

Image: Mapoon Land and Sea Rangers

# Cape York

# Healthy Country Newsletter

## People and Place

Issue 15 - September 2013

As Cape York Natural Resource Management (Cape York NRM) nears our three year milestone, the first term of the original board draws to a close. All positions of the board are available for nomination, with nominations closing on 9 September. If you'd like the opportunity to contribute to the strategic direction and on-ground implementation of natural resource management on Cape York, you could nominate for a Sector Director role. Please call Vicki at Cape York NRM on 1300 132 262 for an information package. More information on page 5.

Image: Lyndal Scobell, Cape York NRM

## What's your climate like?

### **Cape York NRM has got a plan, and it's a plan of action.**

We've commenced a planning process for long term investment in Cape York's natural resources and we want to know what you think.

We are developing an interactive atlas which will include information about the region and best practice land and sea management in Cape York. In order to make this locally relevant your input into the plan is valued.

We are interested to know how you feel about your part of the country, the changes you've noticed over the years, and what you think has caused those changes.

We also want to know what's working in your part of the Cape - and why it works, so we can help share your knowledge with others, and to develop ways to keep Cape York livelihoods strong for the future.

As we are taking a 'planning by doing' approach, we will be running workshops and information sessions concurrently - so there will be an intersection for skills and knowledge exchange.

For more information or to be involved: Peta-Marie Standley on 1300 132 262.

*The plan is funded through the Australian Government's Regional Natural Resource Management Planning for Climate Change Fund.*

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

# Draft Normanby River Water Quality Management Plan available for review

by Christina Howley

**After seven years of water quality research and 18 months of reviewing the results and conducting community consultations, the Draft Water Quality Management Plan for the Normanby River catchment is now available for review.**

The Plan, similar to *Water Quality Improvement Plans* produced in other regions, identifies land uses such as grazing, horticulture and road construction that have changed water quality in the Laura and Normanby Rivers and the priority areas where these impacts are greatest. It also lists the recommended actions for improving water quality in these areas and maintaining good water quality in other areas, such as Rinyirru (Lakefield) National Park and Princess Charlotte Bay.

Areas of high ecological and/or cultural values have been identified and will be adopted under the Qld State Environmental Protection Policy for Water (2009). Water quality guidelines have been established for the Laura and Normanby Rivers based primarily on the results of monitoring conducted between 2006- 2013 by Cape York Marine Advisory Group Environmental Inc., South Cape York Catchments and the Laura Rangers.

Research by Griffith University has been instrumental in identifying the extent and causes of accelerated erosion across the Catchment, as well as what can be done to reduce and avoid causing further erosion that dumps sediment (eroded soils) into the rivers.

The 'Recommended Management Actions' in the Water Quality Management Plan will help to target investments from programs such as Reef Rescue. It is important that the recommendations are realistic for the people living and working in the Normanby catchment.

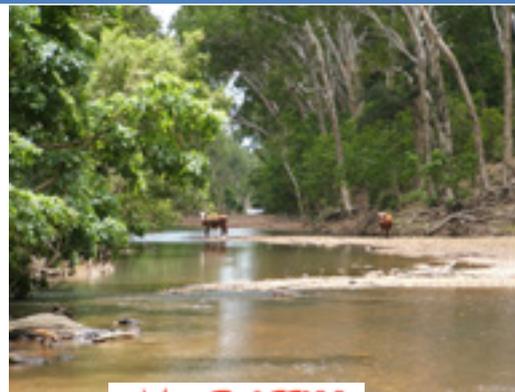
The Plan can be downloaded for review at <http://www.capeyorkwaterquality.info/water-quality>. For further information or comments please contact Christina Howley at [chowley@bigpond.com](mailto:chowley@bigpond.com) or 07 4069 5229.

*The Water Quality Management Plan has been funded by the Australian Government Caring For Our Country Reef Rescue program.*



**DRAFT PLAN**  
Currently Under  
Consultation  
and Review

## Normanby River Water Quality Management Plan



Christina Howley  
Australian Rivers Institute  
Griffith University  
August 2013



CARING  
FOR  
OUR  
COUNTRY



Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts  
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



# Step Forward In Cape York's Turtle Conservation

**Cape York's threatened turtle species are set to benefit from a new alliance which has formed on western Cape York.**

Three Indigenous Councils have committed to working together by taking a regional approach to the monitoring and threat management of threatened Flatback, Hawksbill and Olive Ridley turtles.

Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council, Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council and Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council form the Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance, which will allow Councils to manage turtle conservation locally, while sharing resources and coordinating works.

Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers from the communities have been monitoring turtle populations and controlling threats for many years and through the Alliance will now make direct decisions on management based on local knowledge and experience.

Alliance spokesperson, Robbie Morris from Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council said that in forming the Alliance, the work that is undertaken to conserve turtle species can be much better coordinated.

"The Alliance gives our Land and Sea Rangers a strong voice for turtle conservation. We know the country, the turtles nesting sites, and the appropriate pest management strategy against threats to Olive Ridelys, Hawksbill and Flatback turtles on western Cape York.

"One example of how the Alliance will work is where our Councils will coordinate our feral pig culls to make sure we get the biggest bang for our buck, to give turtle hatchlings the best chance at survival,

and to make best use of funding" he said.

Monitoring over recent years has shown that pig predation on turtle nests and hatchlings on the west coast of Cape York is estimated at between 70 – 98 % in any given season. Other turtle egg predators include wild dogs, goannas and crocodiles.

Olive Ridley turtles are listed in both Queensland and the Commonwealth as an endangered species, while Flatback and Hawksbill turtles are listed as a vulnerable species on both Queensland and the Commonwealth's threatened species lists.

Councillor Polly Smith from Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council said that the Cape's regional natural resource management body is helping the Alliance get off the ground.

"We are working closely with Cape York Natural Resource Management (Cape York NRM) to make



Above: Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance incorporates rangers from Northern Peninsula Area Regional Council and Mapoon and Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Councils. Image: Lyndal Scobell, Cape York NRM

this Alliance work, and will continue to work with each Council's preferred providers for scientific and technical support.

"Our Councils have formed this Alliance so we can direct the coordination of our efforts from the ground up, not from the top down – Councils and ranger groups want to take the lead in the survival of our

turtle populations, and we are working together to make sure it happens" Councillor Smith said.

The Councils are currently in negotiations to engage a coordinator who will work across the ranger groups to align data collection, engage scientific advisors and coordinate ranger training.

Other western Cape York Aboriginal Councils have been invited to join the Alliance. The group's next formal meeting will take place in September.

# Around the Cape



Lama Lama's Working on Country Rangers Brandon Liddy and Toni Woibo on duty at the Port Stewart Ranger Base.



Baiting for feral animals is underway during the dry season. For more information contact Cape York Weeds and Feral Animal Program (CYWAFAP) or your local council.



Greg Westcott contemplates the successful Chili Beach foreshore restoration project, where recycled bollards were installed to curb foreshore access, locally made community seats were installed and revegetation works took place. The community project, led by Greg, was funded by Cape York NRM and supported by the Business Navigator Initiative and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.



Yuku-Baja-Muliku Junior Ranger Kynan Hale correctly identified all of the weeds at CYWAFAP stall at the Cooktown Show, (and did not need any help from his dad Mick, or Landcare's Andrew Hartwig!).



Cape York Sustainable Futures' Peter Thompson, CYWAFAP's Trevor Meldrum and South Cape York Catchment's (SCYC) Jason Carroll get creative at SCYC stall at the Cooktown Show.

*Images above: Lyndal Scobell, Cape York NRM*

# Join the Cape York NRM Board:

## Call for nominations

**Cape York NRM is seeking nominations for appointment to its Board of Directors. We have successfully delivered natural resource management outcomes by supporting and funding on-ground projects and operations across Cape York since 2010.**

Our board has ten Sector Directors. In line with our constitution, this year all board positions will be declared vacant and are open for nomination.

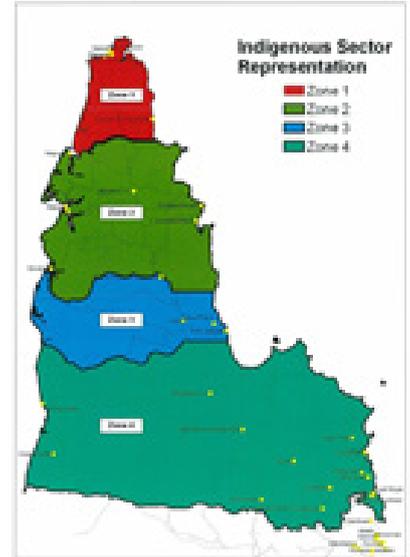
The sectors are:

- Indigenous Sector Zones 1-4 (see map)
- Local Government Sector
- Primary Industry Sector
- Other Industry Sector (Mining, Tourism, Small Business)
- Community Sector
- Conservation Sector

Nominations must be received by Monday 9 September 2013.

Where there is more than one nomination for a sector, members of that sector will be invited to vote by secret ballot.

An Independent Returning Officer will be appointed to oversee nominations and voting.



**For more information and an information package detailing Sector Director selection criteria, please contact Vicki Wundersitz on 1300 132 262 or email [admin@capeyorknrm.com.au](mailto:admin@capeyorknrm.com.au)**

*Do you have a passion for the environment? Are you actively involved in conservation on Cape York?*

Cape York Natural Resource Management is establishing a Conservation Advisory Sub-Committee for the Cape York NRM region.

The sub-committee is open to residents of Cape York, or people with a proven close and recent association with Cape York, who have expertise and experience in biodiversity, conservation issues and management.

Committee members will provide advice and support to the Cape York NRM board through the Conservation Sector Director.

*Interested?* You'll need to be quick - Nominations must be received by Monday 23 September. For more information contact Luke Preece at Cape York NRM on 1300 132 262 or [lukepreece@capeyorknrm.com.au](mailto:lukepreece@capeyorknrm.com.au)

Removing nets from beaches is hard work.  
Image: Lyndal Scobell, Cape York NRM



# Marine Debris:

## *Why we need to clean our beaches*

**Marine debris continues to be a major problem on Cape York with over 10 tonnes of recorded rubbish removed from beaches so far this year.**

Tangaroa Blue Foundation, local catchment and environment groups, Cape York ranger groups, Traditional Owners, school students, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, local residents, businesses, Landcare, Conservation Volunteers and visiting tourists have come together across Cape York to clean the beaches and record tonnes of rubbish.

Heidi Taylor from the Australian Marine Debris Initiative at Tangaroa Blue says cleaning the beaches is not just about picking up rubbish.

“We separate what we collect for recycling, so we record what is removed and how much it weighs. We then work on tracking it where it came from, so strategies to stop it at the source can be identified” she says.

Light breaks plastics down into smaller and smaller pieces (photodegrades), and they eventually become micro plastics. At this size micro plastics are a known threat to marine life as they are often confused with food and ingested, causing internal blockages, infections and death.

Ghost nets also continue to wash up on beaches mainly in the Gulf of Carpentaria causing the death and disability of marine animals, including threatened species such as turtles, sharks, dugongs and crocodiles.

Heidi says it's important to record the marine debris data that is found on beaches, because it is sometimes possible to identify the source of the debris and then work to reduce where it is coming from. For Cape York the source is often from farflung places.

“We have been able to identify, for example, fishing nets on beaches in Cape York, which we have found in Australia's major cities do not contain drains and end up in the ocean. These can travel thousands of kilometres before reaching the ocean.”

“We are working with the plastics industry to ensure these pellets from reaching the environment and prevent pollution from occurring” Heidi says.

Beach clean-ups have now occurred at Mapoon, Chili Beach, Port Stewart, Cape York.

If you are interested in organising a beach clean-up, Tangaroa Blue may be able to help. Contact Heidi Taylor on 0410 166 684.

### **Cape York's top 10 marine debris items**

1. Plastic broken hard pieces
2. Plastic lids & bottle tops
3. Plastic drink bottles (washed up)
4. Rope & net scraps (less than 1m)
5. Foam insulation & packing peanuts
6. Rubber footwear & thongs
7. Broken glass
8. Fishing line in metres
9. Rope (estimated length)
10. Rubber remnants



Above: An hour on the beach and the ute is full of nets, wood and other debris.



Above: Plastic broken hard pieces are the number one debris item on Cape York beaches.



Above: Ropes and fishing line are easily tangled in mangrove roots and branches.



Above: Volunteers and staff from the local community and further afield help at the Chili Beach annual clean-up.

# Marine Debris: Did You Know?

...le, plastic resin pellets on many  
...tracked to the source. Many factories in  
...the pellets, so they leach into stormwater  
...pellets are light-weight and float so they  
...ore washing up on a beach.

...stry to find practical ways of stopping  
...nment at the factories to prevent this type

...t Cooktown beaches, Archer Point,  
...dar Bay, Pormpuraaw and Seisia.  
...ach clean-up in your community,  
...onations are also welcome. Contact

*The following table shows data recorded from some of Cape York's beach clean-ups over the past two years.*

**marine debris items**  
ces  
ter, juice, milk, soft drink)  
s than one metre)  
aging  
gs

in metres)

Where	2012		2013	
	How much was found (kgs)	No. of items found	How much was found (kgs)	No. of items found
Cooktown Beaches	134	2638	1063	3902
Mapoon	487	7177	3938	7169
Port Stewart	n/a	n/a	66	1585
Chili Beach	5574	3254	4910	Not counted

# Learning and monitoring at Mapoon's Turtle Camp

**Two endangered Olive Ridley's have been named, tagged and released at Mapoon's annual turtle camp on western Cape York.**

'Linda' and 'Nancy', named after Mapoon's Cooktown sisters are already being tracked and their movements will provide rangers and scientists with further insights into the species.

Mapoon Aboriginal Shire Council is once again hosting turtle camp at Janie Creek. The camp helps train rangers in turtle physiology and behaviours, provides schools and the broader community with education about the species which nest on western Cape York, and provides important research opportunities for monitoring of the Cape's threatened turtle species.

Land and Sea rangers from Mapoon, Apudthama, Napranum and Pormpuraaw have spent afternoons in training, nights tagging turtles, and counting and measuring eggs, and mornings checking nests for predation.

Many of the Flatback turtles that have arrived on beaches to nest are regular visitors, as they are already tagged. Tagging is an international system which enables rangers and scientists to monitor turtles worldwide.

So far this year Rangers have found there has been less pig predation on turtle nests, while wild dogs have been a bigger problem. Olive Ridley turtle nests are more prone to predation as the nests are shallower than other species. Rangers have been assisting hatchling survival by covering nests with trellis-like material aimed at deterring predators from digging.

Turtle hatchlings began emerging in mid-late August. Turtle camp continues until mid-September with school visits currently underway.



Above: Apudthama Rangers with Mapoon Land and Sea Coordinator, Jane Blackwood Image: Mapoon Land and Sea Rangers.



Above: Pormpuraaw ranger, Clinton Holroyd recording flatback hatchlings Image: Pormpuraaw Land and Sea Rangers.



Above: Preparing an Olive Ridley for release Image: Mapoon Land and Sea Rangers.

## Parthenium (*Parthenium hysterophorus*)

Parthenium weed is a declared Class 2 pest plant under Queensland legislation and a Weed of National Significance (WONS).

It is an annual herb that grows to two metres tall with a deep taproot. The weed has erect stems which become woody and develop many branches with age. The leaves are pale green, deeply divided and lobes are covered with fine soft hairs, while the flowers are creamy white and small – about four millimetres across.

Parthenium seeds are spread by water, vehicles, machinery, stock, feral and native animals and also in stock feed and plant seed.

It is a vigorous species that colonises weak pastures and areas of sparse vegetation cover. It becomes dominant in alkaline, clay loams, mainly in areas where the soil is exposed from overgrazing. Parthenium invades disturbed bare areas along roadsides, heavily stocked areas around yards and watering points.

Parthenium can cause health problems such as dermatitis and hayfever in people and has also been reported as toxic to stock.

Parthenium costs the beef industry around \$16.5 million per year and for cropping industries several million dollars per year.

Want to know more? Contact Cape York Weeds and Feral Animal Program on 07 4069 5020.



Image: <http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/>

## Wash down your vehicles and shake out your clothes and camping gear, and you will be doing your bit to help the environment and agriculture in Cape York

***Have you ever wondered how it is that weeds can spread like wildfire? Invasive weeds are highly adaptable and when left uncontrolled can take over natural and cultivated landscapes, as they compete for the resources of native and crop species.***

Weed seeds are designed to be carried by wind, water and anything they can attach themselves to. This includes animals and people. Weed seeds will attach to tents, swags, shoes, machinery and vehicles, and are easily transported which is why they are such a problem in Cape York. They love a free ride.

During the dry season, the spread of weed seeds by people, machinery and vehicles is a major problem. However there are a few simple precautions that can be taken to reduce their spread:

1. **Wash your car.** Wash-down facilities are free at Lakeland and Mt Surprise and caravan parks and motels often have car-washing facilities. Be sure to wash your car thoroughly particularly the tyres and

also underneath.

2. **Shake out your camping and travel gear as you pack up.** Weed seeds can attach to swags, chairs, tents and other equipment. By giving your camping gear a shake out and by brushing it down you can remove any weed seeds which are trying to hitch a ride.

3. **Remove weed seeds from your shoes and socks, other clothing and backpacks** before you move on to your next destination.

Cape York Natural Resource Management's Conservation Sector Director, Barry Lyon says invasive weeds can seriously threaten native flora and fauna, national parks, waterways and also pastoral and farming land.

"Weeds like grader grass and gamba grass grow by the roadside, and are easily moved to new places by vehicles. It's a serious problem" Mr Lyon says. "For Australian agriculture alone, weeds cost about \$4 billion a year."

# AgForce: Coming soon to a venue near you

All members and non-members are invited to come hear an update on the issues and topics that impact your operation.

**When:**

Monday, 30 September 2013  
Wednesday, 2 October 2013  
Friday, 4 October 2013

**Where:**

Weipa, venue TBC  
Coen, venue TBC  
Cooktown, venue TBC

**Time:**

9.30am  
9:30am  
9.30am

**Guest speakers:**

- Jim Benson, Next Rural
- Jamie Cupples, Farmsafe Queensland
- Noel Brinsmead, AgForce Projects
- Brett Carllson, AgForce Projects
- MLA TBC
- SARCIS TBC

**Agenda**

- MLA Update and Emerging Market Discussion
- OH & S Update
- GIS & mapping
- Wild dog trapping
- SARCIS
- Succession Planning

Drinks & BBQ will be held at each location after the forum. Bring forward your issues for discussion and action.

Everyone is welcome to attend. Please invite your neighbours.

For more information and to RSVP contact:

[agforcenorth@agforceqld.gov.au](mailto:agforcenorth@agforceqld.gov.au)

Paul Burke 0427 577 116 or  
Tahna Jackson 0408 786 057.

## Wenlock River Catchment Group Incorporates

Landholders from the mouth to the upper reaches of the Wenlock River have united to form the Wenlock River Catchment Group. With the paperwork for incorporation now submitted, the group will meet in early October to elect office-bearers. Interim Chairperson is Chuulangun's David Claudie, while Shelley Lyon from the Steve Irwin Wildlife Reserve takes on the interim Secretary role. For more information contact Cape York NRM on 1300 132 262. Below: The beautiful upper reaches of the Wenlock River, taken on country with Chuulangun Aboriginal Corporation. *Image: Lyndal Scobell, Cape York NRM*



# Business Navigator Initiative:

## Cape York Towing Service Pluss

by Kim Macdonald

*Long-time Pormpuraaw identity, Nigel Hall, identified a demand for a vehicle recovery, towing and general transport service in central Cape York and set about meeting the needs of a growing market. The result is a brand new business, Cape York Towing Service Pluss.*

*(Note: correct spelling)*

It hasn't been an easy journey for Nigel and his partner, Josephine Coleman. It's been a hard slog with plenty of patience needed to take the business from "it's a good idea" to "it's up and running!"

Nigel heard about Cape York Natural Resource Management's Business Navigator Initiative (BNI) and made contact. The BNI contractor, Kim MacDonald, drove the 580 kilometres from Weipa to Pormpuraaw to meet Nigel and discuss business support.

On the way, Kim experienced at first hand the need for vehicle recovery services on Cape York. (There have been more than 30 reported rollovers on the Peninsula Developmental Road (PDR) so far this tourist season, mainly due to inexperienced southern self-drive tourists attempting the long, dusty and often rough sections of the PDR.)

Kim had no doubt that Nigel's towing and vehicle recovery service was not only much needed, especially in the central Cape region, but also that his business case was strong. Nigel had developed much of the enterprise planning, operating budget and costs and had basically proven his entrepreneurial capacity and that of his business plan.

While mainstream funding organisations were slow to respond to this new enterprise, the Queensland Government's Business and Economic Support Initiative saw merit in Nigel and his plan.

CYNRM and the State Government have enjoyed a strong relationship since the BNI trial began in 2011 and helping fund Cape York Towing Service Pluss is a great example.

The main targeted markets are local residents and their communities, cattle properties, and the steadily growing self-drive tourist market. Based on the last census, there has been a more than 50 percent increase annually in tourist numbers travelling to the

Cape mostly by motor vehicle.

Unfortunately, many travelers are not prepared for the unusual and demanding road conditions. There are increasing numbers of vehicle accidents and also incidents involving trailers and caravans. That's where Nigel Hall and Josephine Coleman's business will come to the rescue.

The service's minimal competition in the marketplace is not price driven, but is instead driven by the following service traits that CYTSP+ will possess:

- Reliability
- Feedback from end-users and other customers
- Quality of work performed
- Ability to turn over work and provide services quickly
- Ability to handle a large workload
- Capacity to implement safety is paramount to the business
- Backup support available day and night
- Stranded vehicle occupants are able to be taken to a place of safety quickly
- Safety is placed at the forefront of the business
- The service will include providing water and basic foods.

Other benefits flowing from the business include establishing business links with local tradespeople and providing outreach transport services to surrounding remote communities, cattle properties, outstations, mining contractors, road gangs and other local enterprises such as roadhouses.

The business will be fully operational in August.

## September

- 9** Nominations close - Cape York NRM Board
- 23** Applications close - Cape York NRM Conservation Sector sub-committee
- 27-29** [Wallaby Creek](#) Festival
- 27-29** [Landcare Conference](#)
- 30** AgForce meeting - Weipa

## October

- 2** AgForce meeting - Coen
- 4** AgForce Meeting - Cooktown
- 17** South Cape York Catchments AGM (date claimer)
- 29** Cape York NRM AGM (date claimer)



Above: Western Cape Landcare Group are considering projects, and deciding on a home. Ideas? See below.  
Image: Lyndal Scobell, Cape York NRM

## Western Cape Landcare Group *with Kim Macdonald*

**The emergent Western Cape Landcare Group has begun considering projects in and around Weipa.**

Following a successful public launch earlier this year, the Landcare committee – chaired by Weipa Health Service Medical Officer, Dr Alex Dunn – has been negotiating with Rio Tinto Alcan for a “home” for Landcare and the Weipa Community Garden projects.

A committee representative recently met with General Manager of Rio Tinto Alcan at Weipa (RTAW), Gareth Manderson, to discuss what Landcare and the Community Garden will bring to the town and potential project sites to be considered by the committee.

Mr. Manderson was supportive of the community-based projects and recommended negotiations continue with RTAW management, the Weipa Town Authority and the Landcare committee.

It was explained that Landcare and the Community Garden are inclusive projects aimed at providing residents with a place to establish their own gardens in a community environment while propagating native species as plant stock for Landcare regeneration

projects.

While various vacant blocks around Weipa have been proposed, including the former exotic fruit orchard, ongoing negotiation between stakeholders at Weipa will determine Landcare’s “home” and this is expected soon.

While the community committee is being incorporated, residents of Weipa, Napranum and Mapoon are being encouraged to provide ideas about potential projects, gardening tips, plant species that will be needed for regeneration and revegetation projects and events such as field days that will attract visiting plant and garden specialists.

Interested residents are able to contact:

Dr Alex Dunn: [al\\_dunn80@hotmail.com](mailto:al_dunn80@hotmail.com)

Kim MacDonald: [kim.macdonald@iinet.net.au](mailto:kim.macdonald@iinet.net.au)

More information is available at: [www.landcare.org.au](http://www.landcare.org.au) and: <http://communitygarden.org.au/>

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**Next Edition:**  
***Our Natural Economies***  
Want to contribute?  
**Deadline 9 October 2013**



CARING  
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Queensland  
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