

REEF and WETLANDS

Growing a Great Barrier Reef

The world is concerned about the health of the Great Barrier Reef, and so are we.

Over 60% of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park lies off the coast of the Cape York NRM management area. While land managers can't stop bleaching events, we are working together across Cape York to improve the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef catchment.

With each positive action we take to improve Great Barrier Reef water quality, we can help build the resilience of the reef, and perhaps give it a better chance to recover when bleaching events, natural disasters and other significant events occur.

To work collectively on looking after the Reef, organisations from across the state have partnered to form the Reef Alliance. The Reef Alliance secured funding through The Reef Trust Phase III to work on Reef projects within the agriculture industry.

The Reef Trust Phase III Reef Alliance 'Growing a Great Barrier Reef' project is a partnership between agricultural industry and regional NRM bodies, and is facilitated by the Queensland Farmers' Federation (QFF). The common goal is to secure the future health of the Great Barrier Reef. The Reef Alliance Program is funded by the Australian Government Reef Trust.

Vorkshop

Within this state-wide collaboration, Cape York NRM has partnered with Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), South Cape York Catchments (SCYC) and AgForce for The Reef Alliance Cape York Grazing Project.

The project is providing Cape York's grazing land managers with training, technical advice and onground works to improve Great Barrier Reef water quality while contributing to profitability and grazing efficiency.

For land managers who want to know more, the contacts across the partner organisations are listed below. By working together across agencies and the landscape, we can all do our part to look after the Great Barrier Reef.

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Melsonby 3 - 7 July 2017 www.capeyorkfire.com.au

Update from the Directors

Water is an extremely important natural resource. Water is life. We need it to live, and so too does the environment.

However, on Cape York water is not always readily available. While some areas of Cape York have had consistent rain through the wet season, other places are still seeing lagoons half empty, with some creeks still not running.

There is a lot of uncertainty in how the dry season, and seasons to come will play out. It is incredibly important to take the very best care of our water, and to ensure our management practices are the best they can be.

In this Reef and Wetlands edition of Healthy *Country Newsletter*, we celebrate the work that our land managers, farmers, NGOs and Cape York NRM are doing to look after our water and improve Cape York's water quality.

We can all play a part in caring for the Reef, protecting our wetlands, and looking after the land, so that our industries like cattle, horticulture, fishing, carbon sequestration and tourism are sustainable for the generations ahead.

We have so much happening this year – fire management coordination, water quality programs, climate change workshops, finalising our strategic plan, and Cape-wide meetings to inform our Regional Investment Strategy.

You can keep in touch via our website www. capeyorknrm.com.au or follow our updates on Facebook and Twitter @capeyorknrm.

If you live on Cape York and you are not a member, give us a call to join 1300 132 262.

Emma Jackson Chairperson Sector Director - Primary Industries



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Cape York NRM Membership Renewals will be sent to you soon

Your membership is valued

Thank you for your support and involvement in caring for the natural environoment and the sustainable use of Cape York's natural resources

Renewals fall due at 30 June every year

My Cape York Life - sharing your stories with the world

A conversation during a 2016 road trip inspired a wonderful collection of story-telling by some of Cape York's ingenious land managers.

Our podcast series, My Cape York Life, was launched on Friday 10 February on Cape York NRM's Land Manager site. It explores the lives of eight of Cape York's best – people working in conservation, agriculture, local government and not-for-profits - who manage traditional Aboriginal lands, care for endangered species and conservation areas, enable scientific studies, and develop innovation in agriculture, grazing and sustainable farming systems.

The series is available via most podcasts apps, or on Cape York NRM's Land Manger website: http:// landmanager.capeyorknrm.com.au/content/my-cape-york-life

My Cape York Life is brought to you by Cape York NRM, with support from South Cape York Catchments, and the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme.





Episode One and Two Shelley Lyon

Shelley has lived on Cape York for over 40 years, working in national parks and in conservation.

Mikayla Down Mikayla is a 25 year old Traditional Owner of Lama Lama Country and a young Cape York

Episode Three

leader.



Episode Five - Annette Episode Six and Peter Marriott

Annette grew up in Cooktown, and Peter has been a Cape York cattleman for more than 40 years.



Desmond Tayley

Desmond is the Mayor of Wujal Wujal - a place which is "so nice you've got to say it twice".

Within this newsletter Cape York Natural Resource Management is shortened to Cape York NRM



Episode Three Wilfred Peter

Wilfred is a young **Traditional Owner** working as a ranger for Yintjingga Aboriginal Corporation.



Episode Four Louise Stone

Louise has spent many years training Cape York Rangers in Conservation and Land Management.



Episode Seven Wendy Seabrook

Dr Wendy Seabrook is an ecologist from London now living in Cooktown.



Episode Eight Lewis Roberts

Lewis is Shiptons Flat station's third generation, a selftaught naturalist and a botanical illustrator.

A new grazing management practice framework for the Cape York region

by Will Higham, Principal Program Manager - Planning and Implementation, Cape York NRM

A new grazing management framework for the Cape York region was developed as part of the Eastern Cape York Water Quality Improvement Plan. This new framework has been developed to better represent grazing management practices that are applicable in the Cape York Region.

The development of regionally specific management practice frameworks began over 10 years ago in the Mackay-Whitsunday, Burdekin, Wet Tropics and Fitzroy regions of Queensland. The development of a new grazing framework specifically for Cape York means that we can better represent local management practices rather than relying on generic Reef-wide frameworks.

The framework is intended to support rather than duplicate *Grazing BMP* (Best Management Practice) processes and as a result does not present an exhaustive list of management practices. The main grazing management practices that influence water quality (sediment) are represented.

The grazing management practice framework is broken into categories such as pasture management strategy, gully management, fire management, road / firebreak erosion control and wetland / riparian / floodplain management.

It can be used to support the development of property-specific action plans through benchmarking current management practices used within properties and identifying management practices that could be adopted in specific sections of properties to improve water quality. However, it is important to note that graziers have identified that there will be a need to adopt practices across several levels to successfully manage and operate their grazing enterprise on a year-to-year basis.

Cape York NRM will be working with graziers over the coming months and years to review and update the new grazing management practice framework to ensure:

- the wording of the descriptions match grazing industry terminology
- the practical actions required to move from one level of management to another level of management are defined, and
 - the links between the level of practice and water quality (sediment) are validated.

What are ABCD Management Practice Frameworks?

The ABCD management practice framework was designed over 10 years ago to highlight and facilitate communication about the different levels or standards of management practice within the grazing industry that relate to different levels of water quality (sediment).

The ABCD management practice framework provides a definition (and pathway) of improvement from Dated to Better management practices, through to future Aspirational or 'cutting edge' practices.

It is important to specify the year of reference for any ABCD management practice framework. Over time, changes in knowledge, technology, costs and market conditions may validate cutting-edge Aspirational practices so they eventually become industry endorsed best management practices within an ABCD management practice framework.



The ABCD management practice framework provides a common reference point for communication with water quality researchers, social scientists, economists, industry research and extension organisations, and land managers on:

- the level of water quality improvement that can be achieved through improved management practices
- the social and economic costs and benefits of adopting improved management practices
- the level of adoption of management practices required to achieve the Water Quality Targets
- the emphasis on the importance of detailed farm management planning and record keeping to achieving improved resource management, rather than a single technology or individual practice
- the type and scope of action such as Market Based Incentives (MBIs) required to achieve Water Quality Targets.

	D - Dated	C - Compliant	B - Better Practices	A - Aspirational			
	PASTURE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY						
PRACTICE	Continuous high stocking	Property specific - no differentiation between grazing land types	Property specific - independent management of less resilient grazing land types (as per Gully, Fire and Road management below)	Property Specific - independent management of less resilient grazing land types (as per Gully, Fire and Road management) plus wet season spelling			
Ł	GULLY MANAGEMENT						
IAGEMEN	No gully management	No gully management	Cattle exclusion (periodic grazing for emergency feed) for less resilient gully prone grazing land types	Cattle exclusion and active gully management for less resilient gully prone grazing land types			
A	FIRE MANAGEMENT						
OIL M	No fire management	No fire management	Fire management for less resilient grazing land types	Fire management for all land types			
S	ROAD / FIREBREAK EROSION CONTROL						
RAZING	No road / firebreak erosion control	No road / firebreak erosion control	Road / firebreak erosion control for less resilient gully prone grazing land types	Road / firebreak erosion control for all grazing land types			
U	WETLAND / RIPARIAN / FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT						
ABCD	No independent management of wetland / riparian / floodplain grazing land types	No independent management of wetland / riparian / frontage grazing land types	Independent management including annual spelling of wetland / riparian / floodplain grazing land types and active feral animal control	Cattle exclusion (periodic grazed for emergency feed) of wetland / riparian / floodplain grazing land types and active feral animal control			



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DESCRIPTION

CUTTING EDGE and/or INNOVATIVE practices that require further validation to determine economic environmental and social costs/benefits

Industry endorsed best management practice

Minimum legislative requirement

Old and/or superceded practices

MILMAN ISLAND HAWKSBILL TURTLE CONSERVATION STUDY 2017



The Apudthama Rangers conducted an intensive five-week hawksbill turtle monitoring program on Milman Island in early 2017, with the support of the Queensland **Department of Environment and Heritage** Protection, WWF-Australia, Sea Turtle Foundation, Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) and the Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance (WCTTAA).

Milman Island is a sandy cay in Gudang Sea Country, due east of the tip of Cape York, and is a significant nesting site for hawksbill turtles in both Queensland and the entire Western Pacific.

During the five-week census, rangers and researchers monitored nesting activities of all turtles coming ashore and recorded flipper tag information to assist in population size estimates. A total of 271 hawksbill and 278 green turtle visits were made to the island between mid-January

to mid-February 2017, which is understood to be the peak nesting time for the hawksbills in this area.

Data collected will now be analysed by the Queensland Government as part of their efforts to better understand what is happening to hawksbill turtle populations in the western Pacific. Monitoring over the past 20 years suggests a decline in hawksbill numbers and has formed the basis for the Government recently recommending an up-listing of the status of the species from 'Vulnerable' to 'Endangered' in Queensland.

While hawksbill turtles nest and feed in waters of the Great Barrier Reef, they also nest, migrate and feed in other parts of the State and neighbouring countries, such as Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Key threats to hawksbill turtles across their range include unsustainable and illegal take, ghost net entanglement, terrestrial predation, and the impacts of climate change.

Milman Island is one of three index beaches that the Apudthama rangers monitor annually as part of their turtle conservation program. The

Below: The Apudthama Rangers, Sea Turtle Foundation and WCTTAA completed the final week of the Milman Island monitoring program



Apudthama land and sea ranger program patrols some 250,000 ha of land and includes 300 km of coastline.

Below: Turtle tracks on Milman Island

QId Government updates

Wear a helmet - it's the law!

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As of 1 February 2017 it became "a requirement for quad bike riders and the drivers of utility off-road vehicles, and any passengers carried, to wear an approved motorcycle helmet when the vehicle is operating on a road or road-related area.

"Children under the age of 8 are prohibited from being carried as passengers on quad bikes and utility off-road vehicles, as well as any child of any age if they are unable to sit with their feet flat on the floor and hands on handholds."

This information is taken directly from the <u>https://www.qld.gov.au/transport/registration/register/conditional/</u> <u>about-conditional/index.html#helmet</u>



Succession planning grants now available for Queensland producers Source: Queensland government media release

Queensland producers now have access to grants of up to \$2500 to help tackle family business and succession planning thanks to the Queensland Government.

Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Economic Development Bill Byrne said the Farm Management Grants would help producers to access professional advice on these important matters.

With the Farm Management Grants, producers seeking professional advice in relation to succession planning, or a family member wanting to acquire an interest in the family business, can apply for a rebate of up to 50% of fees paid for the advice, with a maximum of \$2500 per applicant, per financial year.

Advice must come from a suitably qualified professional adviser such as an accountant, financial planner or solicitor.

Eligible applicants who received eligible professional advice can apply for a rebate on fees paid for the service through www.qraa.qld.gov.au.

For further information on the Farm Management Grants including criteria visit www.qraa.qld.gov.au or freecall 1800 623 946.

Removal of feral cattle to protect major wetlands on Violet Vale Station

In October last year, excitement was high on the morning of our first day mustering feral cattle out of Saltwater Paddock, a 22,000 acre area which has been fenced off (thanks to previous kind assistance from Cape York NRM) to protect the major wetlands on Violet Vale Station.

After a couple of weeks work pushing in access tracks and putting up mobile yards, we were keen to see how many cattle we would catch. In 2015 we mustered around 100 head and we were hopeful of getting the same number this time round.

Removing feral cattle not only helps protect the wetlands but also offers animal welfare and biosecurity benefits. The muster was done in collaboration with our neighbours from Lilyvale and Artemis Stations and with financial assistance from Cape York NRM.

Over two days, we managed to catch 100 head. Unfortunately, we didn't get them all – a few were just too smart for us including one wily old bull who sat down in the middle of the swamp and wouldn't get up even with the chopper strut urging him.

After the fun of mustering came the hard work of getting the cattle back to the yards at Violet Vale. I quickly learnt that feral cattle do not like getting into cattle trucks and bulls really do not like getting into the bull trailer – it is hot and very dangerous work. Back at Violet Vale, drafting the cattle was a breeze in our new yards but feeding out hay to 100 head was hot and itchy work for the couple of days rest they had before being transported to Mareeba.

Susan Shepard (Lilyvale) won the 'Who can get the dirtiest award' after getting covered from head to toe in black dust thrown up by rampaging cattle, while her brother Robert Raymond (Pinnacle) won the 'work till you drop award' by finishing off the new yards at Violet Vale just the night before the cattle were due.

My nephew Andrew got his first ride in a chopper, Brandon Shepard (Lilyvale) and Trevor Shepard (Artemis) battled it out to see who could tie up the most bulls (they both claim victory) and Glen Shephard (Lilyvale) rode like a madman through the bush on his 4-wheeler chasing cattle all the while directing the chopper by radio. The kids had a ball by missing out on a week of school.

The wetlands seem quiet and deserted now that most of the cattle are gone – next task – feral pigs!

by Niki Collins, Violet Vale Station Photos supplied



Above: Cattle at Violet Vale yards



Above: Loading a bull in thick bush

Page

Above: Susan, Glen & Brandon Shephard waiting for the helicopter.

Our Cape Kiss

Here's a special treat for our Cape York Kids.

In each issue of Healthy Country newsletter we will have a special section for kids.

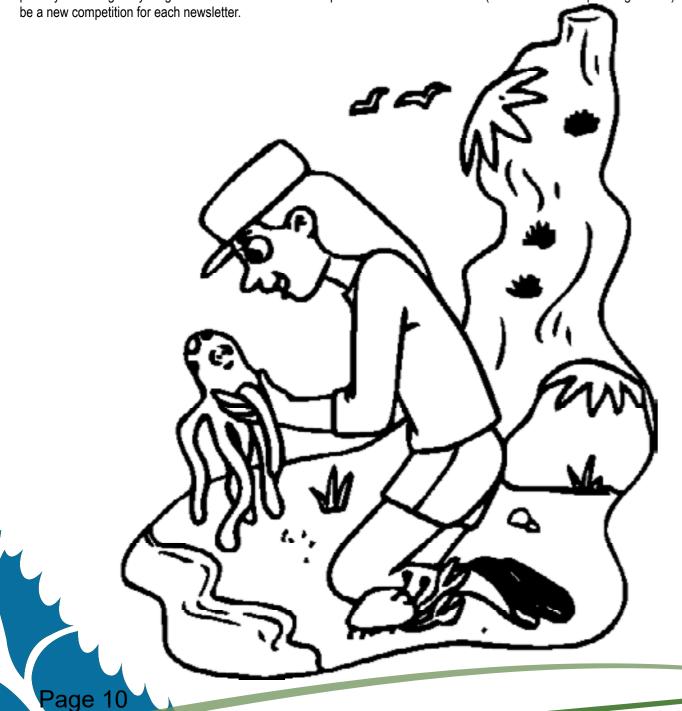
Let us know what you want to see, or send us a short story about your favourite Cape York place, animal or plant. We will also put your stories on our website.

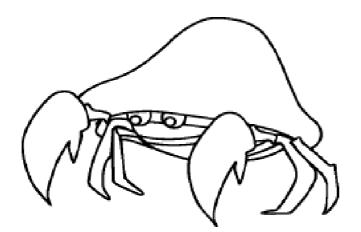
Contact us at: capekids@capeyorknrm.com.au

Draw and colour this healthy happy water life page

What other water life can you think of? Draw some more pictures on the page of things you like to see when you go to the beach, colour in the page, and send your pictures to capekids@capeyorknrm.com.au by 30 April 2017. You might be the lucky one to win a great prize.

Conditions of entry Entries must include name, age, location (town or area), and parent/guardian phone number. Entrants must be primary school age or younger. The winner's name will be published in each newsletter (with consent from parent/guardian). There will







My name is Katelyn Greaves and I have a school based traineeship with South Cape York Catchments (SCYC). Currently I'm in my second year of my traineeship, and have worked in a number of different environments around Cooktown and with the local community.

When I first started I learnt how to spray weeds properly abd safely, and how to monitor using a GPS to produce maps. Later on, I learnt and saw how different weeds impact the environment in different ways. For example; Gamba grass and Hymenachne.

Gamba grass causes frequent and intense fires reducing the native vegetation and replacing ecosystems. After the Gamba grass is controlled the risk of hot fires decreases and native vegetation and ecosystems begin to flourish and expand once again.

Hymenachne, on the other hand, removes all of the oxygen out of the water making native species unable to survive and eventually the wetland dries up. After the hymenachne is controlled the native aquatic species begin to thrive.

Above: Katelyn outside the Healthy Country Hub in Cooktown Photo supplied

I also worked in the local National Parks to help keep the public safe, while looking after the environment. We mowed and whipper-snipped around signs, and fences to keep them visible and reduce fire and weed damage. We pruned vegetation and kept tracks clear, and counted hazards - including crocodiles. I learnt all this work makes it safe and appealing to visitors.

I'm currently at the stage were I'm developing my own projects to work with peers around the Cooktown community. I've completed a project in reducing the amount of rubbish entering Alligator Creek, which flows out to sea. I planned, prepared and conducted the project with the Conservation and Land Management students at Cooktown State School.

Together we are going to further develop projects to continue to reduce the amount of rubbish entering the creek.

I have really appreciated the support that Cape York NRM has given me with my Traineeship.

ENDANGERED TURTLES SAFER THROUGH WORK OF WESTERN CAPE TURTLE THREAT ABATEMENT ALLIANCE



Predation of endangered sea turtles on western Cape York Peninsula has been significantly reduced by a co-ordinated monitoring and conservation program introduced in 2013.

The Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance (WCTTAA) brought together land and sea managers from Pormpuraaw, Napranum, Mapoon, Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) and Kowanyama to work for the protection of marine turtles and their nesting sites on the western Cape York coast.

WCTTAA members and stakeholders held a forum in Cairns in late February to review progress and to identify goals and challenges.

Queensland's entire nesting population of the endangered Olive Ridley turtle is found on the western Cape.

The area is also home to the largest nesting population of the vulnerable Flatback turtle, a species only found in Australia, and a significant nesting population of the vulnerable Hawksbill turtle.

Feral pigs, wild dogs and goannas are the main turtle egg predators, while human activity around nesting sites can deter laying or damage nests and eggs.

Indigenous rangers working with WCTTAA have monitored and protected turtle nests along more

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than 150 kilometres of remote coastline, and removed hundreds of ghost nets from beaches and coastal waters.

> And many thousands of feral pigs have been removed from an area of about

850.000 hectares.

WCTTAA has also developed an effective communications program aimed at reducing human impact on turtle nesting.

Through these activities, the Alliance has achieved a significant reduction in clutch loss - the number of eggs taken by predators from turtle nests - so that hatchling success rates are now within the range needed for a viable population in the future.

WCTTAA Chair Robbie Morris said this is a significant achievement for the Alliance in a relatively short time.

"The Alliance has improved the knowledge and effectiveness of rangers doing turtle and pig management on the western Cape," Mr Morris said.

"We share values and goals, and we're also sharing resources and what we learn working on country. It's a fantastic team effort."

All Alliance member groups were represented at the WCTTAA forum, attended by Queensland Environment Minister Steven Miles, Federal member for Leichhardt Warren Entsch, key members of the Queensland Government turtle conservation program, and Cape York NRM staff.

Cape York NRM CEO Bob Frazer attributes the success of the Alliance to the strong and effective links between all its member groups.

"It's been successful because of the sharing of information, the mentoring, the communication between the groups," Mr Frazer said.



"Cape York NRM hosting and supporting the model has been critical, but into the future we imagine WCTTAA will forge ahead as an independent entity."

WCTTAA is supported by Cape York NRM, and is funded by the Australian and Queensland Government's Nest to Ocean Turtle Protection Program. That funding expires at the end of this year.

WWF Australia Marine Species Manager Christine Hof said the Alliance co-ordination of projects on the Cape has made donor support and sharing of resources more effective.



Queensland Department of National Parks Executive Director Clive Cook said WCTTAA has formed a strong relationship with Government agencies.

"The existence of the Alliance is a very powerful thing from where we sit." Mr Cook said.

"The rangers get together and talk. Working through the Alliance is a very powerful conduit for us."

At the Forum, the WCTTAA Ranger groups recommitted to working as an Alliance, and to further improving turtle conservation outcomes for western Cape York Peninsula.

llamett



Cape York Calendar Events significant to your life on Cape York

APRIL		MAY	
1-17	Qld school holidays	1	Labour Day public holiday
7-8	Breeder Management and Pregnancy Testing Workshop, Olive Vale Station	3	SCYC General meeting, Cooktown
		4-5	Cape York NRM Board meeting
14-17	Easter weekend	12-14	Cairns Home Show and Caravan, Camping and Boating Expo
22	Tangaroa Blue, Cape Kimberley Clean-up	TBA	Western Cape College Careers Day
25	Anzac Day public holiday	TBA	Wenlock Catchment Management Group meeting
		ТВА	Grazing industry roundtable
JUNE		24-26	FNQ Rotary Field Day, Mareeba
9-11	Weipa Fishing Classic		
9-11	Cooktown Discovery Festival		
15	Cooktown Education and Careers Expo		

19-20 Developing Northern Australia conference

30 Jun to 2 July

Laura Aboriginal Dance Festival



Introducing staff member Caleb Zaicz Community Engagement Officer, Cape York Natural Resource Management

Caleb has worked on Cape York for over a decade since he completed his Bachelor of Environmental Science, majoring in botany, at James Cook University in 2006.

Caleb understands the wide spectrum of the natural resources of Cape York. He has a keen interest in the environment, and in working with the people of Cape York to promote the sustainable use of its resources.

Caleb will be working on a variety of projects in the coming months, including climate change adaptation, Cape York cassowaries and the upcoming Regional Investment Strategy meetings.

Photo left: Caleb Zaicz, Community Engagement Officer

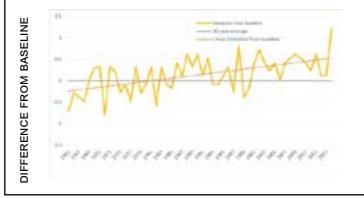
Meet Caleb and other Cape York NRM staff members at some of the events noted in the Cape York Calendar

Cape York NRM is working on an exciting project that will boost the capacity of Cape York communities to plan for adaptation to climate change. Between now and June, we will work with up to five partner groups to scale down the science about climate change to understand the likely impacts in specific areas of country, and to work out what this will mean for the management of land and sea in those areas. Partner groups will work with the Cape York NRM team to identify the biggest issues or concerns for them, and the things that will help them to adapt to these changes, such as funding, research or monitoring. This information can be used by partner groups to inform Cape York NRM's revision of their Regional Investment Strategy, to be conducted during 2017, as well as to develop funding applications, research partnerships, and on-ground management plans.

People living and working on country become familiar with the patterns of nature. These patterns - including flowering and fruiting in plants, the ways animals behave at different times, where fires might burn and how high floods will rise - are related to the weather, in particular how hot or wet it has been (or will be). Many people on the Cape are talking about how longer-term weather patterns seem to be changing and how this is affecting these patterns. Some stories are documented in films on the Cape York NRM Atlas website http:// climate.capeyorknrm.com.au/weather-stories/films

People often say that temperatures are getting hotter. We have used long-term temperature data collected from weather stations across Cape York to plot how temperatures have been changing over time. The simple message: records show that it has been getting hotter across the Cape since the 1980s.

LOCKHART RIVER



In the graphs, the yellow line shows how much the yearly average temperature is above or below average. We all know that some years are hotter and others cooler than 'normal' (that's why the yellow line travels in a zig-zag pattern), but what the dashed red line shows is that, since the 1980s, temperatures have been above average much more often than they have been below. Even in years when temperatures were below average, they were not far below, compared with how far above average they were in other years.

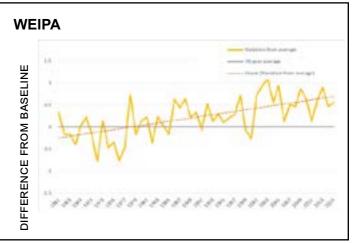
The graphs above are for two locations – Lockhart River and Weipa – but data from Palmerville Station and Kowanyama showed similar patterns. The graphs use actual measurements of the maximum temperature recorded every day to calculate the average daily maximum for every month and for each year. To evaluate how and if temperature is changing over time, a 30-year reference period from the 1960s until 1990s is used; the average for this period is known as the 'baseline average'. The average maximum daily temperature for each year was compared with the baseline average and if there is a positive difference between these numbers, the average daily temperature for the given year was higher than the baseline average, while a negative difference means that the average for that year was below the baseline.

Cape York NRM will work with partner groups using the most up-to-date science about increasing temperatures, evaporation, sea level rise, rainfall, cyclones and other climatic conditions to consider how management practices and planning can help natural systems and people adapt to climate change, and continue to live sustainably on the Cape.

For more information, contact Caleb Zaicz, Cape York NRM Engagement Officer

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Adaptation to climate change by Dr Cath Moran



Cape York Natural Resource Management Ltd Board of Directors



Emma Jackson Chairperson Primary Industries Sector



Barry Lyon Vice Chairperson Conservation Sector



Pauline Smith Indigenous Sector, Zone 2



Mikayla Down Indigenous Sector, Zone 3



Shane Gibson Indigenous Sector, Zone 4



Sandra Woosup Indigenous Sector, Zone 1



John Charlton Tourism, Small Business, Mining and Other Industry Sector



Trevor Meldrum Community Sector



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Desmond Tayley Local Government Sector



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