



**August 2014**

### **A Unique Partnership ups the Recognition**

A partnership of Lake Eyre Basin regional bodies and advisory groups to governments is on the cusp of winning the International River Foundation's prestigious Australian Riverprize.

The Lake Eyre Basin Partnership, comprising Desert Channels Queensland, South Australian Arid Area Lands Board, Northern Territory NRM, Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee and Lake Eyre Basin Scientific Advisory Panel, has nominated the cross-border, community driven management of the Lake Eyre Basin rivers.

This significant achievement, across 20 years, is marked by ground-breaking milestones in Aboriginal, landholder, science, conservation, industry and government cross border communication, collaboration, negotiation and conflict resolution, as well as scientific research and monitoring.

This remarkable effort was driven by many different people, groups, organisations, institutions and governments. Some have been woven through the process in a number of different roles while others have come and gone but all deserve recognition for building and sustaining collective responsibility for a shared future for the Lake Eyre Basin.

Valued at \$200,000, the Australian Riverprize is an acclaimed recognition of excellence in river basin management. It also carries with it an automatic qualification as a finalist in the 2015 Thiess International Riverprize.

Good luck to our fellow Lake Eyre Basin partners!

For more information, check out:

[www.riverfoundation.org.au/articles/2014\\_Australian\\_Riverprize\\_Finalists\\_Announced](http://www.riverfoundation.org.au/articles/2014_Australian_Riverprize_Finalists_Announced)

### **A Big Alliance!**

For many years, the regional bodies covering Australia's rangelands ( 81 percent of the continent) had little voice on the national natural resource management stage. To present a coordinated approach and unified voice to funders, DCQ set out to form an alliance with the other 13 bodies across the country and The Rangelands Alliance was born.

Apart from giving the rangelands regional bodies a voice, the other big achievement of the Rangelands Alliance is the Australian Rangelands Initiative. This is a 15 year blueprint for investment in Australia's rangelands by government, industry and communities. A key part of the Australian Rangelands Initiative is the NRM Spatial Hub project which had everyone excited at the recent Rangelands Stakeholders Workshop held in Adelaide.

The Spatial Hub project will enable landholders to create property maps using a web-based GIS (mapping) system. It also provides information on ground cover so landholders better understand the resource they are using, thereby improving property management.

By providing landholders with the tools, data, skills and access to property-scale information and knowledge, the NRM Spatial Hub will be the foundation for better management decisions, as well as measurable improvements in land condition and productivity.

Starting this year, the Spatial Hub project will involve pilot properties, or 'Super Sites', across Australia's rangelands, where project officers will work with the landholders to help them use the online tools to develop digital property plans that map their infrastructure and inform on-ground property work plans.

The system works by providing:

- Secure on-line access to authoritative spatial data such as high resolution and time-series satellite imagery and land condition products;
- Standard interfaces, tools and workflows for capturing, managing, processing and disseminating property level information; and
- The ability to capture information in the field using hand-held devices such as GPS and Smartphones.

We will keep you up to date, so watch this space!

### **Waddi Update**

Earlier in the year, Helen Cross, our Regional Landcare Facilitator, travelled to Boulia with a group of Indigenous Lake Eyre Basin Indigenous Rangers based in Longreach and Mt Isa, along with the Group's Senior Project Officer Wayne Gamble. Their job was to collect seed from the endangered Waddi Tree (*Acacia peuce*) and propagate them as part of a collaborative project to raise awareness of its cultural and environmental significance to ensure the future recovery of the tree.

With the trees seeding profusely, there was no shortage of pods full of large, hard, black seeds. The trick, then, was to get them to germinate.

The Waddi Tree is iron tough - it has to be to survive where it does - so it was unsurprising that its seeds were like granite pebbles. To prepare them for sowing, the tried and true method of dropping them into boiling water and leaving them soak over night was adopted.

Of the 300 seeds that were planted in a mixture of sand, potting mix and coir, only 40 germinated, but they are all growing well - not a great success ratio, but one we hope to improve on in the future.

The next step in the project is to return the babies to their ancestral home at Boulia. A planting day will be held in Boulia, engaging the Pitta Pitta traditional owners, the local school and community members who are keen to grow a specimen of this unique outback tree, and help raise awareness of its cultural and environmental significance, as well as its precarious existence.

Please note, the Waddi Tree is vulnerable; it is a protected plant and authorisation from EHP is required for seed collection and propagation.

### **Weeds, Fish, Turf and Organic Beef**

While it seems like quite a stretch to link them, they are all current or recent areas of work for DC Solutions.

Drawing on our expertise in weeds, we recently surveyed 6,540 kilometres of State controlled roads through the Central Highlands and Central West areas. In getting the job done, our weed survey experts, Andrew Burrows, Peter Kleinschmidt and Roger Taiki, covered over 10,000 kilometres, from Duinga in the east to Birdsville in the southwest and to the doorstep of Mt Isa in the northwest, as well as all points in between.

In addition to recording the species, location and density of the weeds, we also developed a set of control recommendations and priorities to assist the Department of Transport and Main Roads to plan their control program for the coming year.

This builds on a number of weed survey and control projects we have undertaken on public roads over the past several years.

Andrew Burrows also conducted a major assessment of significant environmental areas on road reserves across the Central West region for Transport and Main Roads. These high value environmental areas ranged from threatened species' habitat to threatened ecosystems and important wetlands.

This survey involved a detailed analysis of mapping layers to identify potential areas, followed by a field inspection of the sites to validate the assumptions. Given the diversity of landscapes within the Central West region, a range of different areas were identified. The general trend was predominantly that threatened animal habitats were identified in western parts of the region, while more threatened ecosystems were identified in the eastern part of the region.

The results from the survey will help the Department of Transport and Main Roads plan programs to improve the management of the areas, and minimise any disturbance during road maintenance work.

Associate, Adam Kerezsy is in the middle of a survey of Gambusia and Edgbaston Goby to establish their presence and range in bore drains in the Aramac area. This is part of a larger project to understand threats (Gambusia) to the endangered ecosystems of the Edgbaston artesian spring complex, as well as any radiation of threatened species (Edgbaston Goby) into the wider environment.

Our synthetic turf team of The Two Jasons (Dolgnier and Smith) have just completed turfing new traffic islands at the Barcaldine swimming pool car park. By all accounts, the locals are very happy with the results ... no watering, mowing or fertilising, and always green! It doesn't get much better than that!

In fact, next cab off the rank with the synthetic turf is the backyard of our own CEO, Leanne Kohler. Leanne has always battled to keep her lawn looking like it was loved, but her worries will be over just as soon as the boys get the job done ... she has to wait her turn. But what better endorsement of a product than to have the CEO choose it.

While project management is her forte, and what takes up most of her time for both DC Solutions and clients, Christine O'Brien has also been heavily involved in helping clients with reporting obligations. Only to be expected at this time of the year. After working out of her Brisbane office for two years, Christine is moving to Longreach in late August, so expect to see more of her around town.

The recent Longreach conference of OBE Organic, the Channel Country based, international organic beef supplier, was the latest subject for the enquiring lens of Alun Hoggett, our filmmaker. Alun produced a news story (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfNW7gjQR4Q&authuser=0>) and captured key presentations of Deirdre Lander (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1opeEX0FQCQ&authuser=0>) and David Counsell (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKXPdhlzCrc&authuser=0>) for internet dissemination.

### **Lessons from Macquarie Island**

The sub-Antarctic islands of Australia are so far removed, both geographically and climatically, from the rangelands of the Desert Channels region, there would seem to be little chance of a connection. But there are land management lessons to be learnt from Macquarie Island, about 1,500 kilometres south of Tasmania, that are applicable elsewhere, especially in Queensland's Outback.

A recent control program on Macquarie island provides a successful model for pest control, just as applicable to serious weed issues in our rangelands. The declaration earlier this year that Macquarie Island is rat, mice and rabbit free after 150 years of infestation and six years of an integrated control program, is both inspiring and instructional.

This program, in a remote location and harsh weather conditions, used baiting, shooting and sniffer dogs across 13,000 hectares. Not only did it break a number of pest management

taboos, it successfully eradicated not one, but three pest species. It also has global significance, with a range of other pest control bodies aiming to use the lessons learnt.

Using the term eradication can be very controversial in pest control programs, as it can be seen by some people as unachievable, or setting yourself up for failure. This program however met the objectives by following through on pest control using the following principles:

- Use the strongest method first - the first attempt at pest control should be the best one, using well considered and tested methods;
- Meticulous planning - well thought through planning is required so that the program is efficient, does not have anything that undermines the investment, and is resourced over the long term;
- Ensure ongoing perseverance - long term commitment is the key, as although the numbers controlled are easy at the start, the last individuals require the greatest effort and cost, but are also of greatest importance; and
- Strict quarantine measures - robust measures are required to prevent any further pest invasion of the area.

Such principles would seem easier to apply on an island, but they can also apply to Prickly Acacia in our rangelands.

Given that the predominant method for Prickly Acacia dispersal is via cattle movement through ingestion of seed, each paddock on a property can be seen as an 'island'. With innovative stock handling procedures, a form of quarantining, future Prickly Acacia seed entry to each paddock can be greatly reduced.

Using the Macquarie Island aspiration of eradication, and building on the quarantine concept, with well thought out plans, strong commitment and well tested methods, it is also possible to eradicate Prickly Acacia, one paddock at a time.

DCQ is currently working hard to develop such a program: using Macquarie Island principles to design, plan and undertake Prickly Acacia eradication, one island at a time.

For more information on planning and implementing Prickly Acacia eradication on your property, contact DCQ on 4658 0600. And check out the Macquarie Island pest eradication program at <http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/?base=12997>.

### **Date Claimer!**

Mark Saturday 27th September on your calendar in bold letters ... it is the must attend Longreach event of the year: 'Trackside 4 321'. So dust off your glad rags, check out the form guide, and get yourself trackside on 27th September.

The racing program includes the Longreach Cup, and tickets will cover entry, race book, food, limited drinks and lots of fun!

This fundraiser for the Down Syndrome Association of Queensland takes its name from the 3 copies of chromosome 21 that are unique to people with Down Syndrome.

Trackside 4 321 is made possible by the generous support of The Longreach Jockey Club, particularly President Rob Luck, the volunteer team from Desert Channels Group, and the catering excellence of the DC Events team.

**Busy place; busy people**

Desert Channels is your one stop shop for many of your needs. If you need: catering, event management, weed surveys and control; feral animal surveys and control, mapping, water testing, environmental surveys, graphic design, editing and laminating, we are your people. Busy place, busy people, quality service, friendly team ... give us a ring.