

Promoting native trees in grazing systems

WHY THIS CENTRAL QUEENSLAND GRAZIER WANTS MORE TREES IN THE Paddock



Anna and Craig Radel's cattle at Attunga, near Biloela



Anna Radel is working to establish more native trees on her property near Biloela.

For central Queensland grazier Anna Radel, establishing more tree coverage in the paddock was about improving groundcover, with the additional hope of bringing back a once well-known koala population.

Anna and her husband Craig run around 600 head of cattle on their 1214ha property Attunga 35km from Biloela and they have another property in the Harrami district they're in the process of regenerating.

The couple bought the property in 2003 from Anna's mother and step-father and have managed it organically since 2009 with a regenerative focus.

When Anna heard about the Queensland Department of Resources' Natural Resources Recovery Program Project "Promoting native trees in agricultural systems" which is coordinated by Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA), she knew she had to be a part of it.

The project aims to reintroduce native trees across farmland in the Banana Shire through supporting graziers to increase the extent of native vegetation on their properties, increasing landholders' skills and knowledge in relation to the importance and use of trees in agricultural systems, and liaising with First Nations to deliver project activities.

"I was looking more for trees to build up a koala corridor and through talking to different people they mentioned that FBA was doing some work so we reached out," Anna said.



Anna Radel and Bethlea Bell, FBA's Science Communication Officer

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Established trees and saplings on the Radel's grazing property near Biloela, Attunga

“Back in the late 1980s they used to bring bus loads of people down this road and you could see koalas.

“When we first came here in the mid-90s you could see koalas, smell koalas and hear koalas but now we rarely see any hint of them.

“We had them, there’s probably still some out there but their habitats and their corridors have definitely been interfered with.”

FBA Science Communication Officer Bethlea Bell was involved in the project and said FBA administered the funding and supported all aspects of the project, liaising with landholders, botanical experts, industry stakeholders and First Nations to deliver the project activities.

“Craig and Anna Radel were involved in a previous iteration of this program and this second revegetation site adjoins their earlier one,” Bethlea said.

“They aspire to increase the extent of koala-friendly trees, with the goal of enhancing the population of this iconic Endangered Species on their property.

“100 koala-friendly Eucalyptus trees were planted, watered and maintained at the site, with fencing to exclude cattle for a number of years.”

Anna and Bethlea said unfortunately the tree planting for this site was immediately followed by five months of dry weather and several frost events, so not all of the 100 trees survived.

“It’s been a ridiculously hot summer,” Anna said.

“They’re holding on, you think they’re dead but after a bit of rain some more come back. But it’s been tough.”

“With replanting and natural regeneration, at least 100 new trees are now thriving within the site and these will certainly be attractive food and habitat for koalas”

“With replanting and natural regeneration, at least 100 new trees are now thriving within the site and these will certainly be attractive food and habitat for koalas,” Bethlea said.

Anna said to improve survival rates for trees in future projects, it would be important to rip up and work on the soil in the paddock before putting them in the ground.

“I think nursery cultured trees going out into an uncultured landscape doesn’t work as well,” she said.

“With benefit of hindsight, aerating and increasing the microbiology of the soil may have made the transition easier. Our biggest challenge was acclimatising the nursery raised trees to paddock conditions in previously farmed soils that were not as active as in other parts of our property.”

Bethlea said despite the few setbacks with dry weather and frost, the project has been a success overall, with more landholders understanding the value of trees in agricultural systems.

“Additional trees and groundcover bring obvious improvements to cattle health, biodiversity and profitability,” Bethlea said.

“The Natural Resources Recovery Program enabled land managers to trial various methods to increase the extent of vegetation in their grazing systems.”

While this project is now complete, in tandem with the Natural Resources Recovery Program, FBA engaged an organisation to develop a spatial model to identify high priority areas for revegetation and the most successful strategies for undertaking this important work.

This Model will guide future projects of this nature throughout the Fitzroy region.

To learn more about how FBA can help you with your property goals, visit our website or call us today.



Cattle at Attunga