



Fitzroy Basin Association Inc.

CELEBRATING OUR 21-YEAR JOURNEY

JOHN E. GRIMES



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*Mustering at Charlevue, Dingo
Photo: Jane Saunders*



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First published in 2018 by Fitzroy Basin Association Inc.

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Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. Celebrating our 21-year journey

ISBN 978-0-646-99489-5

Internal design and layout by Michelle Black Graphic Design.
Cover design by Michelle Black Graphic Design.

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Cotton fields in the
Central Highlands
Photo: Kelly Butterworth



CONTENTS

Foreword	1
Acknowledgements	2
Introduction	7
CHAPTER 1	
The Fitzroy NRM Region	15
CHAPTER 2	
Working Towards a Sustainable Future (FBA 1997-2007)	33
CHAPTER 3	
Planning and Governance	55
CHAPTER 4	
Partnerships and Alliances	61
CHAPTER 5	
Major Achievements	77
CHAPTER 6	
People	107
CHAPTER 7	
Future Focus	117
Acronyms	125
Appendices	127
References	135

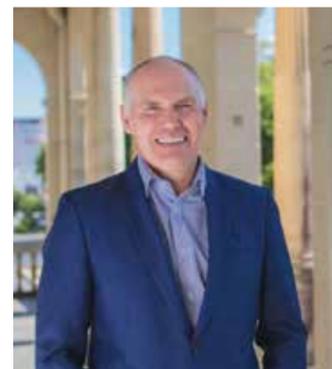


Turtle swimming off the
Capricorn Coast
Photo: Pacific Pixels



FOREWORD

Chair, Sean Conaghan &
Chief Executive Officer, Paul Birch



The story of Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. (FBA) is as interesting as the Fitzroy river system itself. There have been occasions when the organisation has meandered all over the landscape, many times been in an ephemeral state yet always returning to flood due to the hard work and passion of the staff and community. For both of us being part of the FBA family has always been a source of pride that we have been happy to share with any individual, organisation or politician willing to listen.



The choice of the author was a simple decision for us. There was only one person best placed to tell first-hand the events of the last 21 years. Not only has he been part of the family, he worked alongside our staff in many projects when he was employed by the

Department of Primary Industries (Queensland Government). He joined with FBA and AgForce staff in trail-blazing Best Management Practice programs in central Queensland (CQ) that are now being used across the state and further.

Celebrating our 21-year journey encapsulates the aim of FBA since inception and illustrates our beautiful landscape for all to see. On behalf of everyone who has been involved with FBA over the last 21 years we hope you enjoy the book as much as we do and remember the magnificent landscapes on display whenever you are in your 'happy' place.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

John E. Grimes



I am grateful for the opportunity to tell this story about the Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. (FBA). The organisation has been part of my life since I arrived in central Queensland in 1994, and although I'm not sure I deserve the title of

'Godfather of FBA', I have been proud to be a part of its formation and development. I must acknowledge the freedom that my former employer, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (still Department of Primary Industries or DPI to most people!) has allowed me by becoming part of the story.

Those who have been involved with FBA will undoubtedly have heard the expression "the FBA family". I think it is a very appropriate term for an organisation that has grown together with its regional community to become a

custodian and nurturer of natural resource management in central Queensland. For my part, I have always felt welcome at FBA and have lived through its corporate ups-and-downs along with the trials and tribulations of individuals and organisations that make up the 'family'.

The corridors of FBA have been graced by highly talented and committed people, and it is this people-power factor that defines the organisation. Many Board directors have contributed without thought of reward or recompense, and some have had to travel considerable distances to fulfil their roles. The record demonstrates that this dedication has been fundamental to FBA's survival and success. For the employees, who for the most part, have had to deal with one-year contracts, it

is a tribute to the closeness of the 'family' that quite a few have chalked up ten years or more of service. FBA has also welcomed many people for much shorter stays, and it has been a great training ground for those starting their careers in natural resource management.

I must acknowledge the earlier work of Dr Barbara Webster as the author of FBA's ten-year history, which I have used as my foundation for this story. Barbara's book was an in-depth history with lots of interviews and background research. For my part, I have adopted a different style and hope that the result is a worthy addition to Barbara's work.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the regional community of central Queensland. It is one thing to proclaim 'inspired and empowered communities' in a vision statement, but I have

witnessed first-hand how this has happened in central Queensland, and it is great to see that the organisation and what it continues to achieve is owned by the community.

I congratulate Sean, Paul and the FBA 'family' on attaining the ripe old age of 21. This milestone is quite an achievement, given the many twists and turns that have happened during that period, and I have every confidence that there are many further chapters to be added to the FBA story in the coming decades.



Rock art at Ka Ka Mundi
Photo: Peter Verwey

Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to the Elders past, present and future, representing the traditional Aboriginal land across the Fitzroy NRM Region. We recognise that Aboriginal people have cared for land and sea country for tens of thousands of years. It is due to their custodianship that our region has the wealth of natural resources, species and special places that it has today. From a natural resource management perspective, Aboriginal people have demonstrated that sustainability is possible and that they are one of the only cultures whose ideology was based on ecology.



‘It was natural resource management in the purest sense.’

*Lake Nugu Nuga (tributary of the Fitzroy River)
Photo: courtesy of Capricorn Enterprise*



INTRODUCTION

The 21-year journey is a story about teamwork, empowerment and partnerships. It is a story about an organisation that has forged an important role in the world of natural resource management. It is a story of trial and error, energy and endeavour, relationships and partnerships, community and stakeholders and words and actions. It is a story about Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. (FBA).

Before going any further, it must be acknowledged that the term natural resource management is a bit of a mouthful and so has been given the acronym, NRM. For those who may not be in the know, it is timely to explain that NRM is an all-encompassing term that embraces the concept of humankind using and managing, for its own benefit,

what nature has provided—in the form of landscapes, soils, water, plants, animals and biodiversity—but doing so in a way that enables these resources to be used in perpetuity. The human use of these resources needs to be conducted in a controlled manner, recognising that there are limits to these resources and that there are impacts as well as benefits to their use.

It is also important to put this story in perspective at the outset. While the story of FBA began 21 years ago, it was preceded by Fitzroy Catchment Coordinating Group (FCCG), and two key historical periods: pre- and post-European arrival.

The region has been home to Aboriginal nations for 20,000–40,000 years. It is difficult to estimate the total number of Indigenous people

who lived in the region, as their numbers fluctuated depending on seasons and conditions. What is certain is that without the benefit of modern science and technology, they learned to live in harmony with the environment by managing the natural resources sustainably. Their survival through good times and bad was achieved by developing an intimate understanding of the resources and their use over thousands of years. Their use of natural resources was gentle and considered, standing the test of time. It was NRM in the purest sense.



The exploration of central Queensland by Ludwig Leichhardt and Thomas Mitchell in 1844–46 was the catalyst for rapid European occupation. Their arrival was accompanied by an entirely different mindset, not to mention knowledge and understanding, about the use of this ‘wide brown land’. It is a story that was repeated across the length and breadth of Australia and there is no way to sugar-coat its consequences.

Unfortunately, the first Europeans had little respect for the Indigenous people, combined with almost no understanding of the climate and geography of the new country that they were now rapidly occupying. What they did have was an insatiable thirst for land, and the desire and energy to pursue their ambitions. Central Queensland thus became home to thousands of people from all corners of the Earth, and they brought

with them plants, animals and agricultural practices that were as foreign to the land as the people were themselves. Driving the Indigenous people before them, often with disastrous consequences for the original inhabitants, the European settlers quickly spread across the region. As they settled within the Fitzroy NRM Region, they began to clear the native vegetation to graze and breed their introduced sheep, cattle and growing a variety of crops. The taming of the natural resources had begun, often far from being gentle and considered. This was accompanied by the discovery and exploitation of precious metals and vast coal resources buried within the earth—a concept entirely unknown to the Indigenous people. One only has to travel to Mount Morgan to see how mining has substantially altered the landscape, with the long-lasting impacts and threats that this can bring to natural resources.

Previous page: Lake Nuga Nuga—tributary of the Fitzroy River (image courtesy of Capricorn Enterprise)

This page, from left: Ludwig Leichhardt, (State Library of Qld); Thomas Mitchell, (State Library of NSW).

Facing page, from top: Children participating in a parade after WWI in Emerald circa 1918; Rowing regatta on the Fitzroy River at Rockhampton circa 1930, (State Library of Queensland—Picture Queensland); Fitzroy Bridge, Rockhampton, 1918, (State Library of Queensland—Picture Queensland).

The First World War slowed progress, but once hostilities had ceased, development recommenced at an increased speed. With the aid of machines, there were unprecedented levels of clearing and cropping, plus the construction of dams, weirs and irrigation systems along with roads, railways, ports and airports. Towns flourished throughout the Fitzroy NRM Region. As the population increased, more and more land was developed. Following the Second World War, the pace of development quickened even further, supported by bigger and more powerful machinery. During the 1960s, a massive program of land development commenced named the Brigalow Development Scheme. During the next 15 years, some four million hectares of brigalow scrub was cleared and replaced with introduced pastures and annual crops, enabling the beef industry to





treble in size and hundreds of thousands of hectares of land to be cropped. As this development was nearing completion, the Fairbairn Dam was constructed, enabling the growth of irrigated agriculture along the Nogoa-Mackenzie river valleys, plus the expansion of the Bowen Basin coal industry.

So it was, that in a bit over 100 years, central Queensland and adjacent coastal catchments were transformed into a highly productive region, generating considerable wealth for Queensland and supporting a population of over 200,000 people. However, the change came at enormous cost—for both the first people and the natural resources. Indigenous communities were mistreated, killed and disenfranchised from their land, culture and way of life, either displaced, confined in reserves or expected to adapt to the rural and urban ways of the white people who had supplanted them. The natural resources were used beyond their limits and a suite of problems started to emerge as the 20th Century progressed. Rates of soil erosion increased several times above natural levels, sending millions of tonnes of sediment into waterways throughout the Region, eventually reaching the Fitzroy River, its estuary and ultimately the Great Barrier Reef lagoon. Photos

of flood events reveal plumes of sediment reaching beyond Keppel Bay and moving northwards, blanketing corals on their way. Mixed with these sediments were chemicals used in agricultural production, with negative impacts on the plants and animals living along the rivers and in the ocean. The widespread clearing led to accelerated soil erosion, also putting at risk certain species of flora and fauna as habitats were altered or removed. The water resources, on which all forms of life relied, suffered in terms of water quality, upsetting the natural equilibrium and leading to events like blue-green algal blooms and fish kills.

By the end of the 1980s, the realisation had dawned in central Queensland that the environmental damage that had occurred could no longer be ignored. While many landholders, concerned citizens and government agencies were aware of the problems, and were striving to better understand the natural resources and to actively implement improved practices, efforts were often fragmented and limited. With the launch of the 'Decade of Landcare' across Australia in 1989, a new era had dawned.

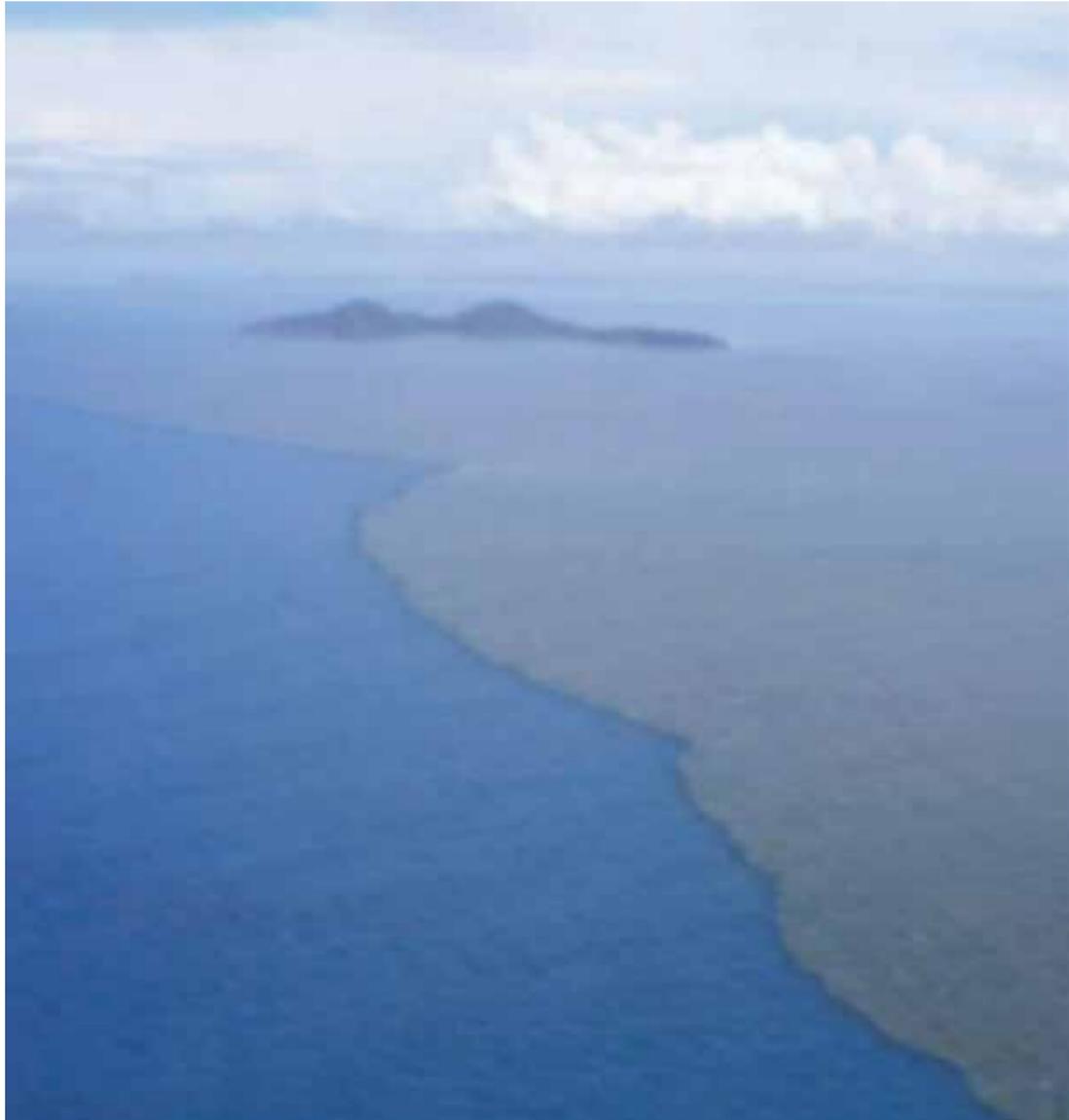
Two separate processes emerged across Queensland at this time: Landcare, an Australian Government initiative with an emphasis on local action and local groups; and Integrated

Catchment Management (ICM), a Queensland Government initiative with an emphasis on catchment-wide action and regional groups. Unfortunately, in the early stages, these two processes were not coordinated, and, to some extent, the respective proponents acted in competition. This book celebrates the birth and development of one organisation, FBA, which emerged from ICM, but depended heavily on the Landcare movement.

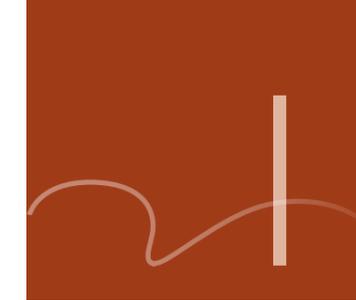
The cornerstone of FBA has been, and remains, the central Queensland community. It is difficult to describe this multi-faceted community, although in summary, it has both urban and rural components, as well as a rich diversity of interests spread across all aspects of NRM. Its greatest strength is the energy and enthusiasm of the regional people who not only created the organisation, but also continue to steadfastly support it.

Facing page, from top: Brigalow scrub clearing, (State Library of Queensland - Picture Queensland); Mount Morgan mine in 1952 (State Library of Queensland); history mining, (State Library of Queensland - Picture Queensland).

Following pages, clockwise from top left: flood plume Keppel Islands; Fairbairn Dam; Fairbairn Dam.



Fairbairn Dam, Emerald



THE FITZROY NRM REGION

The Fitzroy NRM Region is an amazing and unique part of the world. Sitting astride the Tropic of Capricorn, it has a diverse and, at times, dramatic landscape. The landscape was forged by powerful geological forces including volcanic eruptions, rising and falling sea levels and massive erosional and depositional periods. The remnants of these ancient formations are scattered around the region—including the stunning sandstone

escarpments and gorges of Carnarvon Gorge and Blackdown Tableland, the beguiling volcanic plugs of Peak Downs, Capricorn Coast and Targinnie and the huge floodplains of the Fitzroy River and its tributaries, and the internationally significant Ramsar wetlands, situated inland of Shoalwater and Corio Bays.

The Fitzroy NRM Region is over 156,000 square

kilometres in size and is dominated by one of Australia's largest catchments, the Fitzroy Basin, as well as the Boyne and Calliope catchments and several smaller coastal catchments extending from Emu Park to St Lawrence.

It is a region characterised by great variations in climate, featuring extended droughts and occasional enormous long-lasting floods.

In fact, it is regarded as having one of the most variable climates of any region on the planet which presents an enormous challenge for land, water and vegetation management.

*The Capricorn Yellow Chat, found only in the Fitzroy NRM Region, is critically endangered
Photo: John Augusteyn*



Great Keppel Island,
Capricorn Coast
Photo: courtesy of
Capricorn Enterprise



There are two distinct weather patterns most years—a wet, humid period from November to March and a dry period from April to October. Average rainfalls vary from 1,500mm in the north to 500mm in the west and temperatures can range from 45°C to below 0°C.

Measuring 142,545 square kilometres, the Fitzroy Basin is the largest catchment flowing to the eastern coast of Australia. The basin is made up of several large catchments, with the Isaac–Connors rivers in the north, the Nogoal–Comet–Mackenzie rivers in the west

and the Dawson–Callide rivers in the south. The Fitzroy River is formed at the confluence of the Dawson and Mackenzie rivers and its coastal zone includes a large delta and estuary with extensive salt pans and mangrove areas.

The region is home to around 250,000 people. With over 80,000 residents, Rockhampton is the largest city and the regional centre, closely followed by Gladstone with 63,000 residents and world-class port facilities. Other significant population centres include Yeppoon, Emerald and Biloea.

THE FITZROY NRM REGION

80%
Queensland's coal mines

60%
Queensland's coal seam gas wells

36%
Queensland's wetlands

125
Great Barrier Reef Islands

2.6 million
head of cattle

75%
of the regions grain growers have completed Grains BMP

186
producers completed Grazing BMP

20,000 km
of waterways, forming the largest catchment draining into the GBR



*'Gudda Gumoo' Blackdown
Tablelands National Park
Photo: Nathan White Images*



Around 82% of the region is grazed mainly by beef cattle with a further 5% cropped (dryland and irrigation). The remainder consists of national parks, state parks and 30% of the state's wetlands, as well as the urban areas previously mentioned. The region is also home to forestry and fishing industries (both commercial and recreational).

From an economic perspective, the largest industry is coal mining with approximately 40 operating mines supplying high quality coking coal and thermal coal for power production. This number constitutes 80% of the industry in Queensland. Further, at the time of publication, the Fitzroy NRM Region was also home to 60% of Queensland's coal seam gas wells. Despite its massive economic size, the industry occupies less than 1% of the land mass. Coal is exported from the Port of Gladstone, the third-largest coal exporting terminal in the world. Gladstone is also home to several large liquefied natural gas (LNG) plants exporting to foreign markets including China, South Korea and Japan. Other major industries in the region include electricity production, alumina and aluminium production, cement manufacturing and meat processing. To serve its residents and industries, the region has well-established infrastructure including roads, railways, electricity, telecommunications and water supplies.

Although cleared of much of the original brigalow scrub, the region still has large tracts of native forest and significant tracts of mangrove and wetland vegetation along its coast. Some unique vegetation includes rainforest and vine scrub, the Byfield fern, the boggomosses of the Dawson floodplain, bluegrasses in the Central Highlands and Serpentine vegetation near Marlborough. Vegetation management controls have been imposed, relaxed and then tightened again over the course of FBA's history—a factor that is discussed in Chapter 2 as one that has given the organisation some angst.

Internationally significant Ramsar wetlands are located north of Yeppoon at Shoalwater and Corio Bays with other important wetlands located in the deltas of the Fitzroy and Calliope Rivers, and further inland at Taroom. Each year, these biodiverse habitats play host to thousands of migratory birds from the northern hemisphere and tropical Australia.

The region is home to several protected animal species including the Australian Snubfin and Indo-Pacific Humpback dolphins—the former found only in the protected waters at the mouth of the Fitzroy River—the Bridled Naitail wallaby, located in the central part of the region near Dingo, the Fitzroy River and White-throated Snapping turtles,

the Kroombit Tinker and Tree frogs located just south of Biloela and the Yellow Chat and Crimson Finch bird species.

This brief snapshot of the region demonstrates its richness and diversity—

a veritable
cornucopia
of abundance
from a natural
resources
perspective.

Understanding the breadth and significance of these resources has been at the forefront of FBA's endeavours throughout its history and it is a never-ending mission for the organisation. Appreciating that its knowledge base will never be complete, the challenge for FBA is to use the available information in concert with the central Queensland community to conserve, maintain and improve these natural resources.

Facing page, from top: Indo-Pacific Humpback dolphin; Australian Snubfin dolphins; White-throated Snapping turtle (Photo: Craig Latta—www.turtles.net)

Following page, from top: male Crimson Finch; Rheodytes leukops—Fitzroy River turtle; Kroombit Tinker frog (Photo: L. Rolfe)



*Beach Stone-curlew
Photo: Fitzroy Basin
Association Inc.*



home to

256

rare and threatened species



The Bridled Naitail Wallaby is a species endemic to the Fitzroy NRM region
Photo: John Augusteyn



Aerial view of Shoalwater Bay
Photo: Queensland Government



*Carnarvon Gorge
Photo: courtesy of
Capricorn Enterprise*



Yeppoon, Capricorn Coast
Photo: courtesy of
Capricorn Enterprise

WORKING TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

(FBA 1997–2007)

A definitive history of Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. up until the end of 2007, authored by Dr Barbara Webster, was published in 2008. Entitled 'Working towards a sustainable future: a history of the Fitzroy Basin Association Incorporated', this 226-page book explored the origins of the organisation and its publication was suggested to celebrate the tenth anniversary of FBA.

Readers interested in learning more about the circumstances leading up to the formation of FBA and its predecessor organisation, Fitzroy Catchment Coordinating Group, and the subsequent growth and development of these bodies are encouraged to obtain a copy of this history. It is a rich and worthy record of FBA's forming, storming and norming as it gradually evolved into a high-functioning body and

the acknowledged regional leader in NRM in central Queensland.

It is not the purpose of the book you are now reading to recount all the cut and thrust of Barbara's detailed work, although it is prudent to provide a potted history of the period up until the end of 2007 to provide context for this current book.

This page: mustering cattle in central Queensland



Sorghum crop
Photo: Blink Photography

2.1 THE BEGINNING

A major rainfall event in the Fitzroy Basin in January 1991 resulted in the third-highest recorded flood at Rockhampton. This event had a profound impact on Lindsay Fairweather, a young environmentalist stationed as a caretaker on North Keppel Island, who observed over the following two weeks (while stranded on the island) the muddy coloured plume of water issuing out from the Fitzroy River into Keppel Bay, along with all manner of debris that had been washed down from the catchment.

Lindsay was troubled by what he witnessed and this led him to read about ICM and to formulate in his mind the need to develop a plan to address land management problems resulting in millions of tonnes of sediment, with accompanying pollutants, being transported from their original locations and out into the Great Barrier Reef lagoon.

Webster's history reveals that Lindsay collaborated with three other energetic men: an academic, Dr. Leo Duivenvoorden; a farmer/grazier/agri-political figure, Greig Lawrie; and a government scientist, Dr. Don Yule to organise a symposium about the Fitzroy Catchment. Drawing together as much available knowledge and experience as possible, the quartet made inroads in highlighting the major issues that needed

to be addressed, along with processes that would lead to sustainable practices.

The Symposium (12–13 November 1992), attended by almost 200 people, was the catalyst for the formation of the Fitzroy Catchment Coordinating Group (FCCG) and consequently, the development of a catchment strategy. This is generally regarded as the starting point for FBA, although it was not known by that name until 1997.



2.2 FITZROY CATCHMENT COORDINATING GROUP (FCCG)

FCCG began as an interim group in early 1993 under the presidency of Greig Lawrie. The group was interim because it gave itself 12 months to either 'hold 'em or fold 'em'. 12 months later, FCCG was still going and held its first Annual General Meeting, attended by 33 people. As is the case in the formation of any such group, there was lots of discussion. With the symposium still fresh in people's minds, there were plenty of ideas to consider. The biggest early problem stemmed from a perceived lack of representation across the region. The concept of holding meetings throughout the region and engaging with stakeholders can be traced back to this early period.

Gaining traction on the key task of developing a strategy was slow and tedious work, but with the appointment of the first (part-time) project

officer, this work finally commenced in late 1993. The first project officer moved on after only three months, and so began a familiar story for FCCG/FBA in its early stages with staff coming and going at regular intervals. Late-1993 also saw the beginning of the process of incorporating the group—a requirement of the Queensland Government, who provided the funds that allowed FCCG to employ its project officer.

Another early facet of groups is the period known as 'storming' and FCCG went through its share of in-fights as it struggled for purpose, support and resources. The problems came from many sources, including the Queensland Government wanting to control the organisation, existing groups such as Landcare and sub-regional catchment groups (perceiving FCCG as

trying to take control) and agricultural bodies (factional elements within the grazing and cropping industries suspicious of government and their fellow rural factions). Thankfully, under the ever-helpful stewardship of the University of Central Queensland, a base for operations was provided and a welcome mat was laid out for those rallying to FCCG's cause.

Webster's history devotes a chapter to a particularly difficult period for the fledgling organisation between 1994 and 1996. This was the climax of the storming period for FCCG, with the four 'founding fathers' moving on and, unfortunately for some, in somewhat acrimonious circumstances. It was also a period where little seemed to be achieved and doubts were increasing about the future



Facing page from top: Dr. Leo Duivenvoorden, Dr. Don Yule, Lindsay Fairweather and Greig Lawrie, 17 September 1992; visible sediment plumes from the Fitzroy Delta were the catalyst for forming Fitzroy Catchment Coordinating Group (FCCG) in 1992.

This page: Wendy Tyrrell, President of FCCG.



of the group. However, there was good news, with the group successfully incorporating and achieving official status as a regional catchment coordinating committee under Queensland's ICM strategy. This was significant—not only for the status of recognition but also for opening pathways for increased government funding.

The first rudimentary regional strategy finally emerged in 1996, although it was a tumultuous time in many ways, with changing political environments at both federal and state level, tense relationships between FCCG and its 'parent' body, the Department of Primary Industries, and difficulties in filling the project officer position with a turnover of leadership within FCCG.

Despite these difficulties, new blood came to the rescue in the form of a new President and the first full-time project officer, enabling the group to



move forward once more. Webster describes the period 1996–97 as 'an enormously exciting time' for it was able to make some significant progress on its strategy development in concert with widespread engagement across the region.

Much of the group's progress over that period can be traced to project officer Jane Muller who, despite being a young graduate with minimal knowledge of the Fitzroy NRM Region, was able through intellect, good will, sheer hard work and an inherent understanding of people's need for engagement and communication, to reach out to the community and demonstrate that their concerns about a wide suite of land management issues was being heeded and these ideas were guiding FCCG's thinking. President Wendy Tyrrell and Central Queensland University's Professor Geoff Lawrence

ably supported Jane. When good fortune smiled on all organisations involved with ICM across Australia in the form of the Telstra-funded Natural Heritage Trust, FCCG was sufficiently developed that it was recognised as one of the 12 regional strategy groups in Queensland. Though still short of a comprehensive strategy, and initially lacking wide-scale support from its region, FCCG submitted project applications, generating sufficient funding to enable additional human resources to be engaged. Their role was primarily to prepare the regional strategy and implement, the commencement of a Waterwatch program.

This period also marked the transition from FCCG to FBA. The new name signified a coming of age for the organisation—leaving behind its formative stages and establishing an identity that was focused on a

significant future, rather than mere modifications of its past life. In keeping with the new name was a new constitution, vision and set of objectives. Reported in the Fitzroy Catch-up publication, was President Wendy Tyrrell's statement about the change: 'The original strengths of the group remain; however, we have grown enormously as a team'. This claim captures the abiding strength of FBA then and now—its emphasis on teamwork and commitment to being there for its community.

Facing page from top: FBA's first project officer Jane Muller; Professor Geoff Lawrence; Senator Ian MacDonald & Wendy Tyrrell at the commencement of the Waterwatch program.

'an enormously exciting time' for it was able to make some significant progress on its strategy development in concert with widespread engagement across the region.

'The original strengths of the group remain; however, we have grown enormously as a team'.

2.3 FBA TAKES FLIGHT

A landmark event for the organisation was the Sustainable Futures Symposium held in late 1997, where participants met to discuss the working draft of the Central Queensland Strategy for Sustainability (CQSS). CQSS was and continues to be a comprehensive document drafted by Bruce Taylor and informed by a catchment wide consultation process (conducted by Jane Muller and two Central Queensland University researchers) in the lead up to the symposium. At last there was a draft strategy that could be put in front of both the central Queensland community and the officials from both federal and state governments responsible for the National Heritage Trust (NHT) funding.

However, not everything was smooth sailing. Internally, the management committee of FBA underwent a variety

of changes, with three presidents in three years and a period of discontent from the rural sector about lack of representation on the committee. Tension also existed at the Stakeholder Council (what would later evolve into the FBA board) level, as the group struggled to come to terms with sectoral interests across the board. As the association was widening its sphere of influence to include interests such as the Indigenous, fishing and economic sectors - the difficulty of accommodating widely disparate views about issues meant that it was often 'two steps forward and one step back'.

Meanwhile, in the external world, FBA was becoming increasingly frustrated with both the Australian and Queensland Governments, as the processes for applying for funds were welcomed on

one hand, and then bogged down in seemingly endless red tape or bureaucracy on the other. Some elements of this issue can be traced back to the 'big brother factor', where government agencies, used to being in command and responsible for process and funding, were struggling to come to terms with a new entity that was not directly beholden to them, and could not be controlled as easily as the fledgling groups like FCCG that had no funds and relied on volunteer resources.

The problems for the growing organisation persisted throughout 1999, but thankfully, the work on the CQSS continued and FBA launched a revitalised message of its mission. The 'Seven Keys to Sustainability: community organisation; coordination; strategy; information and knowledge; action; investment; monitoring and review'. It was also during this year that FBA

set up its own office located in Rockhampton's CBD. For the first time, FBA had a public face and was easily accessible. Coinciding with this move, FBA adopted its now familiar logo with its yellow, blue and green waves, completing the process of forming its new identity.

The simmering internal tensions came to a head at the AGM held in Emerald in August of that year. Two separate factors were at work in the rural sector: first, the concern about lack of rural representation on the management committee, combined with the perceived over representation by state government; and secondly, anger and outrage among rural producers over the Queensland Government's proposed Vegetation Management Act which was seen as an attack on individual property owner rights. The tension manifested itself

through the endorsement process for the CQSS, particularly the section within the document related to the implementation of the strategy. In hindsight, the attempt by certain rural interests to take out their frustrations upon the State Government by holding up the endorsement process was naïve, not to mention that it was only ever going to hurt FBA, and have minimal effect on the Government.

Webster describes this period of FBA as 'at the crossroads' and it certainly was a pivotal time that had the potential to pull the organisation apart. A further complication at this time was that the rural sector was reorganising itself through the creation of a single representative body and old tensions between groups including the Cattlemen's Union, United Graziers Association, Queensland Grain Growers Association

and Cotton Australia were simmering. AgForce eventually emerged from this process, but the timing of the negotiations leading to its formation could not have been worse for FBA, as it clouded the issue of who from the rural sector could, or would, endorse the CQSS.

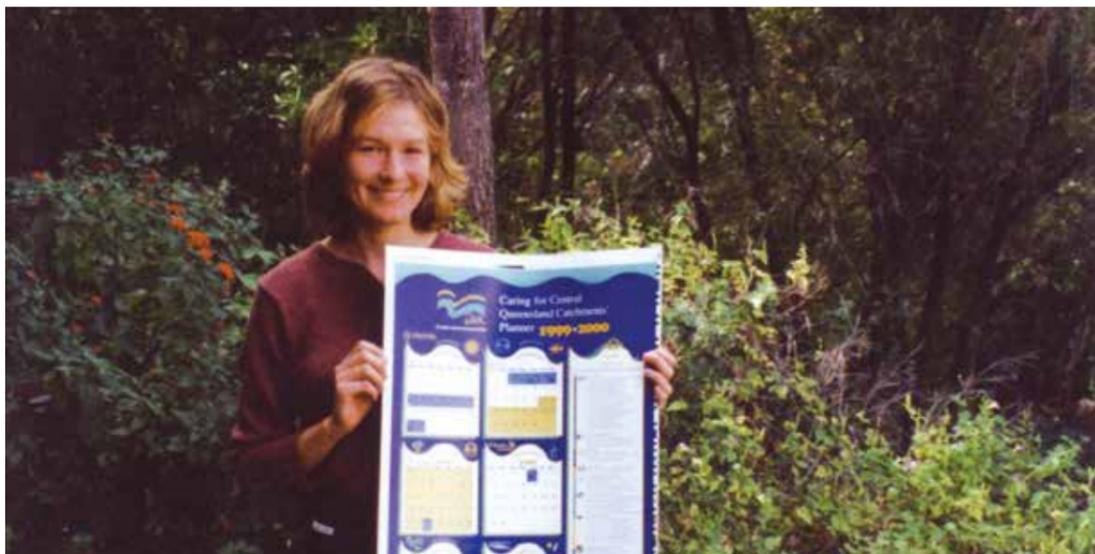
It is said that out of adversity comes opportunity, and so the final half of 1999 saw lots of mediation, negotiation and goodwill, as various parties within FBA strove to find compromise and consensus. Former CEO of FBA Suzie Christensen described this time as the grain of sand that created the pearl", in this case the pearl being the building of trust between landholders and other sectors of the regional community.

The endorsed CQSS in early 2000 was perhaps FBA's greatest achievement to date. What an exhaustive process it had been and at its conclusion, Jane Muller decided it was time to explore new horizons. Having had to bear the brunt of the political in-fighting, Jane had remained steadfast in her endeavours to steer the strategy process through to conclusion, and FBA remains forever in her debt.

The 'Seven Keys to Sustainability: community organisation; coordination; strategy; information and knowledge; action; investment; monitoring and review'.



Sustainable Futures Symposium Dinner 1998 (from left) Bruce Taylor, Jane Muller (from right) Wendy Tyrrell, Bob Noble, Phil Casey



From top: FBA office located in the East Street Mall; Annett Whingham presents the new FBA logo; FBA Chair, Barbara Wildin with regional coordinator, Suzie Christensen and Information Coordinator, Elizabeth Nicolson

2.4 FORGING AHEAD

The departure of Jane Muller coincided with a range of other changes at the Management Committee and Stakeholder Council levels. These included the resignation of the President, Kevin Cotterell, and the retirement of former presidents, Suzy Watson and Greig Lawrie. As old faces gave way to new, and in what would prove to be one of FBA's most fortuitous 'coups', former Mayor of Livingstone Shire, Barbara Wildin, agreed to take on the role of Chair (as the President's role was now called).

Barbara was a human dynamo and her five-year reign as Chair helped move FBA forward in leaps and bounds.

She was an inspired choice as Chair because although she had little knowledge

about FBA initially, she was a central Queenslander through and through, keen to see the region progress. Her period in local government had honed her political skills to a fine edge, and she was a great communicator and advocate. Quick to assess what was needed, she was not afraid to take her cause to anyone, anywhere and so, at a time when the NRM agenda Australia-wide was starting to go places, FBA was equipped with a leader who was clever, savvy and a veritable powerhouse. Looking back, it is impossible not to admire this lady. She accepted no payment for her services and yet worked almost full-time. This went beyond the bounds of what a Chair would normally do, because she was involved in the organisation's operations, and at the time, this dual role of Chair and de facto CEO was vital to FBA's success.

The Barbara-era coincided with two major NRM initiatives that brought hitherto unprecedented levels of funding. NHT, as previously mentioned, started in 1997 but took two to three years to bed down to the point where on-ground works and achievements took place. The second initiative was called the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAPSWQ), which was

devised to accelerate the process of addressing what the Australian Government perceived as the key NRM issues of the nation. The Fitzroy NRM Region was able to access funds from both NHT and NAPSWQ at a time when it had an endorsed strategy and a settled organisation.

An important milestone at that time was the official launch of the CQSS, with no less than the Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, performing the task. This gave FBA an unprecedented opportunity to put itself in the public eye and to signal that it was an organisation willing and able to deliver on the NRM agenda.

It was shortly after the launch that Barbara's political nous and negotiation skills came to the fore. Barbara knocked on doors in Canberra and Brisbane, leaving no stone unturned to put the case for FBA leadership of NRM in central Queensland. Her final coup was to position FBA as the body in the eyes of the Central Queensland Local Government Association which had loomed as a rival for delivery of the NAPSWQ.

Of course, while it is essential to have good leadership, Barbara could not have achieved much without a solid team of people to implement the agreed strategies. This team

had begun to form under Jane Muller. With Jane's departure, Suzie Christensen emerged from the wings and quickly established herself as another go-getter with fine leadership qualities. She was ably assisted by others who became long term employees including Claire Rodgers and Michael Bent. This period also marked FBA's first major delivery mechanisms for devolving the NHT/NAPSWQ funds, which

were called the Riparian Management and the Neighbourhood Catchments initiatives.

From these sprung partnership arrangements with other regional organisations to increase the delivery agents and processes. It is also worth noting that significant inputs were made by a whole host of regional people from multiple organisations who volunteered their time,

knowledge and skills to get the 'show on the road'.

At the top of this list is Central Queensland University (CQU). It is impossible to look back on that era without acknowledging just how important CQU's input was in the scheme of things. FBA's first life member was Professor Geoff Lawrence, awarded in recognition of his fine custodianship of FBA. Without his guidance,

and the doors he opened to university resources, the organisation may well have foundered. CQU's benevolence extended to the provision of FBA's first stand-alone office in the Rockhampton Mall (now East Street once more) and internet, telephone and administrative services. Even more importantly, as outlined in Webster's history, Geoff recognised that NRM is about sociological change rather

than science, understanding the need to mould a group that could affect such change. That, above all, is Geoff's enduring legacy to central Queensland.

Facing page, clockwise from top left: Kevin Cotterall; Suzy Watson; Barbara Wildin; QCSS launch.

This page from top: John Anderson and Kirsten Livermore at the QCSS launch; John Anderson speaking at the QCSS launch.





2.5 EMPOWERMENT

As Barbara Wildin's five-year reign as Chair rolled out, FBA underwent significant structural changes to meet the demands of the federal and state governments for good governance and financial management. Chief among these was the transition from a management committee to a Board, which could be said to have evolved rather than happened at a distinct time. The first Chief Executive Officer, Mike Merrin, was appointed, and as more people were employed to deliver the services required under the NHT and NAPSWQ arrangements, FBA moved its offices to 34 East Street in Rockhampton, thereby gaining much-needed space and a board room but unfortunately losing its street-front premises and its short period of easy public accessibility.

While the new funding initiatives required that

the CQSS be rewritten, as Webster states in her history, the exhaustive efforts to produce the strategy had the significant legacy of building trust and capacity between the regional community and FBA. The strategy development process empowered the central Queensland community and established FBA as a leader in NRM across Queensland.

NHT stage one gave way to NHT2 and, in parallel with NAPSWQ, significant funds for on-ground works continued to flow into central Queensland. Barbara's leadership saw FBA's reach extend into other quarters including the Statewide Regional Groups Collective (representing the 14 NRM groups in Queensland) and with industry groups such as AgForce and the Queensland Farmers Federation. FBA was now clearly its own master and had achieved

wide-scale recognition. This was cemented with the completion of CQSS2 (Central Queensland Strategy for Sustainability—2004 and beyond), the revised strategy needed to comply with the requirements of the federal and state governments. While this was the objective, in developing the strategy, FBA remained true to its core value—namely that its strategy needed to be developed from the ground up and have widespread acceptance from stakeholders.

Facing page, clockwise from top left: 2004 view of the Fitzroy River from Mt Archer; Claire Rodgers; Mike Bent; first Neighbourhood Catchments Team; FBA office at 34 East Street, Rockhampton; FBA's first Chief Executive Officer, Mike Merrin.

It could be said that the strategy development process empowered the central Queensland community and established it as a leader in NRM across Queensland.

This period also saw the emergence of business plans for delivery of the CQSS2. FBA referred to these as Regional Investment Strategies (RIS) which established priority issues to be addressed along with priority areas for action under the Neighbourhood Catchments delivery model. Funds flowed to rural properties to enable more sustainable management practices. Property management

plans across hundreds of thousands of hectares were implemented, as well as protection of riparian zones from cattle grazing. Things were really starting to happen at a scale that was significant and enduring, and as mentioned previously, were being delivered through several pre-existing sub-regional bodies, including the Dawson Catchment Coordinating Group, Central Highland Regional Resource

Use Cooperative and the Lower Fitzroy Catchment Care Group.

By 2004, FBA was barely recognisable from the organisation that had emerged from its cocoon in 1997. In keeping with past traditions, more changes took place. The most significant of these was the resignation of CEO, Mike Merrin, and the appointment of Suzie Christensen as his successor. Mid-2004

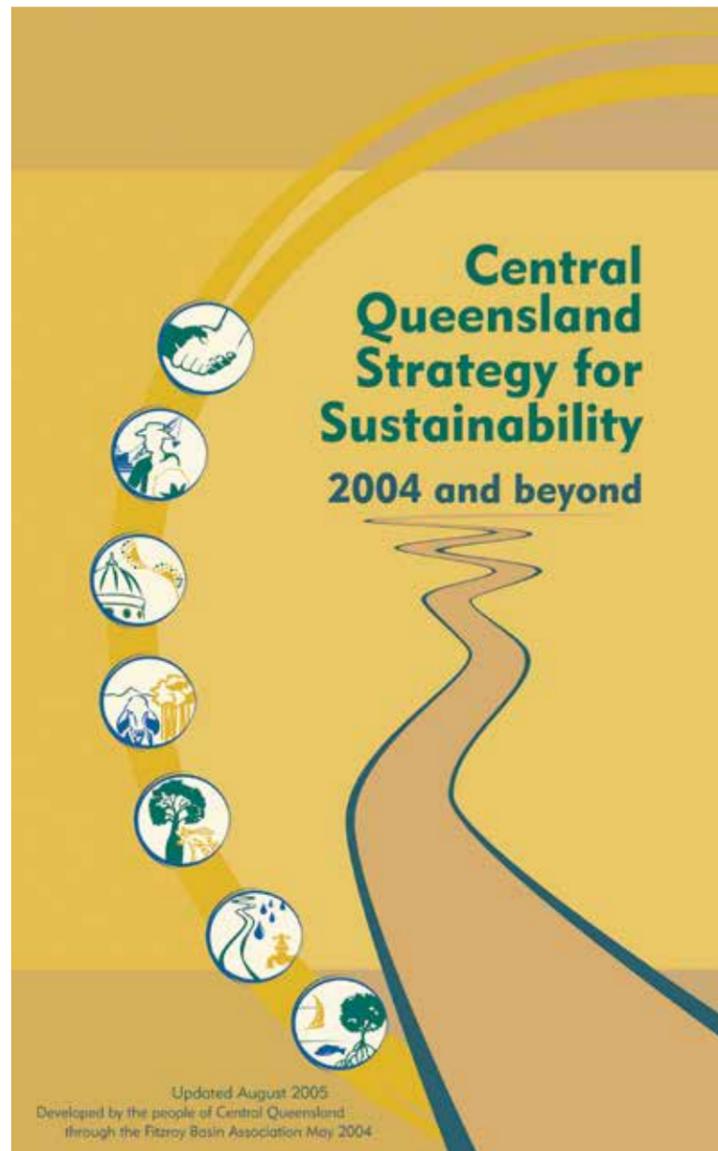
also saw the creation of a Business Manager position, as FBA recognised the need to take full control of its business operations rather than contract these out to third parties. Not without some inner tensions, Barbara and Suzie developed into an awesome team, skilfully supported by Claire Rodgers. Webster describes them as establishing 'a reputation in NRM circles for being formidable adversaries, fierce negotiators and doing what they considered best for FBA'. The male-dominated circles within the respective federal and state government departments certainly had their work cut out trying to push their agendas past this trio.

In 2005, the Australian Government released a green paper outlining a range of options for future NRM arrangements throughout Australia. FBA's submission to this process was for the continuation of the existing

system, but with specific improvements. At the heart of this choice was FBA's desire to remain as an independent, community-owned entity and not be railroaded into any alternative model. Thankfully, the government listened and left the various models operating in different states in place and so, FBA's independence was assured. It was by no means a coincidence that the new FBA vision statement that emerged at this time proclaimed 'Empowered communities for a sustainable central Queensland'.

“A reputation in NRM circles for being formidable adversaries, fierce negotiators and doing what they considered best for FBA’.

Below: Regional Investment Strategy with Suzie Christensen and Claire Rodgers.



By 2004, FBA was barely recognisable from the organisation that had emerged from its cocoon in 1997.



2.6 CONSOLIDATION

As an organisation that was now confident in its position in the NRM world, with assured funding and clear leadership, it was timely in early 2005 that Suzie Christensen's brainchild for a combined FBA Board and senior staff retreat took place to develop a 5-year forward plan and the process for 12-month operational plans.

Having reached such a high in the early part of 2005, FBA came to earth with a thud a few weeks later, with the dual blow of the CEO temporarily (six month leave of absence) stepping down for personal reasons, and then a few months later, the resignation of the Chair due to ill health. Suddenly, it was no longer the Barbara and Suzie show, although into the breach stepped Claire Rodgers as acting CEO and deputy Chair Peter Dunne into the role of acting Chair.

Both Claire and Peter would be the first to admit that their respective elevations in office were not something that they actively sought, nor were they comfortable with, as both considered themselves caretakers in their roles. Yet such was the strength of the organisation by this stage, that through the willingness of Claire and Peter, along with all the Board and staff members, FBA was able to consolidate the huge steps forward achieved during Barbara's reign and continue to deliver the 5-year plan forged at the February retreat.

Importantly, FBA and its sub-regional support network successfully delivered the Regional Investment Strategy, with significant achievements in riparian and remnant vegetation management, salinity and weed management and

water quality monitoring. A significant milestone was the commissioning of the Mount Morgan Water Treatment Plant, enabled via a special allocation of funding from NHT.

Internally, another significant change was the adoption of a new constitution and the formal creation of a governance board—something that had been operating for a couple of years, although not in an official manner.

In celebration of all the great work across the region, a special event called the Neighbourhood Catchments Muster was held in September 2006. Attended by over 200 people, it demonstrated just how much work was going on across the region, and how many people were now engaged in delivering the CQSS2.

In a moving symbolic gesture, participants from every corner of the region brought a sample of water from their locality and as gesture of unity these samples were emptied into the Fitzroy River bringing to life the Indigenous name for the Fitzroy: 'Wongara Gummoo', meaning one river, one people.



This page: Opening of the Mount Morgan Water Treatment Plant in 2006.

Facing page, from left: Peter Dunne; Neighbourhood Catchment Muster Registration—Bronwyn Fryer, Pam Jefferies, Janeen Whiting, Sheriee Press



2.7 HAPPY ANNIVERSARY BABY!

At the FBA Annual General Meeting in late 2006, another changing of the guard took place with Peter Dunne handing over the Chair to Ted Scott. Ted, the former CEO of Stanwell Corporation, brought a wealth of corporate knowledge and experience with him at a time where under the new constitution, FBA was formally establishing its identity. To give substance

to the new Board structure, Board members attended training in the roles and responsibilities of corporate directors. This training underlined that members were no longer representing particular interests—as stakeholder council and management committee members had done previously—but were required to fulfil their duties for the greater good of

the organisation and within the requirements of Australian Government corporation's legislation.

The new Chair favoured consensus-driven decisions, and he was keen to devolve responsibilities to the Board directors. He established several committees that met in between Board meetings, and did much of the leg work on behalf of the Board, reported back to the Board and sought endorsement for policies and recommendations. Another significant change was to elevate the CEO's position as that of the organisation's spokesperson and key public figure. The Chair had no desire to reinvent the hands-on approach of Barbara Wildin with operational matters and he made sure that these responsibilities were firmly in the hands of the CEO as well.



A new constitution was adopted at a special general meeting in early 2007. With the governance board now fully operational, the stakeholder council—which had been the main stay of the former FBA structure—was effectively retired. The 2006/07 Annual Report records more successful achievements with over \$9.3M of expenditure on projects, including new satellite imagery underpinning property planning for almost one million hectares, completion of salinity and risk assessment, improvements to fish passage on the Fitzroy floodplain, voluntary conservation agreements to protect remnant vegetation, incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into Neighbourhood Catchments work, collaborative projects for grains and beef in conjunction with AgForce, Department of Primary Industries and the Beef Cooperative Research

Centre and a special forum to discuss the impacts of mining on NRM and other landholders.

Rounding off this successful year, the AGM included the celebration of FBA's tenth anniversary and the launch of Barbara Webster's history recording the many trials and tribulations of the organisation since its inception. By any measure, FBA had achieved a great deal in its first ten years, but its job was far from over and it looked forward to an even more successful future.

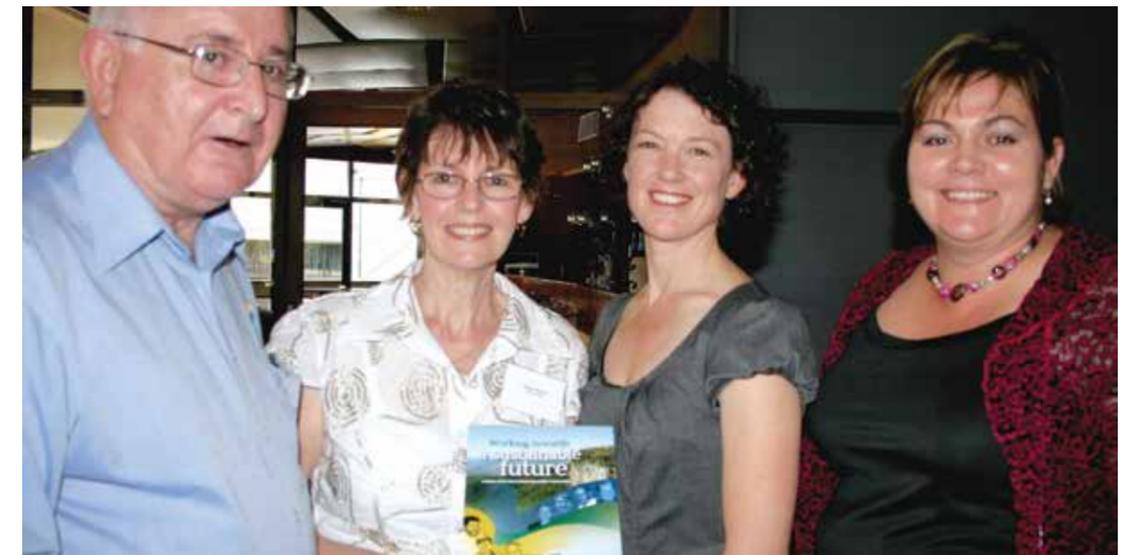
Chapter 2 summarises the history of FBA over its first ten years of operation along with the five-year period of its predecessor organisation, FCCG. The remainder of this book has been divided up into themes which encapsulate the work of FBA over its full history. The aim is to highlight the work of the organisation and in doing so to acknowledge

the outstanding efforts of the central Queensland community in embracing NRM and effecting significant improvements to the state of the environment in the region.

Rather than recount events in detail year-by-year, like the Webster history, a table that summarises the key events and people involved is presented in the following pages.

Facing page from left: 2007 FBA Board members; FBA Chair, Ted Scott.

This page: FBA Chair Ted Scott, author Dr Barbara Webster, Federal Member for Capricornia Kirsten Livermore and Suzie Christensen at the launch of the tenth anniversary book, 'Working Towards a Sustainable Future'.



Year	Events & Achievements	Key People & Organisations
1992	Fitzroy Catchment Symposium	Dr. Leo Duivenvoorden; Lindsay Fairweather; Greig Lawrie; Dr. Don Yule
1993	Fitzroy Catchment Coordinating Group (FCCG) formed	President—Greig Lawrie
1996	FCCG officially recognised and funded	Queensland Government President—Wendy Tyrrell First full time project officer – Jane Muller
1997	Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) launched Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. formed Sustainable Futures Symposium Draft Central Queensland Strategy for Sustainability (CQSS) released	Australian Government President—Wendy Tyrrell
1998	NHT funding received Waterwatch project started	President—Suzy Watson
1999	Seven Keys to Sustainability identified Fitzroy Integrated Research Development Extension and Adoption Initiative (FIRDEA) commenced Stand alone office in Rockhampton Mall	President—Kevin Cotterell
2000	First Strategic Plan launched	President— Barbara Wildin Regional Coordinator—Suzie Christensen
2001	CQSS launched FIRDEA funded Commencement of Neighbourhood Catchments Program National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) announced	Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson Australian Government
2002	NHT2 announced Commencement of GIS mapping and satellite imagery for property plans	Australian Government First FBA Life Member—Prof. Geoff Lawrence
2003	New FBA Corporate Structure implemented CQ Information Papers released	First Chair—Barbara Wildin First CEO—Mike Merrin FBA; Coastal CRC
2004	CQSS2 approved Launch of Mount Morgan Water Treatment Plant Project First Regional Investment Strategy (RIS)	Second CEO—Suzie Christensen
2005	Second Strategic Plan released	Second Chair – Peter Dunne
2006	Neighbourhood Catchments Muster Central Queensland Mining Forum	Third Chair – Ted Scott
2007	New constitution adopted Ten-year anniversary and launch of history Grains Best Management Practices (BMP) project initiated	Author – Barbara Webster FBA; DPI; AgForce

Year	Events & Achievements	Key People & Organisations
2008	Major flood in Fitzroy Basin—severe water quality impacts Innovation fund initiated Caring for Our Country (CfoC) and Reef Rescue Programs initiated (End of NHT and NAP)	FBA Board Australian Government
2009	Creation of Source Fitzroy Ltd (FBA business arm) Funding from Reef Rescue and CfoC First Water Quality Improvement Plan for the Fitzroy Fishway improvement projects initiated	FBA Board FBA; Fisheries Qld
2010	Incentives for Voluntary Land Management Agreements (VLMA) Grazing BMP project initiated Wetland Areas targeted for protection Shift of office to former Rockhampton Post Office Third Strategic Plan	Fourth Chair—Charlie Wilson FBA; DPI; AgForce First Chief Operating Officer—Paul Birch FBA Board
2011	Major flood in Fitzroy Basin Flood recovery program delivered Increased integration of science into NRM projects	FBA; Queensland Government
2012	Launch of FLOW visitors centre Acceleration of Grazing BMP delivery Fitzroy Partnership for River Health (FPRH) established	Third CEO—Paul Birch FBA; DPI; AgForce FPRH 23 members
2013	Flooding impacts from Tropical Cyclone Oswald Further Reef funding announced (Reef Trust 2) Gladstone Healthy Harbours Partnership (GHHP) established FPRH report card released Membership of Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef	Fifth Chair—Ian MacGibbon Australian Government; Reef Alliance 26 members GHHP Chair—Paul Birch Fitzroy Partnership for River Health
2014	Impacts from Tropical Cyclone Marcia Expansion of Grazing BMP into other NRM regions 10,000th visitor through FLOW centre CQSS:2030 launched National Landcare Program initiated	FBA; DPI; AgForce Australian Government
2015	Reef 2050 Plan released and Reef Trust 3 announced Fitzroy Water Quality Improvement Plan (VQIP:2015) released	Australian Government; Reef Alliance Second COO—Elyse Reithmuller FBA
2016	Impacts of Tropical Cyclone Debbie Fourth Strategic Plan Grazing BMP continues to expand	FBA Board FBA; DPI; AgForce
2017	Strategic Cropping Lands initiative commences	Sixth Chair—Sean Conaghan

PLANNING & GOVERNANCE

A hallmark of FBA throughout its history has been its commitment to strategic, regional and operational planning. This has included several iterations of the regional plan, detailing the key NRM issues of the region and the priorities for addressing these. There has been a progression from the first plan, the Central Queensland Strategy for Sustainability (CQSS), launched in 2001 by then Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson, to the NHT/NAPSWQ compliant Central Queensland Strategy for Sustainability—2004 and beyond (CQSS2) to the current plan, Central Queensland Sustainability Strategy 2030 (CQSS:2030).

A defining principle of this regional planning process has been the early engagement of the community in developing and refining the plans, the

incorporation of its priority issues and a delivery pathway that engages it along with individual businesses and industries. As stated in Chapter 2, this process has given the community a strong sense of ownership of the plans, and is regarded as a key ingredient in the ongoing success of the organisation.

It has also been a priority in the planning processes to incorporate the latest scientific knowledge to underpin the issues that are prioritised and the actions that are taken to address issues. This process has become more sophisticated with each iteration of the plan, as specific research projects initiated to investigate issues have concluded and their findings have informed decision-making about where best to target funding, while also providing monitoring data

demonstrating to funders what improvements have been achieved.

As a separate complementary process to the regional planning, FBA's internal strategic plans have been renewed every five years. The process of preparing these plans has been an important means of engaging Board directors and uniting them to work towards a common goal. The strategic plans are the foundation for business operations and performance, with a clearly enunciated vision, mission and values plus core principles for how the organisation functions, including goals to be achieved over the life of the plan. Commencing in 2000, it is interesting to look back at the vision statements of these plans as they demonstrate a growing confidence about the region's place in the NRM world:

2000 FBA demonstrates dynamic leadership for sustainable development in CQ

2005 Empowered communities for a sustainable CQ

2010 A community that understands, values and uses its natural and cultural resources wisely to coexist in a vibrant and prosperous region

2015 Inspired and empowered communities who value our natural assets

In addition to the strategic planning process, FBA's Board establishes and regularly revises the suite of policies that govern the operations of the organisation. Over its 21-year history, FBA has been well-served by excellent Chairs and directors from across many sectors of the community, including most parts of the region. Opportunities have been provided to directors to receive formal training in

company directorship, to ensure that the highest standards of governance underpin FBA operations.

Sitting below these two high level planning processes, FBA has undertaken many other forms of planning. To guide the implementation of the regional plans, FBA prepared what were initially called Regional Investment Strategies, and these established the priorities

for expenditure of grant funds throughout 192 Neighbourhood Catchments. In turn, annual operational plans were devised in collaboration with FBA's delivery partners, Dawson Catchment Coordinating Association, Central Highlands Regional Resource Use Planning Group (CHRRUP) and Capricornia Catchments.



FBA's former delivery partners and the respective catchment boundaries.

Over time, the Australian and Queensland governments required greater attention to specific issues, with protection and restoration of the Great Barrier Reef emerging as the key focus. Thus, 5-year Water Quality Improvement Plans were developed to guide investments to high priority areas and set water quality targets. Supplementing this major plan, FBA undertook a suite of other planning activities that guided efforts in protection of vital wetlands and threatened species, restoring coastal environments and educating the wider community.

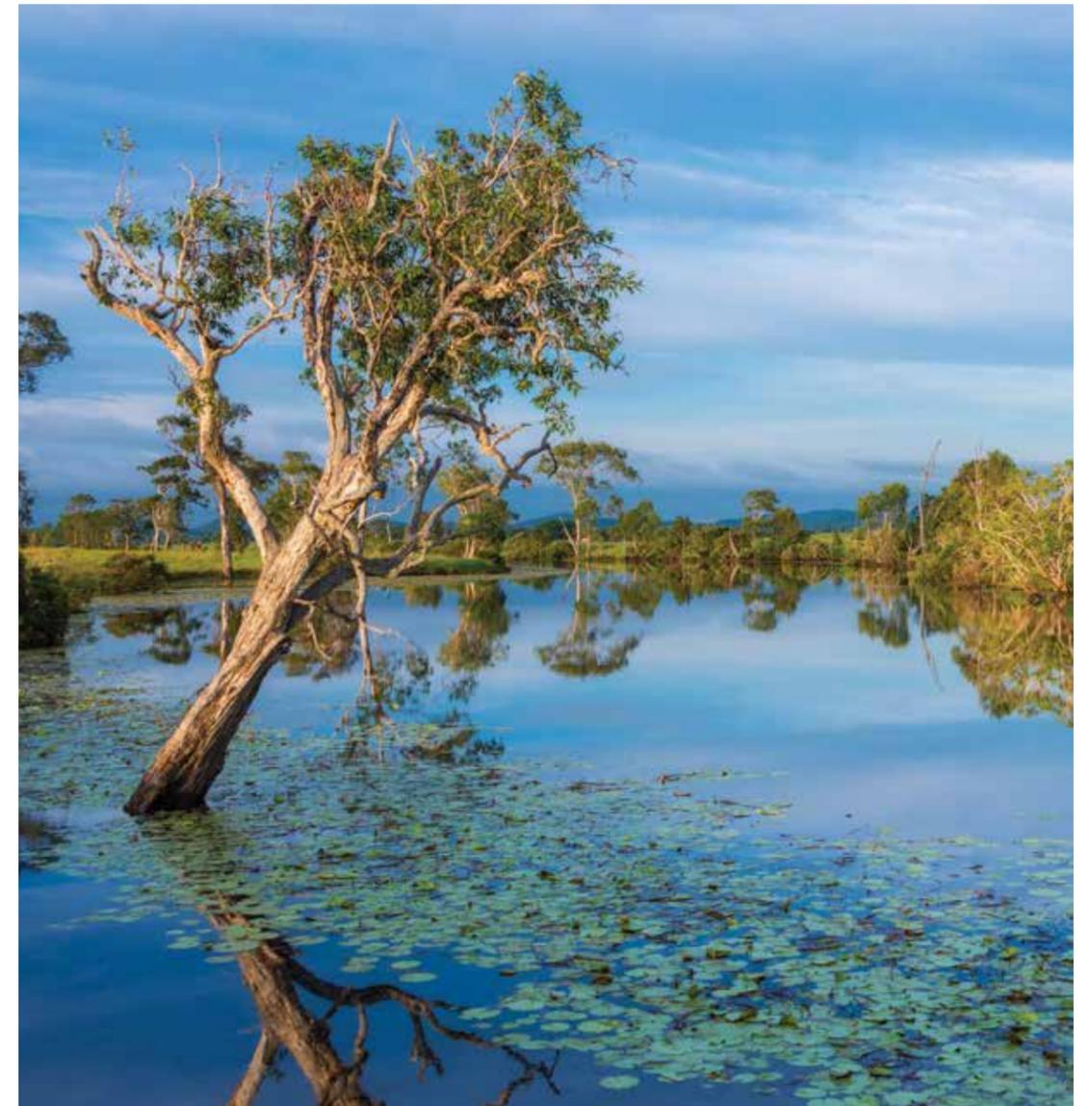
FBA has also been an active participant in the multitude of planning processes that have taken place at national, state and regional levels over the course of its 21-year history. Of interest has been the change in the

relationships and dynamics over this period. From a very minor role in its first years of operation, FBA, through the strength of its planning processes, and the stamp of community authenticity that these represented, became first influential, and then ultimately a leader in these external forums. FBA moved from seeking a seat at the table to a sought-after partner and in some instances setting the agenda, as demonstrated by its formal partnership arrangements discussed in the next chapter.

The power of planning and the rewards that it brought FBA and the central Queensland community have no greater example in FBA's history than in 1999, when according to Allan Dale (Webster, 2000, p.165), the Australian Government established the NAPSWQ and NHT2 arrangements

based on the successful model of the regional/sub-regional planning, undertaken by FBA and CHRRUP. While it is significant improvements in natural resource condition that funding agencies are seeking, the three regional plans have demonstrated, over the course of 20 years, that the Fitzroy NRM Region is one where the community is prepared to do the leg-work to address the key issues, meet the objectives and targets of the funders, establishing the foundations for specific actions along with monitoring the results of these. It is this formula that has led to FBA being rated among the top echelon of the 56 NRM groups across Australia—an enviable and deserved reputation.

*Facing page: Hedlow Creek
(Photo: Nathan White Images)*



FBA moved from a role of seeking a seat at the table to being a sought after partner and in some instances setting the agenda, as demonstrated by its formal partnership arrangements discussed in the next chapter.

It is this formula that has led to FBA being rated among the top echelon of the 56 NRM groups across Australia—an enviable and deserved reputation.

PARTNERSHIPS & ALLIANCES

Planning and community engagement were the elements that established and continue to maintain FBA, but if one thing was to define the organisation above everything else, that would undoubtedly be its partnerships.

4.1 QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT

Partnerships have been at the core of FBA's business from its earliest days, including its longest relationship with the Queensland Government. FBA was born out of the Integrated Catchment Management initiative of the Goss Government in the early 1990s, and all subsequent Queensland Governments have supported regional NRM groups with core funding, as well as specific funding often to match Australian Government programs such as the NHT and NAPSWQ. Queensland

Government officers have worked side-by-side with Board directors and FBA officers, establishing and growing the organisation. There have been many instances of joint initiatives implementing a wide variety of NRM projects throughout the region. An outstanding example is the work undertaken jointly by FBA and Queensland Government in the wake of devastating natural events, especially the 2010/11 Fitzroy Basin floods and again in 2013 following floods in the Dawson, Boyne and Fitzroy

catchments from ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald, which caused massive destruction to properties and infrastructure. FBA was approached by the Queensland Government to lead the flood recovery efforts by engaging affected landholders, designing and planning recovery works and dispersing special funds provided to aid the recovery process.

Following pages: The Rockhampton flood of 2011 reached a peak of 9.2m; Rockhampton following the 2011 flood; erosion caused at Meteor Creek following the 2011 flood.

*Ian Burnett AgForce
President, Minister Andrew
Powell, Charlie Wilson FBA
Chair and Minister John
McVeigh in the formative
years of Grazing BMP.*

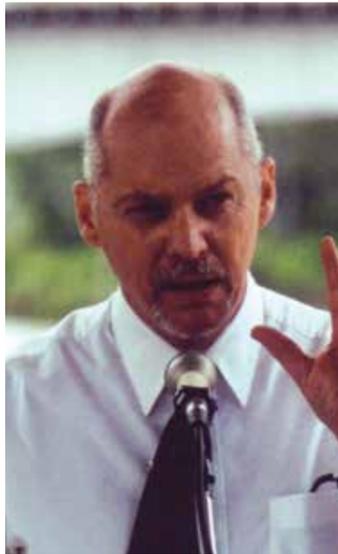


4.2 CENTRAL QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY (CQU)

As outlined in Chapter 2, another significant partnership in the formative stages of FBA was with Central Queensland University, which provided office accommodation, support plus mentoring of the first project officer. Several professors

have been prominent figures within FBA, including Professors Geoff Lawrence, Bob Miles and John Rolfe, each providing wise counsel and guidance in addition to their academic expertise.

From left: Professors Geoff Lawrence; Bob Miles; John Rolfe.



4.3 AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

With the advent of Landcare, the Australian Government entered the world of NRM in the late 1980s, but it was the NHT initiative in 1997 that changed the NRM landscape through the direct injection of funding from the federal coffers to regional NRM groups. The Australian Government also required that NRM groups develop high standards of governance and financial management. This was a different form of partnership from that of the Queensland Government,

and the regional NRM groups like FBA have had a more subservient relationship, albeit one based on mutual respect.

However, the was not always the case, especially when the Caring for Our Country (CfoC) initiative was launched in 2008, after the Rudd Government replaced the NHT/NAPSWQ programs. There was a period where Australian Government officers attempted to impose themselves on the established regional NRM process, and be more dictatorial in their

demands for what issues be addressed and in what manner. For almost 12 months, things looked bleak for NRM groups, as funds dried up and revised arrangements were worked out. Not without some pain, CfoC was eventually operationalised and the former relationship based on mutual benefit was re-established. Thus, the Australian Government remains the major funder of NRM, and its partnership with FBA is vital to the continuation beyond 21 years of joint endeavour.

4.4 SUB-REGIONAL GROUPS

Another vital partnership underpinning FBA's achievements has been that with its delivery partners: Capricornia Catchments Inc; Central Highland Regional Resource Use Planning Cooperative Inc. (CHRRUP); and, Dawson Catchments Coordinating Association Inc (DCCA). These three independent bodies with their own constitutions and boards of management have been an integral part of NRM in central Queensland throughout FBA's history. In fact, DCCA preceded FBA as an incorporated association, so it has been a constant over the 26 years of FBA/FCCG activity.

The sub-regional model was adopted in recognition of the enormous size of the region and the strong ownership that sectors of the community had for these groups, having built them from the bottom

up just like FBA had done in its formation. It also meant that FBA could operate as an umbrella organisation yet devolve operational matters to these groups and their staff along with the funds that were channelled from the Australian and Queensland Governments.

Until 2014, there were in fact five sub-regions with the Boyne Calliope and Three Rivers groups then operating. Capricornia Catchments was known as Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments (FRCC) and covered a smaller footprint. The two entities that were subsequently incorporated with FRCC, were not independent groups with their own constitutions and boards, but did have offices in sub-regional locations and dedicated officers, employed directly by FBA, operating from these. The amalgamation

of these three bodies was an administrative arrangement to streamline operations and had minimal impact on the existing partnerships.

In 2018, a significant change to this long standing partnership is underway, such that FBA will now directly administer the delivery of services and funds across the entire Fitzroy NRM region. This has been a difficult decision and not one that is universally accepted at the time of preparing this history. However, it demonstrates that FBA and the NRM world are a moving beast and organisations must be organic and prepared to adapt as processes mature and agendas change.

The Fitzroy NRM Region has shown itself to be highly resilient and adaptable throughout many challenges, natural disasters and bureaucratic changes—yet has never taken its focus off its primary objective of a prosperous and sustainable future.

4.5 AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

With agriculture dominating land use throughout the 156,000 square kilometres of the Fitzroy NRM Region, it has always been essential that FBA develop and maintain close links with the rural community, and in turn, through the organisations that have responsibilities for, or represent, the rural areas. Over the course of its history, FBA has an enviable

reputation for working closely with peak industry groups such as AgForce, Queensland Farmers Federation (QFF) and Growcom. Other parts of this history feature some significant achievements stemming from those relationships that have been made on specific projects. It is noteworthy that most of the leaders of FBA/FCCG over its 26 years have come

from the rural sector. FBA is indebted to Greig Lawrie, Peter Dunne, Charlie Wilson, Ian MacGibbon and Sean Conaghan for the time and energy they have brought to the role of President/Chair of FBA, along with a long list of their rural colleagues, who have served as board directors or on various working groups or sub-regional organisations.



4.6 LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Rural areas are also heavily reliant on local governments and FBA has been long served by local government representatives at Board level or through direct partnerships with local government bodies such as the Capricorn Pest

Management Group and the Central Highlands Natural Resource Management Group with their focus on weed and pest management. Local governments have also been closely involved with specific projects, for example, in coastal areas and with

initiatives such as fish passage restoration and washdown facilities to control weed spread.

4.7 TRADITIONAL OWNERS

A long-standing partnership has been that with Traditional Owners including Indigenous members on the FBA Board. Bob Muir and Lurlene Henderson have served on the Board for significant periods of time, enriching the planning and policy development processes. FBA has also supported the Fitzroy Basin Elders Committee (FBEC) to encourage broader Indigenous involvement in NRM activities. In 2006, Traditional Owners Property

Planning (TOPP) was targeted through an agreement between FBA, DPI, Rural Property Design and multiple Traditional Owner pastoral companies, to provide technical support to develop holistic property plans. In the twelve months leading up to July 2018, FBA recorded its broadest level of engagement with Traditional Owner corporations to date across the Fitzroy NRM Region, increasing from six to nine. This was cause of celebration for many of the FBA team,

who deeply value the ongoing relationship building with the region's diverse Indigenous communities and cultures.

Facing page: Harvesting season; grazing is a dominant industry in the Fitzroy NRM Region

Below: Woppaburra Elder and former NAIDOC Australian Elder of the Year, Bob Muir



4.8 FITZROY PARTNERSHIP FOR RIVER HEALTH

From the outset of FBA's work in the region, it was understood that monitoring of the major waterways was an essential component in determining where areas of poor water quality were located, and if on-ground works were having a positive effect on water quality conditions. One of the first initiatives undertaken by FBA, the Waterwatch

program, commenced in 1998 and continued for almost a decade. However, it was a major natural event in 2008 that triggered a significant change to the thinking about what was needed to monitor water quality and ecosystem health in the long term.

In January and February 2008, heavy rainfall and subsequent flooding devastated parts of the Central Highlands, flooding

farmland and coal mines. Ensham Mine, near Emerald, was totally inundated, resulting in the submergence of heavy machinery and cessation of mining. Permission was granted for the emergency dewatering of this mine, along with several others in the northern part of the Basin, but this action subsequently caused a significant decline in water quality downstream



Facing page: Waterwatch catchment trailer; Flooding at Ensham Mine in 2008.

This page, from top: Inaugural report card launch, 2012–13; FPRH Manager Nathan Johnson with Mindy and Sacred Heart Primary School students at FLOW.

due to high salinity levels. These salinity levels had an adverse impact that found its way over several months to Rockhampton at the bottom of the river system. A major investigation was undertaken about the mine discharges (The Hart Report), and a Technical Working Group was established to come up with solutions to deal with the saline water in the river system.

It became apparent from this event that the region lacked an integrated monitoring and reporting system for water quality. The Technical Working Group became the Fitzroy Water Quality Advisory Group, with a broader charter to help manage water quality issues in the Basin. To take this further, behind the scenes FBA was involved in extensive negotiations and planning to form a more permanent monitoring body. In 2012, a formal partnership called the Fitzroy Partnership for River Health (FPRH) was signed. It included partners



from government, agriculture, resource companies, industry, research and community interests, with a common goal of providing a complete picture on river health. Partners contribute funding and resources, as well as water quality and ecosystem health monitoring data under data-sharing arrangements. A key output from the FPRH is an annual report card, which shows whether current management strategies are maintaining the health of



aquatic ecosystems, and what trends are emerging over time. Importantly, the community can access the data and the report card presents this in a consistent and informative way. Six years on, the FPRH continues to fulfil a vital role in NRM.

4.9 GLADSTONE HEALTHY HARBOUR PARTNERSHIP

In 2013, a second formal partnership, the Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership (GHHP) was established, with the then Minister for the Environment, Andrew Powell as Chair. Soon after operations commenced, Minister Powell passed the baton to FBA's CEO, Paul Birch. Based on the Fitzroy Partnership for River Health model, this partnership joins 26

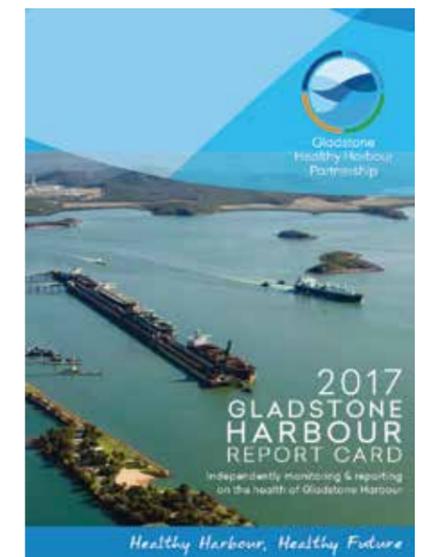
organisations from community, industry, science, government and statutory bodies who have an interest in the health of the Gladstone Harbour. An integral feature of the partnership is an Independent Science Panel to ensure the integrity and reliability of the science underpinning the annual report cards covering environmental, social, cultural and economic indicators. The

vision is for a healthy, accessible working harbour. FBA hosts the partnership, and was chosen for this role because of its demonstrated capacities in leadership, community engagement and management of external funds. The selection of Paul Birch and FBA opened a new chapter in FBA operations, widening its reach in NRM activities, as well as reinforcing its reputation as a leader in NRM.



Facing page: Former Gladstone Regional Council Mayor Cr. Gail Sellers, FBA CEO Paul Birch and State Minister of Environment Andrew Powell MP.

This page, from top: Gladstone Harbour is one of Australia's largest ports, and in 2013, was the world's fourth largest coal exporting terminal; 2017 Gladstone Harbour Report Card.



4.10 ALLIANCES

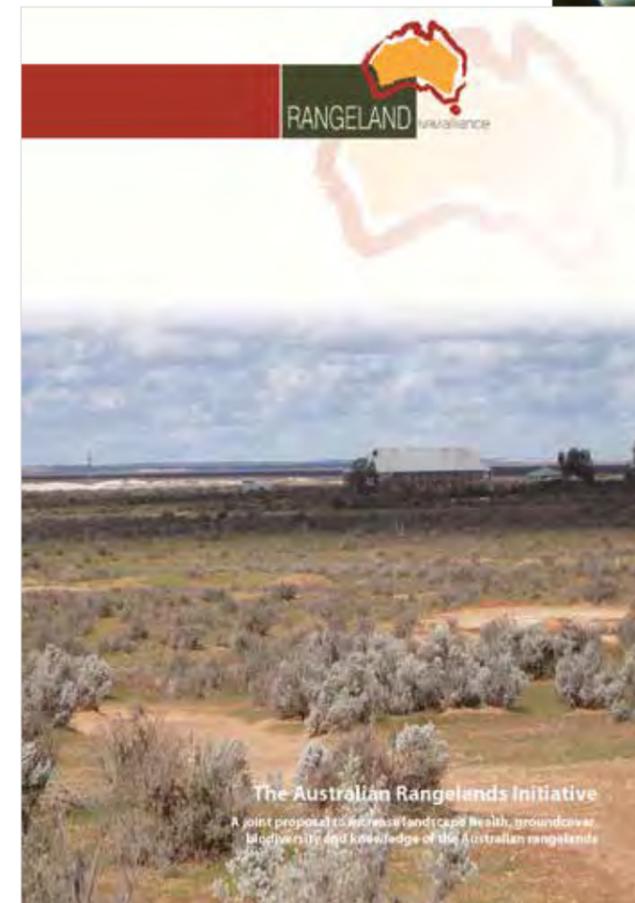
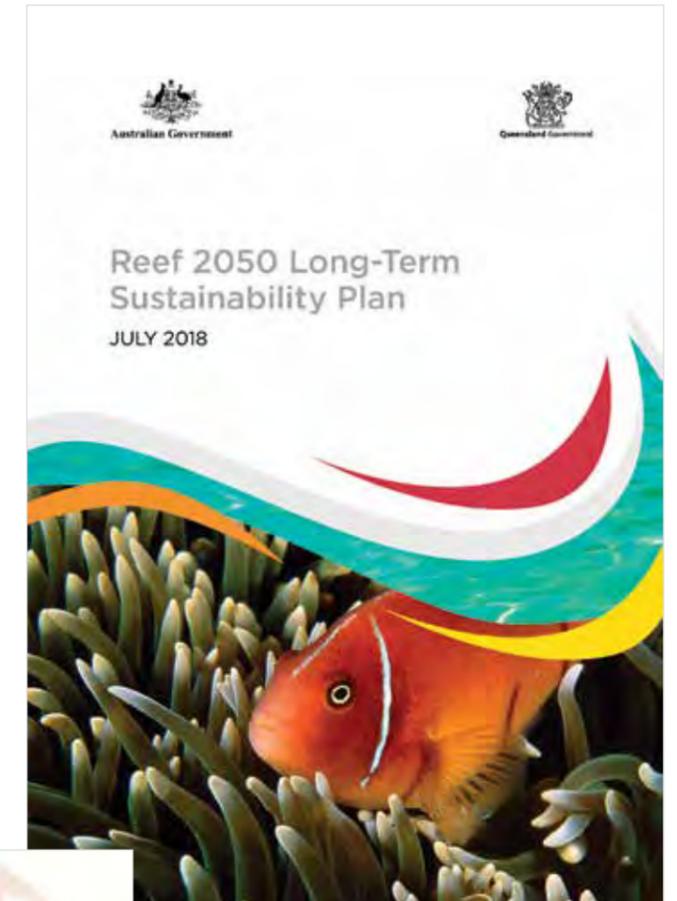
FBA has also been active in forming key alliances. The earliest of these is the Regional Groups Collective (RGC), now called NRM Regions Queensland. This body was formed in 2002, to coordinate and facilitate state-wide delivery of regional NRM outcomes, and to act as a representative body for the 14 regional Queensland NRM bodies. Successive FBA Chairs and CEOs have been active participants in the collective, and FBA's support has been instrumental in the growth and development of the body.

A related advisory group is a body called the Reef Alliance. This alliance came into being in 2007, in the lead up to the federal election, where the six NRM groups with boundaries adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef, along with industry groups including Queensland Farmers

Federation (QFF), AgForce, Canegrowers, Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation, Australian Banana Growers Council, Growcom and the conservation group Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), came together to advocate for a special funding initiative to direct funds specifically for Reef-related on-ground works and research. Thus, in addition to the CfoC program at national level, the Rudd Government committed \$200M for a program called Reef Rescue. The alliance has continued its efforts to the present time, and through these successive Australian governments, have seen fit to direct further significant funds into Reef programs culminating in the 2015 Reef 2050 Plan and the Reef Trust. FBA has been a trusted member of this alliance since the outset, and made a significant contribution in 2013, when it developed a

prioritisation tool to assess projects that was later adopted by the other delivery partners.

Mirroring the Reef Alliance, the Rangeland NRM Alliance was established in 2013, bringing together 14 regional NRM from Queensland, the Northern Territory, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia. The Rangeland NRM Alliance works actively to provide a platform for nationwide networking, data-sharing, exploration of key issues and opportunities for collaboration. The alliance covers 80% of the Australian landmass, and while it is early days, has started developing a 25-year strategy for investment in rangelands NRM, and positioning itself to influence governments to take a nationwide approach to rangeland issues.



This page, from top: Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan, 2018; The Australian Rangelands Initiative, 2013.



Central Queensland coast
Photo: Fitzroy Basin
Association Inc.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

‘Overall, FBA has continued to demonstrate an improvement trend across the three Performance Excellence reviews it has undertaken. There has been improvement in most areas, with significant improvement within the component of Client and Community Engagement, resulting from an effective approach being well deployed. Process Management has seen an improvement, and as the organisation has matured, improvements are also being seen in the area of Business Results.’

*Kroombit Tops National Park
Photo: Gladstone Area
Promotion & Development
Ltd (GAPDL)*

5.1 PERFORMANCE

FBA has a well-deserved reputation for outstanding performance as a delivery agent of NRM services. This has been achieved year-after-year through various changes of government and funding programs that have tested the organisation’s resilience and capacity at times.

However, it is no accident that FBA continues to perform, because from its earliest days, it has been aware of the need to deliver quality services to meet the needs of its community and major funders. Beginning in 2005, FBA participated in an Australia-wide initiative to benchmark its performance against that of other regional NRM groups. These standards are established under the Performance

Excellence Guide for Natural Resource Management Organisations. These performance assessments have been repeated at five-yearly intervals and have been undertaken by a specialist independent company.

It is commendable for a relatively small non-for-profit company like FBA to undertake such reviews, demonstrating a strong commitment to quality management and continuous improvement, ensuring that these principles are intrinsic parts of the organisational culture. The latest review, in 2015, by independent assessor Remarkable NRM, summarised its findings as follows:

‘Overall, FBA has continued to demonstrate an improvement trend across the three Performance Excellence reviews it has undertaken. There has been improvement in most areas with significant improvement within the component of Client and Community Engagement, resulting from an effective approach being well deployed. Process Management has seen an improvement, and as the organisation has matured, improvements are also being seen in the area of Business Results.’



In addition, other performance management processes are undertaken at regular intervals, including an annual self-assessment of performance by individual Board directors, with findings collated and any areas of perceived weakness discussed and addressed

by the Board as a whole. There are also organisational performance management requirements from the Australian Government, so that the key funder of NRM activities can be satisfied that the strategies, policies and structures, essential for service delivery, are in place

and being improved from time to time. In its latest review, FBA scored a perfect 20 out of 20 for its performance, placing it equal top among the 14 Queensland NRM groups.

Source: Natural Resource Management (NRM) Regions dataset (2016)
© Commonwealth of Australia (Department of the Environment and Energy)

FBA scored a perfect 20 out of 20 for its performance, placing it equal top among the 14 Queensland NRM groups.



Steve Farmer at his Mt Elsa property, a Beef Australia 2018 feature property
Photo: Nathan White Images

5.2 FUNDING DELIVERED TO THE REGION

As mentioned earlier, the Australian Government's entry into NRM, particularly from 1997 onwards, was marked by some major initiatives that have directed significant funds directly to groups like FBA. It should also be noted that successive Queensland Governments have also continued to invest significant funding to support regional NRM bodies throughout the entire history of FBA.

The bulk of these funds (88-90%) have been used for on-ground works helping to restore areas of soil erosion, protect streams, waterways and wetlands, modify and improve farming and grazing practices, undertake pest plant and animal control and restore degraded coasts.

Paddock to Reef and Healthy Waterways monitoring programs, introduced to investigate what impacts this

funding and the works that it has enabled have had on the health of the rivers and the Reef, have consistently shown that significant improvements have been achieved despite setbacks when floods like those of 2008, 2010/11 and 2013 create massive damage.

What must also be acknowledged is that the recipients of the funds (mainly landholders) make significant contributions to the works as well, either in cash, materials or labour.

The following table summarises the source of funds and levels of expenditure.

FBA has also been quick to respond in times of crisis. After each of the three major floods over the period 2008 to 2013, and damage from Tropical Cyclones Marcia and Debbie more

recently, the organisation has been approached by the Australian, Queensland and various local governments to assist with recovery programs.

Following page, from top: Summary of the source of funds and levels of expenditure; From left to right Vicki Coburn (DNRM), Rebecca French, Brittany Lauga MP, Charisse Anderson, Jill Lyons, Jeff Krause at the Qld Get Ready Awards.

In 2016, the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (EHP) reported that these targeted on-ground works reduced sediment loss by 9.6% from 2013.

Sources of revenue summary

Year	Funding Sources	Revenue
1997-2006 (consolidated data)	NHT1/NHT2/NAPSWQ (Aust & Qld Govt)	\$30M in total (average of \$3M/yr)
2006 - 2007	NHT2/NAPSWQ/NLP (Aust & Qld Govt) QNRM (Qld Govt)	\$9.342M
2007 – 2008	NHT2/NAPSWQ/NLP—part year (Aust Govt) CfoC/Reef Rescue—part year (Aust Govt) QNRM (Qld Govt)	\$10.534M
2008-2009	CfoC/Reef Rescue (Aust Govt) QNRM (Qld Govt)	\$9.209M
2009-2010	CfoC/Reef Rescue (Aust Govt) QNRM (Qld Govt)	\$9.857M
2010-2011	CfoC/Reef Rescue (Aust Govt) QNRM (Qld Govt) Flood Recovery (Aust & Qld Govt)	\$8.607
2011-2012	CfoC/Reef Rescue (Aust Govt) QNRM & EHP (Qld Govt)	\$13.408M
2012-2013	CfoC/Reef Rescue (Aust Govt) QNRM & EHP (Qld Govt)	\$22.379M
2013-2014	Reef Program (Aust Govt) QNRM & EHP (Qld Govt) Flood Recovery (Aust & Qld Govt)	\$15.123M
2014-2015	Reef Program (Aust Govt) QNRM & EHP (Qld Govt)	\$14.093M
2015-2016	Reef Program (Aust Govt) QNRM & EHP (Qld Govt)	\$16.958M
2016-2017	Reef Program (Aust Govt) QNRM & EHP (Qld Govt)	\$13.417M
2017-2018	Reef Program (Aust Govt) QNRM & EHP (Qld Govt) Flood Recovery (Aust & Qld Govt)	\$14.103M





*Damage to infrastructure and land condition caused by the impacts of Cyclone Debbie, 2017
Photos: Ebony Battersby*

5.3 FLOW

FLOW is the name of FBA's visitor centre, launched in 2012 and located on the ground floor of the former Rockhampton Post Office (below the main FBA office). The concept of a visitor centre was proposed by former CEO, Suzie Christensen, soon after FBA moved to the former Post Office and was to be located upstairs. However, there were no funds readily available for this venture, so then Chief Operating Officer Paul Birch suggested that the Innovation Fund be redirected. He also negotiated with the owners of the former Post Office to use a spare part of the building on the bottom floor. FLOW was conceived as a hub where FBA would demonstrate to the wider community the remarkable natural resources that the Fitzroy NRM Region possesses, including how these are being managed by a suite of land, water, vegetation and cultural organisations and individuals.

FLOW is a free educational facility that helps raise community environmental awareness. It has an innovative design, with multiple interactive displays providing revealing snippets about the region, its unique plants, animals, industries, communities and habitats plus some of the outstanding people involved in NRM activities. The static and interactive displays are complemented by tailored educational sessions led by dedicated FBA staff.

An emphasis has been placed on engaging schools throughout the region, encouraging teachers either to bring students to the centre or utilise the 'FLOW on the Go' school touring program, to learn more about the region's resources and management practices.

Over its six-year history, FLOW has received more than 27,000 visitors through its doors and

published two children's books. The books, written by FBA employee, Julie Cook, feature two endangered species unique to the Fitzroy NRM Region in a fun and informative way.

FLOW is the only one of its kind among the 14 Queensland NRM bodies, and demonstrates the high priority FBA places on engaging with the community and sharing its knowledge and achievements. The education of school aged children provides an integral foundation for their deeper understanding of the place where they live, empowering them to respect the natural resources and those who manage them as they reach adulthood.

This page: Rockhampton Regional Council Mayor, Cr. Brad Carter and FBA Chair, Charlie Wilson cut the ribbon to officially open FLOW.

Facing page: FLOW, located in the Old Post Office, East Street, Rockhampton.



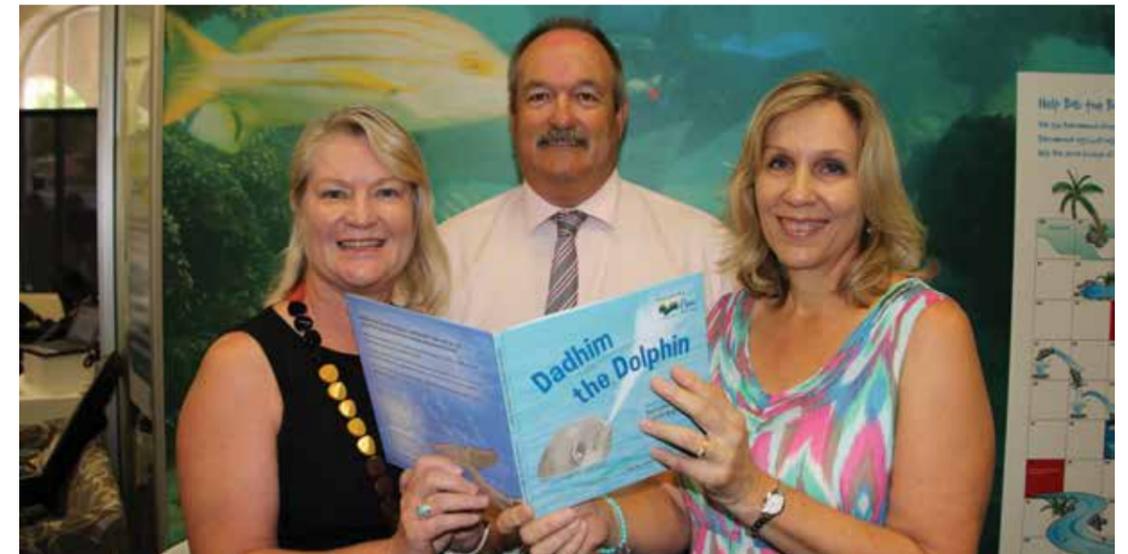
FLOW was conceived as a hub where FBA would demonstrate to the wider community the remarkable natural resources that the Fitzroy NRM Region possesses, and how these are being managed by a suite of land, water, vegetation and cultural organisations and individuals.





Facing page, from top: FLOW visitor centre; FLOW celebrates five years in 2017.

This page, from top: Sharyn Lowth, Marilyn Williamson and Julie Cook debut FLOW's first children's book, Oh Dear, That's My Rear, 2012; Julie Cook, CEO Paul Birch and Marilyn Williamson on the book launch of Dadhim the Dolphin, 2015; FLOW visitor centre.



Over its six year history, FLOW has received more than 27,000 visitors through its doors. The facility is the only one of its kind among the 14 Queensland NRM bodies, and demonstrates the high priority FBA places on engaging with the community and sharing its knowledge and achievements.



5.4 BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The concept of Best Management Practices (BMP) has its origins in the cotton industry, dating back to 1997 when the industry was under intense scrutiny due to off-site impacts from some of the techniques used in cotton production. Essentially, BMP is a farm management system, that establishes agreed acceptable standards for each of the key practices used in the industry. Individual growers voluntarily benchmark their own properties, practices and performance against industry standards. It was widely adopted by growers in the Central Highlands and Dawson Valley and was lauded as the saviour of the cotton industry at the time.

Having seen the success of the Cotton BMP (now called myBMP) in central Queensland in 2006, officers from the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), AgForce and FBA collaborated to investigate a similar approach for dryland cropping. This began a process for examining specific practices used by grain growers, and establishing a set of standards of what constitutes best practice. In a nutshell, best practice can be defined as the standard that a grower who is operating in a sustainable and profitable manner should be aiming to achieve on their property. The first steps were modest and concentrated on spraying

practices, because of the high reliance by most growers on chemicals to control weeds and to reduce the need for cultivation.

From these early efforts emerged the Grains BMP program that, with the involvement of AgForce, became a voluntary industry-led process adopted by increasing numbers of growers from central Queensland. FBA had a key role in coordinating, facilitating and funding the project with DPI—providing technical input and advice. As with the cotton industry, it has allowed the grains industry to demonstrate good environmental management to governments and the wider community. As improved practices have been more widely adopted, it has meant that off-site impacts from cropping have been significantly reduced, with positive outcomes for the quantities of sediment and chemicals making their way into waterways and ultimately out to the Great Barrier Reef. Since its inception about 75% of the Fitzroy NRM Region's grain growers have completed the Grains BMP program.

Mirroring the Grains BMP process, in 2010 work commenced on the development of a grazing BMP, again involving AgForce, FBA and DPI. In the lead-up to this new initiative, DPI had

established a program called CQ BEEF, working with small groups of graziers on issues of common interest. Through group processes and access to technical experts, individual producers would undertake improvements to their grazing enterprises to increase profitability and sustainability.

Best practice can be defined as the standard that a grower who is operating in a sustainable and profitable manner should be aiming to achieve on their property.

An offshoot of this process was the development of specific workshops that offered important training and development for producers. With already well-established partnerships in other areas of NRM activity, it was a natural extension that DPI teamed up with FBA, including its sub-regional partners, to determine which areas to target and attract willing participants. FBA was also able to offer access to funding to support the training program.

With lessons learnt from the cotton and grains BMPs, five modules covering the key components of a beef enterprise were developed through a collaborative approach between technical experts and a reference panel of producers. After some trial runs with test groups, the

modules and self-assessment process commenced in 2012. By 2014, the 100th producer had completed the full program and delivery commenced in two other NRM regions. In 2015, the program accelerated significantly, achieving adoption across many parts of Queensland and within the Fitzroy NRM Region an additional 133 producers completed the program. The following year, this trend continued with a further 169 businesses completing Grazing BMP in the Fitzroy NRM Region and a total of 334 state-wide. Introduced around this same time was an accreditation scheme, whereby individual businesses could put themselves through a process, conducted by independent experts, such that a successful business would then be recognised as having formally achieved the accepted industry standards.

This arduous process is not for everyone, but in 2016–17, 17 businesses achieved accreditation, with a further three businesses receiving re-accreditation.

In 2017, the BMP programs were recognised in the Draft Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan as key measures for agribusiness to improve productivity, profitability and sustainability. Achieving this kind of recognition is no mean feat, and demonstrates the importance of FBA, not only to the Fitzroy NRM Region, but also to the wider NRM community.

Below: Irrigation channel.

Following pages, clockwise from top left: Industry standards workshop for Cotton growers, 2012; Shane Webcke presents on Workplace Health and Safety at a Grazing BMP workshop, 2016; soil testing workshop; Wheat harvesting demonstration; Grains BMP workshop held at Alton Downs, 2016.





Since its inception, about 75% of the Fitzroy NRM Region's grain growers have completed the Grains BMP program.

5.5 TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Another outstanding and on-going achievement by FBA has been its attention to training and development both internally and externally.

Since the mid 1990s, the role of Queensland Government departments has changed considerably, with a reduction in the resources that have been channelled into research, development and extension to the rural sector. This decline

has coincided with the growth and development of regional NRM groups, and over time, groups like FBA have started to fill some of the gaps, particularly in the development and extension area. An example of this from 2009 was FBA's Emerging Leaders Workshop, aimed at helping younger members of the rural community develop their leadership skills. FBA and its

sub-regional partners became actively involved in hosting or running workshops on multiple topics, often in conjunction with departmental people from primary industries, natural resources and environmental protection. Such workshops are often referred to as capacity building, but over the years more than one landholder has reminded those using that expression, that

their capacities are just fine, they just need the opportunity to have them exercised!

As mentioned earlier, FBA also increasingly took on the mantle of facilitating and coordinating the training and development workshops such as Stocktake, fertilizer and chemical management and application, property planning, herd management, business planning and workplace health and safety to complement the BMP processes. As a result, field days which used to be the staple of many a DPI officer, became part and parcel of FBA's NRM delivery. This extended further, into areas such as wetland protection, native grassland protection and setting water quality objectives for regional streams. Over more recent times, FBA has run training and development workshops in conjunction with Landcare groups for volunteers involved with marine debris collection, turtle monitoring and nest protection and weed management along creeks. FBA has also met specific needs of the Indigenous community such as supporting trainees in the Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management course and upskilling Traditional Owners in governance and management.

As part of FBA's Neighbourhood Catchments initiative, training has been

provided to hundreds of landholders in technical skills such as computer mapping, use of GPS technology and pasture budgeting, all of which are essential tools in planning and implementing works under the various incentive schemes funded by the Australian and Queensland governments.

In April 2018, FBA hosted Joel Salatin, the highest production-per-hectare farmer in the USA. Salatin, of Polyface Farms is, to date, FBA's most illustrious presenter.

A series of two-day events were held in Emerald and Rockhampton with a total of 256 attendees. The highly regarded workshops reached land managers responsible for 898 931 hectares, with attendees from as far as New Zealand, Adelaide and the Atheron Tablelands travelling to attend. Topics such as diversification, multi-species farming and direct marketing farms were cited as the key drawcards for attendees.

Closer to home, FBA has made the training and development of its own Board directors and staff a high priority. New directors receive training via an induction process, complete with a director's manual containing the full suite of FBA documents, including constitution, charter, strategies and policies. Directors also

receive training in corporate responsibilities and governance, via the Australian Institute of Company Directors. For staff, a formal induction process is initiated, which includes an introduction to the organisation's comprehensive set of policies, governing areas such as human resource management and workplace health and safety. The strong team culture of FBA is immediately apparent to new arrivals and visitors alike and is regarded a key strength of the organisation. One year contracts and resource constraints limit the amount of formal training and development opportunities that are available for FBA officers, although flexible working conditions and a family friendly environment allow individuals to pursue personal growth and development.



Facing page, from top: Holly Lambert, Elyse Reithmuller, Katie Crozier, Reece Brooks, Joel Salatin, Emma Grezl, Erin Baldwin, Ebony Battersby and Mitch Vallely at the Future Face of Ag workshops with Joel Salatin; Joel Salatin workshop, Rockhampton.



This page, from top: Wetlands tour 2008.; three-legged challenge at the Emerging Leaders workshop in Emerald, 2010; Workshop 1999.

Facing page, from top: FBA Senior Project Officer Cassandra Tracey; Tree planting day with The Caves School Mt Etna, 2016; Aldoga Fire Training, 2018.





Facing page, from top:
 Gully Mitigation Soil Workshop, 2016;
 Marine debris collection day 2016;
 Beach clean-up, 2017.

This page, from top:
 FRCC Mapping Workshop for
 Pineapple Growers, 2003; Gyration
 Field Day 2018; Indigenous
 engagement workshop, 2004.

5.6 INNOVATION & LEARNING

Part of FBA's modus operandi has been to embrace change and 'seize the day'. Sitting outside the government bureaucracy has allowed the organisation to remain organic in its structure and very adaptable to changes in circumstances such as new government policies and programs. This commendable philosophy can expose the organisation from time to time, so, it is vital that it be bold and innovative to stay ahead of the pack.

A good example of this philosophy in action came from the mind of one of FBA's directors, Ross Ingram, who managed a large cropping and grazing operation in the Central Highlands. Ross suggested that interest earned from funds received in advance of payment for completed incentive works should be allocated to a special initiative to encourage the trialling

of innovative projects from across the region. This was the conception of the Innovation Program. After guidelines were established, a call for projects was made through FBA's communication channels. One of the earliest projects funded from this program, was an innovative idea by Andrew and Jocie Bate from Gindie, south of Emerald. Having grappled with the cost and problems of bigger and more expensive farming equipment—not to mention the time spent sitting at the controls of this gear—their idea was for an entirely different concept—small, lightweight synchronised machines operating simultaneously courtesy of robotic technology. They came up with name of 'swarm farming', and five years after receiving the seed funding from FBA, SwarmFarm Robotics was launched as a commercial venture. As well as

reduced labour and equipment costs, the technology offers the potential for major environmental outcomes due to reduced chemical usage, and damage to soils from compaction and erosion.

Another characteristic of an adaptable and innovative organisation is that it learns from its endeavours. Such was the case for FBA, when in 2009, it established a separate business arm, called Source. Source was designed as a stand-alone business, with its own constitution, board of management and manager, embarking on a process of attracting funds for specific projects, from a wider array of external sources. After several years of operation, including the successful delivery of multiple projects, a review of Source was undertaken. As a result, the FBA Board decided that, while the venture had some strengths, the overall results

did not reach the desired performance levels, and thus it was timely to close Source and adopt a different model for future external funding arrangements.

In Chapter 3, FBA's great success in forming and maintaining partnerships across the full gamut of Federal, State and Local Governments, industry groups, community groups, and

Indigenous groups, other regional NRM groups as well as individual landholders has been discussed in some detail. However, it is worth repeating that the partnership and alliance approaches adopted by FBA have been highly innovative and, to a large extent, the reason that its performance has continued to be rated so highly by independent reviewers and

fundors. The culture of innovation has enabled FBA to adapt and respond to several funding crises (usually resulting from changes of government and new priorities for where funds are directed), a number of destructive natural events, and internal changes of strategy and direction as greater knowledge and understanding of NRM needs have emerged.



Sitting outside the government bureaucracy has allowed the organisation to remain organic in its structure and very adaptable to changes in circumstances such as new government policies and programs.



Clockwise, from top left: Former FBA Director, Ross Ingram; Andrew and Jocie Bate (centre) are congratulated for their success by CEO, Paul Birch (right) and Deb Frecklington MP (left); the innovative SwarmFarm robot.

5.7 COMMUNICATION & ENGAGEMENT

Ever since Jane Muller started producing Fitzroy Catch-up in 1996, FBA has made communication with its regional constituency a priority. As technology and digital connectivity advanced, FBA was quick to embrace the use of email, the creation of a web address, teleconferencing, regular newsletters and, more recently, a Facebook page (I believe in a sustainable CQ found at #fitzroybasin). It was a bold move to commission the documentation of the 2007 history and to share the story of the group from its inception to its tenth anniversary.

For many years, a dedicated Communications Officer position has been part of the workforce, and a look back at the media outputs and FBA 'presence' demonstrates an amazing amount of information flowing outwards each year. In addition, it

shows just how far reaching FBA endeavours have become with a whole host of activity scattered across the community. As an example, the 2016–17 Annual Report states that FBA worked with 81 delivery partners, engaged 45 schools, 1232 landholders and reached 92 regional centres and townships.

In 2018, FBA hosted an interactive stall at the triennial Beef Australia event in Rockhampton, with over 4000 visits to the stall by school students over the week's duration.

The students were able to engage in hands-on learning with FBA's river modelling table, and ask staff questions about ecosystem health.

With its devolved operations via the sub-regional groups and a long-held commitment to engaging with its regional community, FBA has excellent connectivity with

In 2016–17 FBA worked with 81 delivery partners, engaged 45 schools, 1232 landholders and reached 92 regional centres and townships.

its stakeholders. Other sections of this history have highlighted FBA's formal engagement processes. For example, developing regional plans demonstrate FBA's preparedness to consult comprehensively with attention to both the geographic spread and the wide suite of interest groups. Previously mentioned has been FBA's ability to react in times of crisis by putting its 'bread and butter' operations on hold while addressing emergency needs after floods and cyclones. It is not possible to achieve results at such times unless you have established connections with your community, which has been tested several times over in the last ten years. FBA's recognition of the importance of engagement has seen it create a dedicated Engagement Manager position.

The same philosophy applies to the external world, with FBA playing a prominent role in the Regional Groups

Collective, directly engaged through its partnerships with government, industry and interest groups and well-connected to its funders, via both formal reporting processes and informal interactions. This allows FBA to be both responsive to needs and proactive in reacting to emerging issues. This responsiveness has been rewarded through funding in 2016/17 for professional development for extension staff from six organisations and involvement in the Queensland Government's strategic cropping lands program with the purpose of mitigating loss of productive agricultural land to the mining industry. Most recently, FBA's proactive nature has seen the organisation's involvement in an increasingly diverse range of activities such as:

- coastal dune restoration,
- fish passage projects,
- habitat restoration at Mt Etna,
- marine debris collection days with Darumbal youth,

- protection of Fitzroy River Turtle nesting sites,
- marine turtle monitoring and, recently
- a special initiative aimed at improved understanding of the Palm Tree and Robinson Creek wetlands and their conservation significance.

Facing page: Cone fishway, an element of a fishway installed at the Fitzroy River Barrage, Rockhampton in 2016.

This page: Cassandra Tracey and Jodi Liddell (Ecosure) at a habitat restoration site, Mount Etna 2016.

Following page, from top: Marine debris collected from Five Rocks in 2017; anti-predation device for turtle nests; flatback turtle hatchlings emerging.





5.8 INFORMATION & KNOWLEDGE

Across central Queensland, the 1990s were a period of major activity in the preparation of plans and studies covering water management, biodiversity, vegetation management, local government planning schemes and economic development. This was timely for the newly created FBA, because it provided access to a wealth of data and information that had previously been rather sketchy and scattered. Not that FBA had been without its own contributions—as the background papers that were prepared for its 1992 and 1997 symposiums provided a substantial collection of information. These studies and plans, from multiple organisations and individuals, were important sources of information during the development of the first CQSS, although it was still apparent that there were overlaps and large gaps in

the data and it was a bit like ‘herding cats’ trying to bring what was available all into one collection.

In recognition of the importance of information flow, FBA created an Information Coordinator position (Suzie Christensen) in 1999. Meanwhile, the Department of Natural Resources suggested the Fitzroy Integrated Research, Development, Extension and Adoption initiative (FIRDEA) as a mechanism to improve linkages and stop overlap and duplication. This was complemented by an idea from Professor Geoff Lawrence to establish a Central Queensland Regional Information Service, for gathering regional data and helping the flow of information among regional communities. Establishing this became a task for the Information Coordinator. The reader could be forgiven

for thinking that the very mechanisms that were being suggested to overcome confusion, were indeed a rather confusing tangle in themselves. However, funding was eventually received for FIRDEA, enabling a Science Manager (Claire Rodgers) to be employed, with a focus on developing a Research and Development Plan for the region. Thus, commenced a commitment from FBA that has continued ever since, which is to ensure that the latest scientific knowledge is integrated into the planning and implementation efforts.

There is probably no better example in FBA’s history than in 2003, when there was an imperative to update the regional plan. FBA employed the Cooperative Research Centre for Coastal Zone Estuary and Waterway Management (Coastal CRC) to prepare a detailed set

At over 156,000 square kilometres, Fitzroy Basin is the largest river system draining to Australia’s east coast and the Great Barrier Reef lagoon. 90% of the landscape is used to produce food and fibre, and Fitzroy Basin is also home to nearly 25% of Qld’s cattle (over 2.6 million head, which is more than the whole of the Northern Territory).

of information papers as background information, prior to embarking on an extensive engagement process across the region to incorporate local experience and traditional knowledge with the science. The targets set in the resultant CQSS2 plan had a commendable mixture of inputs, and achieving regional endorsement was much easier compared to the first plan. An interesting outcome from this exercise was that rather than have a stand-alone mechanism like FIRDEA, science was now firmly embedded as an underpinning part of almost all FBA activities.

FBA has an enviable record of embracing the latest science and technology to improve its services. In 2010, FBA in collaboration with the Queensland Government, started using a tool called VegMachine that combined satellite imagery mapping and historical data to determine

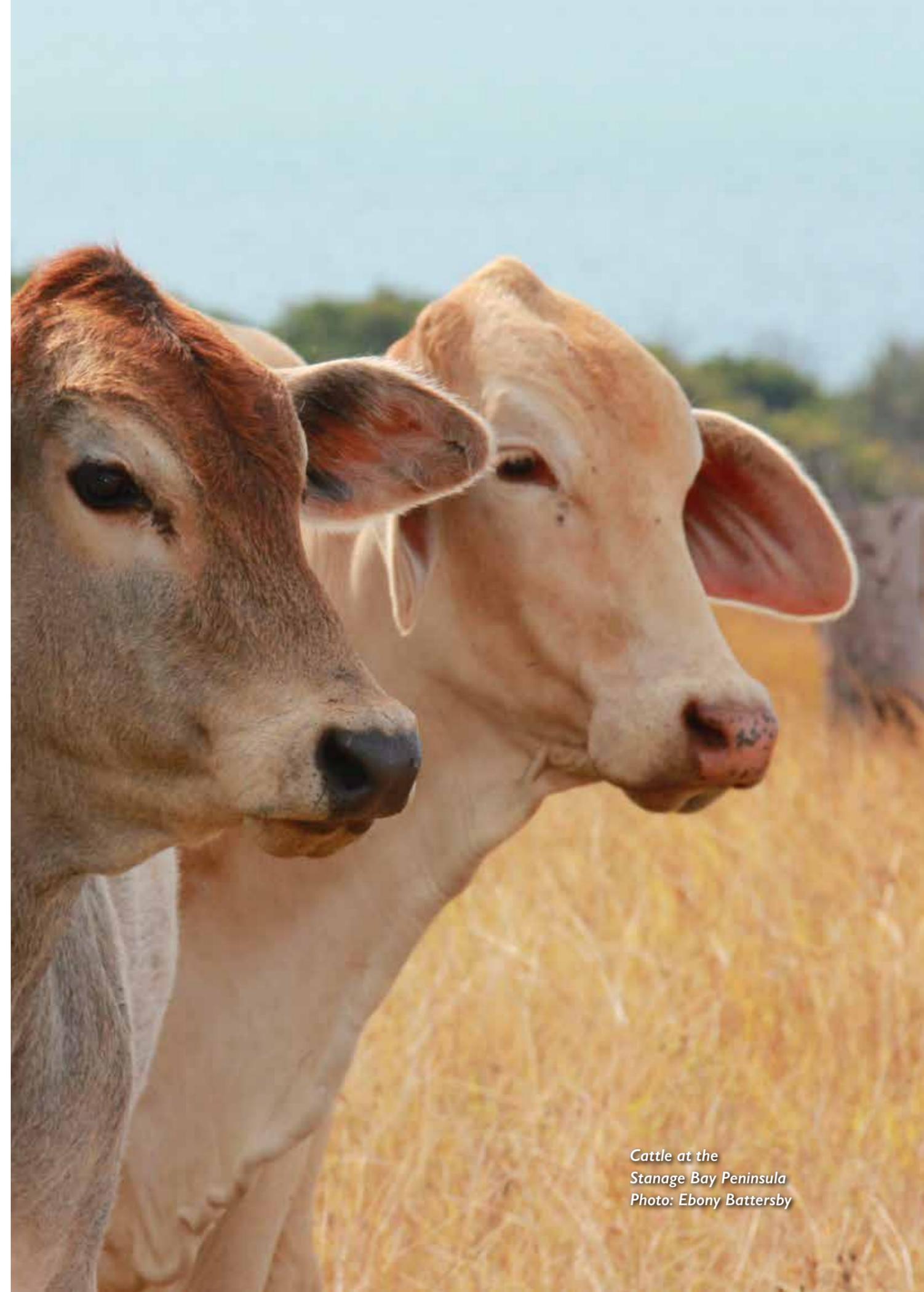
changes in ground cover over time. This information was used in conjunction with land type studies and software called PEPER (modelling sediment reduction), to help target projects to areas where the greatest change can be effected.

More recently, the Fitzroy Water Quality Improvement Plan 2015 (WQIP:2015) and the Central Queensland Sustainability Strategy (CQSS:2030) followed a similar path so that the best available science could guide future investment. The advantage this time around is that the plans are online resources, and can be easily updated, accessed and reviewed as new science becomes available. Another significant step forward with these plans is that, in addition to having science available to set targets, it can now be used to better identify priority areas for action and, incorporating economic

analysis tools, can point to where the best value for money is being achieved.

...science was now firmly embedded as an underpinning part of almost all FBA activities.

FBA Project Officer, Emma Grezl at Beef Week, Rockhampton 2018



*Cattle at the Stange Bay Peninsula
Photo: Ebony Battersby*

KEY PEOPLE

It is problematic when writing a book of an organisation's history to single out individuals, especially when it is an organisation like FBA, which has such a strong culture of teamwork, community involvement and

a large turnover of people at both Board and officer level. While running the risk of excluding some significant figures, the following snapshots provide a brief synopsis of people who have had a major impact within

'the' FBA 'family'. Some of this information has been taken from Webster's history, while the remainder is from more recent sources.



Jane Muller (1997–2000)

Jane was FBA's first full-time employee and the person synonymous with the production of the first regional strategy. The project officer role was Jane's initial job on graduating from university. She did not have a rural background, and by her own admission, lacked a detailed knowledge of the region. However, what she did have in abundance was energy, enthusiasm and a delightful personality that quickly won over people from all parts of central Queensland.

Jane's preparedness to travel the region and engage communities and organisations throughout became the blueprint for those who followed in her footsteps. Her other significant legacy was in overseeing the transformation of FBA from a fledgling organisation with good intentions, to one that was representing NRM interests in the region and therefore the organisation of choice to lead the work under the NHT program.

*Kookaburra at Blackdown
Tablelands National Park
Photo: Ebony Battersby*



Professor Geoff Lawrence (1997–2002)

Geoff was the original ‘godfather’ of FBA, providing a physical home for the organisation at Central Queensland University and Rockhampton Mall providing access to university resources that enabled the group to function. He was also an important figure in the leadership of the organisation, though never aspiring to assume the President/Chair position. Through his professional background in the social

sciences, Geoff had a second-to-none understanding of the processes that were unfolding via the Australian and Queensland governments Landcare and ICM programs. He could clearly see the importance that the community-led process that emerged in the form of FBA needed to be preserved and enhanced. Geoff’s other significant contribution was in mentoring and guiding Jane Muller and other officers as the group started to expand.



Suzie Christensen (1999–2012)

Suzie joined FBA in a junior officer capacity, after serving as the Project Officer for the Marlborough Landcare Group. Suzie hails from the region, and her family have an agricultural background, which gave her an intimate understanding of issues facing producers. After Jane Muller’s departure, Suzie became Regional Coordinator, and was soon in her element, engaging with community groups about the regional plan. She formed a formidable team with Barbara Wildin, and was a well-respected

figure among her peers across the other 13 NRM regions. Suzie became FBA’s second CEO and served in that capacity for eight years. Suzie’s great legacy to FBA was the strong team that she forged as the organisation expanded several times over from when she started. Like her mentor Barbara, Suzie had a good sense of community and government needs, as well as the nous and natural leadership abilities to position the organisation to deliver what was required.



Barbara Wildin (2000–2005)

Barbara came to chair FBA having just retired from Livingstone Shire Council, after nine years as mayor and three as a councillor. Barbara was a central Queenslander to the core, having grown up and married in the region. Her five years as chair were transformational. It was through her leadership that FBA established itself as an organisation that all three levels of government, industry groups, community groups and landholders

recognised and respected. Barbara had some wonderful gifts that she used to great effect on behalf of FBA. A grass roots politician, she had a wonderful understanding of her community and the inherent need to engage with people and other organisations, listening to their concerns and messages. She then had the ability to take those messages to the highest places, advocating for her region and its needs.



Peter Dunne (2000–2010)

Peter comes from a farming/ grazing family that has been part of central Queensland for several generations. With a base at Duaringa, Peter owns and manages several farming and grazing properties, spread across the region and has a long and continuing relationship with the Landcare movement. Peter became a familiar figure at FBA meetings from its earliest days, and eventually, was elected as a director of the FBA board. His great gift to FBA was his willingness to contribute his knowledge

and understanding of farming and grazing matters along with his strong connectivity with the rural community. At a time of crisis, Peter put aside his business interests and his personal reluctance for leadership to assume the role of FBA Chair. Having seen FBA through its difficult time, Peter happily passed the baton to others and resumed his former role. At the time of writing, Peter is still an active member of the central Queensland rural community as well as a proud life member of FBA.



Ted Scott (2006–2010)

Ted was enticed to join FBA following a long and distinguished career in the Queensland Power Industry, including his role as CEO of Stanwell Corporation. Ted, ever humble about his career, introduced himself at his first Board meeting as an engineer, with fairly mediocre skills, but being pretty good at human resource management. He had in fact left Stanwell to establish his own consultancy business, specialising in coaching of senior executives. It was those HR skills, and some not inconsiderable business ability, that he put

to work for FBA. He was not interested in being the face of FBA like Barbara Wildin, but his legacy was in enhancing the performance of the organisation - commencing with the governance of the Board, a new constitution and leadership training. Ted also presided over the establishment of Source as FBA looked to gain greater financial independence. Ted also envisioned the creation of Board sub-committees devolving greater responsibility to Board directors.



Charlie Wilson (2006–2013)

Charlie is another producer with a long-standing presence in central Queensland. After he and wife Kay established a successful irrigated cotton business in the Emerald Irrigation Area, Charlie served as chair of Cotton Australia. He was also active in regional planning processes, representing agricultural interests on the first Water Allocation and Management Plan Advisory Committee, established for

the Fitzroy Basin. Charlie was voted onto the FBA Board in 2006 and served as deputy Chair under Ted Scott, before assuming the Chair role from 2010 to 2012. Charlie's special gift to FBA was his ability to re-forge the links with the rural community, and to demonstrate to his rural colleagues that a leadership role within FBA was an important and worthwhile pursuit.



Paul Birch (2008–Present)

When Paul arrived in central Queensland seeking a sea change from a busy corporate life in Sydney, the last thing on his mind was that he would work for a regional NRM group. But a vacancy in the Business Manager role saw him employed at FBA while setting up home near the fairways of the Capricorn Resort. In 2010, Paul was elevated to the role of Chief Operating Officer, and in 2012, became CEO. By his own admission, his

knowledge of NRM matters was very limited, but he had a strong background in business and finance. At a time when the Australian Government was demanding high levels of governance and accountability, Paul had the right credentials to lead FBA. Paul was the architect of the FLOW Visitors Centre and chairs the Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership (GHHP), with both initiatives having increased the recognition and reputation of FBA.



Ian MacGibbon (2010–2017)

Ian took over the chairing role from Charlie Wilson and continued the proud tradition of rural leadership at the helm of FBA. With a background in agribusiness, and a successful grazing property north of Marlborough, Ian had been a member of the Reference Committee assisting in the development of the Grazing BMP. Shortly after he became Chair, the government changed at a federal level and Ian, in

conjunction with the CEO, was able to demonstrate to government bureaucrats in Canberra, the effectiveness of the previous investment in Reef-related activities, and the need to continue the program. Subsequently, Ian became a prominent figure in the Regional Groups Collective, ensuring that the partnerships between Australian and Queensland governments and regional NRM groups continued to thrive.



Cathy Herbert (2005–2013)
Ian Herbert (2013–present)

Cathy joined the FBA Board at a time when the Australian Government was insistent that conservation interests should be part of the Board mix. Cathy was a member of the Capricorn Conservation Council and, together with husband Ian, had been actively involved in hands-on environmental work for many years (including upon their own property near Mount Morgan). Cathy played a significant role by being the voice of views that were not always prominent in the Board's thoughts. By probing and questioning, she brought a greater consciousness of environmental issues, even though at times she probably felt she was fighting against the tide. During her long commitment to FBA, she took on the role of chairing the NRM sub-committee, demonstrating the value of having a broad range of interests as part of the Board

make-up. Cathy served for a total of nine years, and her successor was husband Ian. Ian spent most of his working life with Ergon Energy, having graduated as an electrical engineer, but his passion for the environment was never overshadowed by his career. Ian carried on Cathy's tradition of scrutinising matters coming before the Board, and with his technical background, has often been able to offer some alternative perspectives. It was Ian who was responsible for working out the system for Board directors' terms in office, a seemingly simple matter far more complicated than first impressions, and was dutifully attended by FBA's 'resident' engineer (much to the relief of the other Board members)The two-for-one 'deal' that FBA has received from the dedication of the Herbert duo has been a wonderful legacy, something unlikely to be repeated.



Sean Conaghan (2010 – present)

Sean joined the Board at the same time as Ian MacGibbon as new blood from the rural sector boosted FBA's ranks. Sean and his family own and operate the highly successful 'Barmount Station' Feedlot near the junction of the Isaac and Connors Rivers and he has an intimate knowledge of the Fitzroy Basin. After a couple of years gaining experience as a Board

director, Sean took over from Cathy Herbert as Chair of the NRM sub-committee. He continued this role until 2017 when at the October AGM he became the sixth Chair of the FBA. They don't come any more local than Sean and, with his love for the Basin in combination with his business expertise, another period of quality FBA leadership is now underway.



People in Leadership Roles

Life Members

- Prof. Geoff Lawrence 2002
- Sandy Paton 2005
- Christine Donaldson 2005
- Barbara Wildin 2006
- Peter Dunne 2010
- Charlie Wilson 2013
- John E. Grimes 2018
- Ian MacGibbon 2018

Presidents of FCCG

- Greig Lawrie 1993–96
- Wendy Tyrrell 1996–98
- Suzy Watson 1998–99
- Kevin Cotterell 1999–00

Chairs of FBA

- Barbara Wildin 2000–04
- Peter Dunne 2005–06
- Ted Scott 2006–10
- Charlie Wilson 2010–13
- Ian MacGibbon 2013–17
- Sean Conaghan 2017–current

CEOs

- Mike Merrin 2002–04
- Suzie Christensen 2004–12
- Paul Birch 2012–present

FBA Employees (10+ years)

- Michael Bent
- Paul Birch
- Rachel Bryan
- Suzie Christensen
- Pamela Jeffrey
- Nathan Johnston
- Jill Lyons
- Sheree Press
- Peter Smith
- Shannon van Nunen
- Shane Westley



*View from Mt Larcom
Photo: Gladstone Area
Promotion and Development
Ltd (GAPDL)*



FBA's 21st celebrations with Iman Traditional Dancers at Guluguba, 2018.

FUTURE FOCUS

It might well be the case that the only certainties in life are death and taxes, but at the time of writing this book, the future of FBA, at least in the medium term, is looking bright. The Australian Government continues to invest significantly in NRM, with a special focus on measures to reduce impacts of past and current human activity on the Great Barrier Reef and FBA has a strong reputation among funders, peers and its partners.

As the achievements of FBA outlined in the preceding pages attest, the organisation has been delivering excellent value for money. With its culture of teamwork, adaptability and innovation, it is well equipped to meet the challenges that may come its way in the years ahead.

A significant change is already in the pipeline,

through the assimilation of the sub-regional delivery process within FBA—a move designed to reduce the costs of delivery. There is some risk in modifying what has been a successful delivery model stretching back 20 years, although key personnel and experience are mostly being retained in the changeover, and the savings achieved can be redirected to on-ground operations.

At a state level, pressure is mounting to alter the long-established model of 14 regional NRM groups. As one of the larger NRM groups, FBA has shown itself to be a willing partner to help some of its smaller counterparts, with Desert Channels Queensland to the west and Burnett-Mary Regional Group to the south, having been the recipients of FBA knowledge and expertise

in business practices and delivery of specific programs (2018 Working in Partnership). Additionally, the Reef Alliance has demonstrated that closer affiliation of groups rallying together over common issues can be a catalyst for major NRM initiatives, enabling accelerated activity and progress that is highly attractive to funders. A new model may see amalgamations of groups, or at the very least re-alignment or integration of some groups.

FBA's formal partnerships have demonstrated that significant additional investment in, and action on, specific issues can be very important at points in time. This model seems to be very attractive to the corporate world when the impacts of industry come under intense scrutiny.



However, partnerships of this type are not intended to be permanent fixtures, so it will be important that FBA is conscious of the need to either wind up its involvement in these activities as their usefulness passes, or adapt/improve them to meet changing circumstances.

Crystal ball-gazing when dealing with mother nature and world affairs can be a daunting prospect, but FBA has done its best during its 21 years. A couple of examples of FBA attempting to be responsive to issues include the opportunity it saw to get involved in carbon trading. Another was exploring mutually beneficial use of land for agriculture and mining. Trying to position the organisation with emerging issues comes on top of the challenges of changes in government policy, which alter where the emphasis is being placed on matters. Unfortunately, government policy is a moving feast and

will undoubtedly remain a matter that requires constant attention in the future. The lesson to be learnt from these examples is, while it is important to be alert to new or emerging opportunities, FBA must never lose sight of the core issues and needs of its regional community. The community is the reason for its existence and will remain so in the future.

FBA has been an exemplary training ground for young graduates entering the workforce. This has created some complexities due to high turnover rates, as Gen Ys and Millennials quickly move on to explore other parts of the world, but it has also added vibrancy and enthusiasm that provides the organisation with a future focus, helping combat the complacency that can develop when people become too settled and comfortable. Based on the high-performance levels achieved

over many years, there appears to be no imperative to change the recruitment and other human resource practices as they currently stand.

It is an adage that those who fail to plan, plan to fail—and as discussed in Chapter 3, FBA has a proud history of undertaking strategic and other forms of forward-planning at regular intervals. The established practice of reviewing strategic plans regularly every two to three years and updating them every five might be judged too frequent in some organisations, but given the three year political cycle, and evidence of how quickly the NRM agenda has changed in the past, there is every reason to continue the current practice. Likewise, the ten-year period for renewal of regional plans has served the Fitzroy NRM region well. The one warning note is that success in the past is no guarantee





of success in the future, so FBA must avoid becoming too formulaic in its approach to planning, and always leave itself capacity to address the emergent or unexpected that is just around the corner.

FBA's future is tied to its current vision—inspired and empowered communities who value our natural assets—and mission—to empower our region with the resources, knowledge and skills to maintain our natural assets for future

generations. These statements are supported by six values: Accountability; Innovation; Teamwork; Passion; Integrity; and Empowerment. In the pages of this history, these powerful values have been demonstrated time and again. They have served the organisation well over its 21 years and with an ongoing commitment to them, there is every reason to be optimistic about the continued success of FBA.

Previous pages, clockwise from top left: Iman Traditional Dancers celebrate FBA's 21st at Guluguba, 2018; Aerial of Canarvon Gorge National Park (Photo: Tourism Queensland); Clam Bay, Great Keppel Island (Photo: Tourism Queensland); Iman Traditional Dancers celebrate FBA's 21st at Guluguba, 2018.

Facing page: Rockhampton Regional Councillor Drew Wickerson and Livingstone Shire Councillor Tom Wyatt cut the cake at one of FBA's 21st celebrations in 2018.

This page: FBA work in partnership with Burnett Mary Regional Group, Desert Channels Queensland and Gidarjil Indigenous Organisation Queensland, 2018.

The community is the reason for its existence and will remain so in the future.



Inspired and empowered communities who value our natural assets—and mission—to empower our region with the resources, knowledge and skills to maintain our natural assets for future generations.

These statements are supported by six values: *Accountability*; *Innovation*; *Teamwork*; *Passion*; *Integrity*; and *Empowerment*.



*Wild Cattle Creek,
Tannum Sands
Photo: Gladstone Area
Promotions and
Development (GAPDL)*



Humpback whale at home
in Keppel Bay
Photo: Pacific Pixels



ACRONYMS

AGM Annual General Meeting	CQSS:2030 Central Queensland Sustainability Strategy 2030	GHHP Gladstone Healthy Harbour Partnership
BMP Best Management Practices	CQU Central Queensland University	GIS Geographic Information System
CEO Chief Executive Officer	CRC Cooperative Research Centre	GPS Global Positioning System
CfoC Caring for Our Country	DCCA Dawson Catchment Coordinating Association	ICM Integrated Catchment Management
CHRRUP Central Highlands Regional Resource Use Planning Cooperative	DPI Department of Primary Industries (now called Department of Agriculture and Fisheries)	NAPSWQ National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality
Coastal CRC Cooperative Research Centre for Coastal Zone, Estuaries and Waterway Management	EHP Department of Environment and Heritage Protection	NHT Natural Heritage Trust
COO Chief Operating Officer	FBA Fitzroy Basin Association Inc.	NHT2 Natural Heritage Trust Mark 2
CQ Central Queensland	FCCG Fitzroy Catchment Coordinating Group	NRM Natural Resource Management
CQ BEEF Central Queensland Better Economic and Environmental Future	FIRDEA Fitzroy Integrated Research Development Extension and Adoption	RGC Regional Groups Collective (now called NRMRQ)
CQSS Central Queensland Strategy for Sustainability	FPRH Fitzroy Partnership for River Health	TOPP Traditional Owners Property Planning
CQSS2 Central Queensland Strategy for Sustainability – 2004 and beyond	FRCC Fitzroy River and Coastal Catchments	WQIP:2015 Water Quality Improvement Plan 2015
		WWF Worldwide Fund for Nature



APPENDICES

*Internationally significant
Ramsar wetlands are
located inshore of
Shoalwater and Corio Bay
Photo: Queensland Government*

Appendix A: CQSS:2030 Strategies

Asset	Key attributes	Objective	#	Strategy
Soil	Soil quality	Maintain the extent and condition of productive land	S1	Build knowledge about soil health management techniques.
			S2	Promote and support land use planning that identifies and preserves high quality soils.
			S3	Promote land and water management practices that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * maintain ground cover * minimise risks of soil loss and degradation * increase soil carbon * prevent and minimise impacts of salinity and acid sulphate soils * minimise contamination * improve soil physical, biological and chemical health
	Rehabilitate degraded lands	S4	Build knowledge about the extent of degraded agricultural lands and rehabilitation techniques	
		S5	Build knowledge about effective mine site rehabilitation	
		S6	Promote and support planning that identifies and prioritises the protection of vulnerable soils and the restoration of degraded soils.	
		S7	Promote land and water management practices that restore degraded sites and manage vulnerable soils appropriately.	
	Ground-cover	Manage groundcover to protect soil resources	S8	Build knowledge of end-of-dry season groundcover standards by land type.
			S9	Promote and support property planning that effectively monitors and maintains groundcover standards
			S10	Promote land and water management practices to maintain groundcover.

Asset	Key attributes	Objective	#	Strategy
Groundwater	Water levels and pressure	Manage groundwater to maintain levels and/or pressures long-term	S11	Build knowledge about sustainable long-term use of groundwater resources
			S12	Assess the cumulative risk of impacts to groundwater from resources and energy industries (extraction & disposal)
			S13	Monitor and report groundwater levels
	Groundwater quality	Manage groundwater quality	S14	Promote integrated water resource planning (ground and surface water)
			S15	Promote land management practices to maintain/restore vegetation in areas of salinity risk
			S16	Promote and support water use efficiency and water management practices to reduce demands on groundwater, manage salinity risk and avoid contamination
			S17	Assess the cumulative risk of impacts to groundwater from resources and energy industries (extraction & disposal)
	Groundwater dependent ecosystems	Protect the extent and condition of groundwater dependent ecosystems	S18	Promote land management practices to maintain/restore vegetation in areas of salinity risk
			S19	Map, assess and build knowledge about groundwater dependent ecosystems.
	Aquatic ecosystems	Maintain the extent and condition of aquatic ecosystems	S20	Develop and promote land and water management practices to protect/maintain/restore critical groundwater dependent ecosystems.
S21			Identify priority species/ecosystems and critical refugia to maintain viable populations.	
Freshwater rivers and wetlands	Riparian ecosystems	Maintain the extent and condition of riparian ecosystems	S22	Understand the cumulative impacts of energy, resources and agriculture on flow, water quality and river health.
	Wetland ecosystems	Maintain the extent and condition of wetland ecosystems	S23	Promote and support the adoption of land and water management practices that protect/maintain/restore critical refugia, riparian ecosystems and wetlands
	Flows	Manage flows	S24	Promote integrated water resource planning (ground and surface water)
			S25	Promote and support water use efficiency measures to reduce water demand
	Water quality	Manage water quality	S26	Reduce the impact of barriers to aquatic connectivity.
S27	Promote and support land and water management practices to maintain water quality within appropriate guidelines.			

Asset	Key attributes	Objective	#	Strategy	
Terrestrial ecosystems	Terrestrial ecosystems	Maintain the extent, composition, structure and function of terrestrial ecosystems	S28	Understand new habitat formation and develop land management practices conserving biodiversity values	
			S29	Understand the drivers of declines in stronghold populations	
			S30	Identify priority species/ecosystems and critical refugia to maintain viable populations.	
			S31	Promote and support vegetation management planning	
			S32	Identify and promote land and water management practices to protect/maintain/restore critical refugia & ecosystem function	
	Coastal and marine ecosystems	Terrestrial landscape patterns (corridors)	Manage habitat connectivity to sustain natural values	S33	Promote land and water management practices to minimise the impacts of weed and pest species
				S34	Identify and promote land and water management practices to improve habitat connectivity at the local and regional scale.
				S35	Assess impacts of rising sea levels/extreme events on coastal human uses and natural values.
				S36	Assess risks of the cumulative impacts of ports, infrastructure and coastal development on coastal and marine ecosystems.
				S37	Identify and prioritise high value coastal ecosystems for protection and restoration.
Coastal and marine ecosystems	Estuarine and shoreline ecosystems	Protect/maintain/restore extent and condition of estuarine and shoreline ecosystems	S38	Promote land and water management practices to reduce sediment, nutrient and pesticide runoff from catchments.	
			S39	Promote land and water management practices that improve water use efficiency	
	Flows	Manage water flows to sustain human use and natural values	S40	Reduce the impact of barriers to aquatic connectivity.	
			S41	Promote water use planning to maintain timing and volumes of flow to maintain ecosystem health	
	Estuarine and marine water quality	Manage water quality to sustain human use and natural values	S42	Promote and support climate adaptation planning	
	Shoreline buffers	Manage the coastal shoreline to buffer the impacts of sea level rise and extreme weather events			

Asset	Key attributes	Objective	#	Strategy
Climate and air	Air quality	Manage air quality (gaseous and particulate matter) in priority areas	S43	Support and promote industry management practices to maintain air quality within appropriate guidelines.
			S44	Monitor and communicate trends in carbon emissions.
	Atmospheric carbon	Manage atmospheric carbon emissions	S45	Promote and support mitigation actions including carbon sequestration and emissions reduction.
			S46	Assess and report climate data (trends, extreme events and ocean changes)
	Climate elements	Understand and respond to trends in temperature	S47	Build and share understanding of the implications of climate change for regional natural resource assets, communities and industries
			S48	Research climate adaptation responses for vulnerable industries and ecosystems.
			S49	Promote and support climate adaptation planning at the national, state, regional, sectoral and enterprise scales.
	Ocean changes	Understand and respond to changes in sea level and tidal/storm surges	S50	Support innovation and dissemination of practices to manage climate risks (climate adaptation), across all sectors.
			S51	Support innovation and dissemination of practices to reduce emissions and sequester carbon (climate mitigation), across all sectors.

Strategic Plan

2016-2020



Fitzroy Basin Association Incorporated (FBA) is the lead natural resource management (NRM) body for Central Queensland.

Our region extends over 156,000km², from Nebo in the north to Injune in the south, and west to the Drummond Range. This includes the Fitzroy and adjacent coastal catchments including Boyne and Calliope.

While historically dominated by agriculture and grazing, significant additional land uses are now evident. The region is now Australia's fastest growing mining and industrial area.

The FBA charter is to ensure the region's natural assets are used wisely and preserved for future generations. We will do this by taking a holistic and business-driven approach to sustainable development.

Our vision

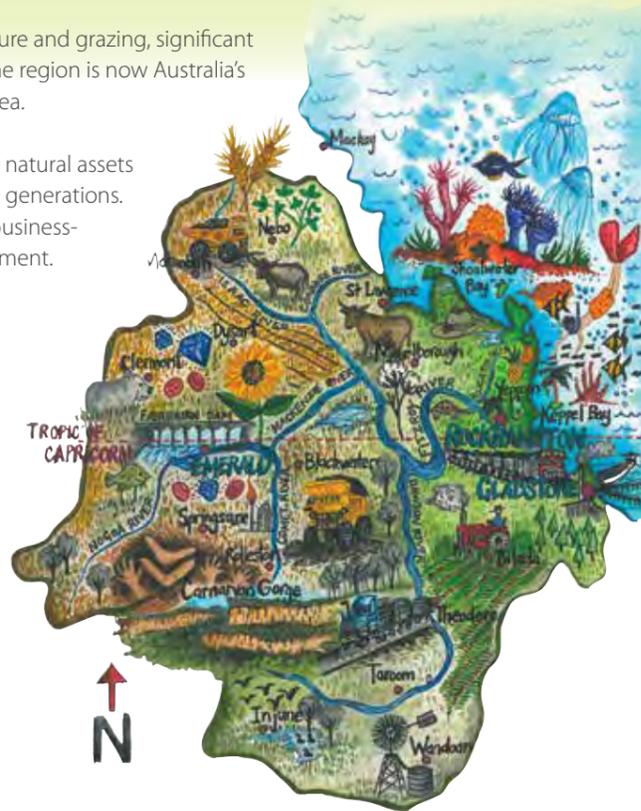
Inspired and empowered communities who value our natural assets.

Our mission

To empower our region with the resources, knowledge and skills to maintain our natural assets for future generations.

Our values

- Empowerment
- Integrity
- Accountability
- Teamwork
- Innovation
- Passion



How we work

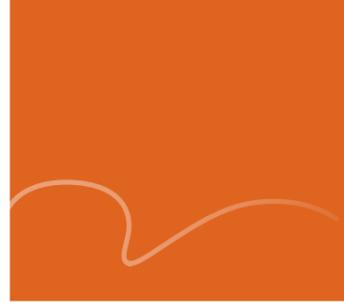
- Community Engagement**
By communicating and connecting with our community stakeholders using mechanisms that are meaningful and relevant to individuals and groups.
- Investment**
By sourcing funding from all available avenues to invest in the protection of our natural assets.
- Partnerships and Alliances**
By identifying and fostering relationships with all levels of government, industry and the community.
- Information and Knowledge**
By securing current information and knowledge and making it easily and readily available.
- Advocacy**
By proactively engaging and influencing all decision makers on priority regional issues.
- Delivery**
By working closely with our Partners, to ensure delivery of the latest, innovative, sustainable practices.
- Continuous Improvement**
By ensuring we constantly review and amend our processes to achieve the best outcomes.

Our seven key goals

- 1 | Community engagement and involvement**
To engage and partner with government, industry and the community to achieve positive landscape outcomes and build knowledge and capacity.
- 2 | Best management practices**
To enhance the productivity and ecological sustainability of the region's natural resources through encouraging the adoption of best management practices based on sound business and environmental principles.
- 3 | Land use planning and management**
To support land use planning and management initiatives with high quality data, information and knowledge systems.
- 4 | Climate change**
To use a holistic and business driven approach to ensure land use practices are adapting to climate change and variability.
- 5 | Long term sustainability planning**
To add value to the 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan by being actively involved in all activities that aim to preserve or improve our natural assets.
- 6 | River health and water quality**
To reduce sediment and contaminants flowing into our waterways and the Great Barrier Reef by building strong relationships with all stakeholders to foster sound land use practices, risk management and transparent reporting.
- 7 | Ecosystems**
To ensure the ecological integrity of our landscape is preserved by delivering programs that assist in the protection of our threatened species and biodiversity.

Fitzroy Basin Association Inc.

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Freshwater lagoons surrounding Rockhampton are essential fish nursery habitats for native fish like barramundi
Photo: Nathan Johnson

FBA would like to thank the following people and organisations for their image contributions to this book.

Capricorn Caves

Capricorn Enterprise

Craig Latta

Ebony Battersby

Gladstone Area Promotion Development
Limited (GAPDL)

Jane Saunders

John Augusteyn

Kelly Butterworth

Nathan Johnston

Nathan White Images

Orin Lucke Blink Photography

Pacific Pixels

Queensland Government

State Library of Queensland

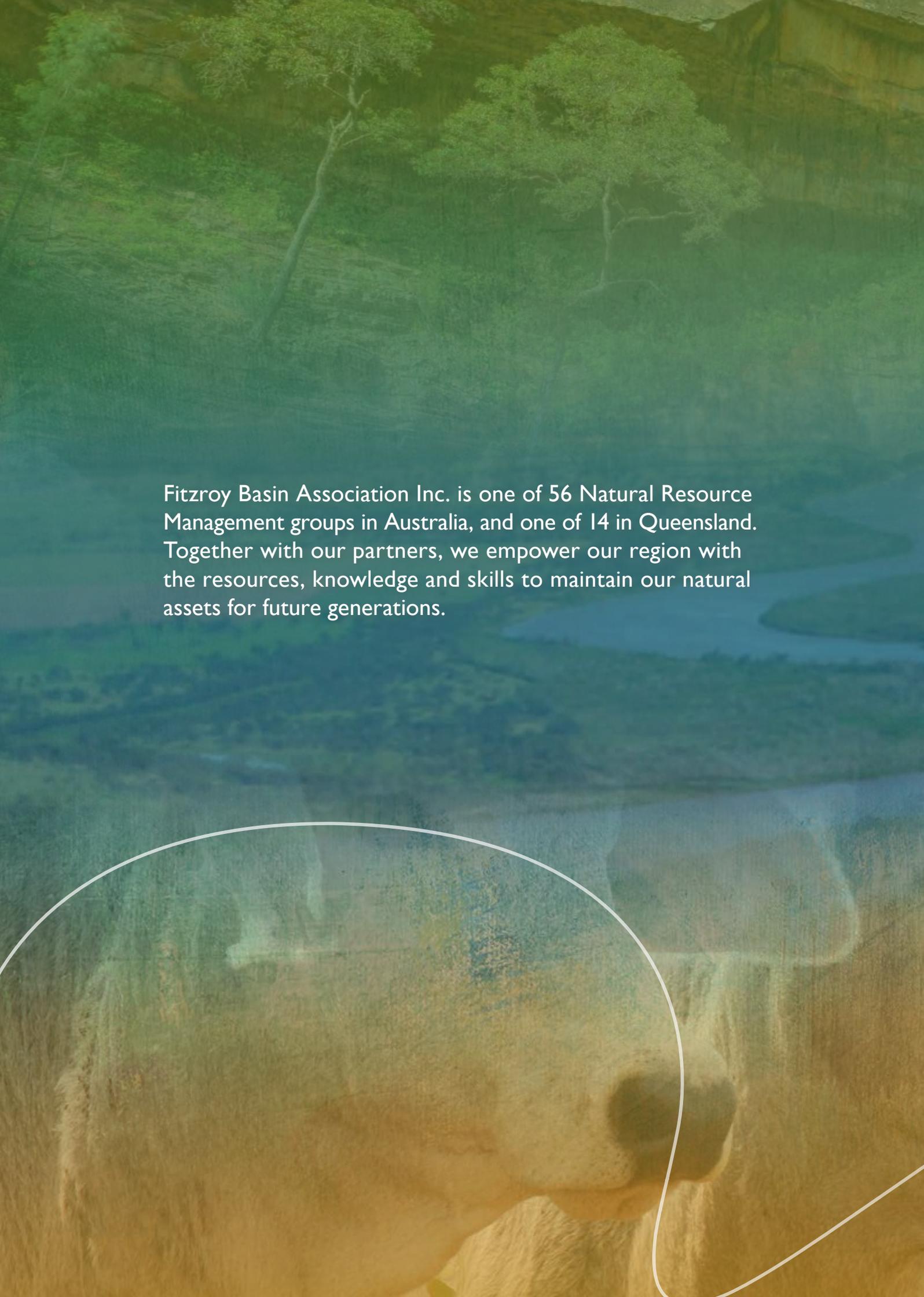
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Starfish
Photo: Pacific Pixels



Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. is one of 56 Natural Resource Management groups in Australia, and one of 14 in Queensland. Together with our partners, we empower our region with the resources, knowledge and skills to maintain our natural assets for future generations.