



Indigenous Engagement Strategy 2014 – 2018 HEAT Program



Introduction

Desert Channels Queensland (DCQ) is a community organisation working to improve the management of natural resources in its region – the Queensland section of the Lake Eyre Basin.

Since its formation in 2002 DCQ has developed strong and enduring relationships with indigenous groups and individuals across the region, in particular by supporting the development of the Georgina Diamantina Coopers Aboriginal Group (GDCAG) which represents the major language groups of the region.

The DCQ program of work as approved by the Federal Government in the environmental stream for the next five years will largely be focussed on reducing threats to the environment through weed and feral animal control works.

This indigenous engagement strategy outlines the principles which DCQ will adopt to promote indigenous engagement throughout the region with the aim of increasing indigenous grass roots and volunteer participation in natural resource management activities.

Desert Channels Queensland will continue to work with the Traditional Owners and the indigenous community of our region for successful outcomes in natural resource management within the new funding models offered by current governments.

This strategy links to DCQ's strategic plan, NRM plan and our current contract and work plan for the High-value Environmental Area Targeted investment (HEAT) program with the Australian government.

HEAT Program 2013 - 2018

(High-value Environmental Area Targeted investment)

The HEAT program, has been designed to allow for the thoughtful development of strategies aimed at reducing threats to high value ecological sites. It is envisaged that these strategies will be detailed enough to be incorporated into future Natural Resource Management Plans, Local Authority Pest Weed and Animal Plans and where appropriate discussions with landholders and land managers.

One key aim of the HEAT project is to continue to improve on ground collaboration between all parties undertaking land management activities within the DCQ Region.

HEAT is a program funded by the Australian Government. The on ground activities being rolled out under the current funding rounds are priorities from previous plans and are fixed, subject to contracts with the Federal Government. On ground investment focus is aimed at reducing the key threatening processes of weed and pest animals, with the dual aim of building of the major ecological transport zone, the riparian habitat.

HEAT is one of three projects within the environment stream being implemented to tackle serious issues in the region. The other two program's DCQ is rolling out under the environment stream are a feral pig control program and a woody WoNS control program. All three projects are required to have strong links.

The Current Program

Sub-program 1 - Collaborative planning

The Desert Channels area is home to many significant vulnerable and endangered EPBC species and is also used by vulnerable and endangered species as a migratory waypoint. Investment to protect significant communities and sites to date lacks a strong co-ordinated catchment planning focus that brings together key land managers and land planners who determine major investment decisions. This component of the program is to bring diverse groups together to ensure better catchment wide cross collaboration planning, better co-ordination of collective investment and to develop long term investment strategies to reduce threat to EPBC species. DCQ is not the only investor in this area and the strategies are to be designed to allow investors to determine local priorities.

Sub-program 2 - Improvement of riparian habitat

The current on ground work centres around enhanced management of 6,740 ha and 61km of riparian habitat to reduce weed threat, protect conservation estate and improving likely habitat to augment recovery plans for EPBC species. Throughout this program DCQ will undertake field surveys and mapping of high value habitat and conduct bio-condition assessments at a number of relevant sites throughout the program to add information to aid planning.

Sub-program 3 - Protection of artesian springs

Mapping and field assessment of 26 spring complexes (both recharge and discharge) during FY 13/14 built on previous work undertaken by DCQ, Government and community. The Current NRM plan highlights these complexes for investment. These areas were considered a high priority in the NRM plan and Federal Government investment secured relates to 52 ha and 5 km of riparian habitat in

the Upper Thomson River. Bio-condition assessments will be undertaken at a number of relevant sites throughout the program. Due to their priority in the NRM plan DCQ continues to seek additional co-ordinated investment.

Sub-program 4 - Reduction of mosquito fish habitat

Survey and mapping of artesian bore drains in conjunction with landholders for the mosquito fish and the development of management plans to reduce mosquito fish habitat.

Sub-program 5 - Communication, education and awareness

Catchment wide communication, education and awareness raising is a significant strategy in this investment round. DCQ will increase awareness within the community regarding EPBC species, recovery plans and areas associated with protection of their habitat and land management. This will be done through a number of activities each year including field days, workshops, communication and information road signs, newsletters and media opportunities.

Sub-program 6 - Indigenous engagement

In addition to key investment partners, DCQ is seeking input from the Indigenous community in strategy development to ensure investment opportunities are maximised. Workshops and specific communication targeted towards increasing indigenous community participation in investment strategies is planned.

Sub-program 7 - Data collection and mapping through Fulcrum

Continued data collection of key threatening species is envisaged in the current NRM plan and will continue to be incorporated. DCQ is improving community access to the data and community involvement in data collection and validation through this project.

Strategies for engagement

Through the HEAT program and following consultation with Georgina Diamantina Coopers Aboriginal Group (GDCAG), the following three strategies will be implemented:

- Support for landcare groups which, through their activities, increase indigenous participation in high value NRM projects
- Tailored communication products outlining upcoming community activities
- Skills development for participants engaged in high value NRM projects

DCQ, through the strategy, has committed to ongoing communication with the indigenous community and has developed goals aimed at strengthening indigenous engagement and participation in high value NRM activities at the voluntary and grass roots level.

Monitoring of engagement activities

The workshops and training days will be monitored through event survey and feedback forms to determine the effectiveness of the events.

Distribution of newsletters and other information will be monitored through the DCQ mailing list and general post to indigenous community members. Feedback on communication products will be encouraged.

Future engagement opportunities

There may be opportunity to undertake further indigenous project works and activities if additional funding streams and resources can be sourced. Desert Channels Queensland will continue to work with the Traditional Owners and the indigenous community in the region to pursue these opportunities.