

# Queensland Murray-Darling Committee

## Annual Performance Report July-December 2008



**healthy landscapes**  
viable communities





Queensland Murray Darling Committee Inc.

RIS, and

Caring for our Country Transitional RIS

July-December 2008

Narrative Performance Report

1 July – 31 December 2008





Executive Summary	1
Introduction	1
Major achievements for the period	1
Progress of overall investment	2
Linkages of new projects to other NAP/NHT/NLP projects	2
Risks or issues affecting performance and action taken or to be taken	3
Summary of corporate governance issues, initiatives and risks	3
Map of QMDC catchment planning activities	4
Final Reports Summary	5
RIS Program Activity	6
QMRIS01-Vegetation and Biodiversity	6
QMRIS01- Riverine, Floodplain and Wetland	7
TRIS Program Activity	8
Program 1 - Aboriginal Cultural Heritage	8
Sub-Program: SP1 - Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways (TKRP)	8
Sub-Program: SP2 - Cultural Heritage ongoing implementation	9
Program 2 - Reinforcing the NRM Capacity of Regional Communities	10
Sub-Program: SP1 - Enhancing our communities' NRM skills	10
Sub-Program: SP2 - Engaging Communities in NRM	12
Sub-Program: SP3 - Local Government engaged in NRM	14
Program 3 - Governance and Accountability	16
Sub-Program: SP1 - Strategic Leadership	16
Program 4- Sustainable Landscapes	18
Sub-Program: SP1 - Landscapes in Balance	18
Sub-Program: SP3 - Risky Business - Adaptive Landscapes	21
Program 5 - Vegetation and Biodiversity	22
Sub-Program: SP1 - Maintain and improve conservation status of native species and natural icons	22
Sub-Program: SP2 - Increase in the extent of remnant native vegetation	23
Sub-Program: SP3 - Maintain or improve ecological function of native vegetation	24
Sub-Program: SP4 - Improve the state of biodiversity knowledge across the community in the QMDB	25
Program 6- Weeds and Feral Animals	26
Sub-Program: SP1 - Feral Animals	26
Sub-Program: SP2 - Weeds	28
Sub-Program: SP3 - Science for change in weed and pest management	30
Program: 7- Wetlands and Floodplains	31
Sub-Program: SP1 - Improved water quality and riparian function	31
Sub-Program: SP2 - Healthy aquatic flora and fauna in priority wetlands	32



# ***Executive Summary***

## ***Introduction***

This narrative report provides an update of the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee's achievements over the six-month period between July and December 2008 and complements the quantitative data that has been entered into the enQuire system.

The report is comprised of three main sections. The first, the Executive Summary, provides an overview of achievement throughout the year and outlines issues of risk management and those areas where QMDC will aim to improve performance.

The second and third sections respectively outline the key achievements across the region by theme according to the Regional Investment Strategy (RIS) and the Caring for our Country Transitional RIS.

The financial reports for this period will be submitted into enQuire.

QMDC has consistently met all financial reporting obligations, including submission of audited statements. The 2007 – 2008 audited financial statements were submitted to the Joint Steering Committee following QMDC's annual general meeting (AGM) in October 2008.

## ***Major achievements for the period***

- Many events were held throughout the QMDC region during the period July to December 2008 with the aim of increasing community awareness and participation in NRM issues including:
  - The fourth annual Discovering Landcare Forum held in Goondiwindi in August 2008 was attended by over 500 students, teachers and community members from across southern Queensland. The theme for 2008 - "Science to the Rescue" - promoted the importance of managing our natural resources sustainably and the role of science to help achieve this.
  - The Reptile Recovery Program was launched at Myall Park Botanic Garden at Glen Morgan in October 2008 with 70 members of the community attending.
  - 3 climate risk workshops with 29 landholders attending from 7 sub-catchment groups and a further addresses at the AGMs for 3 Landcare groups where 38 group members heard about climate change issues.
  - Landcare Coordinators held 33 awareness-raising workshops and 6 training events, with 213 and 57 participants respectively. They also produced 9 publications received by 166 community members, 6 media articles made available to almost 7,000 recipients. All activities aim to which provided information about natural resource management (NRM) issues and activities.
  - The latest in the continuing series of QMDC's Naturally Resourceful workshops (which encourages and supports women as land managers, decision makers and community leaders) was held in 3 locations [Glenmorgan, Mitchell and Bollon] with a total of 37 participants. This series was held in partnership with the NLP 07 project: "Managing Total Landscapes through the adoption of Advanced Grazing'.

- The Landcare Conference held in Monto in September 2008 which was attended by a number of QMDC Landcare Coordinators and staff – with the latter presenting sessions on the following subjects:
  - QMDC's Naturally Resourceful programme which encourages and support women as land managers, decision makers and community leaders by developing leadership, communication and management skills;
  - QMDC's use of e-learning and e-tools to support the delivery of training to rural and remote landholders; and
  - An action learning activity which demonstrates the effect ground cover has on erosion, water infiltration, salinity and water quality.
- QMDC, in partnership with Amaroo Environmental Education Centre (Amaroo EEC), coordinates the Darling Downs QESSI Hub to support Sustainable Schools in the Darling Downs and south-west Queensland region. Through this role QMDC is supporting a number of schools in the region to develop school-based sustainability projects and school environmental management plans.
- QMDC continues to support 58 planning groups in the management area (refer to map at page 4) including 39 sub-catchment groups and 19 other groups. There are currently 32 sub-catchment groups with approved contracts.
- Following community participation and involvement, responses, the Draft Maranoa and Districts and South West Regional Plans have been finalised and ready for submission to Cabinet. This innovative process involves 5 Regional Councils (2 in the Maranoa region and 3 in the South West region), and QMDC is an observing member on the statutory Regional Coordination Committee that oversees the development and implementation of the Plan

### ***Progress of overall investment***

A range of complementary projects have delivered resources to the region over the past six months. The most important new initiative is the securing of a \$400,000 contract to deliver the Federal Government's White Box Grassy Woodland Stewardship tender for south-east Queensland. This project involves the management and delivery of a promotional campaign for the programme to potential clients, site assessments following landholder expressions of interest, and coordination of subsequent landholder tender bids. The project is working closely with SEQ Catchments, landcare groups and a number of private consultants on delivering this exciting initiative. Other projects approved include:

- Delivery of the highly successful "Naturally Resourceful" programme for rural and regional women to three groups of Indigenous women in the Queensland Murray Darling Basin, and collaborative delivery of workshops in Winton and Longreach with Desert Channels Queensland.
- Delivery of Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) training and support services to South West NRM in Charleville.
- Assisting the Western CMA in NSW in the development and publication of a range of extension materials for improved biodiversity management.
- Delivery of Australian Landcare Management Systems (ALMS) clinics throughout the eastern States.

### ***Linkages of new projects to other NAP/NHT/NLP projects***

QMDC still uses the NRM regional Plans a principle document for developing new project and ensures linkage to the Plan.

## ***Risks or issues affecting performance and action taken or to be taken***

The Queensland Murray-Darling Basin is subject to a very significant amount of coal and coal seam gas / petroleum licensing approval and / or exploration permits. As of December 2008, the area of good quality agricultural land is over 1.52 million hectares, with in excess of 500 kilometres of higher order streams (main rivers) with granted coal licence and over 23,000 hectares of endangered vegetation (under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999 (Qld)*) subject to potential clearing for mining.

The overall footprint of the mining / petroleum industry is very large and has the potential to negatively impact on a number of resource condition targets as well as community confidence to participate in proactive NRM activities.

## ***Summary of corporate governance issues, initiatives and risks***

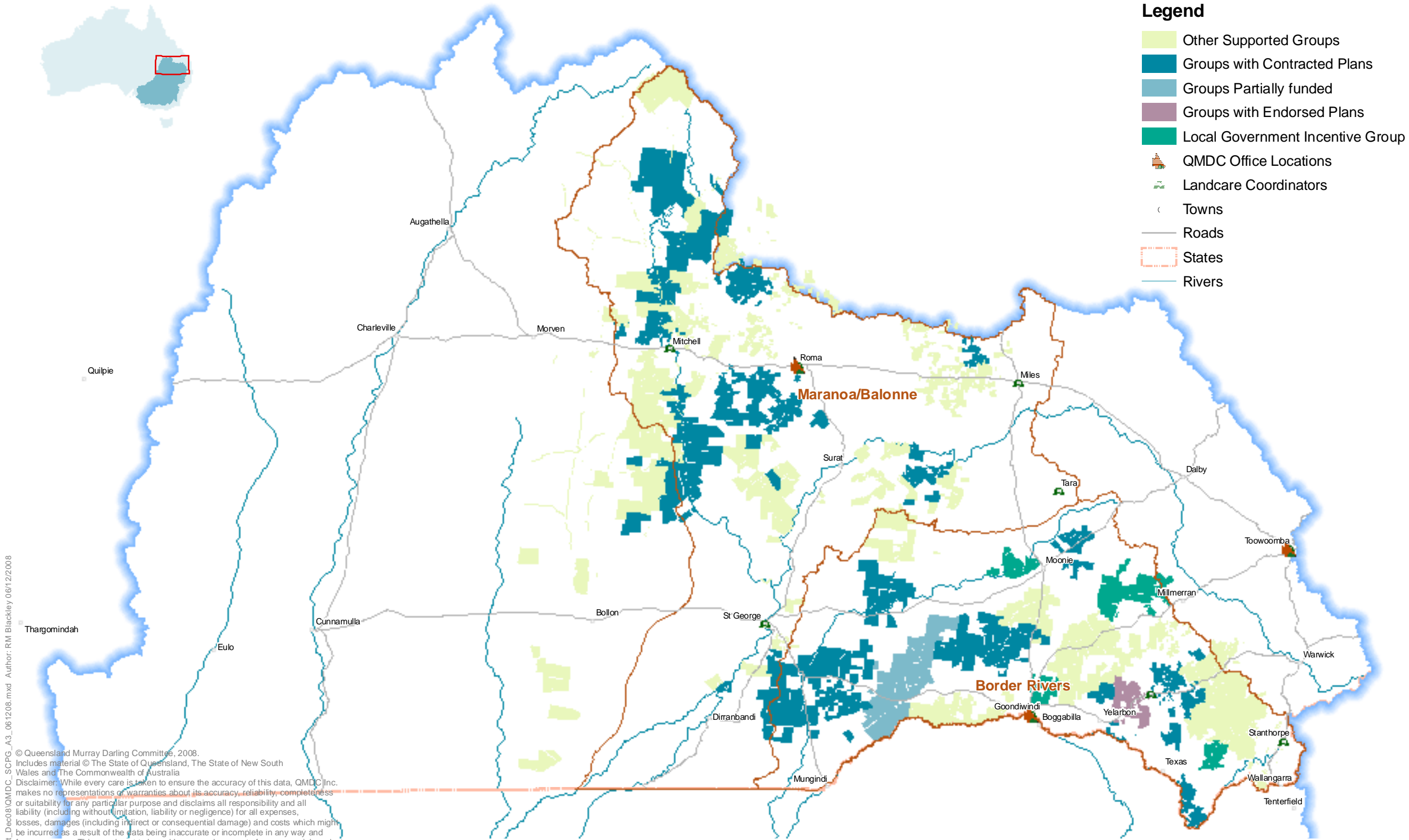
QMDC has received an unqualified financial audit from an independent auditor and a copy of the audit statement has been supplied to the Department of Natural Resources and Water (NRW). No significant issues were raised by the auditor.

QMDC had a successful Annual General Meeting (AGM) at which the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) renewed its membership to the committee.

<b>On-ground Activity</b>	<b>Cumulative outputs September 2004 to December 2008</b>	<b>New Outputs July to December 2008</b>
Revegetation of degraded areas (ha)	173,566 ha	14,106 ha
Conservation earthworks (km)	1,030 kms	44 kms
Area of land protected through engineering works (ha)	39,532 ha	1,327 ha
Fencing of degraded lands (km)	575.6 kms	139.6 kms
Alternate watering points created	653	50
Riparian zone fencing (km)	453 kms	49 kms
Combined weed & pest animal eradication &/or management (ha)	927,494 ha	54,721 ha
Revegetation and changed management of land affected by salinity (ha)	43,808 ha	2,946 ha
Area protected from soil erosion (ha)	204,662 ha	6,769 ha
Remnant vegetation management (ha)	65,022 ha	912 ha

*(Note: Figures in the above table include achievements with NAP, NHT, CfoC and NLP investment)*

**Map of QMDC catchment planning activities**



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Scale 0 50 100 Kilometres

Projection: Geographic Coordinate System GDA-94  
 Datum: Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994

Funded by:

Queensland Murray Darling Committee Inc.  
 Cnr Campbell & Bellvue Streets, TOOWOOMBA QLD 4350  
 Phone: (07) 4637 6226 Fax: (07) 4632 8062

**QUEENSLAND MURRAY-DARLING CATCHMENT PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

**December 2008**

## ***Final Reports Summary***

The following Final Reports have been submitted via upload into enQuire as separate documents attached to QMDC's portfolio,

<b>Cwlth I.D.</b>	<b>State I.D.</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Submitted</b>
64397	NLP11	Detailed soil reference sites for improved land management	30/01/09	15/01/09
50186	NLP06-05	Increasing the sustainability of agriculture on Indigenous managed lands near St George and Dirranbandi through targeted on-ground works	30/01/09	15/01/09
50200	NLP06-01	Strategic management of Parthenium weed and weed seed spread in the Border Rivers and Maranoa Balonne catchments	30/01/09	16/01/09
50202	NLP06-03	Monitoring for good on farm practice	30/01/09	16/01/09
56304	NLP07	Managing total landscapes through the adoption of advanced grazing concepts	30/01/09	20/01/09
64392	NLP09	Improvement of soil health and productivity in the Nindigully area through the implementation of improved land management works	30/01/09	20/01/09
64401	NLP10	Implementing sustainable land management and production systems in the Yalebone Creek catchment	30/01/09	20/01/09

## ***RIS Program Activity***

### ***QMRIS01-Vegetation and Biodiversity***

#### **Key Achievements against milestones**

- 2 out of 2 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008

#### **Milestone JD08-01: Two (2) additional Voluntary Agreements established on areas of HNCV**

- 2 voluntary management agreements established. (Total coverage for 4 new Land for Wildlife properties for July-December 2008 period under both RIS & TRIS is 259 hectares).

#### **Milestone JD08-02: One (1) additional integrated NRM plans incorporating vegetation management practices developed. Previously approved plans being progressively implemented.**

- 250 (hectares) of terrestrial indigenous vegetation enhanced/rehabilitated with management agreements; and
- 1 sub-catchment plan developed

#### **Risks**

None.

#### **Other Comments**

Eighty-eight landholders in the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee (QMDC) area have expressed an interest in taking part in an Environmental Stewardship program targeting the Box-Gum Grassy Woodland (BGGW) vegetative community. The BGGW is a threatened ecological community supporting a variety of critically endangered, endangered and vulnerable species. The area covered is approximately 405,000 hectares of the wheat/sheep belt of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria; which is less than 5% of its original extent. An estimated 16,000 land managers are located within the total area, and of the 88 applications received by QMDC from Queensland property owners, at least 20 have expressed an interest in joining the Nature Reserves Covenant Program.

## ***QMRIS01- Riverine, Floodplain and Wetland***

### **Key Achievements against milestones**

**1 out of 1 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

**JD08-01 - Two (2) additional integrated NRM plans incorporating riparian management practices developed. Previously approved plans being progressively implemented.**

Under subcatchment planning, the following works were contracted:

- 12 off-stream watering points to be installed;
- 384 hectares of wetland native vegetation to be enhanced/rehabilitated & under management agreements;
- 39.2 kilometres of streambank length of riparian vegetation to be enhanced/rehabilitated; and
- 2 sub-catchment plans developed with Riverine, Floodplain and Wetland outputs

### **Risks**

None.

### **Other Comments**

QMDC has successfully completed the Bureau of Rural Sciences community stream sampling project across the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin.

## ***TRIS Program Activity***

### **Program 1 - Aboriginal Cultural Heritage**

#### ***Sub-Program: SP1 - Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways (TKRP)***

##### **Sub-Program Objective**

Capture traditional knowledge relating to Aboriginal values, social and environmental perspectives of natural resources and their management by 2010.

##### **Sub-Program Description**

Traditional knowledge information relating to natural resource management is captured, stored and disseminated to the Aboriginal and wider community. This will be done by implementing Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways projects and developing protocols for Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways projects.

##### **Key Achievements against milestones**

**1 out of 1 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

**JD08-01 Traditional Owner and Aboriginal community actively involved in the development and implementation of Traditional Knowledge Revival Pathways projects across the QMDC region.**

- Protocols have been established with traditional owners for the access and use of traditional knowledge.
- Two Traditional Knowledge Recording Projects have been established with the Kambuwal and Gamilaraay Traditional Owner groups.

##### **Risks**

The *Cultural Heritage Act 2003 (Qld)* is an integral tool for Traditional Owners regarding the protection of Indigenous cultural heritage assets and is currently under review. There is a risk that changes made to the *Act* could possibly enable both private and public land managers to disregard the concept of "Duty of Care". This could constitute a risk if land managers wish to further develop areas which have a high cultural heritage value to Traditional Owners, and thereby have a negative impact upon Natural Resource Management of the area.

##### **Other Comments**

QMDC is developing a leadership program specifically for Indigenous women to become empowered in the NRM area. This project is a result of the on-going success of QMDC's 'Naturally Resourceful' programme and is funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

## ***Sub-Program: SP2 - Cultural Heritage ongoing implementation***

### **Sub-Program Objective**

Develop and deliver natural resource management works programs for the protection, maintenance and enhancement of areas of Cultural resource and values by 2010.

### **Sub-Program Description**

Ensure that the protection of culturally significant sites and the protection and rehabilitation of 'at risk' flora and fauna species of specific cultural significance by 2010.

### **Key Achievements against milestones**

#### **1 out of 2 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

##### **JD08-01 - Develop and deliver NRM works incentive packages for the protection, maintenance and enhancement of culturally significant sites.**

No indicative outputs expected to be delivered this semester for this milestone.

##### **JD08-02 - Enhanced cultural heritage on public lands/reserves in partnership with local and state government.**

*Milestone not achieved*

*Variance*

- Delays with the initial negotiations regarding site location with Traditional Owners have occurred, but now approximately 15 hectares has now been identified as culturally significant

*Corrective action taken or proposed*

- The area is expected to be protected by fencing by June 2009

### **Risks**

QMDC is developing a contingency plan to directly engage the Traditional Owners in all aspects of the on-ground works if the above risk eventuates if there is a disbanding of Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) in the region. This is due to the Funding Agreement stating that QMDC and the Traditional Owners will engage CDEP to conduct on-ground works projects for the protection of Cultural Sites within the QMDC region.

### **Other Comments**

The Wuurriyalay Winangay Project is being developed and will be located within the Goondiwindi Regional Council Local Government boundary, and funded by the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA), will identify numerous cultural and sacred sites in the region. The project aims will include the protection of terrestrial native vegetation.

## **Program 2 - Reinforcing the NRM Capacity of Regional Communities**

### ***Sub-Program: SP1 - Enhancing our communities' NRM skills***

#### **Sub-Program Objective**

Public and private land managers undertaking innovative and appropriate practices to address NRM issues.

#### **Sub-Program Description**

There are a number of established groups and networks of people involved in natural resource management planning and decision making across the region. QMDC supports trainers, facilitators and coordinators play a critical support role for these groups.

The training delivered through this sub-program aims to improve the skills of facilitators and coordinators as well as those of local groups and networks.

The training offered to the local groups and networks is designed to complement the skills training outlined in the biophysical sub-programs. This sub-program will support the provision of communication styles workshops, leadership and conflict resolution training and other similar modules based on the principles of group development.

Using QMDC's accredited and experienced trainers and facilitators, this sub-program will ensure that these key decision-makers continue to have access to appropriate support and expertise to ensure the on-going development of their capacity (skills and knowledge) to achieve natural resource management outcomes.

#### **Key Achievements against milestones**

##### **3 out of 4 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

##### **JD08-01 - Accredited training delivered to local groups and networks.**

*Milestone not achieved*

##### *Variance*

- There was one creditable training session delivered to 16 participants at Roma on wild dog, fox and cat trapping techniques, but delays have occurred with the delivery of the second. This is an elective component of a comprehensive package being developed for sub-catchment planning groups.

##### *Corrective action taken or proposed*

- Arrangements have been made for the workshops to occur in late February/early March 2009.

**JD08-02 - Non-accredited training workshops delivered.**

- There have been 3 Grazing Land Management (GLM) workshops conducted for the July to October 2008 period, with 30 participants attending.
- QMDC education staff coordinated and delivered 3 training workshops for 45 primary and secondary teachers and staff, supporting teachers to incorporate NRM topics into their teaching, and covered a range of topics including:
  - climate change;
  - sustainability science; and
  - Landcare in the classroom.
- Draft manuals have been developed for Biodiversity monitoring and Land Condition monitoring, and were trialled in workshops with stakeholders in December 2008.

**JD08-03 - Review of existing sub-catchment plans underway with groups.**

- Sub-catchment plans have been reviewed for 3 existing sub-catchment groups.
- Sub-catchment plans have been reviewed and improved for 2 sub-catchment groups.

**JD08-05 - Sub-Catchment Planning process initiated with new groups.**

During the period July-December, the following activities occurred:

- 3 new sub-catchment groups have been supported in a plan development process;
- 3 sub-catchment plans have been completed and approved;
- these approved sub-catchment plans have resulted in 25 formally documented on-ground works contracts being issued; and
- there were 25 property management plans developed.

**Risks**

Community motivation to undertake projects, or enter into contracts, with QMDC is at risk when projects have to be cancelled if landholders can't realistically implement project actions within a 12-month period due to dry weather/ drought conditions.

This is a community attitude risk that affects confidence to plan and implement on-ground works.

**Other Comments**

None.

## ***Sub-Program: SP2 - Engaging Communities in NRM***

### **Sub-Program Objective**

To encourage a diversity of people from within the region to become actively involved in NRM activities.

### **Sub-Program Description**

QMDC with a number of key regional partners will, organise, coordinate and/or host a range of events and activities across the region. These will include, but not be limited to:

- Naturally Resourceful - targeting groups of rural women and encouraging them to embrace the challenges of sustainability and change faced by rural communities.
- Youth Fora - covering a number of structured learning activities targeting school age children through to young adults, and which are designed to introduce these age groups to NRM science in a practical way.
- Working with various sectors of the regional community to develop and showcase innovative approaches to NRM.

### **Key Achievements against milestones**

#### **2 out of 2 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

##### **JD08-01 - Targeted awareness raising events identified, organised and undertaken.**

- The Reptile Recovery Program was launched at Myall Park Botanic Garden at Glen Morgan in October. Approximately 70 members of the community attended this event which was officially presided over by Ray Brown, the Mayor of Dalby Regional Council.
- Landcare Coordinators held 33 awareness-raising workshops and 6 training events, with 213 and 57 participants respectively during the July to December 2008.
- During the July to December 2008, QMDC produced 23 media releases produced resulting in 62 print and 14 broadcast-based media opportunities, giving a total of 76 events.

##### **JD08-03 - Regional 'report cards' completed and shared with regional communities.**

- No indicative outputs expected to be delivered for this milestone.

**Risks**

None.

**Other Comments**

The fourth annual Discovering Landcare Forum was held in Goondiwindi on the 19th and 20<sup>th</sup> of August 2008, and was attended by over 500 students, teachers and community members from across southern Queensland. The theme for 2008 was "Science to the Rescue", and promoted the importance of managing our natural resources sustainably and the role of science to help achieve this.

Forum activity topics ranged from water use efficiency to climate change, and included:

- a mix of guest speaker presentations;
- various 'expert-led' interactive activities and peer-teaching sessions; and
- a Family Science Show which focused on family involvement in natural resource management.
- The Landcare Community Dinner to which the whole community was invited to hear addresses by Governor Penelope Wensley AO, and three guest speakers covering science and sustainability topics, and
- 2 two field-based activities travelling to:
  - the Goondiwindi Botanic Gardens (for Primary students); and
  - a private property to examine property management issues and innovation (for Secondary students).

## ***Sub-Program: SP3 - Local Government engaged in NRM***

### **Sub-Program Objective**

To increase rural community participation and leadership in local government natural resource planning and delivery processes.

### **Sub-Program Description**

Local governments, the Local Government Association of Queensland, Landcare and Catchment groups and the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee have partnered to deliver a capacity building program to increase rural community participation and leadership in local government natural resource planning and delivery processes.

### **Key Achievements against milestones**

#### **2 out of 2 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

##### **JD08-01 - Draft Local Government NRM policies developed.**

- Previous to the amalgamation of Local Government Associations (LGA's), QMDC negotiated with 4 separate LGA's to assess location and viability of weed seed prevention wash-down facilities. The LGA's were:
  - the former Booringa Shire Council (now Roma Regional Council) – regarding the Mitchell facility (agreement reached);
  - the former Bungil Shire Council (now Roma Regional Council) – regarding the Injune facility (agreement reached);
  - the Roma Town council and the former Bungil Shire Council (as representatives on the Roma Saleyards Board) - regarding the Roma saleyard facility (agreement reached; and
  - the former Taroom Shire council (now Banana Shire Council) – regarding the Taroom facility (agreement still under negotiation].
- A contract has been negotiated regarding town water-metering and river water-supply with Balonne shire Council.
- An agreement has been negotiated regarding the control of *Harrisia cactus* with Goondiwindi Regional Council
- Community participation and involvement, respond and finalisation of the Draft Maranoa and Districts and South West Regional Plans ready for submission to Cabinet. This innovative process involves 5 Regional Councils (2 in the Maranoa region and 3 in the South West region). QMDC is an observing member on the statutory Regional Coordination Committee that oversees the development and implementation of the Plan. The plan documents regional objectives and land use policies to be considered by new development in the region in relation to:
  - the natural environment;
  - natural resource management;
  - strong communities;
  - economic development; and
  - infrastructure.
- In November 2008, two workshops were held in the Maranoa and Border Rivers areas to build capacity and understanding of integrating NRM into local government planning schemes. The outcome has been recognition and drive for an innovative network in the NRM, environment and planning sectors across local government and QMDC.

**JD08-02 - Sub-catchment groups have strong local government involvement.**

- Local government staff are consulted and involved in the identification and management of weed and pest animal issues in sub-catchment group areas and planning processes.

**Risks**

Significant changes to local government staff, structure and some procedures have generated a period of uncertainty, which has meant that the progress of some projects has been delayed.

**Other Comments**

QMDC was involved in a closed community stakeholder consultation process with a local government and a coal seam gas company investigating the options for coal seam gas waste water availability and re-use in the community of Roma.

## **Program 3 - Governance and Accountability**

### ***Sub-Program: SP1 - Strategic Leadership***

#### **Sub-Program Objective**

Maintain and progress effective mechanisms for community stakeholder input into institutional changes and policy development to ensure continual improvement in NRM plan implementation. QMDC will manage their relationships with key organisations to achieve productive, effective and efficient outcomes from NRM investment.

#### **Sub-Program Description**

Through strong effective leadership from the QMDC committee and by providing tactical decision making the strategic plan will be put in place. This includes regular functioning of full QMDC committee and Executive Committee to guide investment decisions for Caring for our Country and other investments. This sub-program also includes QMDC's input into several strategic developmental activities at the regional, state and national levels. QMDC's pro-activity will position it as the first point of call for NRM policy and program development and delivery by all levels of government.

Provide accurate accountable financial management of projects. Concise contract management processes ensuring that all sub-contracts accurately reflect parent contracts and can achieve desired milestones and outputs.

#### **Key Achievements against milestones**

**4 out of 4 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

##### **JD08-01 - Effective Decision Making of the Committee.**

- QMDC has played a lead role in the formation and development of a policy framework for the Regional Groups Collective that has resulted in a formal collaborative arrangement between all Regional Groups in Queensland.
- The QMDC Executive Committee meets on a monthly basis, alternating between face-to-face meetings and the Annual General Meeting occurred in October 2008.

##### **JD08-02 - Coordination of NRM effort across QMDB.**

- The Regional Coordinator for Water and Riverine program is currently in negotiations with the Condamine Alliance and South West NRM regarding the establishment of an on-line community stream monitoring database.
- QMDC has supported Desert Channels Queensland in the development of future business arrangements.
- QMDC continues to directly support 58 planning groups in the management area (refer to map at page 4) including 39 sub-catchment groups and 19 other groups. There are currently 32 sub-catchment groups with approved contracts.

**JD08-03 - All contractual requirements met.**

- Currently, QMDC is up to date with all contractual requirements.
- The independent financial audit was completed in September 2008, and was included in our Annual Report. Individual project audits have still yet to be received by us from the auditors.
- Financial reporting has been achieved on time and on budget.

**JD08-04 - Ongoing effective and efficient administration functions.**

- QMDC's administrative procedures manual/protocols are in an on-going review. The most recent updates have been to review our:
  - organisation's constitution;
  - internet banking policy,
  - delegations policy; and the
  - Human Relation policy.
- Information management has been focused on maintenance & renewal of existing systems including a replacing of 3 servers, backup capabilities and a majority of laptops/Personal Computers.
- Initials discussion have also taken place within QMDC for us to implement a Microsoft SharePoint Server application that will enable us to better manage our critical data for internal use as well as provide greater more easily accessed data for our external clients as well that sit outside of our internal corporate networks. This is made more easily achievable as a result of our newly updated server hardware.

**Risks**

The timeline for the Caring for our Country Regional 'base' allocation for the 2009/2010 process announcement is very concerning to the committee as our ability to plan for the level of care capacity for the 2009/2010 year is limited.

**Other Comments**

QMDC staff have also given presentations on key NRM issues to:

- the Great Artesian Basin Coordinating Committee;
- the national Veg Futures Conference;
- the Queensland Land Protection Council;
- a community forum on mining in Dalby; and
- a National Market Based Instruments (MBIs) forum in Brisbane.

## **Program 4- Sustainable Landscapes**

### ***Sub-Program: SP1 - Landscapes in Balance***

#### **Sub-Program Objective**

Better managed regional and sub-regional landscapes resilient to ecological risk factors.

#### **Sub-Program Description**

Landscape scale management of property level risk factors affecting high value agricultural assets will be undertaken to reduce sediment movement into river systems. This will involve landscape scale land resource assessment in the Border Rivers and Condamine Balonne alluvia areas and consolidation of existing detailed land resource data sets. This information will support planning, design and implementation of sub-catchment planning initiatives and will include practice change options such as water quality / soil conservation structural works. Landscape scale planning of salinity processes in areas of high salinity risk, including an assessment of impacts from salinity on urban infrastructure, will inform landscape change programs. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks will be established to benchmark and monitor changes in landscape performance, changes in farming system and this will allow benchmarking of land resource condition.

These activities will build on current strong partnership arrangements using current scientific knowledge accessed through networks of Research, Development and Extension organisations and our strong community engagement strategies currently in place.

#### **Key Achievements against milestones**

##### **1 out of 1 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

##### **JD08-01 - Develop and implement 2 sub-catchment plans within the QMDB that supports land use in accordance with capability, soil conservation and salinity risk constraints**

During the period July to December 2008, QMDC has:

- conducted land resource assessments including land and soil technical reports as part of the sub-catchment (SCP) process for 6 SCP groups covering 14,784 hectares;
- produced 3 sub-catchment plans incorporating land capability / suitability assessments, salinity risk assessments for areas of high salinity risk and soil conservation
- conducted 3 Grazing Land Management 'Tasters' workshops, with 30 participants attending;
- conducted 3 climate risk workshops with 29 landholders attending from 7 sub-catchment groups;
- contracted 296 hectares of land to be treated and protected from soil erosion by engineering works through the SCP process;
- contracted 400 hectares of land to be treated for erosion through exclusion fencing to manage grazing pressure through sub-catchment planning;
- established 6 monitoring sites to assess changes in farming systems with 3 sub-catchment groups; and
- conducted a session at the Traprock Woolgrowers field day on pasture selection and management at the Terrica woolshed.

**Risks**

None.

**Other Comments**

None.

## ***Sub-Program: SP2 - Farming for the Future***

### **Sub-Program Objective**

More resilient grazing and farming systems that account for ecological risk factors

### **Sub-Program Description**

Industry mechanisms such as the development, revision and implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) & Recommended Current Practices (RCPs) will be used as risk mitigation strategies to achieve NRM objectives. Industry BMP's and RCP's that predominantly influence grazing and farming systems will be developed and implemented to prevent, stabilise and reverse trends in degradation and salinity. Changes to these approaches will target the prevention, stabilisation and reversal of deteriorating trends in land condition. The changes will incorporate government planning initiatives and will be implemented through subcatchment planning initiatives. Collaborative arrangements with Research, Development and Extension (RDE) providers will inform these industry approaches. Changes to industry approaches will focus on land condition decline, pasture run-down, salinity expression, nutrient rundown, erosion, biodiversity protection, cultural values and soil structure decline. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks will benchmark and monitor changes in farming system performance.

### **Key Achievements against milestones**

**1 out of 1 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

**JD08-01 - Develop and implement 1 industry BMP/RCP initiative in collaboration with industry organisations within the QMDB that address resource condition risk factors.**

- On-going input into revisions for the Grains and Cotton BMPs are continuing. Two modules have been completed for the Grains BMP by QDPI&F staff and an outline of the Cotton BMP is progressing.
- The development of the Border Rivers Grazing Land Management workshop series has progressed to the stage where modules have been completed by QDPI&F staff.
- 25.2 hectares of native riparian vegetation has been contracted to be fenced through sub-catchment planning.
- 1683 hectares of land has been contracted through sub-catchment planning for pasture establishment on degraded cropping land.

### **Risks**

None

### **Other Comments**

QMDC staff have completed four Environmental Management System workshops for 24 Australian Landcare Management System certified landholders in the Traprock, St George and western Maranoa-Balonne areas.

***Sub-Program: SP3 - Risky Business - Adaptive Landscapes*****Sub-Program Objective**

Landscapes resilient to risk factors resulting from the region's prolonged drought conditions and climate change.

**Sub-Program Description**

The extent and severity of impacts caused by the region's prolonged drought and climate change experience will be assessed through an analysis of risk factors affecting regional ecological and production systems. These investigations will assess impacts in terms of potential area affected, predicted changes in regional pasture composition, regional rainfall erosivity impacts on cropping systems and regional rainfall erosivity impacts on moisture infiltration in grazing systems. Management practice change in terms of regional drought recovery planning and climate change adaptation will be developed.

**Key Achievements against milestones**

No milestones with indicative outputs expected to be delivered this semester.

## **Program 5 - Vegetation and Biodiversity**

### ***Sub-Program: SP1 - Maintain and improve conservation status of native species and natural icons***

#### **Sub-Program Objective**

Identifying distribution and ecological requirements of at risk species and communities and developing and implementing recovery plans for their protection.

#### **Sub-Program Description**

Ensuring that essential habitat and populations are protected.

#### **Key Achievements against milestones**

**0 out of 1 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

**JD08-01 - Commence implementation of landscape wide actions in high nature conservation areas identified through Back on Track analysis.**

*Milestone not achieved*

*Variance*

- The draft Back on Track Plan is currently out for public comment.

*Corrective action taken or proposed*

- All comments received will be incorporated and the plan completed by January 2009. Implementation planning meetings have occurred and will be actioned in January 2009.

#### **Risks**

Risks include:

- the inability to obtain sufficient funds to implement actions in the plan; and
- that plan completion to final version may be held up as a result of public comments made by the community, agency staff and regional body staff.

#### **Other Comments**

None.

## ***Sub-Program: SP2 - Increase in the extent of remnant native vegetation***

### **Sub-Program Objective**

Managing regrowth back to remnant vegetation status with a focus on endangered and of concern ecosystems.

### **Sub-Program Description**

Increase in the mapped extent of endangered and of concern ecosystems through regrowth habitat retention.

### **Key Achievements against milestones**

**1 out of 1 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

**JD08-01 - Develop and deliver a targeted environmental stewardship programme for protection and enhancement of regrowth vegetation through voluntary conservation agreements.**

- Review of tender process is occurring via our involvement with the Box-Gum Grassy Woodland (BGGW) Environmental Stewardship process.
- The Stewardship project is in the process of being contracted, and negotiations with partnering agencies are complete.
- QMDC is negotiating with other scientific organisations to review the mechanism design needs of QMDC in delivering private land biodiversity management programs including delivery through sub-catchment planning and MBIs in the form of a discussion paper.
- Training materials developed by a private consultant were utilised at field officer training sessions.
- QMDC has delivered a new round of the 'Land for Wildlife Plus' programme throughout the Border Rivers and Maranoa-Balonne catchments with 18 landholders contracted to implement on-ground works protecting regrowth and remnant vegetation.

### **Risks**

Clear direction through the findings of the discussion paper may not be sufficiently aligned with QMDC's current vegetation and biodiversity programme delivery methods. Implementation may require significant changes in delivery necessitating further funding to action. Landholder uptake of these methods is always a concern. Issues such as ongoing drought and financial hardship continually affect the uptake of these programs across the QMDB.

### **Other Comments**

None.

## ***Sub-Program: SP3 - Maintain or improve ecological function of native vegetation***

### **Sub-Program Objective**

Improve habitat linkages between High Nature Conservation Value (HNCV) areas at a landscape scale.

### **Sub-Program Description**

Increased linkages between HNCV areas at a landscape scale

### **Key Achievements against milestones**

#### **3 out of 3 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

#### **JD08-01 - 2 Sub-catchment plans identifying critical landscape linkages and targeting improved habitat condition in high nature conservation value (HNCV) areas across the QMDB.**

- There have been 2 sub-catchment plans produced with vegetation and biodiversity outcomes.
- 2 workshop were held with a total of 90 participants:
  - 1 'Farmecology' workshop held at a Land for Wildlife property (30 participants)
  - 1 workshop in partnership QPWS Threatened Species Network at Myall Park (60 participants)
  - 158 hectares of critical linkages and habitat condition enhanced, rehabilitated, or under changed management practices in remnant areas;
- 3 sub-catchment scale biophysical assessments have been produced regarding landscape connectivity and habitat condition for nationally and regionally significant species' habitat requirements completed

#### **JD08-02 - Voluntary conservation agreements developed for HNCV areas.**

- 2 Land for Wildlife newsletters developed and distributed to approximately 180 members.
- 2 voluntary conservation agreements were negotiated with landholders across the QMDB through the Land for Wildlife programme. (Total coverage for 4 new Land for Wildlife properties for July-December 2008 period under both RIS & TRIS is 259 hectares).

#### **JD08-03 - Reserve Management Plans developed for the QMDC Regional Council areas.**

No indicative outputs expected to be delivered for this milestone.

### **Risks**

None.

### **Other Comments**

None.

## ***Sub-Program: SP4 - Improve the state of biodiversity knowledge across the community in the QMDB***

### **Sub-Program Objective**

Capacity building activities for community and land managers are developed and implemented throughout the catchment.

### **Sub-Program Description**

Relevant/critical land managers value biodiversity and manage accordingly.

### **Key Achievements against milestones**

#### **1 out of 2 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

#### **JD08-01 - Strategic and coordinated delivery programme for biodiversity training and awareness.**

- The development of three units of accreditable training will constitute the Farmecology component of the vegetation and biodiversity extension materials. These units are expected to be trialled with the Yarril-Wyaga and Teelba sub-catchment groups in early 2009.

#### **JD08-02 - Facilitate establishment of research to address knowledge gaps on ecological function and climate change resilience of native species and natural icons.**

##### *Milestone not achieved – Incomplete and Closed*

- QMDC wishes to classify this milestone as 'Incomplete and Closed', as being unrealistic.

##### *Variance*

- Based on analysis of the task and discussions with CSIRO and the Australian Government Climate Change Agency, QMDC has concluded that the 6-month timeframe and the level of investment have been unrealistic and insufficient to achieve this milestone.

##### *Corrective action taken or proposed*

- QMDC has been pursuing other resources to enable this milestone to occur, but efforts to date have been unsuccessful.

### **Risks**

Due to climate change no longer being a high priority for the Commonwealth Government at present no applications will be made through the upcoming/current Caring for our Country funding scheme. As a result it will be imperative for the QMDC and other partners to source these funds through other means. Relationships with partners continue to be built in order to deliver on this milestone.

### **Other Comments**

None

## Program 6- Weeds and Feral Animals

### ***Sub-Program: SP1 - Feral Animals***

#### **Sub-Program Objective**

Using the best available current science to work with landholders, local and state government and key stakeholders (e.g. commercial shooters) to develop and implement coordinated multiple property pest management plans.

#### **Sub-Program Description**

Prevention, eradication or containment of regionally and nationally prioritised Feral Animals on a landscape scale (whole sub catchments) to enhance biodiversity values, priority wetlands / riparian areas and high value agricultural lands. This sub program will have high chance of success due to partnerships already developed with local government, state government (DPI&F Biosecurity), landholders and commercial shooters. This sub program will maintain and improve our partnership with research organisations (IA CRC, RWPARC) to develop and improve program effectiveness by the application of best science. This program has a solid training, broad capacity building and communication element to maintain and increase the region's capacity to reduce feral animal threatening processes.

#### **Key Achievements against milestones**

##### **1 out of 2 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

##### **JD08-01 - Develop and implement 2 sub-catchment plans within the QMDB**

- The radio-collaring of animals under the pigs / cats / fox project will provide data enabling home-range mapping to be produced covering an area of approximately 303,304 hectares;
- A sub-catchment plan has included feral animal control considerations;
- During the July to December 2008 period, QMDC delivered to sub-catchment groups:
  - One accreditable training session delivered to 16 participants on wild dog, fox and cat trapping; and
  - a 1080 poison training course for 3 groups with 45 participants attending, and
- 50,000 hectares of coordinated pig/cat/fox control has been contracted to occur.

##### **JD08-02 - Develop regional plans in conjunction with state and local government to work with all relevant stakeholders to develop ownership and a common way forward to address 1 regionally and nationally prioritised feral animal species.**

##### *Milestone not achieved*

- Regional Weed and Pest Management Planning has been undertaken between Local Governments, Biosecurity Queensland, DPI&F, EPA, AgForce, landholders and QMDC. Representatives from these groups, forming the Regional Pest Management Steering Committee, approved the priority weeds and pest animals list and targets in November 08. In October 2008, these stakeholders, with councils, commenced using the regional priority list for the development of regional council pest management plans.
- QMDC made a presentation to 20 participants at the Maranoa Regional Landcare Group on the development and application of the priority weeds and pest animals list and targets.

### *Variance*

- The determination of departments, directors and managers within councils has delayed the finalisation of Local Government Area Pest Management Plans under the auspices of the Regional Pest Management Plan.

### *Corrective action taken or proposed*

- This is now due to occur in early 2009.

### **Risks**

The determination of departments, directors and managers within councils has delayed the finalisation of Local Government Area Pest Management Plans under the auspices of the Regional Pest Management Plan. This is now due in early 2009.

### **Other Comments**

During the July-December period, the following activities have occurred:

- QMDC Carp Busters events have been held at St George (333 participants) and Dirranbandi (260 participants) fishing clubs in September & October 2008.
- The Weeds & Pest Steering Committee has endorsed the final draft of the new Weeds and Pest targets ready for approval by the QMDC executive prior to JSC submittal;
- Under the pig / cat / fox project, jointly funded with the Blue Print for the Bush, the following activities occurred:
  - two aerial surveys have been conducted for feral pig density;
  - one coordinated control effort for pigs has been conducted across 3 sites;
  - one coordinated control effort for foxes has been conducted across 1 site;
  - an assessment of damage to wheat production from feral pigs has been determined;
  - 4 feral pigs were collared to investigate home range and habitat requirements; and
  - an expansion of the number of coordinated control sites included from the original 66 landholders to currently 75 landholders.

## ***Sub-Program: SP2 - Weeds***

### **Sub-Program Objective**

Using the best available current science to work with landholders, local and state government and key stakeholders (e.g. National Parks); to develop and implement coordinated multiple property pest management plans.

### **Sub-Program Description**

Prevention, eradication or containment of regionally and nationally prioritised Weeds on a landscape scale (whole sub catchments) to enhance biodiversity values, priority wetlands / riparian areas and high value agricultural lands. This sub program will have high chance of success due to partnerships already developed with local government, state government (DPI&F Biosecurity), and landholders. This sub program will maintain and improve our partnership with research organisations (University Queensland) to develop and improve program effectiveness by the application of best science. This program has a solid training broad capacity building and communication element to maintain and increase the regions capacity to reduce weed threatening processes.

### **Key Achievements against milestones**

**0 out of 2 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

**JD08-01 - Develop and implement 2 sub-catchment plans within the QMDB.**

*Milestone not achieved*

- 1 sub-catchment group is developing weed infestation maps for an area of 27,676 hectares;
- 2 sub-catchment plans have been contracted to undertake pest plant control measures.
- A collaborative project with the Goondiwindi Regional Council is conducting *Harrisia cactus* control methods over 3,000 hectares, and two sub-catchment groups have contracted weed control works covering 1,741 hectares; and
- 1 sub-catchment group held a training session on weed identification and control measures.

*Variance*

- There is one workshop outstanding (CB2.1). There was one accreditable training session delivered to 16 participants at Roma on wild dog, fox and cat trapping techniques, but delays have occurred with the delivery of the second. This is an elective component of a comprehensive package being developed for sub-catchment planning groups.

*Corrective action taken or proposed*

- The one outstanding workshop is expected to be attained by June 2009.

**JD08-02 - Develop regional plans in conjunction with state and local government to work with all relevant stakeholders to develop ownership and a common way forward to address 1 regionally and nationally prioritised species.**

*Milestone not achieved*

- Regional Weed and Pest Management Planning has been undertaken between Local Governments, Biosecurity Queensland, DPI&F, EPA, AgForce, landholders and QMDC. Representatives from these groups, forming the Regional Pest Management Steering Committee, approved the priority weeds and pest animals list and targets in November 08. In October 2008, these stakeholders, with councils, commenced using the regional priority list for the development of regional council pest management plans.
- QMDC made a presentation to the Maranoa Regional Landcare Group on the development and application of the priority weeds and pest animals list and targets, with 20 participants attending.
- QMDC has negotiated contracts to control the spread of all weed seeds (targeting Parthenium) with:
  - Roma Regional Council for 3 public washdown facility upgrades at Injune, Mitchell and Roma; and
  - Banana Shire Council for 1 public washdown facility upgrade at Taroom.
- The *Harrisia cactus* program in partnership with the Goondiwindi Regional Council involves adjoining landholders in the 10km radius of Goondiwindi undertaking control activities for this species.
- There is a media campaign to promote the Rapid Response Program for Parthenium outbreaks in partnership with Local Governments, Biosecurity Queensland and QMDC.

*Variance*

- The determination of departments, directors and managers within councils has delayed the finalisation of Local Government Area Pest Management Plans (CB1.2) under the auspices of the Regional Pest Management Plan.

*Corrective action taken or proposed*

- The Local Government Area Pest Management Plans is now due in early 2009.

**Risks**

None

**Other Comments**

The Lippia Manual has been completed

## ***Sub-Program: SP3 - Science for change in weed and pest management***

### **Sub-Program Objective**

To build on the best available current science and our current research partnerships to develop improved methods of feral animal and weed control to better understand how we should strategically control pests in prioritised parts of the landscape.

### **Sub-Program Description**

To investigate (with existing partners - NRW, BRS, DPI&F BioSecurity) and apply improved understanding of the ecology including climatic and soil characteristic requirements for the prioritised weeds and pest animals infesting and threatening the natural assets of the catchment. E.g. 'Endangered', 'Vulnerable' and 'Rare' species and habitats of the southern Brigalow Belt and the New England Tablelands. This will allow us to be much more strategic about which of the regionally and nationally prioritised weeds and pest animals we address in which parts of the landscape. This will include specific seed ecology investigations of priority weeds where knowledge gaps exist.

### **Key Achievements against milestones**

**0 out of 1 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

**JD08-01 - To investigate the ecology including the climatic requirements of 10 regionally and nationally prioritised feral animals in the QMDB to understand locally when the best time and methods are for coordinated control.**

*Milestone not achieved*

- QMDC has negotiated a contract with CSIRO to investigate feral animal habitat suitability for prioritised feral animals in the QMDB.

*Variance*

- Finalisation of the contract was delayed due to protracted negotiations regarding making the modelling framework 'fit' the relevant climatic and land systems data for the QMDB. (The original model was based on Parkinsonia in Western Queensland.)

*Corrective action taken or proposed*

- The project is now expected to be completed by June 2009.

### **Risks**

None.

### **Other Comments**

None.

## **Program: 7- Wetlands and Floodplains**

### ***Sub-Program: SP1 - Improved water quality and riparian function***

#### **Sub-Program Objective**

Improved wetland management through changed management in the riparian zone, with reduced sediments, nutrients and pesticides entering waterways.

#### **Sub-Program Description**

Controlled stock access to riparian zone (including fencing, off stream watering points and commitment to controlled time grazing in riparian zones).

Improved land management (including grazing and cropping practices to improve cover and reduce pollutant runoff).

#### **Key Achievements against milestones**

**1 out of 1 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

##### **JD08-01 - 2 sub-catchment plans developed including riparian function considerations**

- Extension workshops including a Rapid Assessment of Riparian Condition (RARC) assessment were undertaken at 2 sub-catchment group properties.
- A presentation was given at the Inglewood Landcare group's Annual General Meeting regarding monitoring methods and results of community and agency monitoring to date.
- Through the sub-catchment planning programme, there have been 35 kilometres of riparian fencing contracted to protect 52 hectares of riparian native vegetation.

#### **Risks**

None.

#### **Other Comments**

The Regional Aboriginal Advisory Group (RAAG) has developed the Caring for Country Plan incorporating their desire and capacity to contribute to regional NRM. This includes many riverine interests and QMDC is working to incorporate cultural heritage assessments and interests into riparian planning.

## ***Sub-Program: SP2 - Healthy aquatic flora and fauna in priority wetlands***

### **Sub-Program Objective**

Community ownership of wetlands and wetland conditions and involvement in changed practice to protect and improve wetland ecosystems.

### **Sub-Program Description**

Adoption of recommended practices that minimise impacts of land and water use on wetland health are identified and implemented in priority wetlands.

Community awareness of adopted practices and the effect on wetland ecosystems.

### **Key Achievements against milestones**

**2 out of 2 scheduled milestones completed for July – December 2008**

#### **JD08-01 - Effective functioning of the Border Rivers Demonstration Reach Project.**

- A sub-catchment group which includes 7 landholders is being assisted in activities which aim to improve riverine conditions.

#### **JD08-02 - Baseline river health and water quality monitoring program maintained and enhanced (including integration of government and community monitoring data).**

- There is continuing quarterly wetland health and water quality monitoring occurring at 60 sites, involving both QMDC technical staff and community participants.
- A technical report will be prepared for a sub-catchment group.
- A presentation was given at the International River Symposium in September 2008 regarding engaging the community in wetland health which provided an analysis of wetland health and water quality data. The presentation can be accessed online at <http://www.riversymposium.com/index.php?element=WEBBppt>

### **Risks**

None.

### **Other Comments**

- QMDC is working with Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MBDA) to incorporate Native Fish Strategy intent and works into activities related to healthy aquatic flora and fauna in priority wetlands.
- QMDC is contributing to the development of the Environmental Protection Agency's AquaBAMM application in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin (QMDB). This process aims to prioritise wetlands in the QMDB for conservation value. QMDC has contributed through staff attendance at expert panel fora and facilitating community engagement in the AquaBAMM process.
- The Regional Aboriginal Advisory Group (RAAG) has developed the Caring for Country Plan incorporating their desire and capacity to contribute to regional NRM. This includes many riverine interests and QMDC is working to incorporate traditional owner interests into aquatic flora and fauna related activities.