, community ethos, and social interdependence were concepts woven into most reflections about the good things about living in the region. A relaxed and safe place to live and raise a family was a core description in every workshop. Communities were described as welcoming, friendly, and connected - with local populations being small enough for everybody to know each other.

The role of community in defining and supporting regional identity was evident in the “great sense of community and pride” reported by participants as was their



acknowledgement of the importance of community in celebration and entertainment. “We love to celebrate stuff, be positive, have fun, and show our passion” was echoed in group reflections in all workshops.

The social constructive role of community in the region was also broadly acknowledged with reference to the relative ease (compared to urban communities) in which individuals might “have a positive impact”. Community groups existed in a raft of different forms across the region and “everyone can be a part of something”. In some of the more remote communities, people could actually achieve more because of the encouragement and support they received from others.

Other workshop participants pointed to the advantages of self-organisation that came from small communities where people could “organise and advocate” for particular preferred futures. The claim was made that “People are interested in the future and get involved and support each other – there is connection, we feel alive in our connection, we care about each other”.

In several workshops too, reference was made to the power of inclusion: “We tend to be strongest when we’re doing things that everyone can be part of”.

The special and unique aspects of central western Queensland as a place in geo-physical terms came through in references to the landscape and in some districts the “untouched natural environment ... [of] sand hills, wide open spaces, and unique pristine rivers”. Participants in more than one workshop claimed to be “connected to our landscape”. Others pointed to the unique wildlife species, sunshine, clean air and artesian water as environmental factors that made living in central western Queensland such a positive experience.

In the midst of drought, understandably economic factors did not reflect strongly across the workshops as being a compelling feature for living in the central west. Participants pointed to housing affordability, the infrastructural and human capital of the pastoral industry, the bounty of the land when it rained, the potential of renewable energy and prospective tourism growth as positive economic features of the region. Resonating strongest, however, was the optimism portrayed by participants themselves in their self-belief, their interest in having a go, and in their passion for “our people and our place”.



There was a consistent view expressed that emphasised the foundation of human capital and the formative role played by social capital (community) in shaping the region's economic prospects.

## 2.2 Success and achievement

The history and achievements of the pastoral industry figured strongly across workshops when participants were asked to discuss regional successes, highpoints and community achievements.

Young primary producers in Barcaldine recalled the sheep boom as being the glory days of primary industries because prices were good and the local economy and employment was buoyant. More recently, they pointed to farm business cash flow improvisations like farm machinery outsourced to civil and civic projects and examples of local on farm business diversification. From Blackall to Boulia people talked about the achievement of "adapting our primary industries from sheep to cattle by adapting to change and opportunity".

In Jundah young primary producers talked of further innovation as the local industry sought to differentiate and add value through Clean Green Organic OBE grass-fed beef.

The establishment of the Stockmen's Hall of Fame and the Longreach Pastoral College reflected the primacy of the farm economy in central western Queensland's past. In several locations mention was made of the frustrated potential of kangaroo management and harvesting as an industry well supported by local skills.

Besides the region's agri-industries, most frequent reference was made to the progress of the tourism industry especially heritage, rural, and remote landscape tourism as a regional economic achievement. "We are a special niche tourist destination providing the genuine Aussie heritage. People can visit here to experience a more relaxed lifestyle". Besides the region's heritage museums there was also growth in events and celebrations attracting tourists – from yabby races to gymkhanas, picnic horse race days, and fossil digs.

Events organisation figured strongly in most reflections about the social successes across the region. "Community spirit" was the most oft used description of the social catalyst for local organisation and initiative. Whether it

was a fund-raising dinner on the airport tarmac in Longreach, picnic races in Barcaldine, a fishing competition in Windorah, annual show days, or beach parties in Boulia, the willingness of people to link together and work cooperatively to make successful social events was held up routinely as a successful feature of life in the central west. The relatively high level of volunteerism was reported positively as was the proactivity and responsiveness of communities in times of need “because there is a desire from all to help”.

Scarcity of resources and limited population gave rise to other successes, notably women in the workforce, capacity for local self-organisation, willingness to adapt and adopt the new technologies to better connect to the outside world for things like education and telehealth. Inter-personal connectivity was also commonly mentioned as being important – in examples as varied as inter-generational connectivity in Blackall to indigenous and non-indigenous links in Boulia.

Safety, self-reliance, and creativity also jumped out of descriptions of social success in the region. And generally, there was acknowledgement that the things that worked best were the initiatives that drew most widely from the community.

When it came to celebrating the natural capital of the region, there was near universal appreciation of the “amazing” landscape, the “night sky in winter, or being able to go out to the open downs”, the “untouched natural environment .... Sand hills, water, wide open spaces, unique river systems, and pristine rivers” the “life-blood of local recreation and relaxation”. “We are in the Lake Eyre Basin, all our towns and communities except Alpha are all connected by the same, unique, inland river system”. Talking of things unique, workshops were also quick to point out the region’s flora and fauna and fossils.

## **2.3 Life in central western Queensland**

Drawing out the positive reflections workshop participants made about their region, it is evident that the core elements of a resilient region are present and in play.





Here are 20 defining appreciative perspectives:

- We love where we live and want a future for our families here.
- We are strongly connected to our community and our landscape.
- We belong here.
- People are resilient, energetic, and self-reliant.
- The climatic and seasonal cycles have a major impact on our economy but we have shown we can adapt.
- We have a rich history and heritage – indigenous and European.
- We're all going through the same things, we have common experience and a lot of shared commitment.
- When we get ourselves organised and draw widely in our communities, we can do big things.
- Existing regional communication and cooperation can provide for even stronger and more productive collaboration.
- We've got a good primary industry base we can build on.
- There are opportunities for economic diversification through innovation.
- Some issues are a lot more extensive and complex but we are learning.
- There are local resources – human and natural - as yet untapped.
- Our young people are wanting to learn and be skilled for the future.
- We can and want to do things for ourselves independent of government.
- Our facilities are good but we can do a lot better with them.
- Our environment is unique and special.
- Our region has talents, resources and potential currently undersold.
- Direct regional engagement with the broader world can create new opportunities.
- We have adapted before and we will again to make a future here.



### 3. Imagining the region making the most of its strengths

This section reports the key ideas, suggestions and themes to emerge from workshop discussions that focussed on what might be possible in the region by building on the best of the successes and strengths outlined earlier. Each workshop group was encouraged to boldly dream the possibilities by extending its thinking and harnessing the aspirations of each of the individual participants.

The group was asked to take account of what already is happening but imagine a stronger, resilient, more sustainable future for the region. They were invited to consider: What would it be like? How would it be different? If the region was to really excel at something in future, what could it be?

#### 3.1 A Regional Vision for the Future

The ideas raised in workshops as part of imagining a future which built on the region's strongest attributes are presented below organised under the nine foundation headings of the Queensland Plan (*See explanatory note on Page 16*). The information has been arranged this way to assist CWQ achieve regional alignment with the 30 year Plan for the wider State. It also makes more visible those consistencies and complementarities in thinking between local, regional and State-wide aspirations for the future.

#### Foundations of the Queensland Plan<sup>iv</sup>

**Education Building life skills and inspiring bright minds**

**Community Making connections**

**Regions Building thriving communities**

**Economy Forging diversity and prosperity**

**Health and wellbeing Being healthy and active**

**Environment Achieving balance**

**People Creating opportunities for everyone**

**Infrastructure Being connected**

**Governance Balancing all our interests**

## **3.2 Regional Vision for Central Western Queensland**

### **1. Education - Building life skills and inspiring bright minds**

- We are a community rich in and aware of its own capacities, training our people and children for the roles needed for the future here.
- A place of opportunity to which our young people can return at the end of their education.
- Young people are choosing professions that will enable them to come back and contribute.
- A broadened role for a regional Agricultural College offers a wider range of courses.
- A regional Trades Training Centre offers a diversity of courses.
- A regional University campus offers courses in rural industries, science and tourism.
- New jobs and skills coming from new industries and local innovation.
- Families are able to educate their children up to Grade 12 at local schools which would also have great tele-education facilities.
- Our school and further education captures the imagination and the capacity of our children in ways relevant to the future of the region and we have the facilities to support the learning journey for our people who are training and studying.

### **2. Community - Making connections**

- We are a community where young people contribute and older people listen more to the views of younger people.
- CWQ has a thriving network of community groups providing facilities and mutual support.
- People are relying less on government and drawing more from community members organising to do things for ourselves involving more people along the way.
- Organisations/structures for working better together across the region are established and achieving closer inter-community cooperation.

### **3. Regions - Building thriving communities**

- Our region is attracting more families and is a region where young people can return to because it is affordable, has more industry including professionals, and infrastructure for modern living.
- We are a region where we are always improving what we're good at.
- The region boasts a rich and thriving cultural scene.
- The region has its own cultural brand.
- The 'leaving' mentality to seek opportunity elsewhere has changed and our kids can work here.
- CWQ is more creative and inclusive in making better use of the people already here in our community.



#### **4. Economy - Forging diversity and prosperity**

- Newcomers can move here to find opportunities.
- CWQ has an economy where people who want practical and physical work can still find opportunity.
- Local people are committed to supporting local enterprise and businesses are competitive so people will spend locally.
- Self-sufficiency and living affordability have been boosted by local cooperative purchasing arrangements especially in consumables.
- Business Innovation Centres support regional businesses developing and commercialising products and services.
- Farming production is diversified delivering new economic opportunity and local food security.
- Innovation in farming production has made it sustainable.
- The region is known internationally for organic/clean-green food exports.
- Food production has been boosted by innovations in primary production.
- The region has a rangeland agricultural brand.
- Water is better utilised especially during the huge floods that occur occasionally.
- Primary producers and their supply chains have developed redundancy strategies for resilience in dealing with climatic cycles.
- Tourism and agriculture are making the most of opportunities for integration.
- The rest of the world knows a lot more about what we have and our indigenous history and heritage are well presented and understood by younger generations.
- Our region is well promoted, well marketed and sign-posted locally to internationally.
- Our region is strategic and targeted in its promotion achieving a wider awareness of what we've got to share here.
- We have a stronger tourist industry, built on authentic, immersion experiences drawing on our heritage - pastoral, pioneers, landscape.
- Our towns are beautified and existing assets and resources are better utilised.
- Tourism numbers have increased by 50%.
- International direct flights connect Longreach to overseas.
- CWQ is a top 20 tourism destination in Australia for domestic and international tourists.
- Food tourism opportunities are being exploited with a paddock to plate experience - station cooking, beef and bush-tucker, enabling visitors to see, taste and buy unique food.

## **5. Health and wellbeing - Being healthy and active**

- Health care facilities are equivalent to city standards.
- The regional collaborative health model is a role model for rural/remote communities across the world.
- Community services are delivered and managed efficiently locally (e.g. mental health, ATODS, HACC, and Family Services) and shared services provision does not discriminate racially
- We treat and care for our people locally using our qualified local health care workers and technology.
- We've closed the gap on indigenous health.
- We are sharing and selling the intellectual property we've developed in modern health care management.
- We care for our elderly in local aged care facilities.
- Locally trained doctors live and work in the region.
- We would care for ourselves through community programs like Meals on Wheels, Blue-Care, Home and Community Care.
- Local towns are more 'family friendly' in amenity for active living with parks, playgrounds, Skate Park, Water Park, and shade for swimming pools.

## **6. Environment - Achieving balance**

- For those wanting serenity our core character will still be the same – and people wanting tranquillity and peace will still find it in CWQ.
- Local agriculture is a world leader in sustainable use and re-use of water.
- CWQ has reduced its carbon footprint substantially using sustainable renewable energy.
- Our pastoral industry fits well with our natural environment and assets as a sustainable pastoral industry.

## **7. People - Creating opportunities for everyone**

- CWQ is a welcoming community, more able to provide for people who leave and come back.
- The rest of the world knows a lot more about what we have here.

## **8. Infrastructure - Being connected**

- CWQ is region with facilities and infrastructure for people wanting to live here.
- CWQ is connected to the world physically and digitally.
- Slow internet speeds and communications blackspots are a distant memory.
- A regional Data Centre and High Technology Hub provide economic and social benefits.

- CWQ has the infrastructure to secure sustainable water resources.
- Central western communities own, produce, and store their own energy.
- Geothermal and solar energy are the main sources of reliable renewable energy.
- Renewable energy is delivered through a regionally owned utility working with private sector energy specialists
- Government regulations have changed to enable us to form our own cooperative energy utility.
- We make greater use of affordable renewable energy because the State regulatory requirements for off-grid systems now encourage growth in renewable energy generation and storage.
- State Government is more supportive of private sector development by making it easier and cheaper to convert land from leasehold to freehold.
- Our connectivity to the outside world is enhanced by better roads and public transport services.
- All of our communities including remote indigenous communities have essential utilities and human services.

## 9. Governance - Balancing all our interests

- Government and public servants would have a better understanding of the needs and unique circumstances of remote and regional communities.

---

*More than 80,000 Queenslanders contributed to the formulation of The Queensland Plan, an aspirational community vision supported by The Queensland Plan Act 2014. The Plan enjoys bipartisan support and requires alignment of local government planning to its strategic direction.*

---

### A NOTE RE CWQ PATHWAYS VS QUEENSLAND PLAN

These nine foundations listed above created the framework for The Queensland Plan. All the Queensland Plan foundations have a number of goals that highlight what Queenslanders said they wanted to be, do or achieve.

In the Central Western Queensland Pathways workshops participant goals were distilled into a Summary Vision for the Region which appears next.

In the Queensland Plan each goal is supported by a number of success factors that describe the outcomes Queenslanders want. The QP process also set high level targets for each function. In this CWQ Pathways report, targets for each foundation have not been set. Rather the workshop process focussed on designing how the vision might be achieved and to this end focusses more on the capturing the functions and processes of building regional resilience in CWQ than on setting targets. That is a planning element that could arise later in the pathways process.



### 3.3 Regional Vision: Place and Community

The consolidated workshops vision for the future of Central Western Queensland distils to two focal points: *CWQ as place*, and *CWQ as community*.

Central Western Queensland is **a place** where people can



Central Western Queensland is **a community** which is



## 4. Designing how the vision for the future will be realised

We create pathways to the future and new capacity by building on what we have discovered and imagined for our region. The focus in this section is on the changes workshop participants identified as being needed to make a reality of the vision for the future of central west region.

**The key factors to emerge from the workshops that are crucial to shaping the future and resilience of central western Queensland can be organised into seven pathway planks extending on the five elements of resilient regional systems identified by the Rockefeller Foundation.**



**Future and Resilience Pathway Planks – CWQ**

## **4.1 Central Western Queensland Future Vision – 7 pathway planks to build it on**

Having envisaged a future for central western Queensland and their part of it, each of the five workshops spent an afternoon session focussed on the key ingredients (design steps) including changes which would have to occur, for the vision to be realised. Here summarised are their findings and recommendations:

### **1. Strengthening Identity, Learning, and Consensus**

- Keep identity relevant to the future.
- Strengthen community - inclusion, openness, diversity.
- Reflect, acknowledge, learn, and be aware.
- Explore possibilities, do things not yet done.
- Take responsibility.

### **2. Developing Leadership, Skills and Strategy**

- Build pathways to the vision.
- Work as "one community", involve everyone.
- Proactively self-organise.
- Leverage capacity and investment.
- Change the brand, change the rules.

### **3. Creating Links, Relationships and Mutuality**

- Don't take each other for granted, check presumptions.
- Strengthen the whole by linking beyond generations and communities.
- Cooperate across and within the region and then collaborate.
- Build local knowledge through connection and communication.



#### **4. Making Institutions Adaptable and Accessible**

- Make institutions accountable, multifunctional, and adaptable.
- Create information flows that are connected, constructive, open and accessible.

#### **5. Caring for Health and Wellbeing**

- Care for people locally.
- Educate and train our health care workers here.
- Exploit digital technology for local health care.
- Aim for a world class regional and rural health system.
- Create lifelong opportunities and learning.

#### **6. Innovating and Enterprising**

- Achieve economic resilience through diversification.
- Innovate for resource security for future development.
- Engineer energy self-sufficiency.
- Encourage business to business cooperation.
- Launch value chain marketing and branding.
- Make global connection through digital innovation.

#### **7. Orienting and Engaging Local to Global**

- Collaborate purposefully local, regional and beyond.
- Creative and connect to new pathways and new partners.
- Look beyond government to global possibilities.

## 4.2 How do we do it? Detailed feedback from workshops

Having envisaged a future for central western Queensland, each of the five workshops spent an afternoon session focussed on the key ingredients (design steps) including changes which would have to occur, for the vision to be realised. Here summarised are their findings and recommendations:

### 1. Strengthening Identity, Learning, and Consensus

- Work together to function better regionally – ‘Team Central Western Queensland’.
- Build our strong community spirit to embrace regionalism as well as localism.
- Foster pride by valuing our people.
- Define and brand CWQ as a region – create and market it as a regional identity/brand
- Develop a committee or working group that represents each shire – to get people involved – to manage an events calendar to assist coordination and better communication across CWQ.
- Local Government should harmonise and ensure consistent practices and systems across boundaries e.g. road quality, feral animal control practices.
- Regional Councils should explore what individual communities could gain from regional collaboration.
- Regional Councils should explore specialisation opportunities across the region to deliver complementary capacities in different parts of CWQ i.e. where some centres become a hub for services across western Queensland (e.g. aged-care services) – communities operating regionally with distinctive value propositions.
- Proactively utilise communications and technology effectively to support more frequent whole of region ‘conversations’.
- Walk and talk ‘regional’ in government, business, media and social activities.
- Promote the need for change and collaboration in the community conversation.
- Beautify towns, improve street-scaping, re-purpose vacant buildings.
- Invest in and extend parks and public playground amenities to facilitate community integration and harmony especially among children through play and proximity.
- Start local conversations about ways to better use existing infrastructure can be a catalyst to helping us change the way we do things.

- Start conversations with young people and business owners to encourage new thinking and cooperation.
- Talk more inclusively to create community unity.
- Each Local Government develop its own version of the 30 year Queensland Plan.
- Ensure Council LGA names strengthen shared identity.

## **2. Developing Leadership, Skills and Strategy**

- Local leaders at all levels to canvas opportunities to make a difference in new areas.
- Leadership groups can help people be more informed about options for the future.
- Change practices and cultures to build and lead and not wait for outsiders to make decisions for us.
- Encourage stronger leadership by our youth.
- Bring together annually a regional leadership forum in each LGA drawn from all generations from schools to the elderly to discuss issues and ideas.
- Extend partnerships between local business and schools to provide work experience for school students.
- Build a local community development and learning cycle by shifting thinking and encouraging increased communication and cooperation between people learning and local business owners and managers
- Create a tourism-business networks for people seeking opportunities for further training.
- Develop digital skills in young people through improved connectivity and enabling mobile devices in education.
- Provide free access to the internet at libraries to draw young people into the facility for learning and social interaction as well as play.
- Undertake a skills audit of the community to identify available local technical skills not currently deployed.
- Stage local Business Expos with a focus on creating Elder/Younger Skills Exchange.
- Make more constructive use of indigenous people particularly in addressing development processes, stakeholder engagement and communication with Traditional Owners and historical peoples.
- Train people to negotiate the regulatory systems covering emerging industries such as tourism and food hospitality systems.



### 3. Creating Links, Relationships and Mutuality

- Strengthen community groups by helping them review their establishment and mission through education and sharper strategy for growth and renewal.
- Strengthen community resilience by seeking to do more ourselves (lessening dependence on government) and work as 'one community'.
- Promote involvement and volunteerism as a catalyst for getting experience.
- Draw on existing knowledge and capacity by establishing mentor relationships between older and young people in the community.
- Appoint people as ambassadors and role models for a lifelong opportunity and learning initiative
- Establish stronger and more productive local business networks including across the region.
- Study the form and role of cooperatives in building self-sufficiency and achieving efficiencies.
- Give greater recognition in the community to volunteering through thank you events and awards.
- Nurture community groups by active mentoring and education programs.
- Emphasise partnerships between community groups especially in sharing resources and capacities.
- Audit the skills of communities to collect and harness the capabilities of community members.
- Actively address community succession planning with initiatives to encourage new participation.
- Encourage community groups to draw insight, ideas and strength by partnering more actively with other groups beyond the region.
- Assist and encourage community groups to focus more on the idea of self-organisation, local initiation and building community self-reliance through their activities.
- Think and act as one community – members of the workshop group could lead by example and have a positive attitude to opportunities for collaboration.
- Make community organisations more aware of their regional associates and counterparts and invite broader participation in local events across the different communities.
- Establish a Youth Social Committee to coordinate events and organise a social calendar across the region for balls, sports days, mixed teams between towns.
- Government and industry should work together to create greater mutual awareness in city and country by establishing exchanges between city and country people, particularly gap year experiences in regional areas for city youth.

- Business should build stronger business networks and collaborations between towns, links and networks to assist businesses to be more proactive in addressing their needs.
- Our region should be a place where there is regional sport, reflecting regional collaboration.

#### **4. Making Institutions Adaptable and Accessible**

- Make existing resources more productive through multi-functional use of digitally enabled schools, libraries and services facilities.
- Encourage community ownership by cooperation, consultation, conversation and cooperative decision-making.
- Develop interactive creative ways to engage people and gather feedback using modern technologies.
- Engage the dis-engaged, listen respectfully and gather their views.
- Continue this cooperative conversation in the community.
- Encourage community ownership by cooperation, consultation, conversation and cooperative decision-making.
- Open up “future pathways” process to other interested community members.
- Use this type of process for sharing information between communities.
- Build success and strength by focussing on working together inclusively as ‘one community’ free of racial and cultural divisions.
- Share knowledge and information around the community so people know the full story about things that matter to them.
- Think about an organisation of people like us at this table, who can organise a conversation in the community, to work with council on some of these issues – to generate informed community discussion.
- Ensure Local Government provides more forums for people (including youth) to be consulted and have a voice in their community – effectively ensuring that the region consults with itself much more.
- Share information, help individuals understand how they make a difference.
- State and Local Government should explore opportunities to develop higher education facilities e.g. TAFE, university in the region and also re-purpose existing unused infrastructure, possibly by leasing/selling to private sector.
- Local Government and RAPAD should link to international think-tanks and external collaborators for ideas of how to stimulate regional economies and communities.

## 5. Caring for Health and Wellbeing

- Foster pride by valuing our people.
- Develop a world class rural and regional primary health care system focussed on achieving resilience through efficiencies and doing more with less.
- Promote a regional team approach to establish just one practice and administrative model in the central west and a raft of partnerships that generate impact, better use of facilities and increased capacity.
- Emphasise digital innovation in health services practice to generate efficiencies and new capacities.
- Increase local medical capacity by awarding sponsorships to locally born students to study medicine/health disciplines and return to the region to practice.
- Improve local health services to reduce transfers out in favour of people being cared for locally.
- Creates savings in the primary health care area by expanding allied health facilities and achieving softer entry to the health system.
- Efficiencies and technological innovation drive plans for a new regional hospital based in Longreach.
- Deliver health care through a range of media including telehealth, FIFO specialists, and an expanded regional profession.
- Increase emphasis on health education and awareness to slow growth in demand for primary health care and results in increased local health and well-being.
- Challenge the community to actively sponsor a range of public/private partnerships aimed at reducing chronic disease through healthier lifestyles and much better health awareness and literacy.
- Challenge health services to better engage with the community and evidence a customer focus in their culture and practice.
- Promote cultural diversity and new population by resettling refugees in vacant houses.

## 6. Innovating and Enterprising

- Pursue economic diversification through tourism, value adding in food production including kangaroos, and increased use of renewable energy.

### **Agriculture**

- Develop of options for the cattle industry to minimise dependence on any one option either live export or meat processing.



- Innovate on farm production and value chain marketing to enable local livestock producers a strong differentiation on premium clean, green, and organic labels in a global marketplace.
  - Create an industry structure to finish cattle as well as breed cattle, value-add to our current breeding.
  - Build consumer awareness by cattle stations having people come and experience it.
  - Develop more explicit and higher profile links to clean green marketing food labels – possible join OBE.
  - Collaborate with the tourism industry to draw on visitor traffic to build consumer awareness of local agricultural products.
  - Draw on resources of QDAF to build the market development strategy.
  - Explore and develop new flexible models of farm ownership, business and production sustainable in the region.
  - Invent and promote a unique regional brand for primary produce based on regional industry standards that encourage differentiation and premium grading of produce.
  - Rec-capitalise local agriculture by accessing foreign investment and funding from international superannuation funds.
  - Use existing supply chains in new ways to directly engage markets and offer niche and diverse products and services.
  - Producers collaborate to develop intellectual property in farm production and marketing for commercialisation and diffusion.
- **Energy**
  - RAPAD to lobby State Government to introduce a regulatory framework for regional renewable energy that encourages local self-sufficiency and involvement by private enterprise.
  - Councils to lead community conversation and with interested third parties on the opportunities to increase self-sufficiency through renewable energy.
  - Councils to discuss with utilities to make better use of the renewable energy opportunities in CWQ.
  - Council and community to canvas potential private sector partners to install and develop renewable energy and storage capacity in the region.
  - Council and the community to discuss with the State Government the regulatory changes required to support extension of renewable energy and local self-sufficiency in CWQ region.

## **Water**

- Develop strategies for sustainable utilisation of flood plain water by local organic beef producers.

- Undertake detailed feasibility analysis and prepare persuasive and strongly validated proposals informing the creation of public-private partnerships (PPPs) drawing on a range of water sources and technologies – bores, weirs, pipes, and ultra-efficiency in water use.
- Promote the use of solar and geo-thermal energy to filter bore water, secure town supply, and underwrite new industries in hydroponic foods and algal biofuels.

## **Tourism**

- Make best use of regional assets - human, natural and built resources - providing great amenity for locals and facility for a regional tourism industry attracting visitors internationally.
- Develop and promote partnership culture within local tourism industry.
- Develop partnerships with other groups including Tourism Australia, international tourism providers, and international investors focussed on funding tourism infrastructure in the region.
- Develop a regional collaborative platform to host a “sinking fund” for the rejuvenation and development of regional tourism.
- Create a tourism collaborative vehicle facilitating group visitation and lowered flight costs.
- Ensure strong community-based advisory committees are established to actively enrich and promote tourism development.
- Extend the regional tourism vision by integrating existing town-based committees into a regional discussion to work together and with groups like Outback Qld Tourism Association.
- Strengthen the relationships with other communities to build a tourism strategy that includes all the major communities in organised trips and travel.
- Develop more effective and targeted marketing of the region including to tourism organisations, government agencies and on the web.
- Develop and conduct a cohesive regional marketing campaign focussed on both domestic and international markets and emphasising digital and social media connectivity.
- Promote tourism actively and directly using regional local governments.
- Develop a range of accommodation options across the region from home-stays to 5 star.
- Focus on developing a reputation for authentic high quality service and experience.
- Create and integrate large scale cultural events with the regional tourism strategy.
- Re-think/re-organise existing events and resources, emphasising better collaboration among variety of local people, and marketing to existing organisations.

- Create event specific tourism strategies staged in the shoulder seasons – river festival, concerts and corporate sponsored events.
- Develop immersive landscape, pastoral and heritage focussed tourism with interpretative historical centres.
- Integrate the green clean food marketing theme with existing events– and combine tours of properties with town restaurant outlets – collaboration between graziers and town businesses.
- Extend the utility of existing tourism facilities by developing partnerships with the education and creative arts sectors to explore other options.
- Provide a higher profile for indigenous art and culture in tourism profiles and strengthen the case for additional facilities attracting visitors and longer stays.
- Leverage tourism from the existing pass-through visitor traffic to grow regional centres as destination focussed on agricultural and food experiences
- Establish a tourism education college in the region to assist in customer focussed training and general quality assurance.
- Develop niche marketing opportunities around corporate retreats, youth groups, and international groups.
- Encourage visitation by providing free camping permits and facilities.
- Stay true to the region’s core values and heritage and built a strong tourism industry and infrastructure without becoming Disneyland.
- Extend local government infrastructure to receive more tourists – showers and toilets, basic infrastructure.
- Appoint Community Tourism Ambassadors.

## **7. Orienting and Engaging Local to Global**

- Lessen distance barriers and costs by extending existing fibre optic digital infrastructure and developing community level digital strategies.
- Create new options and stronger engagement with the outside world with improved bandwidth and connectivity.
- Facilitate local discussion and knowledge about how to better engage with the outside world and how to better utilise existing communications facilities through a community-based digital strategy.
- Hold economic development discussions with Mount Isa and other regional stakeholders through the Federal Government’s Northern Australia Strategy
- Give new impetus to collaboration between RAPAD councils on infrastructure strategies



- Undertake detailed research into possible markets including services markets accessible by social media.
- Use existing supply chains in new ways to directly engage markets and offer niche and diverse products and services.
- Innovate in agriculture to achieve strong differentiation on premium clean, green, and organic labels in a global marketplace.
- Develop regional partnerships with international tourism providers and international investors focussed on funding tourism infrastructure.
- Re-structure agriculture to attract foreign investment and funding from international superannuation funds.

## **5. Next Steps: what to change and how best to work**

Before closing, each workshop discussed a number of strategic questions to contextualise their strategies. A short list of questions framed the thinking and consequent observations:

- What do we really need to change to make these things happen?
- How can we best work collectively to achieve the collective vision?
- What are the new relationships we need to make our future happen?

Workshop reflections included:

- There is great scope to improve the connectedness between towns in the region.
- We can be more positive and creative in the way we think about things and contribute to a stronger frame of mind in our region.
- If we think and act as a regional economic system we will break down the separation between businesses and towns.
- By being more proactive we can help our region get on the front foot and stop being so reactive.
- When we strip away our formal, usual roles, we function better as a community.
- Forget who we are, and come together as a group of individuals, as community members.
- Every community needs ownership of their vision.
- Be aware of, and build links with, the range of groups in our community and bring people on the journey.
- To get community buy-in – let people with passion and strengths do their stuff – help them to run with it, we all have a civic responsibility to chip in and help those having a go.

- To overcome the perception from state and federal governments that there are no votes here or nothing that matters here, we need first to come up with our own solutions.
- Going forwards we should be juggling between bringing enough people on board, and getting action – sometimes we will make mistakes, the point will be to learn from them.
- Make sure our key relationships with the state and federal governments are well informed and that they know what we're doing and plan to do.
- Work proactively with government partners, and other business and community partners to develop our vision.
- There are a number of communities within our own Council region that we need to reach.
- It's not just a local thing – we should think regionally, and think outside our own region.
- Given there is some scepticism about councils –we need some kind of regional-based group drawn from across the community to provide guidance or discussion – not just councils.
- The role of businesses is important; they take risks, invest above and beyond –collaboration with and between businesses is essential to help momentum in starting projects.
- Look outside our community too, once we have road-tested the ideas and directions – look at what is going on in other regions of Australia and the world.
- Working more closely across groups and across the region eg between towns and between primary producers and tourism.
- Think bigger possibilities with some of our events.
- Look outside government for partners on projects especially in energy.
- Think more creatively about how to use water without impacting on the pristine quality of our waterways.
- Study and understand use of small scale business cooperation to achieve outcomes.
- We need to be committed to working together and uniting as a community.
- Council is vitally important but we can also do or at least start a lot more things ourselves.
- Community process will work much better if information is shared more widely in meetings like this to discuss local priorities.
- This report from today should be provided to the participants.
- Group participants should talk to local business and to existing community groups and tell them about what we did today.
- This "future pathways" process should be opened up to other interested community members and could be linked also to work sponsored by individual Councils.

- Each of us should speak about the possibilities of community doing things more broadly and collaboratively.
- Participant volunteers could provide presentations to communities.
- We want to stay involved in this process – we are all interested in being involved in continuing discussions.
- The Council must be involved.
- The report of this workshop must be taken back out to the community.
- Our work today should be reported back to council and used for regional plans and steps taken to promote community ownership of the future pathways conversation.
- The process should be extended also to include high school students.
- We should follow the lead of other successful community activities.

## **6. Reflections on the Workshop Process as community development**

All the workshops concluded with a reflection on what had occurred during the day and how it was different. Most participants were taken by the focus on the positives and not on problems. “We’ve worked from our strengths....been positive today, not negative”, was the general verdict. “We heard the voices of people concerned who want to make this their community a better place”.

Asked to explain what they would tell other community members about the workshops, participants spoke of developing “a shared vision for the region....set some goals and identified the tools that we will need to get there”. “We’ve shared our passions and information about our community and learned new things from each other”.

Others spoke of using group “collective wisdom” to “flesh out the priorities and share how we can achieve this together”. “We looked 15 years ahead and established what we want to see, and we came up with some really good ideas.

Coming from “different perspectives” and combining views was seen as a strength of the process with “strong commonalities of issues and pathways’ being identified. “We have heard other people’s knowledge and expertise, and transferred that across a range of issues....We have seen our problems through somebody else’s eyes”. The candour of discussion was appreciated as was the need to work together. “There was a lot more people here with positive things to bring to the table than I expected, and I’m really feeling a sense of community again because we’ve all been able to sit together”. “We have a very diverse range of people in the group, however we’ve come together and raised complex challenges”.

Most participants looked beyond the workshop and expressed their concern that there be meaningful follow-up. “Today will not be purposeful if we don’t have a where to and what to do next”. “Once we walk out of this door, we need to



unite". "Everybody is interested in coming together again". "I heard a lot of good ideas, I'd like to see something done".

The format of the Pathways workshop as a community discussion was seen as having broader utility in community planning and development: "Community involvement is here today, it needs to keep going". "Meetings like this could be held before council meetings to discuss things and provide clear community feedback to the council". "We've bridged local divisions in our thinking, tried to act as one community, and considered things in a broader regional setting". "We brainstormed ideas for the future of the area, and it's exciting, you should join the journey".

## Acknowledgements

As workshop facilitator and report author, I wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance provided to this project by Mr David Arnold, General Manager of the Remote Area Planning and Development Board. David has been a grounding influence on the project, assisting in setting its goals and ensuring its timely delivery. To that end, the assistance of Mr Vol Norris on behalf of RAPAD has been invaluable in everything from liaising with local Council officers to ensure venues and catering, to workshop advice, and most importantly of all – in capturing the input of workshop participants. Thank you Vol for your enthusiasm, energy and expertise in staging the workshops.

In each of the five centres across the central west where local participants convened, the workshops were sponsored by local mayors and a debt of thanks is acknowledged to the Board of RAPAD for supporting this visioning initiative focussed on the intermediate to longer term of the region.

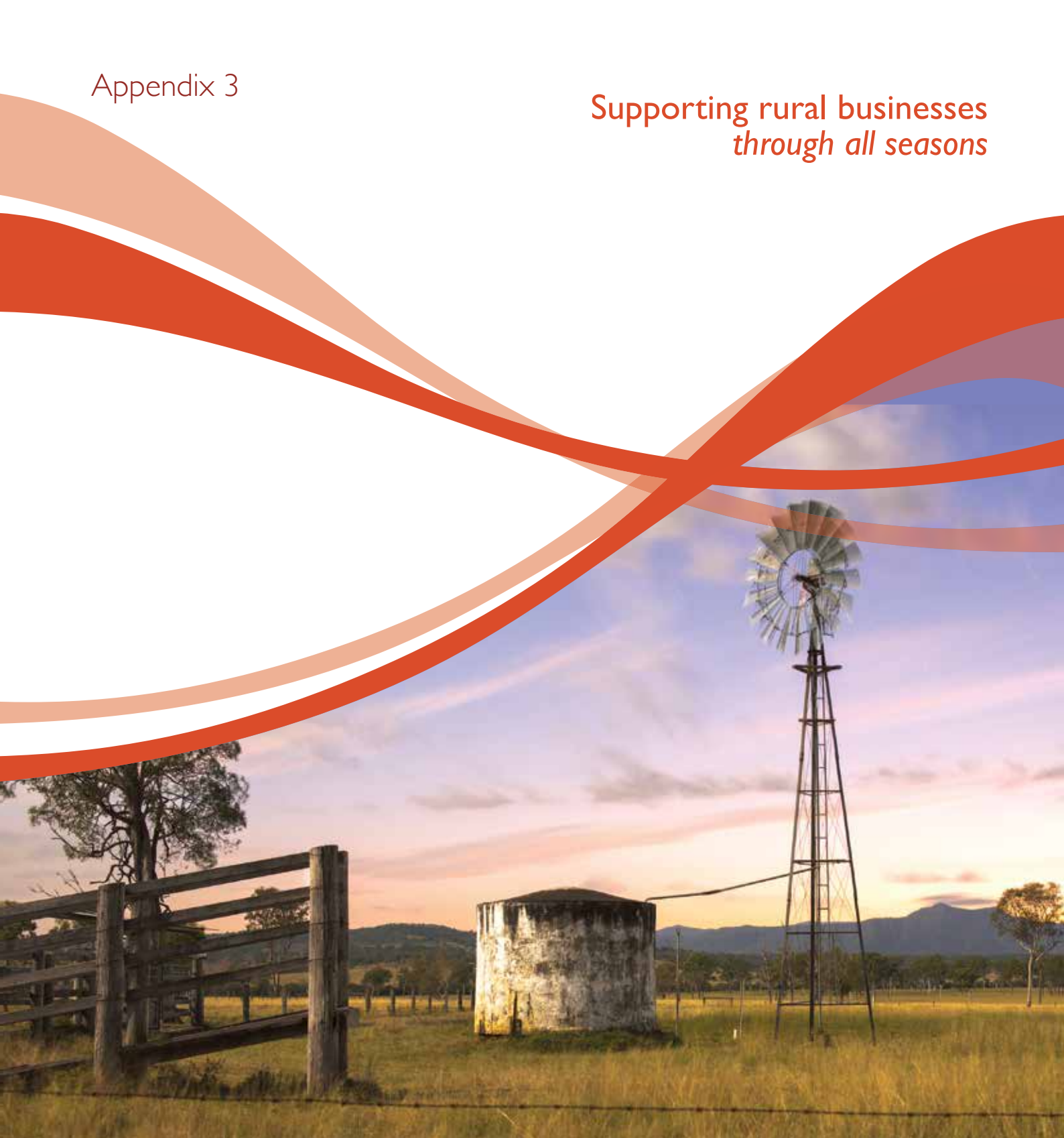
---

<sup>i</sup> Rodin, J (2014) *The Resilience Dividend: Managing disruption, avoiding disaster, and growing stronger in an unpredictable world*, Perseus Books, New York.

<sup>ii</sup> Ludema, JD, Cooperrider DL, and Barrett, FJ Appreciative Inquiry: The Power of the Unconditional Positive Question. <http://www.2012waic.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Ludema-Cooperrider-Barrett-goed.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Bliss Brown, *Imagine Chicago*.

<sup>iv</sup> <http://queenslandplan.qld.gov.au/>



And Rural Financial Counselling Service  
Queensland Central Southern Region

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2015 - 2016**

# RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE NORTH QUEENSLAND

(And Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland - Central Southern Region)

## Annual Report 2015 - 2016

PUBLISHED BY THE CENTRAL WESTERN QUEENSLAND  
REMOTE AREA PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT BOARD 2016

© CWQ RAPAD 2016

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia Licence.

To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au>



CWQ RAPAD asserts the right to be recognised as author of the original material in the following manner.

### CONTACT US

Mail PO Box 592  
Longreach Qld 4730

Email [rapad@rapad.com.au](mailto:rapad@rapad.com.au) [gm@rapad.com.au](mailto:gm@rapad.com.au)

Websites [www.rfcsnq.com.au](http://www.rfcsnq.com.au) [www.rapad.com.au](http://www.rapad.com.au)

### More information

Enquiries regarding this report may be directed to:  
CEO, RFCSNQ - [ceo@rfcsnq.com.au](mailto:ceo@rfcsnq.com.au)





## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland (RFCSNQ) would like to thank the Australian Government and the Queensland Government for their continued support of the Rural Financial Counselling Service program.

In-kind support is provided by the RAPAD Board of Directors to RFCSNQ.

RFCSNQ also thanks numerous stakeholders who provide our RFCs with ongoing support in their everyday roles.



# CONTENTS

Service Transition	2
Joint Chairmans' Report	4
Organisational Structure & Governance	6
Organisation Charts	9
Skills Matrix	10
Register of Board Meetings	11
CEO's Report	12

## OPERATING STATISTICS

Service Statistics	13
RFCSQCSR Service Statistics - 1 July 2015 to 31 March 2016	14
RFCSNQ Service Statistics - 1 April to 30 June 2016	16
Case Studies	17

## RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLOR REPORTS - RFCSNQ

Rachel Bock - Longreach	22
Richard Lewis - Mackay	24
Neil Dickinson-Jones - Cloncurry	26
Nick Birchley - Cairns	28
Ian Durham - Townsville	30

## RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLOR REPORTS - RFCSQCSR

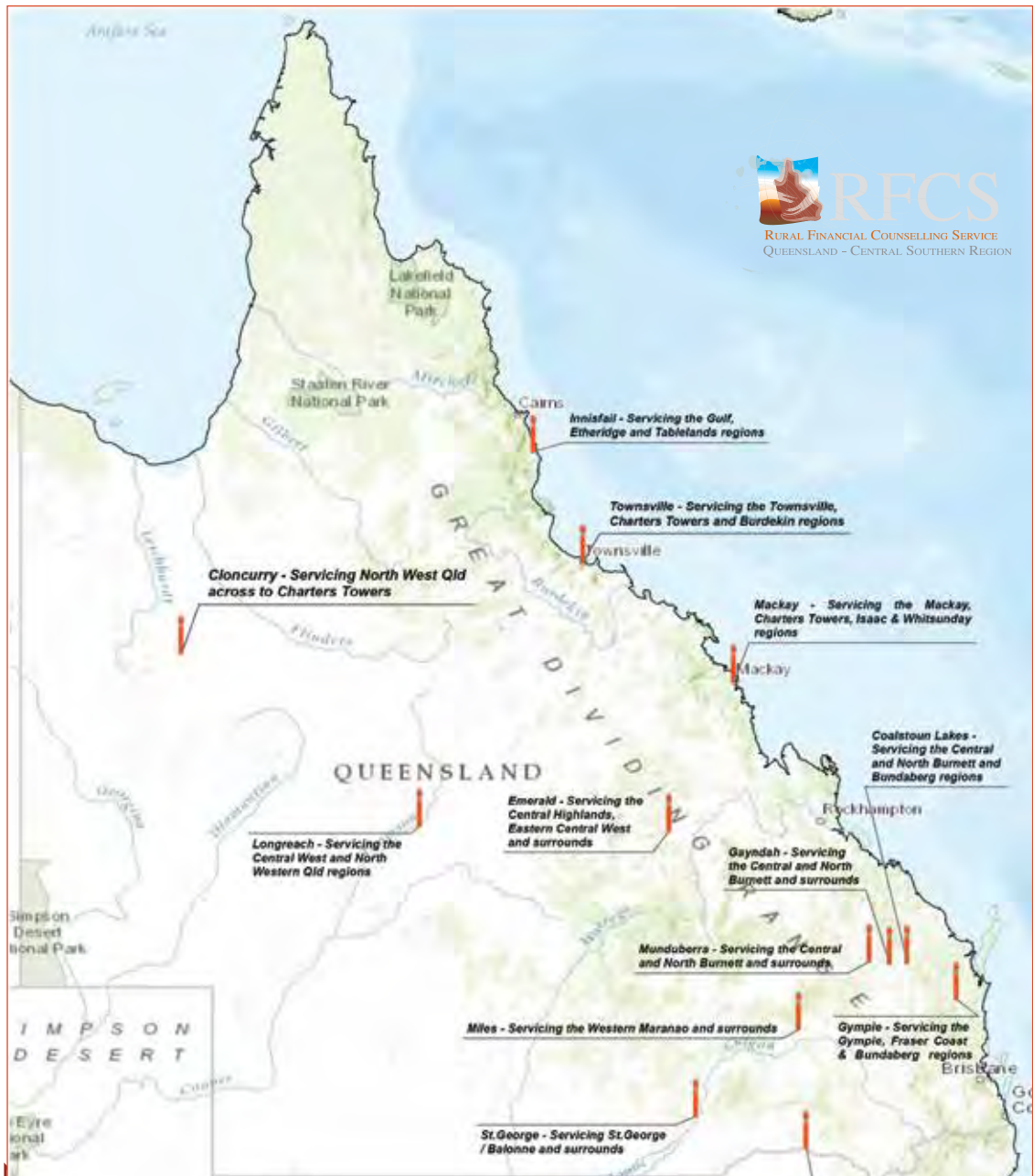
Emma Cook - Emerald	32
Derk Abberfield - Gympie	33
Debbie Cowley - Goondiwindi	34
Kim Corfield, Tony Kassulke & Ben Slack - North Burnett	36
Glenn Budden - Miles	38

# SERVICE TRANSITION

In 2015, the Central Qld Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) submitted an application to the federal governments open grants process for the delivery of the rural financial counselling (RFC) service in Queensland. RAPAD had successfully delivered the RFC service through the registered business, Rural Financial Counselling Service Qld - Central Southern Region (RFCSQCSR) since 2006/7, and prior to that, for approximately eight years as a provider in the Central Western Queensland region.

RAPAD was awarded the new North Queensland region, and from the date of awarding in late December 2015, through to 31 March 2016, RFCSQCSR entered both a wind-up and transition stage. RFCSQCSR had to be wound up and it transitioned into the new Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland, which took effect on 1 April 2016.

**Map I. RFCSQCSR service area map pre 31 March 2016**





RFCSQCSRs (pre 31 March 2016) service region coverage is that represented in the map 1. As at February 2016, RFCSQCSR had 13 rural financial counsellors (RFC) servicing its region although one rural financial counsellor (RFC) resigned pre wind up to take up alternative employment, while another retired.

Of the remaining 11 RFCs, four transitioned across to RFCSNQ, while five obtained positions with the new southern Queensland provider. Unfortunately two RFCSQCSR RFCs located in the new southern region were unsuccessful in obtaining employment. In the process of the transition, one RFC from the southern-based service provider took employment with RFCSNQ, making up the present five RFCSNQ rural financial counsellors.

**Map 2. RFCSNQ service area map**



# JOINT CHAIRMANS' REPORT



This year has seen some significant changes for Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland Central Southern Region (RFCSQCSR), which wound up on the 31st of March 2016, and transitioned to Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland (RFCSNQ), effective 1 April 2016.

As Chairs of the outgoing RFCSQCSR, and the new Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland Project Management Committee respectively, we offer this report jointly.

We acknowledge the Australian Governments Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (DAWR) for awarding the Central Western Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) the offer to continue delivery of the rural financial counselling service in the new North Queensland region. We believe that apart from the quality of our application, the awarding of the grant to RAPAD was also due to our past effective delivery of the rural financial counselling service for approximately eighteen years, and a reflection of RAPADs sound governance oversight.

We also acknowledge the State Government for their past and continued support of the rural financial counselling service in Queensland.

The wind up of RFCSQCSR was done smoothly and professionally and here we would like to acknowledge the CEO, David Arnold, the administrative staff, and also the rural financial counsellors (RFCs). The wind up affected the RFCs the most and while five of the outgoing RFCs based in the new southern region, obtained employment with the provider (RFCSSQ) servicing that southern region, two were unsuccessful in gaining employment. Four RFCSQCSR RFCs based in the new Northern region stayed on with RFCSNQ and we also employed Nick Birchley, who up until 31 March, was employed by the southern provider. All that sounds confusing however it reflects in some way the difficulties encountered in winding up and transitioning, and again we would like to acknowledge the professionalism of the RFCs in handing that period.

As importantly, throughout this period we have no record of any client being unduly interrupted in their receipt of service, and this is testament to that professionalism we just spoke about.

This reporting period has seen the fourth year of drought in much of our service region. In some cases this period of drought reaches back further than four years and for some farmers it will unfortunately mean an exit from the industry. As we get to the end of the reporting period however, it is heartening to see some very good rainfall events, which we hope, could mean a start to the end of the drought. In our past, and now new service areas in Northern Queensland the cane and banana industries have their own battles to face with disease and commodity prices, all playing havoc with industry profitability.



Despite this however, across all industry sectors, there remains a strong optimism in farming and agriculture and we are proud that the rural financial counselling service can contribute and assist when problems arise in our agricultural and support industries.

As a part of the new RFCSNQ, RAPAD has established a project management committee to oversee the governance and administration of RFCSNQ. The project management committee is a skills based committee, and while four RAPAD directors remain as members given the skills they possess, we welcome on board new PMC members, Alison Larard who was appointed in June, and Dr Chris Capel and Shan Delany who were appointed shortly after the reporting period. All three members bring with them strong business, academic and industry relevant skills that will allow them to be important contributors to the governance and administration of RFCSNQ.

As we move into the 2016-17 period the CEO is recruiting for two more positions, most likely to be based in the Atherton Tablelands and Central West region. This will bring us to six core funded RFCs and together with contingency funding when required, we are confident we can deliver on the governments rural financial counselling service policy objectives in the new North Queensland region.

**ROB CHANDLER**  
RAPAD Chair

**RICK BRITTON**  
RFCSNQPMC Chair

**Pictured on this page and inside front cover:** the region has experienced some much needed rain in the past months.





# ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE & GOVERNANCE

## PARENT ENTITY & RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE NORTH QUEENSLAND PROJECT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Central West Queensland Remote Area Planning and Development Board (RAPAD) is the entity that provided the rural financial counselling service from 2006/7 to 31 March 2016 through RFCSQCSR. RAPAD has been awarded the contract for the delivery of the rural financial counselling service in the new North Queensland region via the registered business Rural Financial Counselling Service North Qld (RFCSNQ). To meet the National Rural Advisory Committees (NRAC) 2015 findings, from their review into the rural financial counselling service nationally, RAPAD appointed, under its constitution, a skills based project management committee to oversee the management and governance of RFCSNQ. On 1 April, an interim RFCSNQ project management committee (PMC) was appointed consisting of four RAPAD directors who had the prerequisite skills.

Between 1 April and 30 June 2016 and following a merit based selection process, the interim committee appointed experienced agri-consultant Alison Larard to the PMC. Shortly following the end of the financial year the interim PMC appointed another two member, Dr Chris Capel and Shan Delany making up the seven members skills based PMC. The RFCSNQ PMC are remunerated consistent with NRAC findings, and department contractual requirements at the rate set out by the Remuneration Tribunals, 'Remuneration and Allowances for Holders of Part-Time Public Office'.



### CHAIRMAN RICK BRITTON

and his photographer wife Ann own and operate cattle breeding enterprises in Queensland's far North West, residing just outside of Boulia, at Goodwood Station.

Rick has significant demonstrated

experience in public administration, leadership and governance, along with a lifetime of knowledge of primary production in some of Australia's harshest climate.

He is a passionate community advocate and through his role as Boulia Shire Council Mayor he has developed an intimate understanding of the needs of communities, both rural and non-rural.

In both his local government, RAPAD and business interests, Rick actively pursues professional development opportunities and to further this knowledge of governance and administration, he has completed the Australian Institute of Company Directors course.



**ROB CHANDLER** has lived and worked in the Barcaldine area and in the wider Central West of Queensland all his life. He is married to Deb and they have three children, Phoebe, Emily and Mac.

Rob has experience through his life in primary production owning and running an 80,000-acre sheep and cattle enterprise. He has vast experience in public administration through sixteen years in Local Government, and is a very successful small business owner and operator through his various motel and tourism related ventures.



**BRUCE SCOTT** has extensive governance, leadership, community consultation and community development skills along with demonstrated experience in small business, primary production and public

administration.

Bruce resides at his channel country region property, Moothandella. He has been self-employed and an employer for more than 30 years in his own businesses. He has extensive experience living and working with very remote communities and understands their unique social needs. He has experience in probity and governance, financial monitoring and budgeting in cash and accrual standards as well as asset management and capital depreciation.

Bruce also brings to the organisation extensive experience in ICT consultation, communications infrastructure planning, network development and telecommunications services rollout to regional and remote areas.



**DR CHRIS CAPEL** has extensive experience in rural and remote community development as a landholder, a state government employee for 13 years, a consultant and in voluntary roles. She has

been a partner in her family's sheep and cattle grazing enterprise North West of Longreach since 1985. She has worked for the Queensland State Government's Office of Rural Communities and the Department of Primary Industries in policy advice, project management, community development and communications.

In 2007 she established Chris Capel Consulting and has worked for a range of rural and remote clients mainly in Central Western Queensland. She also currently works for the University of Queensland and Monash University marking Masters student assignments in Rural Community Development and Social Work subjects. She completed the Australian Rural Leadership Program in 2001.

Chris has a Masters degree in Public Relations (USQ) and graduated with a PhD from Monash University in Rural Sociology in 2015. She is currently a member of the Mid North Coast Regional Development Australia (NSW) advisory committee and Secretary of the Rotary Club of South West Rocks.



**ALISON LARARD** is a career agribusiness and finance specialist. Raised on a mixed livestock and cropping farm near Warwick on the Darling Downs, Alison has a life-long commitment to Australian

agriculture. This interest has been formalised with a Bachelor of Agricultural Economics from University of Queensland and a Masters of Business Administration from University of New England, majoring in Agribusiness, International marketing and Project Management.

Having worked for 15 years in banking, farming, benchmarking & business management, farm financial counselling & agricultural economics, Alison estimates she has worked with over 250 businesses. Many of these families have been based

in North Queensland in the beef, dairy, horticulture, field cropping, sugar and various niche industries. Business planning and management, applications for finance, feasibility studies, project and turnaround management, and succession planning are all areas of expertise for Alison.

Recently published, in the CSIRO's The Rangeland Journal, Alison and a group of colleagues published their findings from 3 years of project work entitled Rangeland profitability in the northern Gulf region of Queensland: understanding beef business complexity and the subsequent impact on land resource management and environmental outcomes. She will co-present these findings at the International Rangelands Conference in Canada in mid-2016. Alison currently resides on the family farm at Evelyn on the Atherton Tablelands. In her down-time she loves fishing trips with "her boys" Bart, Ian and Andrew.



**ED WARREN** has a diverse background which covers small business ownership in agriculture and non-agricultural areas.

Ed was the Chairman of the Central West Health and Hospital

Board; a position he held since its inception in 2012 through to his resignation in 2016. Previously he was Mayor of the Winton Shire Council and a councillor on the same for over ten years, and he is currently the Mayor of Longreach Regional Council having been elected in the 2016 elections.

Ed has worked through Queensland in the agricultural services sector between 1976 – 2007 and from 2008 to 2015 owned a rural enterprise near Nyngan in New South Wales. Ed has lengthy experience in governance and public, not-for-profit, and private administration. His leadership and strategic thinking skills have been developed through his roles in local government and public health governance, along with his own successful small business enterprises.

Ed is passionate about supporting not only his own community but also the entire region and greater North Queensland region. His networks are extensive throughout the greater region.



**SHAN DELANY** is a Certified Practicing Accountant in Public Practice based in Townsville.

She established her own mobile accountancy business in July 2005 and now has a client base, which is spread throughout

Australia. Her clients are a diverse range of small and medium size businesses. Due to her husband's work in the mining industry she has moved a number of times and lived on the Atherton Tablelands, in Central West NSW and Darwin prior to settling in Townsville for the schooling of her two children. This has allowed her to work with a diverse range of people in different industries.

Shan is an active volunteer having been a member on Parent and Citizens committees since 2002, holding various positions. Currently is the Treasurer of the Building Fund for a local Townsville State High School. Also through the years she has volunteered on a number of sporting committees. She is a strong advocate for volunteering in her local community.

Shans qualifications are: Bachelor of Business - Distinction from University of Southern Queensland major in Accounting and minor in computer programing in 1991, Completed the CPA Program and attained CPA Membership in 1995, CPA public practice Program in 2005, Tax Agent Registration in 2005.



**RAPAD CEO DAVID**

**ARNOLD** also manages RFCSNQ. David has extensive experience in managing government contracts and RAPADs businesses. David managed RFCSQCSR since its

inception in 2006/07. At that time David brought together 4 services into one and between that start through to RFCSQCSR wind-up and transition, RFCSQCSR was managed as a successful and effective service.

David holds an undergraduate degree in business and post-graduate certificate in 'foresighting' from Swinburne University. He has completed the full Australian Institute of Directors, Directors program

and over the last 5 years has attended 3 governance training refresher programs, the most recent (2015) being conducted through the AICD. David completed this in his role as Deputy Chairman of the Central West Hospital and Health Service, which is a \$60m entity delivering health services across the central western area of Queensland.

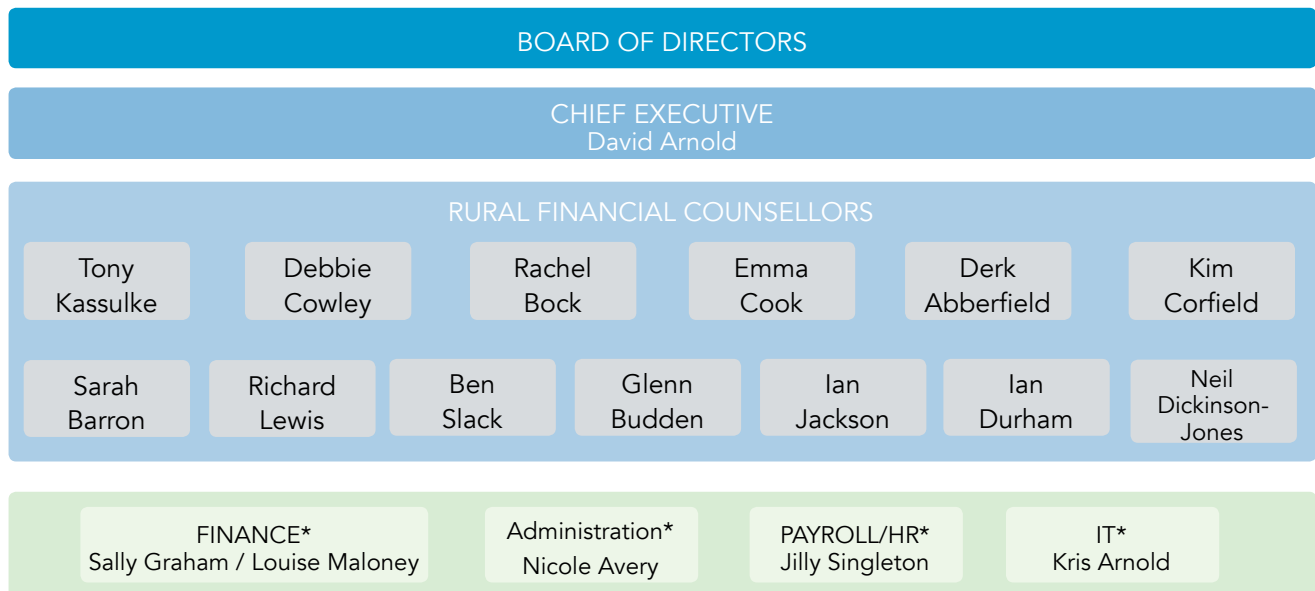
David has completed 'Intensive Negotiation Skills' training with Michael Klug from Clayton Utz Solicitors and most recently he completed the 'Leading for Strategic Success' program; a program developed for leading CEOs, through the Mt.Eliza Business School.

Administration (payroll, general administration, finance) for RFCSNQ is provided through RAPAD staff.

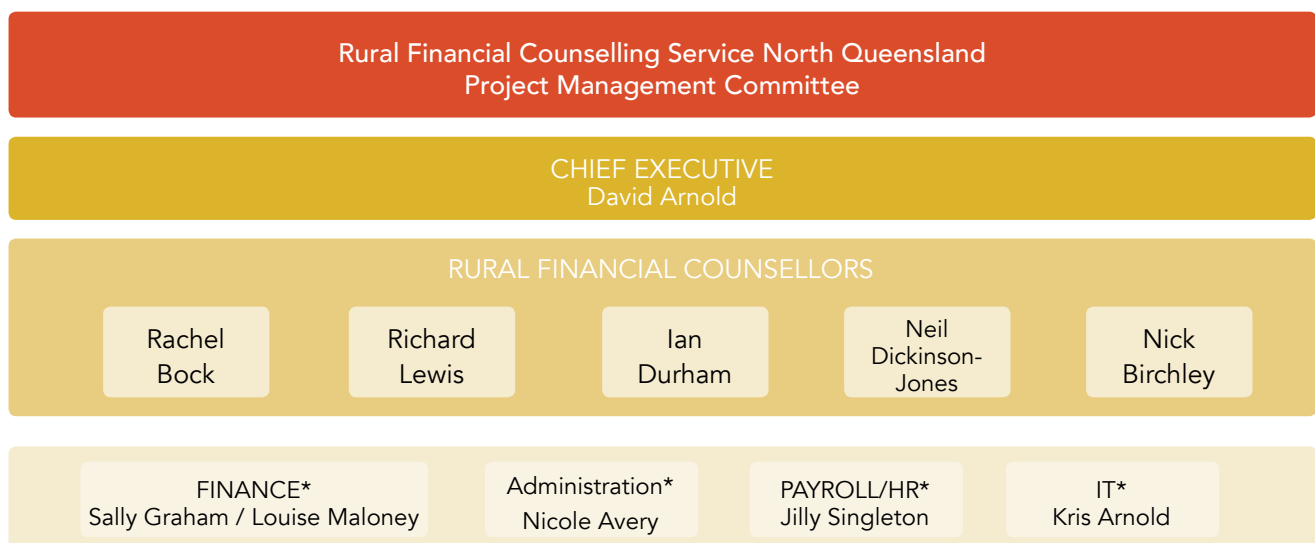


# ORGANISATION CHARTS

## RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE QUEENSLAND CENTRAL SOUTHERN REGION



## RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE NORTH QUEENSLAND



\* Staff work in RAPAD entity and perform functions for RFCSNQ as required

*This organisation chart only references RFCSNQ employees and RAPAD staff directly related to RFCSNQ and does not refer to other RAPAD business units.*

# SKILLS MATRIX

## RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE NORTH QUEENSLAND PROJECT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

	Rick Britton	Rob Chandler	Ed Warren	Bruce Scott	Alison Larard	Dr Chris Capel	Shan Delany
Experience as Chair of Boards	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Demonstrated leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Demonstrated planning, analysis skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Corporate governance skills	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Demonstrated understanding of issues affecting rural Nth Qld	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Received training in past 3yrs in the issues affecting NFP	✓		✓	✓			
Significant experience as Directors of incorporated entities and or companies	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Demonstrated experience (10yrs) in managing successful business or large government or community enterprise; interpreting financial statement; managing staff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accounting and or financial tertiary qualifications					✓		✓
Legal qualifications or significant experience in contract management	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Background in social welfare and or community development	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Experience in HR and performance management					✓	✓	✓

# REGISTER OF BOARD MEETINGS

## RFCSQCSR BOARD

1 JULY 2015 TO 31 MARCH 2016\*

3 July 2015

Cr Chandler, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton, Cr Owens,  
Cr Britton, Cr Owens

7 August 2015

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton,  
Cr Owens, Cr Britton

4 September 2015

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton,  
Cr Britton

11 & 12 November 2015

Cr Chandler, Cr Britton, Cr Groves, Cr Muir,  
Cr Lenton, Cr Owens

1 December 2015 AGM

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton,  
Cr Owens, Cr Britton, Cr Morton

4 February 2016

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Lenton,  
Cr Owens, Cr Britton, Cr Morton

6 March 2016

Cr Chandler, Cr Groves, Cr Muir, Cr Owens,  
Cr Britton, Cr Morton

\*BOARD MEMBERS LISTED ONLY

On 31 March 2016 RFCSQCSR wound up and the RAPAD Board appointed, under its constitution, an interim project management committee to oversee the governance and administration of the RFCSNQ.

## RFCSNQ PROJECT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

1 APRIL TO 30 JUNE 2016\*

20 April 2016

Cr Britton, Cr Scott, Cr Chandler, Cr Warren

3 June 2016

Cr Britton, Cr Scott, Cr Warren

\*BOARD MEMBERS LISTED ONLY

The RFCSNQPMC endorsed and welcomed new member Alison Larard to the PMC at the June 2016 meeting, and shortly following the close of the financial year Dr Chris Capel and Shan Delany were appointed to the RFCSNQPMC, making up its skills based seven member project management committee.



## CEO'S REPORT



As the joint Chairs have already outlined in their report, this year saw the transition from Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland Central Southern Region to Rural Financial Counselling Service North Queensland.

The granting of the rural financial counselling service to RAPAD in late 2015, following the open grants process was recognition of our past service delivery, together with our application.

The transition process was a difficult time for the service with our workforce of highly experienced rural financial counsellors reduced by 60-70% and this presented a number of teething problems for the new RFCSNQ service. I'd like to commend the outgoing RFCs, and those RFCs who stayed on with RFCSNQ, for their professionalism through the transition process. I don't believe any client was affected by the changeover, past or post 31 March, and this reflects on the professionalism of staff.

On 1 April we also welcomed experienced RFC, Nick Birchley who is based in South Johnston.

Enclosed are the individual RFC reports for the past year. These provide an in-depth overview of each RFCs local area and the issues each faces in their everyday work role.

As a part of the change from RFCSQCSR, new branding has been developed for RFCSNQ. RFCSNQ instigated its new website at the changeover so visitors had full access to information about RFCSNQ and along with more traditional awareness tools, RFCSNQ has continued with use of social media as an advertising and awareness tool.



The analytics Facebook provides is useful feedback as we develop monitoring and evaluation outcomes, which form important parts of our contractual requirements with the Australian Government.



As we move into this 2016-17 period, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the service will be an important assessment tool for both our management committee and the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, with whom we hold the contract and we await the department's M&E framework so it can be acted upon as soon as possible.

Through this next reporting period and beyond, I and the RFCs, look forward to managing and delivering the new RFCSNQ in same professional manner as occurred with its predecessor, RFCSQCSR.

**DAVID ARNOLD**  
CEO

## SERVICE STATISTICS

As noted several times, RFCSQCSR wound up on 31 March 2016 and transitioned to RFCSNQ.

The following pages detail the service statistics for RFCSQCSR for that nine month period and for RFCSNQs three-month period. For interpretation purposes, RFCSQCSR had thirteen RFCs in that period (11.63 FTE) while RFCSNQ in the April to June three month period had five RFCs. In this transition period some client data numbers were not fully captured as the national database became live and training occurred.



## RFCSQCSR | JULY 2015 TO MARCH 2016

No. of accessible funded RFC (FTE / DAFF + Other)	11.63
No. of Clients Assisted	377
Client numbers/RFC (FTE) (Avg)	32.42
Client Assistance hours (excluding travel)	6,453.97
Client travel hours	863.55
<b>Total Client Assistance Hours</b>	<b>7,317.52</b>
Avg Client Hours Per RFC (FTE) (excl.travel)	554.94
Avg Client Travel Hours per Client	2.29
Major Assistance type by Hours	Business Planning
% Total Client Hours	21.52%
Avg (hrs) of Assistance given / Client Excl. travel	17.12
Avg (hrs) of Assistance given / Client Incl. travel	19.41
<b>Case Management Numbers as at 22/04/2016</b>	
No. Clients on Action Plan with Action Items	8
No. Clients on Action Plan without Action Items	80
No. Clients on Action Plan with Assistance Hours	88
Total Active Clients	222
% of Clients on Action Plan with Action Items	3.60%
% of Clients on Action Plan with Assistance Hours	39.64%



## RFCSQCSR PREDOMINANT CLIENT LOCATIONS

LGA / locations	Clients
(Unknown / Invalid)	15
Aramac (S)	13
Atherton (S)	2
Balonne (S)	20
Banana (S)	1
Barcaldine (S)	10
Barcoo (S)	1
Bauhinia (S)	1
Belyando (S)	4
Bendemere (S)	1
Biggenden (S)	13
Blackall (S)	4
Boulia (S)	1
Bowen (S)	2
Broadsound (S)	1
Bundaberg (C)	4
Burdekin (S)	5
Burnett (S)	1
Cairns (C)	1
Charters Towers (C)	4
Chinchilla (S)	3
Cloncurry (S)	1
Cooloolo (S)	10
Dalby (T)	2
Dalrymple (S)	3

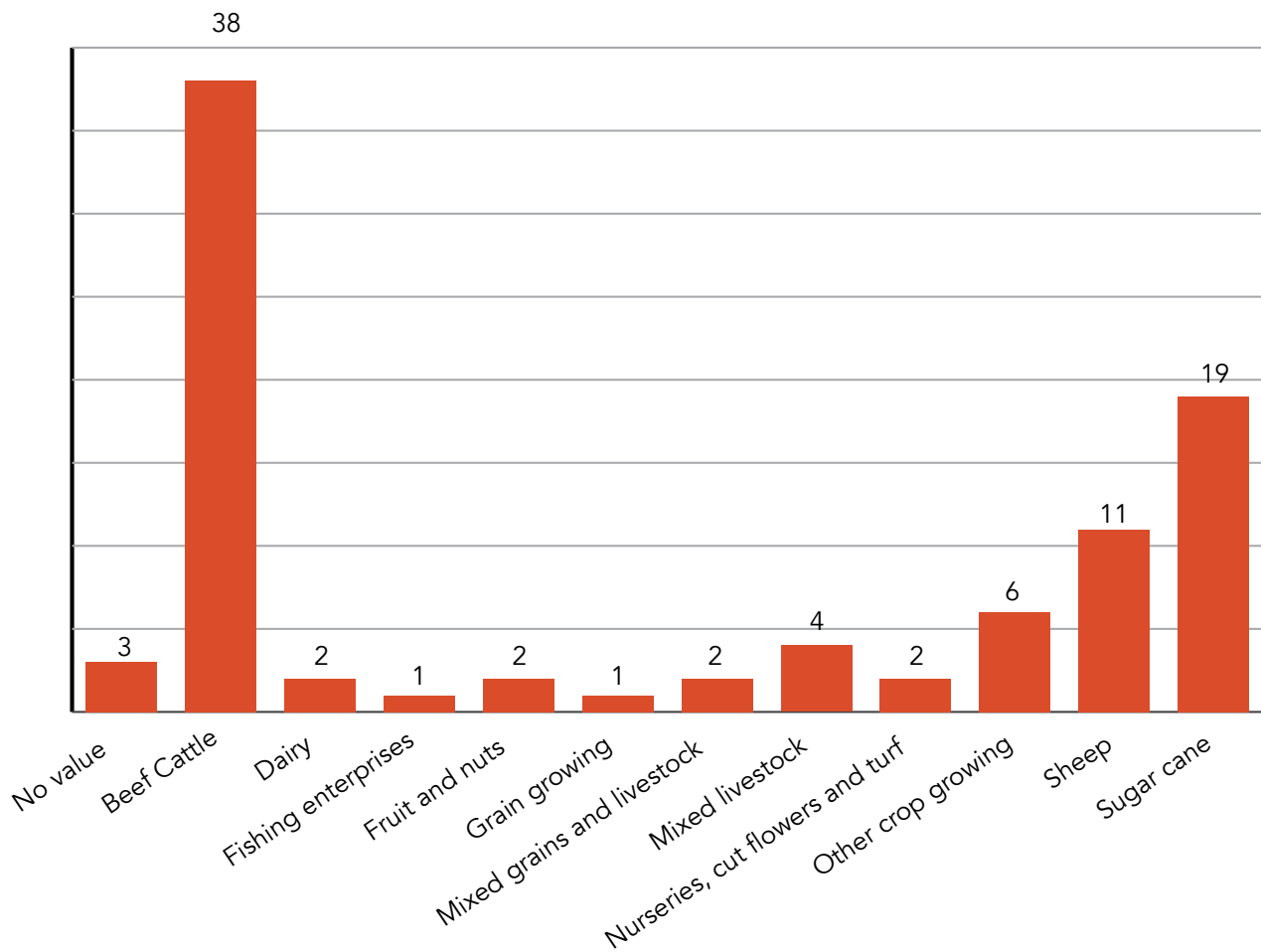
LGA / locations	Clients
Diamantina (S)	2
Eidsvold (S)	4
Emerald (S)	4
Etheridge (S)	1
Fitzroy (S)	2
Flinders (S)	5
Gayndah (S)	9
Goondiwindi (T)	16
Gwydir (A)	1
Hinchinbrook (S)	3
Ilfracombe (S)	4
Inglewood (S)	13
Inverell (A)	1
Isis (S)	4
Isisford (S)	2
Jericho (S)	7
Kilkivan (S)	2
Kolan (S)	7
Livingstone (S)	1
Longreach (S)	21
Mackay (C)	10
Maroochy (S)	1
Maryborough (C)	1
McKinlay (S)	5
Millmerran (S)	1

LGA / locations	Clients
Mirani (S)	1
Monto (S)	4
Moree Plains (A)	3
Mount Isa (C)	1
Mundubbera (S)	11
Murilla (S)	7
Palm Island (S)	3
Paroo (S)	1
Perry (S)	1
Richmond (S)	1
Rockhampton (C)	1
Sarina (S)	2
Stanthorpe (S)	1
Tara (S)	9
Taroom (S)	3
Thuringowa (C)	3
Tiaro (S)	1
Townsville (C)	6
Waggamba (S)	17
Wambo (S)	1
Warroo (S)	1
Winton (S)	11
Woocoo (S)	6

# RFCSNQ SERVICE STATISTICS

1 APRIL TO 30 JUNE 2016

## RFCSNQ ACTIVE CLIENTS BY INDUSTRY | APRIL TO 30 JUNE 2016



# RFCSNQ CASE STUDIES

This is how the Rural Financial Counselling Service can help people move forward in their situation in the comfort of their home with respect and dignity. Case specifics have been altered to protect the client's identity.

## CASE STUDY I

### CLIENT'S SITUATION

This case study relates to an older couple with a small horticultural farm. A separate venture to their home farm had failed and their bank sought recovery of the outstanding funds under their personal guarantees.

The home farm gave them a good income but did not have the capacity to repay the loan to the bank.

They had significant funds in superannuation however insufficient to cover their debt. The farmers were referred to the Rural Financial Counselling Service for assistance.

The clients were very scared because what they had worked for over their lives was at risk of being sold.

RFCSNQs local Rural Financial Counsellor (RFC) visited them, assessed the situation and advised them the superannuation money was untouchable by the lending institution however the farm was at risk because of the guarantee and subsequent mortgages.

The lender offered the clients the option of undertaking Farm Debt Mediation where the lender and the clients sit down and try and come up with an agreement to fulfil their obligation of their loan.

The RFC recommended they accept, and a rural solicitor from Legal Aid Farm and Rural division was also engaged to assist. The lender was very demanding and the clients felt intimidated at times.

Once the mediation was organised, the RFC coached the clients as to what to expect from the process and what would be likely to occur on the day of mediation.

The lender came to the mediation with three lawyers and one senior credit officer, which was quite intimidating for the clients, not having been in this sort of environment before.

After six hours of negotiation, the lender made a significant concessional offer to the clients for full and final satisfaction of the debt. The offer would give the farmers the opportunity to retain their farm and home however they would need to use their superannuation and borrow a significantly less amount to do so.

The lender possibly saw they may not necessarily get more had they enforced their security and that the sale process could be time consuming and not get the lender the best outcome.

### OUTCOME

The offer made by the lender allowed them to retain their home and income source.

They were extremely grateful for the process acknowledging the lender had their rights however were prepared to make concessions that would be commercially acceptable and would allow the clients the opportunity to move on.

The clients were supported through the process by the RFC and the Legal Aid Lawyer and because of their experience and knowledge; they assisted the farmers get an acceptable outcome.

The RFC also assisted the clients obtain the necessary finance helping them to again become self-sufficient after two very stressful years of trading, and the lenders recovery process.

## CASE STUDY 2

### CLIENT'S SITUATION

The Rural Financial Counselling Service was contacted by a client who was referred by their banker.

The family were farming various crops including maize and potatoes and had a small herd of beef cattle. They were in the process of dissolving a family business with two sons each buying out individual farms with separate banks so they could operate on their own.

Their banker was new to the district and in his first hands-on role in branch agri-banking. He was uncomfortable with the data and whether they had the capacity to service the bank's proposed loan.

The Rural Financial Counsellor (RFC) met with the husband and wife farmers and was initially impressed with their skills and level of enthusiasm for the business. Their data was quite good however it was a case of them, not being able to put it into a format that was clear and precise to the bank.

They had been working on the basis, that lots of data was good. Over the next two weeks the RFC and clients concentrated on getting the data to be concise and meaningful and that clearly showed what they were trying to do.

The RFC and clients developed production and cash flow projections with a number of sensitivities to address price and productivity variations that may occur. The assumptions were clear, realistic and presented in a way that the banker could relate to.

The RFC and clients took a holistic look at the business, and discussed strategies for machinery upgrades over time. This way when the banker asked, the farmers could confidently address the issue and demonstrate they had a long term and structured approach to their farm enterprise. There was also discussion on the need to put some superannuation away and factor that into the business plan each year.

### Outcome

The farmers were able to present a strong plan supported by realistic assumptions which showed they could not only service the debt, but could build some savings and working capital reserves for times of hardship.

The farmers were also able to present an attractive plan to a number of financiers, and ultimately achieved a favourable finance package for themselves.



## CASE STUDY 3

### CLIENT'S SITUATION

An elderly couple on a mixed grazing enterprise requested an appointment to help complete their annual financier review paperwork. We went through the initial entry assessment questions and I assessed they were eligible for a service appointment.

The grazing business is their only income, the husband had been employed full-time however this off-farm income ceased some years ago. The lending was based on that income continuing. An appointment was made and I estimated the face-to-face appointment would take approx. 2-3 hours.

On arrival at the property it appeared the wife was suffering from a condition which was impacting on her mobility. It had been exacerbated from non-treatment so we arranged for an appointment with the local GP.

The husband mentioned he was having problems with their bank with having been transferred to different branches across Australia for management of their accounts as the bank had closed their local agribusiness office a few years before.

He had received a letter from the bank and wanted me to take a look at it. The letter was advising of a default of the overdraft account and requested a full review of the facilities – however the deadline for this review had now passed. On further review of loan documents and bank statements it became apparent one loans interest only facility had expired and principal payments had commenced. The client had not realised this hence the default on his overdraft as the funds he was transferring monthly did not cover the deductions being taken for his loans and his account had been transferred to credit management. This changed the nature of the appointment and therefore it's length dramatically.

### Solution

- Arranged a callback from local Medical Centre for appointment for treatment and management plan for client's health issue.
- Completed application for emergency assistance with grocery vouchers.
- Worked with client to arrange payment plan with local council for outstanding rates.
- Worked through last 12 months expenses to work a cashflow budget for next 12 months.
- Went through cattle numbers and planned sales over next 12 months to ensure enough cashflow.
- Arranged transfer of \$ to bring overdraft back in order and established an ongoing monthly transfer to ensure account remains in order.
- Simplified current bank account structure to ensure ease of future transactions.
- Called credit manager to discuss situation, get balances and advise requested requirements will be provided.
- Discussed future plans with clients as they wish to exit agriculture. They are unable to work at full capacity due to health and their children would not be taking over the running of the property. The client is contacting two local property agents to discuss a sale, and the client would like to travel whilst health allows.
- As some fencing, and other maintenance required attention, organisations were contacted which were able to assist with farm work as the clients did not have the means to employ a contractor.

## Case Study 3 Cont.

### Case Plan

Overall Goal – Continuation of banking support to operation with medium to long term goal of selling the property.

Objective	Actions & tasks	Responsibility	Time frame	Measure of achievement
<b>Short Term</b>				
Access immediate support for living expenses	Apply for support from support agency	RFC	Immediately	Support agency provide grocery vouchers and contribution to outstanding household bills
Manage health issues	Appointment with local GP	Client	Immediately	GP management plan in place
Bank contacted	Update on situation	RFC	Immediately	Make bank aware client now fully understands situation and requested documentation will be supplied
Full financial review	Review situation and provide docs to bank	RFC	Within next 2 weeks	Review lodged with bank
Source info on property market	Contact agents	Client	Within next 2 weeks	Visits from agents booked
Reduce credit card costs and reliance	Request hardship allowances	RFC & client	Within next 2 weeks	Credit card interest reduced/held and payments affordable or in process
<b>Medium Term</b>				
Keep within budget	Work with clients to ensure cashflow in covers cashflow out	RFC & client		Maintain all accounts and cover living expenses
Real estate agent appraisal of properties	Agent selected and appraisal requested	Clients	Within next 2 months	Appraisals completed and agent appointed
Retirement planning	Referral to professional adviser in consultation with existing accountant and lawyer	RFC & client	3 months	
<b>Long Term</b>				
Sale of property	Property marketed and sold	Client	Within next 6 – 12 months	Property sold and proceeds repaid to the bank
Retirement				

## SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTION SNAPSHOT

Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have proved to be invaluable promotional tools for the RFCSNQ across our diverse and remote region. Featured here are examples of how we are able to promote the service and activities. This can then be shared through our online community, including 'advocate' Pete Lewis who has more than 3000 followers.





# RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLOR ANNUAL REPORTS

As this report covers both Rural Financial Counselling Service Queensland Central Southern Region (RFCSQCSR) and its successor Rural Financial Counselling Service North Qld (RFCSNQ), the following reports are from outgoing (ending 31 March 2016) RFCSQCSR rural financial counsellors:

Kim Corfield  
Ben Slack  
Tony Kassulke  
Emma Cook  
Glenn Budden  
Derk Abberfield  
Debbie Cowley

And current RFCSNQ rural financial counsellors  
Nick Birchley#  
Richard Lewis\*  
Neil Dickson-Jones\*  
Rachel Bock\*  
Ian Durham\*

\*RFCs who transitioned across from RFCSQCSR to RFCSNQ on 1 April 2016.

# Nick Birchley transitioned across from Rural Financial Counselling Service South West region on 1 April 2016. RFCSQCSR St. George based RFC, Sarah Barron and Mena Creek based RFC Ian Jackson resigned and retired respectively, early in the 2016 calendar year and no report is provided.

# LONGREACH

## Rachel Bock

Based in the Longreach RAPAD office with operational area covering Barcaldine, Barcoo, Boulia, Diamantina, Longreach and Winton with footprint into the Richmond, Hughenden and Flinders shires in conjunction with Cloncurry office.

### MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The major focus of activity continues to be assisting clients who are experiencing severe financial hardship due to extended drought. This accounts for approximately 70% of client numbers and time is spent conducting financial analysis, renegotiating loan terms and structures with lenders and accessing support from government and non-government agencies.

A considerable number of my clients are currently in credit management with their lenders, and most have been in this position in excess of 12 months. Varied reasons for this include an inability to make repayments, expiry of interest only period, inability to repay temporary increases. Lenders have been monitoring these client situations closely. Following the June rains there has been an increased interest in these accounts from their credit managers.

Clients continue to access the service to assist in obtaining and or maintaining the farm household allowance (FHA) and applying for other drought relief assistance schemes such as freight rebates and completion of drought management plans.

Following recent rains in some parts producers are accessing the service to plan strategies for restocking. Some producers have received enough response enabling them to return stock from agistment whilst others who have fully destocked are seeking assistance with plans and finance for restocking. It will take some time for producers to build up their herds again and return to normal trading and in some instances the size of the debt may render the business unviable.

### NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

I have not been involved in any debt mediations in the 2015/2016 financial year. Legal Aid confirms there have been no mediations across the six Central West council areas in the last twelve months. Those producers that I have been involved with, who have already participated in mediation in prior years, are continuing to receive extensions from their lenders in relation to deed of agreement activities such as refinancing or selling property.

Banks are increasingly referring clients to the service where viability or future ability to meet payments is a concern. Early referral to the service provides the client with greater options than they would be able to access following a transfer to credit management.

With drought in its fourth year across the service area there has been an increased take up of QRAA drought concessional loans. Some producers who have accessed these loans to reduce their current interest expenses are saving up to \$30,000 per annum in interest based on current rates.

Following the state and federal government's contributions for fencing and predator control, there has been a large increase in interest and take up of QRAA sustainability loans. Once the fencing is complete it will allow producers to continue in the sheep and wool industry without the adverse impact of wild dogs. Numerous producers are considering a return to sheep and wool production from, or in addition to beef, following the erection of the fences.

Carbon farming has been promoted across the service area with a number of producers entering into or considering carbon farming arrangements to bring in additional 'drought proof' income. At this point however none of the carbon abatement agreements have been finalised.



*The major focus of activity continues to be assisting clients who are experiencing severe financial hardship due to extended drought.*

### RFC'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Once the ANZ's moratorium lifts in December I believe those clients currently sitting in credit management will be offered mediation by their lenders. This could lead to an increase in the numbers of properties on the market and producers exiting the industry.

There have been some very good falls recorded across the service area in June (and July) however there are also a number of properties who have continued to miss out on any substantial falls. Producers are optimistic that the upcoming season will be the end of the drought.

With the removal of stamp duty from farm family transfers I anticipate an increase in producers commencing succession-planning activities. This combined with the upcoming increase in QRAA First Start Loans from \$650,000 to \$2 million may see an increased number of younger generations entering the industry.

The farm household allowance ceases after three years of payment and the next 12 months will see some recipients reaching their 3 year limit of payment.

A number of clients have made the decision to exit the industry and have sold or are in the process of marketing their properties, whilst others are waiting for grass levels to improve prior to listing their properties for sale. At this point those lenders involved are working well with and supporting their clients in this process. Majority of those planning to exit the industry are at or above retirement age with grown up children unwilling or unable to take over the debt to carry on the business enabling the older generation to retire.

### CLIENT OUTCOMES INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT, WITHIN AND OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE:

A number of clients have made the decision to exit the industry and have sold or are in the process of marketing their properties, whilst others are waiting for grass levels to improve prior to listing their properties for sale. At this point those lenders involved are working well with and supporting their clients in this process. Majority of those planning to exit the industry are at or above retirement age with grown up children unwilling or unable to take over the debt to carry on the business enabling the older generation to retire.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

I continue to work with Central West Rural Wellness Network across the region. One notable achievement by the group has been to secure support to appoint a Small Business Financial Counsellor to work with those 'non-rural' small businesses, which have been adversely impacted by the ongoing drought. RFCSNQ's parent organisation, RAPAD hosts this position.

I participated in the ATO's rural fix-it squad which brought together farmers, businesses and government and non-government agencies from across Australia to highlight and attempt to solve rural issues in dealing with the ATO and other government agencies, and I will attend another forum in the 16-17 period.

I assisted Frontier Services with connections to local graziers and agencies for their first Outback Links Spirits Raising Trip to Longreach and surrounding areas. Volunteers from Qantas and RACQ worked tirelessly on numerous properties, which highlighted the awareness and support for producers in drought-affected regions.

I worked with Rotary to cater one evening for the Ilfracombe hay runners. The evening brought a lot of wonderful, charitable people together and highlighted Australians support for others with a great amount of good feeling that money cannot buy.

I've had continued attendance at various community events and field days across the region including the Qld Sheep Show, Windorah RFDS event and Rotary movie nights.

# MACKAY

## RICHARD LEWIS

Servicing coastal Central Queensland from Rockhampton to Townsville and the hinterland to the west between the Capricorn and Flinders Highways out to Clermont and Charters Towers. Realigned to Mackay, Whitsunday and Issac Regional Council areas reflecting recent RFCS changes.

### MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY FOR THIS REPORTING PERIOD

Assisting clients in severe financial difficulty accounts for approximately 60% of client numbers and a much greater percentage of my counselling time. Clients are assisted in many ways including financial analysis, direct negotiation with financiers resulting in loan restructures, formal deeds of agreement or formal farm debt mediation (FDM). All are provided with vital follow up support.

Just two new FDM clients for 2015/2016 is positive, it reflects the change in the banks approach particularly to drought impacted clients. RFC assistance to clients managing the often-complex financial and emotional negotiations that are an integral part of FDM and deeds of agreement is essential and time consuming. This applies equally to initially achieving an agreed outcome and then facilitating the processes involved to assist clients meet the agreed milestones. Commitment to these roles has been the major focus for much of my time during this reporting period.

Clients continued to seek assistance with a mixture of cash flow/business analysis and planning, loan applications and succession planning. Many clients seeking Centrelink assistance evolve following provision of assistance in other areas.

*Assisting clients in severe financial difficulty accounts for approximately 60% of client numbers and a much greater percentage of my counselling time.*

### NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

There has been a positive trend in earlier referral of clients identified as at risk by their financiers, for assistance with business analysis. This is enabling more proactive planning and greater options which are a positive for all parties hopefully placing clients in a better position to take advantage of improving prices and seasonal change.

The long overdue jump in cattle prices in early 2015 while initially rising to possibly starry heights has settled a little but is a boon to those fortunate enough to be able to take full advantage of it. Those who proactively managed and reduced numbers early due to drought, and have since had rain, are unfortunately feeling the sting in the tail of having sold on a much lower markets.

Central and Burdekin Region cane farmers are weathering the combined impact of a reduced crop for the 2015 season due to poor rainfall and the spread of Yellow Canopy Syndrome. With sugar prices dangerously close to, or below, the cost of production for many the 2015 season has been mediocre. Sugar prices have shown some improvement in recent months and potential yields and returns appear encouraging for 2016. The recent highly beneficial rain too much of the state has been a mixed blessing for the cane industry. The have been major delays in harvesting due to wet weather. This is raising some concern as to whether the entire crop will be harvested if there are further major rain delays.

### RFC'S VIEW OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Cattle producers across the region are on the whole, benefiting from improved prices for all categories of stock aided by the re-opening of Asian markets. Unfortunately, there are many across the region still severely impacted by drought particularly in the Northern and Western areas. This follows a patchy and light El Nino influenced wet season. There have recently been high unseasonal falls particularly across the Central Highlands and near Coastal areas. Those missing out on decent rains face further forced sales and possibly feeding. Many fortunate to have had reasonable relief rain still face an extended period without income needing to restock or await herd regeneration. This is further exacerbated by a major time delay to enable pasture regrowth from dormancy or seed after an extended period of dry weather.

A serious shortage of breeders and replacement heifers after years of drought induced high female slaughter rates will slow recovery in herd numbers. Queensland total cattle slaughter and live export numbers for the last three years, despite low prices, are up over 20% per year on the ten year average. This drought attributed herd reduction will be further exacerbated by drought reduced calving percentages over the next couple of years.

Above average sales of younger stock in recent years, again influenced by drought, are expected to maintain values for feeder and export type stock for several years due to the resultant imbalance in demand versus supply. The shortage of suitable slaughter cattle available to meatworks across Central and Northern Queensland this season has been highlighted by delayed kill starts following the Christmas break, a reduction in the number of daily shifts, staff employed, and reduced kill numbers. Stock availability has declined further with most works now reducing their operating days per week in an endeavour to maintain staff and continue operation.

Indicators are the sugar industry in the Region may continue to struggle as many growers increased borrowings to manage the smaller crop and low prices of 2015. World sugar prices, while rising over the last 12 months, continue to fluctuate with returns to growers also influenced by movement of the Australian Dollar. Projected returns for the 2016 crop are expected to be considerably stronger than 2015.

Given the below average seasonal start to 2016 across most areas, combined with current markets, I see little improvement in the overall position for most in this region over the next year. Further, despite their declared best endeavours to assist wherever possible, the banks continue to move perceived at risk clients experiencing servicing and equity problems to their "intensive management portfolios".

The major downturn in the mining industry in the Bowen Basin and its associated services sector has impacted heavily on both large and small regional centres. The impact has also been felt across all farming sectors as many smaller farmers had diversified into the provision of labour or contract services to the mining sector to assist debt servicing and generally diversify and maintain their viability.

## CLIENT OUTCOMES INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT, WITHIN AND OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

Client outcomes from counsellor assistance have varied widely with some accessing funds as required, and others negotiating restructure of their portfolios to better suit current conditions. Those clients within asset management divisions have or are negotiating arrangements for loan restructure, refinance, partial or total asset sale over time to exit agriculture while others move towards FDM. Ongoing negotiation with financiers is assisting some clients in severely impacted areas to extend their deeds to enable sale at a more opportune time.

A number of clients have been assisted with access to FHA and other Centrelink support mechanisms while a number remain unsuccessful.

The continuing contribution by Denis McMahon and the Farm Rural Legal Service to the FDM and the negotiation process is of great assistance to the RFC service in achieving the very best possible outcome for clients undergoing a very traumatic experience.

Farm succession continues to be a major issue and challenge to all sectors involved. It is often complicated by the lack of financial capacity of many aging farmers to "pass" the property to the next generation who may lack the capacity to buy their parents out. Foregoing secure off-farm positions for a high-risk occupation on a property, that may no longer be viable with any degree of debt, is resulting in multi-generation farming families exiting agriculture altogether.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

The Service is widely promoted through ongoing personal contact with the banking sector at all levels, QRAA Client Liaison Officers, accountants and other professional service providers such as Centrelink and Government Departments. Support has been provided to the Centrelink Mobile Office whenever possible while it is in the Region.

Contacts with producer organisations at all levels have been maintained and the RFCS promoted across the diversity of industry groups. This included attending Field Days, industry meetings and forums across the region.

# CLONCURRY

## NEIL DICKINSON-JONES

Servicing North West Queensland from Camooweal to Torrens Creek taking in the shires of Flinders (Hughenden), Richmond, McKinlay (Julia Creek) and Mount Isa. As well as into the Gulf taking in the shires of Burke (Burketown), Carpentaria (Normanton) and Croydon shires.

### MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY FOR THIS REPORTING PERIOD

As this was a new RFC service area established at the start of August 2015 from additional drought funding there were a limited amount of active existing clients, and these were previously serviced from Longreach. A fair portion of 2015/16 has been making the region and relevant referral parties aware of the service and what the service can offer. This being local councils, Centrelink, AgForce, QRAA, Southern Gulf Catchments, banks, accountants, solicitors and Qld DAF staff.

From these referral sources seven clients (6 new & 1 existing RFCS client) have been assisted with applying for farm household allowance (FHA). One of these new clients is being assisted with an extension of their deed of forbearance with their existing bank. Four clients (3 new & 1 existing RFCS client) have been assisted with QRAA drought applications; one new client with a QRAA sustainability loan and two existing clients with existing QRAA loans. An existing client was assisted in producing budgets for their respective bank, with a new client also being referred by a prospective financier. Two clients (1 new & 1 existing RFCS client) were assisted with Qld DAF emergency water infrastructure rebate. One new client was assisted with budgeting for their prospective first property purchase with a combined application with QRAA & their existing Bank.

In a lot of the new FHA applications, clients were not aware of their entitlements or they deemed that the application was too tedious or too difficult to complete. As well some of these clients had

already ruled themselves out, as being ineligible to apply for FHA. The majority of client interaction has been assisting clients with accessing government support, budgeting, analysis of budgets, as well as negotiating with Banks and the relevant government departments.

### NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

From these new referral sources, banks are seeking support with client production of financial data (stock schedules, cash flows) as a certification of possible problem accounts. This allows the clients/financers to identify possible shortfalls within their operations as well as making clients more accountable and stringent in outgoing funds.

The ongoing drought has continued with all shires in the covered RFC region still droughted. With the one exception being the Cloncurry Shire, which was lifted, late in the financial year. Some areas south of Hughenden have entered their sixth year of drought with large areas of the black soil mitchell grass downs having little to minimal response to the rainfall they have received over the traditional wet season (in some instances quite considerable). What has been quite unique has been out of season winter rain, which in most cases has been quite considerable falls, along with being quite repetitive over a number of rainfall events. This combined with a considerable warmer winter has seen reduced initial levels of deterioration in pasture quality. This has seen greening and some pasture growth as we approach the end of this financial year. With hope that this pasture growth continues from the retained soil moisture, as the temperature warms up and the days get longer to assist pasture growth.

With the prolonged droughted seasons that have been experienced, livestock numbers are considerably reduced, to fully destocked, in some harsher regions. Cattle prices which were seen in 2015 as record levels, have continued to rise through 2016 to new increasing heights. These prices have been seen as an excellent tonic and saviour to those producers that have been lucky enough to retain herd numbers but as in most cases reduced levels.



Unfortunately this does not assist those graziers that had to heavily reduce numbers several years ago into much reduced market prices. With the previous drought costs of feeding, agistment, droving etc. these cattle sales have done very little to reduce debt levels. Some producers have been left with very high debt ratios compared to retained stock numbers. The prospect of restocking looks very limited for a large number of producers.

### RFC'S VIEW OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Livestock producers, who have managed to retain considerable numbers, have a fair to profitable year ahead as long as their properties have considerable grass cover and the season continues to promote pasture growth. With the outlook of the El Nino weather pattern predicted to further weaken, with the development of a La Nino pattern to develop in the Australian spring this will increase the probability of improved seasons.

For those producers that have limited to no stock, their debt levels and their financiers will play a major part in their direction that they can undertake. With the forecast of store cattle to remain at the current high prices, this will make restocking considerably hard, to near impossible. The ability to generate income from agistment may also be difficult, with the ratio of available pasture to available stock being mismatched with an oversupply of pasture. Even with the current situation with improvement pasture growth & quality, producers are also wary of restocking on light pasture after the previous dry seasons.

As mentioned there will be producers in the hands of their financiers in regards to ongoing support. What I have seen as a counsellor, a lot of producers are coming out of this drought with considerably increased debt levels but unfortunately with reduced stock numbers. The main positive factor being that considerably higher cattle prices will support the reduced turnoff, and in lot of instances younger than usual turnoff being sold.

*As this was a new RFC service area... a fair portion of 2015/16 has been making the region and relevant referral parties aware of the service and what the service can offer.*

### CLIENT OUTCOMES INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT, WITHIN AND OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

At this stage counsellor support has been quite beneficial to the clients, in most instances bringing positive outcomes. This has been supported by clients keeping their financiers well informed throughout the process. Yet with this in mind, some financiers have been allowing clients to remain on their properties in a "care taker" mode, waiting for the season to change, with indication of their property/s to be sold once in a saleable condition. There seems to be a number of deed of forbearances coming due, with the financiers being reluctant to extend the deeds to a reasonable timeline to allow an efficient marketing program being conducted successfully.

I have observed one financier offering to extend a deed of forbearance, with a condition that the client waive their right to farm debt mediation (FDM). FDM, with the assistance of Legal Aid, and the RFC, is a very supportive and effective support towards the client's outcome. This allows the client to successfully exit the industry or adjust. The downturn in the mining industry has also impacted on some off farm income. This industry was also a very good source of off farm income to support smaller or new farmers with their agricultural businesses. It has also had a negative effect on the local contractors; with former mining contractors competitively quoting on local contracts.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

As previously discussed the RFC service has been heavily promoted to introductory and referral sources such as local councils, Centrelink, AgForce, QRAA, Southern Gulf Catchments, banks, accountants, solicitors and Qld DAF staff. This has been successful with a number of referrals coming from a number of introductory sources. RFCSNQ advertising material has also been distributed and this has resulted in client contact.

The service has also been promoted at relevant industry information/demonstration days, run by groups such as MLA, Qld DAF, Southern Gulf Catchments and AgForce. Another major event that occurs in this region was the Richmond Field Days, where a joint site was shared with QRAA, AgForce.

# CAIRNS

## NICK BIRCHLEY

Servicing Far North Queensland from the Herbert to the Cape and west to the Tableland and Gulf areas.

### MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY FOR THIS REPORTING PERIOD

This area has only been serviced by RFCSNQ since the restructure from 1 April 2016.

From that time, the introduction of new systems and programs has taken some time however the client base dealt with includes some carry over from previous activities prior to the restructure.

The fourteen client families serviced in the three months to the 30 June included the following industries:

- Sugar Cane            2 New
- Cut Flowers
- Beef Production    2 New
- Herb Production
- Banana Farms       1 New

The type of work included one mediation in Brisbane where we have come to an agreement whereby the clients can remain trading on the farm.

### NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

Sugar is experiencing their best prices ever however farmers are having difficulty in getting their crop off in time. Wet weather has delayed the harvest and reduced the CCS (Commercial Content of Sugar), which affects their price. Last year the harvest in Tully went into the new year which is extremely rare and affects CCS as well as ratooning for the following year.

The Herbert region is experiencing a wet year as well and producers are in disagreement with their sugar mill owner, over marketing arrangements, which are causing some concern. While prices are good and interest rates are low; for the Herbert in general, the dispute appears to be driving a lack confidence in the industry.

The banana industry has also experienced a collapse of the price due to a major over supply to the market. There is concern that the cause is due to oversupply of capacity however others are saying the growing conditions have been good making the crop significantly larger than normal. It has also been a contributing factor to the failure of one of the major farming businesses in the industry. Recently prices have returned to be profitable however 2016 will be a year of significant losses for the industry.

Biosecurity infrastructure and revised practices due to Panama has increased some costs of production.

Beef has seen record prices over the past few years however there have been shortages of stock from the drier areas. The coastal producers who are smaller by nature are enjoying the benefits of having feed.

## RFC'S VIEW OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Bananas: biosecurity issues and market supply are the main foreseeable issues that this industry appears to be facing. Panama continues to hover over the industry with the current outbreak seemingly contained to one property at this stage.

The industry body, ABGC has decided to buy the property on a 2/3 industry 1/3 federal government funding arrangement in an attempt to contain the outbreak and they require a levy proposal to be successful to complete the buyout. The pathogen can be spread by soil, be it on shoes, machinery or trucks bringing supplies or taking fruit to market. A less likely but realistic way in which it can be spread can be by passing animals through the farm. Another threat is that it could also get into the waterways and be spread throughout a catchment.

Should further outbreaks occur then there could be a scramble for clients to exit or convert to growing cane or paw paws.

Cane: Experiencing good prices and good growing conditions. Capacity to harvest and for the mill to crush the high volume is an issue for the industry. The age of growers continues to be an issue with the industry not getting much renewal.

Beef: Coastal operators will continue to thrive as prices remain however replacement cattle are making the fattening costs expensive. Coastal producers do not have the extensive breeding operations to fully capitalise on the high market prices.

Gulf and Cape producers like many elsewhere, will enjoy the benefits if they have had plenty of feed however those who have destocked will find it very expensive to restock.

## CLIENT OUTCOMES INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT, WITHIN AND OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

During the past three months I have assisted

- Four at risk clients submit proposals to their banks that has given the bank comfort to continue support for their clients in the medium term. This allows them time to trade on and address the key issues affecting their businesses.
- Four clients who have sought 'what if's' for expanding their businesses by way of increasing their scale or diversification to other agricultural options.
- One Farm Household Assistance client.
- One mediation and follow up refinance as part of the conditions of the mediation deed.

## COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

Addressed drought recovery and information centre at Chillagoe attended by approximately 20 farm business owners. Received one client as well as a number of contacts.

I have had two meetings with executives of ABGC (bananas) in regards to the Panama TR4 disease incursion implications and recent market conditions causing price collapse.

# TOWNSVILLE

## IAN DURHAM

Servicing coastal Queensland from Bowen to Ingham and inland to Pentland (west of Charters Towers). Clients were also serviced in the Tablelands and Gulf region due to the retirement of former RFC Ian Jackson.

### MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY FOR THIS REPORTING PERIOD

The Townsville service is relatively new and started operations on 1 September 2015. Initially the focus was on service promotion and letting it be known that we were available. Producer groups such as Agforce and Canegrowers were targeted along with commercial banks, QRAA, QDAF, clergy and social counselling services. I also had a presence at several field days and grower meetings.

Several clients in severe financial difficulty were soon receiving assistance and the service has now worked with or still working with 15 primary production enterprises.

A high percentage of time has been spent working with two farm debt mediations. The first one has moved to a deed of forbearance period and the second is likely to be signed. A deed of forbearance is where the bank agrees to continue conditional support for a given period provided conditions in the deed are met such as sale of assets. My work continues with these clients during the deed period due to the banks needing regular updated financial information. Requirements include budget monitoring with actuals compared to budget and where there is a substantial difference an explanation report is required.

Other client work has been assistance with start-up loan applications, loan restructure applications, Centrelink household assistance applications, preliminary work for a client starting to consider retirement/succession planning, cash flow/business analysis and planning and finally assisting a client to setup a farm office and begin keeping records such as a cash book.

### NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

Commercial lenders (banks) appear to be referring clients, which they have identified as at risk to the RFC service instead of dealing with them 'in house'. A couple of the banks are requiring their clients to take a more professional approach in the provision of information. Budgeting, cash flow analysis and farm plans are required. This is having a positive effect on producers who are having to improve their reporting skills. Initially they don't know where to start so working with them through the process is positive for their respective businesses.

Cattle prices had a very fast rise in the later part of 2015 which has given many producers hope for the future.

Many producers were selling off cattle during the drought and using the funds to keep their nucleus breeder herd alive. When the drought breaks producers will find it hard to buy replacement stock and I'm witnessing that at the end of this reporting period.

Cane producers in the Herbert and Burdekin struggled with disease and early season sugar prices that were below the cost of production. Later in the season the sugar price improved to be slightly better than the cost of production. Sugar producers' financial positions remained static. There was insufficient profits to replace machinery or put new technology into the farming system.

Bananas have struggled with disease containment and mediocre produce prices.



### RFC'S VIEW OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

High numbers of cattle have been sold due to drought with producers selling off older stock then younger unfinished stock. High numbers of heifers have been sold and slaughtered than would normally have been kept for breeding. The funds were used to fund the feeding of a nucleus breeder herd. The result of selling off unfinished stock has the effect of selling stock that were due to be sold over the next two years. Even after the drought breaks, incomes will be down as producers wait to grow out stock. In my opinion – when the drought breaks it will take several years for the industry to recover to pre drought cattle numbers and many more years to recover financially.

In my opinion the sugar industry in the region will continue to struggle. Irrigation costs and electricity pumping costs have been very high due to drought, this coupled with at best a break even sugar price has meant growers have been unable to afford machinery replacement or technology incorporation into their farming systems.

Increasing age of producer's continues to be a concern with the average age of sugar producers at well over 60. Younger people that want to take on the challenge of farming find it almost impossible to raise the necessary capital to purchase a viable farming enterprise

### SUMMARY

After the poor seasonal start to 2016 in the region, I see little improvement in the financial position for most producers.

The banks will need to be tolerant. Forced sales could see a major deterioration in land values further eroding equity.

*After the poor seasonal start to 2016 in the region, I see little improvement in the financial position for most producers.*



# EMERALD

## EMMA COOK

Service area is predominantly the Central Highlands area.

### MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The major focus of activity for the reporting period has largely been associated with debt mediation issues. Most of the clients that I have assisted have been pre-mediation, as the majority of banks in my area seem to be attempting to work with clients to resolve their financial issues or find a suitable outcome that is agreeable to all parties concerned. This is perhaps a reflection of the current economic climate whereby forcing a client to sell their property won't necessarily provide the desired result.

### NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

No new or unusual activities/trends were noticed this period. Rural properties continue to sell, with purchasers being mainly existing farmers who are in a strong financial position and already have equity and cashflow to support additional debt. Low interest rates have also been a notable factor that is contributing to new lending.

### RFC'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

Agricultural industry remains strong in the local area, largely due to good commodity prices, however rainfall over the summer has been quite patchy in some areas. This will no doubt result in dry seasonal conditions later in the year, which will put a strain on cashflow for some farmers. Unfortunately, some of these farmers may also face increased bank pressure due to another year of inadequate rainfall and poor farm returns.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

I have continued to promote the service through my existing clients and networks. There have also been other opportunities, such as the Australian Government roadshows, which I have attended to further promote the service.

### CLIENT OUTCOMES, INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT, WITHIN OR OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

Some clients are continuing to work with the service to improve their financial situation. Those experiencing debt mediation issues often take a significant amount of time to find a resolution and consequently, I am still assisting these clients. Comparatively, those clients that I have assisted with options to improve their financial situation have made changes to their operations accordingly and no longer need to utilise the service.



## GYMPIE

### DERK ABBERFIELD

Area serviced includes the Gympie, Fraser Coast and Bundaberg shires with some of the towns covered Gympie, Kilkivan, Goomeri, Kandanga, Imbil, Tin Can Bay, Maryborough, Tiaro, Childers, Bundaberg, Gin Gin and Rosedale.

#### MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The major focus over the last 9 months has been similar to the previous 12 months, with a reasonable summer and leading into summer, producers have been working towards recovering from previous floods, drought and market crashes. Optimism has crept back into the area and people are looking forward and are hoping that a couple of seasons can be strung together to help them get over the previous years. Bank related issues are easing however there has continued to be a steady flow of referrals from the banks, with one noticeable difference being that in a few cases they have been open to working more closely with the client to identify ways to improve their position. This has resulted in the immediate push for farm debt mediation to be relaxed some producers working towards exiting or restructuring within agriculture. There has also been a slight change in banks attitude with a number of clients being able to refinance before mediation and even one after mediation.



#### NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

I can't say that there has been any unusual activity within the reporting period that I have not seen before.

#### RFC'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

The next 12 months will hopefully see another reasonable season in this area allowing clients to continue to recover and get back on to their feet. There is still large numbers on the Farm Household Allowance (FHA) and which also will be reaching their third year this year. With some clients finishing the FHA in the next 12 months there may be an increase in the services however if conditions continue we should see an easing over the next 12 months.

#### COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

The last 12 months promotional activities have consisted of meeting with stakeholders and promoting the Rural Financial Counselling Service. I have met with most banks, council economic development officers and Centrelink FHA officers. I have also attended financial workshops help by accountants.

#### CLIENT OUTCOMES, INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT, WITHIN OR OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

Client outcomes over the last reporting period have been varied. I have attended a number of farm debt mediations with clients and the results are all very similar. With the improvement in both the markets, both commodities and real estate, those that attend mediation are pushed to achieve a sale as soon as possible.

# GOONDIWINDI

## DEBBIE COWLEY

Service area includes Goondiwindi east to Yelarbon, Inglewood, Texas and Milmeran, west to Toobeah and Talwood, north to Moonie, and many areas in between. Some clients received assistance in neighbouring shires when appropriate.

### MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The majority of work during the last 12 months has been focused on assisting farmers with loan applications and cash flow work. I have also assisted a number of farmers with preparing loan applications to purchase their first rural property.

The service assisted a number of farmer's with drought concessional loan applications with QRAA. This reporting period I have assisted farmers with drought recovery loans to restock and/or plant crops.

Unfortunately to March, there has been little uptake via Centrelink with the farm household allowance. For whatever reason, farmers have not applied for this assistance.

Due to excellent sub-soil moisture and in crop rain, most farmers yielded above average with their winter crop last year.

Opportunities for our local farmers arose out of a failed chickpea crop in India last year. Large areas were planted to chickpeas instead of the traditional wheat/barley combination. Many farmers forward sold their crop on a hectare basis at prices around the \$600 to \$750 per tonne mark.

Farmers who harvested chickpeas were very happy with the yields and prices received. Anyone who did not forward sell their crop may have received between \$800 and \$1000 per tonne for their chickpeas post-harvest. These are the best prices ever received for this product.

Wheat and barley crops were also at high yields. The prices of those grains have continued to fall away

since harvest with many farmers sitting with grain on hand on farm or in the system.

Locally, our grain facilities at Goondiwindi had difficulty handling the grain harvest with views of trucks lining up for the most part of a day just to deliver one load. Many farmers chose to 'dump' their grain on farm in the end with little other choice given the logistics issues of delivery.

It was a great positive for our district to finally experience a good result at harvest given the many years of failure with drought and flood impacting those yields.

Local businesses have seen the first uptick in sales since 2009.

Graziers who have had stock to sell have fared well in 2015 and 2016 with the improvement in both cattle and sheep prices. Good winter, spring and summer rains have fallen across the district. Recently though, the tap has turned off but many still have a good body of dry feed.

The service has been well utilized by farmers and small business operators alike during the last 12 months.

Referrals to the service are mainly from accountants, banks, QRAA, Goondiwindi Regional Council, DAFF, friends, word of mouth and self-promotion.



### NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN REPORTING PERIOD

This service assisted 35 clients with the farm debt mediation process from 2008 to mid-2014. With the more favourable seasons, better cattle prices and an improvement in property prices across the board, no new mediation clients have accessed the service. Bank managers are reporting a reduction in debt by their borrowers or the ability to start working on some badly needed infrastructure improvement with some cash flow working its way through the system.

### RFC'S VIEWS ON WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER NEXT 12 MONTHS

It is difficult to say what might happen with this year's grain crops. Rain has not fallen for several months (up to March), which is starting to worry many across the district.

A late summer heatwave burnt off the green feed from summer.

As the prediction for last summer rain was dire, many farmers baled their barley stubble. With a bumper crop, there was plenty of straw to bale. Many farmers are still holding onto those bales so that should help if there is a dry winter. As the price of barley has been very poor since harvest, many farmers are also holding barley on farm. This could also be utilised for stock if need be.

### CLIENT OUTCOMES ACHIEVED INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT WITHIN OR OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

Some farmers have received assistance from QRAA through concessional and drought recovery loans. A small number of farmers have accessed assistance from Centrelink with the farm household allowance. A number of farmers sought assistance for their bank review.

A number of first time farmers sought assistance with the purchase of their first property.

Once again, it is a pleasure to be involved with the Rural Financial Counselling Service.

# NORTH BURNETT

## KIM CORFIELD, TONY KASSULKE & BEN SLACK

Three RFCs serviced the North Burnett area based in Coalstoun Lakes, Gayndah and Mundubbera and servicing the surrounding areas including Biggenden, Mt Perry, Monto and Eidsvold as the major townships

### MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

The major focus of activity this year to date has been QRAA loan applications and finance proposals, with over one million dollars approved finance to date this year. Main funding submissions were for purchase of property, partnership dissolutions and upgrade of equipment. Several financiers engaged the RFCs to work with their clients prior to issuing any farm debt mediation advice. This has provided good outcomes for the clients and the banks, allowing a good working relationship to proceed between both parties. Some comments have been this would not have occurred without the input of the RFC.

With the variable seasons in the North Burnett, there has been a large amount of assistance required with the Centrelink Farm Household Allowance (FHA) and the administration of the program. Many clients have required assistance with their annual reviews and negotiations with their financial institutions to restructure their debt.

Bank managers have been referring their clients to contact the service when they are requiring further advances to continue trading and this increased workloads throughout the year.

Continuing bank mediation clients have required regular assistance to complete quarterly reviews or updates to financiers.

### NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

Nil.

### RFC'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

The forthcoming year remains uncertain for many farmers and graziers. Should the cattle prices remain at current levels this shall allow a period of recovery for all producers. Many producers however do not have excess stock available to sell and the price to restock is above most budgets.

Feedlotter have reduced numbers in their yards due to the ongoing price of cattle, however after several good years of returns most have the current situation factored into their planning.

Around Coalstoun Lakes the farmers in the area have had the opportunity to plant peanuts, corn and sorghum but as a solely dryland farming district they are desperately waiting on some rainfall to finish the crops off. Dryland farmers are the biggest risk managers in the agricultural industry and being able to assist them in any way has been a privilege.

The priority remains to improve the viability of all farming enterprises, with a major focus on reducing costs and debt whilst trying to improve their farm profitability and viability.

A lot of work continues to be done with clients in their negotiations with financial institutions and the ongoing active cashflow management and review of their enterprise and operations.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

I have attended as many information sessions and field days as was available to attend this year. There were several drought information sessions and ongoing Farm Household Allowance information sessions with Centrelink.

### CLIENT OUTCOMES ACHIEVED, INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT WITHIN OR OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

The majority of clients in the North Burnett area are adjusting within agriculture. Most of our work relates to assistance with QRAA Loan applications, Farm debt mediations, Bank annual reviews, bank negotiations, cashflow preparation and assistance with Centrelink applications and administration of their schemes.

Some clients are undertaking succession planning purchases of part of the family farm and assistance in preparation of cashflows and loan applications and proposals.

There has been an increase in the opportunistic view of the graziers and farmers alike this year and with improved weather conditions for the coming year this shall allow a period of recovery to continue in the North Burnett.



# MILES

## GLENN BUDDEN

Servicing the areas across the Western Downs including Chinchilla, Miles and Tara districts.

### MAJOR FOCUS OF ACTIVITY WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

Farm debt mediation preparation and post-mediation assistance with clients is an ongoing focus of the service in this area. Administrative windup of the current service in operating in Miles also accounted for a large part of my time between February and March 2016. Graziers looking to restock are struggling to finance their decision. They are more likely to take up finance through a stock agent, but are incurring a higher interest rate.

### NEW OR UNUSUAL ACTIVITIES/TRENDS WITHIN THE REPORTING PERIOD

There is a perception that grazing properties and mixed farming properties are beginning to move. There has been less movement of cropping properties, due mainly to the value of good cropping properties together with uncertainty of grain commodity prices into the future. Grazing properties values have not lifted a great deal through this period, except for the Taroom/Wandoan area. The general consensus has been that the strong cattle price has underpinned the property market. The towns of Chinchilla and Miles and to a lesser extent Dalby are coming to terms with the reduction in coal seam gas activity. For town businesses, cashflow has disappeared as the population has declined. A number are at the point of deciding whether to petition for bankruptcy.

### RFC'S VIEWS ABOUT WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

There will be graziers in the region that will be unable to fully restock given that they had either de-stocked or reduced their stock numbers as part of their drought mitigation strategy. Cattle prices have continued to break records for types that restockers are chasing and for female cattle. There is a small move for some cattle producers to turn to sheep, if they have a sheep and wild dog secure property. Sheep values have been stable over a number of years. The main barriers to preventing the move to sheep are suitable fencing, awareness of the profitability of a sheep operation and the wild dog problem. I believe that generally primary producers are more optimistic about the rural sector, following the rise in cattle prices, a more stable cattle market, together with a reasonable summer and autumn. Forecasting of future grain prices is unreliable. I suspect that we will see a continuation of pressured asset sales by lenders as the impact of cropping and off-farm incomes vary.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS OR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RFC

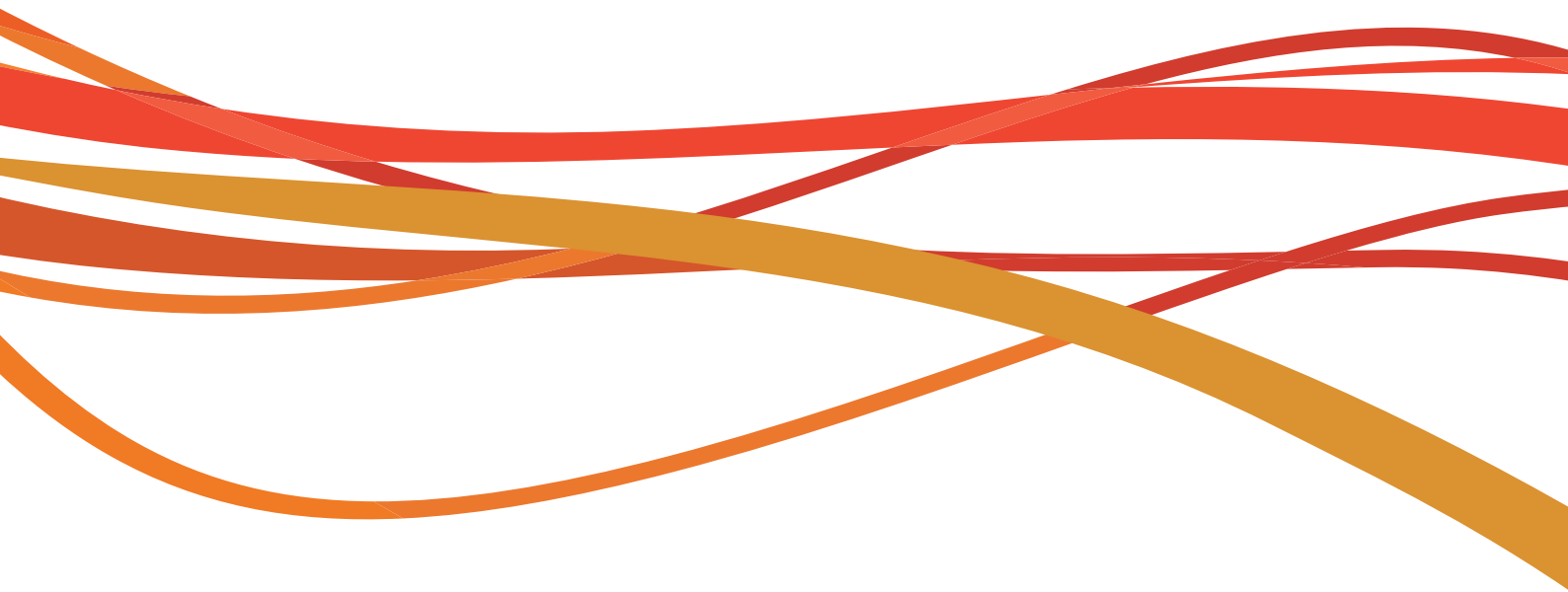
Attended Department of Human Services mobile unit in Miles and presented at various drought related forums.

### CLIENT OUTCOMES ACHIEVED, INCLUDING ADJUSTMENT WITHIN OR OUTSIDE AGRICULTURE

Clients said that they are better prepared to deal with their lenders because of the explanation of financial terms and the benchmarks that lenders use, after being clients of this service.

One post mediation client has been negotiated with their lender, with assistance of the Farm & Legal Service, Legalaid Qld and the RFC, to have their house property unencumbered from the bank. These clients were being forced to sell both properties to retire their bank debt. An outcome for clients of the service is that they can think more clearly about their situation and make well informed decisions.





RAPAD.COM.AU