

5. Results for Cluster B (Second phase clusters) (Coastal management, Primary industry, Secondary and Tertiary industry, Traditional Owners)

Results about perspectives and readiness to partner are given here for sectors studied in 2005. Strategic perspectives analysis interviews were again used for the coastal sector and for secondary and tertiary industries. The interview schedule was modified for secondary and tertiary industry, as very few interviewees were members of BMRG, unlikely to have much knowledge of BMRG or the NRM Plan *Country to Coast*. For primary industry, our information is based mainly on interviews with persons interviewed as catchment group or landcare group representatives who are also primary producers and from interviewees of the secondary and tertiary sector who serve primary producers. Our interpretation of progress towards partnership by Traditional Owners is based on a previous study in the Burnett Mary region, which identified issues, aims and barriers, and on the interactions during two forums arranged by BMRG to establish governance and partnership formation.

5.1 Coastal management sector

This is a small sector but with diverse interests, including environmental monitoring and management groups, coastal residents groups, and fishing interests. Additional information from interviews conducted with conservation sector or secondary/tertiary sector representatives who are also linked to coastal management has been included. Because of the diversity of coastal sector organisations we have reported issues, aims, constraints and commitment to partnership in subsectors (environmental, fishing, tourism and planners).

Points about issues, aims and opportunities under a regional approach, constraints and commitments follow, together with our comments followed by partnership recommendations. The points are sometimes amalgamations of similar views, sometimes the opinion of just one person. Comments that did not appear to add to an overall subsector perspective have not been included.

Issues:

Environmental monitoring and management groups focused on the impacts of recreational fishing, and aquaculture (scallop and prawn farms), the impacts of development along the coastline and the impacts of flood sediment on sea grass beds. The following statement from DPI&F supports the concern over recreational angling:

The recreational harvest for many species often exceeds the commercial harvest. It is estimated that the recreational harvest for bream, flathead and dart is four times the commercial catch, whiting and mud crabs is three times, tailor is two to four times the commercial catch and blue swimmer crabs, school and spotted mackerel is estimated to be twice the commercial catch (QDPI 2005, Series Information bulletin Q 102012, p, 109).

Fishing interests emphasised the impact of stream barrages and dams, and the loss of key fishing areas. Points made include:

- it is important for fish to be able to move from salt to fresh; barrages and dams have been a detriment to fish of all species – need upstream access to maintain a good fishing industry
- a major problem with barrages is in sediment collection – in a flood this is stirred up and dumps out with the floodwater and covers seagrass beds etc.
- fishermen blame the dams more than any other adaption to water courses for fish number decline
- loss of key fishing areas within marine parks has reduced viability for many fishers
- increased population is probably not going to be an issue, provided people don't want to take home an esky load of fish
- development is OK provided the mangroves remain, runoff is not toxic and suitable amount of runoff is maintained (not all stored)
- zoning in the proposed Marine Park (Great Sandy) is contentious.

Tourism interests showed a mixture of mild concern and complacency. Some concerns were about water use with increasing numbers, effect of hyacinth on the coast in floods, aquaculture, stormwater bringing rubbish to the bay and beach erosion. Other concerns include:

- concern that we might lose some areas to death.
- disagreement with Indigenous people hunting live turtles and dugong.
- cane farming impact on the reef: wasteful irrigation and nutrients ends in the sea.
- increased boating (increase in ferry transfers and fishing could damage the waterway).

Complacency and optimism are reflected in one opinion that 'I assume someone has thought through natural resource issues in allowing such tourist expansion (we pay taxes for this)', and another that fish populations are actually increasing, so charter operators will still find fish, though the species available will change.

Planners believe there is great ignorance about the importance of water in the present environment (people complain about costs and restrictions) and mentioned runoff effects of urban development and erosion losses due to dispersive soils in streambanks.

Comment

The fishing industry considers itself very much under threat, and those interviewed believe that this does not need to be the case. There are two main thrusts to their concern – firstly, the belief that protected areas in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park have unnecessarily penalised fishers; and secondly the damage to restocking of the most important commercial fish through the presence of dams and barrages on streams. The tourism industry on the other hand believes that in the newly defined Great Sandy Straits Marine Park there are insufficient commercial fishing exclusion zones. Environmental groups interestingly see recreational fishing as the greater threat, citing evidence that recreational catches are greater than commercial.

The nearest to a common ground issue is the concern about the impact of sediment from flooded streams on coastal marine life.

Aims and opportunities

Environmental monitoring and management groups

- Form technical hubs; based in NRM or BMRG office where data is pulled together from all sources and made available. BMRG could support or initiate.
- Need engagement in planning, sharing of information, working together; proper partnership.
- Form partnerships with industry etc.; talk to developers and explain what damage they can do.
- Conservation consortium is getting marine conservation groups together (a 10 point plan).
- BMRG should be a lobby group to stop people damaging the area.
- Talk to people to get action going – networking.
- Like to do research but need funding.
- Like to work with scouts, guides etc. and Friends of the Burrum.

Fishing

- Need to get rid of barrages.
- Convert caneland to small crops (much more water efficient) to reduce water requirements.
- Expand fishing education program.

Tourism

- Increased tourism development is good for us – even though it adds competition, the more facilities provided, the more tourists will come.
- One would like to provide more education (we need to get eco-certified).
- Need to look at grey water use.

Planners.

- Aims to adopt sustainable urban design for water and energy.
- Environmentally friendly development can be a marketing tool.

Comment

Environmental groups had obviously thought through issues and had actions they would like to see happen, including partnerships with industry, networking and links to institutional technical expertise; other groups appeared not to have thought about the problems from the point of view of what to do next. Some fishers suggested that barrages had to go; more practically they would like to see much better public education about fishing. Resort owners generally did not see themselves having a role in coastal management, although perceptions about this may have changed slightly during the interview.

Constraints/barriers/ needs

Environmental monitoring and management groups

- Monitoring organisations need skilled technical support.
- Need ongoing support not dependent on short-term projects.
- Rather than seeing it as a conservative landscape, planning decisions are based on assumption that developer has the rights unless can be successfully challenged.
- Environmental Council needs more internal capacity.
- Lack of support for RAMSAR sites; lack of policing by EPA (vandalism from motor bikes; developers building on wetlands).
- A divide between long-term residents and the growth economy.

Regional Partnership Agreements Burnett Mary, July 2006

- Providing money to community groups for short projects scattered across groups uses money needed to support staff in agencies.
- While it is argued that community group support gives community ownership, often the community group is just a small group running from grant to grant trying to do something.
- Government has used community grants to move responsibility on – too easy to say get community together –throw some money at it – but groups haven't got the capacity.

Fishing

- Over regulation of the fishery; fish numbers have not declined.
- Damage to the reef offers opportunity for a more diverse system.
- The Representative Area Program has resulted in unfair loss of fisheries (some good spanner crab areas are not on the Reef but were eliminated).
- Insufficient consultation –a protocol was set up with advisory groups; but not followed; could have shown inappropriateness of some area boundaries.
- Qld Fisheries have taken a lot of steps over the past 10 years, which had significant impacts on fishing; then the Marine Park Authority came on top of that.
- Support green zones but not the way they have been implemented.

Tourism

- Inappropriate development e.g. apartments on a sand dune.
- Hervey Bay City is not sustainably developing – infrastructure is not keeping up.
- Council services are adequate for residents but this is a tourist destination (Hervey Bay).

Planners

- With growth, not sure that environmental flows in streams are still possible with a much used stream like the Mary.
- Vegetation retention requirements in planning.
- Meeting cultural heritage requirements in planning.

Comment

Short term funding, especially to community groups for small projects came under fire by one interviewee from the environmental monitoring area, believing that it would be better spent supporting technical staff in agencies where the expertise would be ongoing. Other environmental constraints were seen to be need for more internal capacity for environmental groups to make meaningful contribution, problems of the supremacy of developers in terms of opportunity and rights, and lack of agency support for RAMSAR sites. Fishers saw lack of appropriate consultation as a major barrier.

Commitment to action/readiness to partner

The Environmental monitoring and management groups were the only ones with comments that fit this category:

- some are in a partnership arrangement through the Priority Actions program, and have sponsors who provide support and administer grants
- have maintained good sponsorship by performing well
- like to have a close working relationship – have networks with many groups
- like to be involved, don't believe in working in isolation.

Comment

Some environmental groups have become aligned with NRM Plan Management Action Targets but fishing, tourism and planners at this stage were not familiar with the Plan, and will take some time (and more interaction) to view themselves as 'coastal managers', taking some part in the Plan's Activities.

Partnership recommendations, coastal sector

Because of the diversity of groups, and the lack of data related to Felkins' 'readiness to partner' questions (as shown for Cluster A sectors in chapter 4), we are reluctant to try to answer them. However, it would be useful for those involved with the coastal sector to do so, perhaps dealing with each subsector separately.

BMRG's partnership with GBRMPA in 2005 to run the Reef Guardians Program has been one successful coastal partnership.

The GBRMPA Reef Guardian Schools program encourages schools to commit to the protection and conservation of the Great Barrier Reef.

The BMRG was the first natural resource management group in the nation to formalise a partnership with GBRMPA to support the program, and awarded a total of \$10,000 to the region's 20 Reef Guardian schools.

BMRG Newsletter April 2006

Recent progress with the coastal sector has included improved linkage with the fishing industry, with one peak commercial fishing body taking membership in BMRG, and a forum recently held which brought together some of the stakeholders. Having diverse roles and being quite independent, it is unlikely that stakeholders will respond to sector network meetings unless the meetings target specific issues, in which case those affected by that issue might come together. This could progress to a set of working groups or alliances. The Lower Mary-Burrum River water quality monitoring alliance established over the past year under facilitation of BMRG's Coastal Management Support Officer is a good example of a working group of this nature. In this instance, there was clear common ground and few differences in opinion on what needed to be done. Groups working on other issues will probably not be so unified, and facilitators may need to manage conflict. The formation process for the water quality monitoring alliance, outlined in chapter 6, Section 6.5, may be useful for generating other working groups.

BMRG's partnering with some stakeholders in the sector will be a gradual process, and partnerships between some stakeholders may be even more gradual. The views of commercial fishers, recreational fishing, environmental groups and marine authorities and government agencies vary considerably and appear to have been hotly debated at times. Partnering will also be hampered by the belief by some that consultation processes have been truncated. Are there common ground activities that might build relationships and understanding of 'culture' and needs? The 'negotiation space' approach to planning, with focus on points of common ground rather than the issues that create separation, outlined in chapter 6, section 6.5, is well suited to this situation.

It is perhaps important to note that this process for conflict management does not require suppression of conflict so much as a willingness to put points of disagreement to one side while points of agreement are progressed. As 'common ground' planning progresses, the associated development of understanding about needs and culture, and improvement in relationships should enable some of the hotly debated issues to be brought to the table.

To bring more organisations with a potential coastal management role to a stage where they recognise the issues, possible solutions and what they can do, requires a well-planned awareness campaign directed at those who benefit from the coastal resource in some way. The potential audience is even more diverse than the planners, resort owners, fishing charter operators and whale watchers included in our interviews, but coverage of those subsector groups would be a good start. If they can be enticed into membership the information that flows from that might generate a greater response than current interest would suggest.

Enabling (capacity enhancement) recommendations

We have not tried to rate the 'partnership capacity' statements (listed in the Landcare section, chapter 4), to the coastal management sector. It is probably premature to try to rate some of the statements or questions for the sector as a whole; they would need to be applied to specific partnerships developed between BMRG and individual organisations or for the Water Quality Alliance, whose main immediate capacity needs are training in data collection and recording. Questions such as 'how well do they trust and cooperate', and 'how well do they operate in decision-making, implementation and reporting' would receive high rating in the alliance forming stage but have not been tested in an operational sense.

Information to organisations in all subsectors about coastal issues, what can be done and who is doing something will be an important part of early capacity enhancement for this sector.

5.2 Primary industry

Primary industries no doubt have the greatest impact on natural resources in the region. Grazing, dairying, canegrowing, horticulture, peanuts, forestry and fishing are economic and social mainstays of the region. They also need to bear the main burden of adoption of sustainable practices.

Partnerships within primary industries might be between individual landholders and BMRG, individual landholders and landcare groups, individual landholders and rural industry organisations, rural industry organisations with BMRG and rural industry organisations with other rural industry organisations or with other industries.

Because other studies were being carried out within the rural sector, we did not undertake extensive strategic perspectives interviews. However we have drawn together information relevant to partnership opportunities. After commenting on some 'general' data, we look briefly at the grazing industry, dairying, horticulture and peanut growing. Fishing, although a major primary industry, is discussed within the coastal management section. Productive forestry is discussed along with the milling aspects of the industry in the secondary - tertiary industries section.

General

A report on rural landholder practices and attitudes (PAP1.1) (Byron, Curtis and Mackay 2004) provides the following information pertinent to deciding readiness to partner:

- 13% of respondents were a member of a landcare group
- 22% had employed a consultant to provide on-property advice
- 31% had used the services of a government advisor in the past year
- 6% had work undertaken on their property that was at least partly funded by

government programs in the past five years
67% of respondents said that they had an off-property income for 2003/2004.

Landcare membership in the region is low compared with national averages and relatively few have joined government-funded projects. We infer that independence or suspicion of government-funded programs might inhibit partnerships.

Byron, Curtis and Mackay also reveal that 70% of landholders surveyed have had no involvement in local action planning and 14% have had very little. This does little to foster a partnership approach to natural resource management. However, slightly more positively, 27% indicated strong interest, and 26% some interest, in taking part in a grant scheme administered by BMRG or a government department.

Although 76% thought the availability of cash was an important constraint to changing management practices inferring that incentives might be of interest, 69% thought stage of life was an important constraint; inferring that the majority of producers may be past striving for best practice – a worrying conclusion considering that 70% of them have no succession plan. It is also worth noting that four of the five highest responses to a question about the main issues affecting the district were social or financial rather than natural resource or production technology constraints (the availability of surface or groundwater being the exception, coming in second). Impetus to get stuck into natural resource management may be low when there are many other seemingly more important concerns.

Grazing

The following points were made during interviews with four inland Burnett graziers who were in organisations that held some affiliation with BMRG other than their grazing interests. Hence it is biased, all having known interests in natural resource management. Nevertheless the data contains prompts about directions that could help cooperation and partnership formation with graziers.

Issues (2004 interviews):

The limited sample of graziers noted water management as a major issue on several fronts: drought, decline in underground water, getting a balance between irrigators and those who want to preserve the river. Weeds, salination, and feral animals were other issues impacting on profitability. Sustainable management was mentioned.

Aims and opportunities

- Immediate recognition and funding for what is seen as important in each local area.
- Use more carrot than stick; for landholders can often see the needs but lack the cash.
- Funded trials in areas of concern (useful for both landholders and government to see what works and what warrants investment).
- Efficient water use to meet needs for cropping, city water supply and environmental flows.
- Practices for sustainable grazing management.
- BMRG should be gearing to deal with causes not symptoms.
- Careful watch on prevention of salinity (right down the catchment).
- Important to start weed control at the top of the catchment, but need coordination so that all branches along the way are covered as well.
- Thorough observation of pests. We need someone continually looking for pest re-infestations and new potential pests.

Regional Partnership Agreements Burnett Mary, July 2006

- Effective projects – Regional coordination of projects is good.
- Opportunity to link people with what needs to be done – people in cities could come out in groups – primary producer is too busy and too poor to do the whole thing.
- Need a substitute for the effective extension program we once had.

Constraints and barriers

- Grass roots members are frustrated that so much money is going into administration.
- Need the right people on BMRG Board to ensure they keep eyes on long-term objectives.
- Major communication gap from members of Board to industry organizations and individuals – Board needs to realize benefits that might flow if there is understanding.
- A lot invested in structures – not seen as providing practical on ground industry support.

Commitment to partnership

- Landcare is taking on a partnership project for grazing land management education – this is a good way to go (rather than setting up through Agforce).
- Communication is most important.
- Need to deal with the individual farmer, as has been done for some other schemes recently.
- Identify the priority projects for a subregion then set up agreements directly with landholders (neither landcare groups nor Agforce are quite in position to do this).

Comment

The ‘aims and opportunities’ comments suggest key features of actions suggested by graziers that might generate partnership activities - *funding for what is seen as important in each local area; more carrot than stick; trials in areas of concern; practices for sustainable grazing management; watch on prevention of salinity; start weed control at the top of the catchment, but need coordination; thorough observation of pests; a substitute for the effective extension program we once had.*

The references to Board activities in the constraints section are possibly historic, as these interviews were held in 2004; Board elections have been held since then.

As well as landcare partnership delivery of sustainable grazing management workshops (as has been happening for the past year), sustainable grazing management will be a theme of anticipated partnerships with Agforward (a wing of Agforce with objectives to promote good land management and link with regional natural resource management groups and other programs)¹.

Dairying

We have insufficient interview information to draw generalisations, but the following points were made. Issues include water allocations, effluent management, salinity, maintaining rivers in sustainable condition but allowing fairness to everyone involved. Aims and opportunities include: a water use efficiency project; an effluent manual; a riparian health project (what farmers could do to help the environment and not hinder or maybe benefit their operation); and a view that working at regional level provides more opportunity to work with people you know.

¹ At the time of the interviews, Agforce appeared focused on lobbying government over tree and water issues, and were not viewed as taking a positive stand on natural resource management practices. Agforward provides a different face, with information and skills programs that can mesh with NRM Plan Activities. A recently appointed regional partnerships officer will work with BMRG to establish points of common ground and partnership options.

Comment

The Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation (QDO) has taken a positive approach to partnership with regional bodies. A joint project with Central Queensland University and BMRG is currently trialing a competitive tender incentive program related to effluent management.

Horticulture

The Burnett Mary region boasts a wide range of horticultural enterprises, including in particular citrus, vegetables, avocados and macadamias. We have no interview information on issues in the horticulture industry or perceived opportunities for partnerships. Growcom has a regional partnerships coordinator who is working with BMRG to establish a trial incentive program based on a competitive tender process similar to the dairy industry trial mentioned above.

Peanut growing

Dryland peanut cropping has been a mainstay industry of the South Burnett for many years. Increasing amounts of peanuts are now grown under irrigation in the lower Burnett, particularly as a break crop between sugar plantings. (The potential impact of this expansion on the dryland areas is not known.) The following information is from interviews with processors, agri-service agents and a research officer as part of the secondary/tertiary sector interviews but includes important perceptions about the industry and opportunities for partnerships with growers and service industries.

- There are dwindling numbers of peanut farmers in the South Burnett – they are selling to life stylers – this was some of the most productive land in Australia.
- Age is a big factor in this area. Farmers don't have succession – tend to go out of cropping and run some cattle.
- Farmers still in peanuts are the better farmers – growing better yields – this has slowed the decline in tonnage drop with changed land use, but increased land price means it is difficult for these good farmers to expand.
- In the 1970s about 50 000ha red soils were cultivated. This is down to 35-40 000 now, partly because some land should not have been opened up. There is not much change in peanut tonnage.
- Farmers can't do much more because prices are squeezed so much through imports from overseas.
- Growing peanuts need some tillage – but bigger growers are going to controlled traffic - Have full spectrum of growers from conventional to almost zero till.
- Rip strip tillage is the closest to zero-till; it needs fine-tuning.
- Rip strip (a problem with water-loss to ground water?)
- Some work through grower groups re adoption of strip till.
- Little pesticide used on dryland crops but irrigated crops require frequent spray.

Comment

Partnerships that enhance viability of Kingaroy farmers locked-in by price squeeze and high land prices seem warranted, particularly on grounds of sustainability of productive land and social sustainability (maintaining the culture of this community). If dryland peanut growing becomes unviable, good agricultural land could be taken over for non-economic life-style blocks. Two current activities possibly warranting support are a) further development of the rip strip tillage equipment, if a benefit to soil health and water use efficiency, and b) further support for a whole farm economic analysis of farm structures project designed to keep cropping properties viable.

Peanut growers are strongly linked to the agronomic advisers employed by the processor for advice and new technology. As Burch, Rickson and Annels (1992) have pointed out, this close nexus between grower and processor is often not in the best interests of the natural resources – the advisers are likely to be motivated to improve production rather than the land, and processors sometimes stipulate production requirements that are detrimental to land condition. While there might not be the level of contractual expectations placed on peanut growers as in some other enterprises, it seems warranted to take positive steps to seek a partnership between BMRG, DPI&F and the Peanut Company of Australia to foster best natural resource management practices amongst peanut growers.

Partnership recommendations, Primary Industry sector

Current efforts by government and regional bodies to identify satisfactory incentive schemes for landholders, the positive attributes of the recently announced Blueprint for the Bush Scheme, and the appointment by rural industry peak bodies of regional partnership officers intimate a change in climate which could foster a marked change in rural producer involvement in government supported natural resource management activity (from the very low participation rates reported by Byron, Curtis and Mackay in 2004).

A Queensland Farmers' Federation MOU with BMRG provides foundational arrangements for joint contributions to sustainable management programs such as Farm Management Systems. Within that, QDO and Growcom (horticulture industry) and canegrowers have developed management improvement systems tailored to industry requirements. QDO and Growcom are also trialing competitive tender approaches to system improvements by producers in association with BMRG and Central Queensland University.

The Agforward division of Agforce is gearing up, through a recently appointed regional partnerships officer, to link with regional bodies on sustainable management programs of mutual interest. This is a very important linkage for the Burnett Mary, where grazing land management practices are a major issue. Given that landcare groups are also promoting sustainable grazing practices, prospects for fruitful partnerships at both the regional and district levels are strong. Agforward is now running workshops for landholders, including a computerised property planning series.

These industry - regional body relationships, initiated through government support for regional partnership officers, could well develop into long-term partnerships, as each body recognises the importance of sustainable farming practices to both successful industries and successful resource maintenance. Queensland is fortunate to have active industry bodies for most industries, with an added advantage of having most of these linked for policy and strategies under the QFF umbrella. This provides regional bodies with an efficient channel for communication and application of incentive schemes to a range of producers.

As partnerships develop, it is useful to review the Felkins questions about readiness to partner to identify areas needing attention, as well as the criteria for successful partnership agreements in chapter 3 section 3.11.

Collaboration between rural industry organisations on some overlapping issues or programs might be needed. One area of potential concern is the development of separate farm management systems for each industry. If a producer has more than one enterprise there is the possibility of differing, even perhaps conflicting, requirements for best management practice. Additionally if

exports at some future stage are required to meet international quality assurance standards, the multiplicity of management systems may be problematic. Fortunately, the QFF Farm Management Systems approach, which covers most industries, has paid particular attention to establishing common broad principles for development of the individual systems. It has established a member forum which:

- establishes and maintains communication among member organisations to address needs of multi-commodity enterprises.
- identifies and fosters opportunities for efficiencies and coordination of FMS programs.
- develops communication processes to review trends and emerging issues (Queensland Farmers' Federation 2005, p.7).

This answers some of the concerns, but it would help further if Agforce could partner with QFF in this part of the program's activity, i.e. establishing agreed principles and monitoring issues presented to multi-commodity producers.

An alternative would be for all industries to adopt the ALMS (Australian Land Management System) approach (Gleeson 2006), though it appears that landholders might not be ready for the rigour of its Environmental Management Systems approach (Whelan 2006) and industries within the ambit of QFF appear to have decided not to follow this route. Nevertheless it does avoid both concerns raised (fits all industries and meets international standards). As it is also a NRM focused approach, it is perhaps appropriate for BMRG to initiate links between the ALMS program leaders and rural industry organisations to identify elements from ALMS that should and can be transposed into industry systems relevant to the Burnett Mary to give integrity and consistency to the NRM parts of industry quality assurance programs. (Note that we have not investigated what consideration has already been given to this by industry organisations).

In the absence of an ALMS approach, some commodities such as peanuts appear to fall between the cracks of best practice programs by industry organisations. Although field crops such as peanuts are in Agforce's domain, our information is that few peanut growers would be members of Agforce, hence there appears some likelihood that Agforce might not invest in promoting best practice systems for peanuts. An alternative might be for BMRG to invest in partnership with the major processor and adviser to peanut growers – Peanut Company of Australia (PCA) – to develop and promulgate a sustainable farming system for peanuts. (However, perhaps giving this attention to a specific crop would create problems of overlapping systems: peanuts would rotate with other field crops in some areas and with sugar cane in others.)

The possible widespread adoption of competitive tender as an incentive tool will be observed with interest as we feel that it runs fundamentally across some of the tenets we have promoted for natural resource management partnerships – cooperative action on priority issues through partnerships developed on trust and complementary activity (see chapter 6 section 6.8).

We have not carried out capacity needs analysis for primary industry partnerships. For producers, capacity enhancement needed to make the changes to sustainable farming practices will best be identified by industry organisation coordinators of the farming systems developed for each industry, as well as landcare coordinators or regional body staff operating with producers to implement systems.

5.3 Secondary and tertiary industry

For the secondary and tertiary industry sector, we focused on non-members of BMRG and therefore needed to change the question schedule to explore knowledge about BMRG and natural resource management programs. The sector has a vast range of small businesses and, for this region, just a few large corporations. For this round of research we decided to work with businesses that had an obvious or at least arguable link to the use of natural resources.

The businesses have been grouped into the following subsectors: agricultural machinery; agri-services; agricultural processing; seafoods, timber, coastal tourism, rural tourism, town planning.

Agricultural machinery

Knowledge about BMRG and natural resource management activity.

Representatives from three agricultural machinery firms were interviewed (two inland Burnett, one mid-Mary). None had heard of BMRG or the Country to Coast NRM Plan. One was in a landcare group until 5 yrs ago and another was aware of landcare groups and had occasionally sold farm machinery to groups Australia-wide. One was aware of past projects to plant trees but did not see them as very active at the moment (more projects about 5 years ago): 'Landcare seems to have gone out of fashion'.

Perceptions about issues and trends generally or affecting the firm

Change in land use with loss of productive land was of considerable concern in the South Burnett through increased 'lifestyle' ownership: twenty years ago this was the most viable dryland area in Australia – once farmers sold out to their next door neighbour. Now there are dwindling numbers of peanut farmers and big farmers are selling to lifestylers. Other prime South Burnett country went to trees – DPI&F bought it at high prices.

Other farm productivity factors that have impacted on machinery sales over a period of time are drought, drops in commodity prices, fertiliser up 30%, fuel up 50%. It was also recognised that if land becomes degraded, agricultural machinery business is affected. Other issues mentioned were water and inadequate sewage systems.

Perceptions about what should be done

One was enthusiastic about a reduced tillage machine, which cuts a stubble strip and deep rips. Another criticised road engineering works: Main Roads channels alongside the road to bleed moisture from road surface are often narrow channels that can erode; cuttings to reduce crests are steep, causing erosion plus uncontrolled weeds; drains graded into paddocks build up banks that cannot be maintained for weeds.

Perceptions about Constraints

Comments were not directed at agricultural machinery issues, one was criticism of state government for inadequate spending on NRM issues; another criticised use of engineering solutions such as groins and rockwalls along the coast.

Comment

Changed land use may have an impact on machinery sales: as land goes from farming to lifestyle blocks, small tractors and slashers may become the money-makers for agricultural machinery sales yards rather than production equipment. Apart from one interviewee's enthusiasm to boost

sales of a reduced tillage innovation, most of the research and development that was opening up better tillage practices in the 80s appears to have dissipated. If innovative development ceases and farmers retain their older but less conservation efficient machinery, this is a loss to sustainable management. We think that some stimulus to spark joint activity between machinery fabricators, researchers, landcare groups and innovative farmers might pay dividends or at least show that the best treatment for our remaining good agricultural soils is a high priority. Perhaps support for more intensive trials and modification of the rip-stripper would be a worthwhile starting point.

Agricultural processing

Knowledge about BMRG and natural resource management activity

The managers from six agricultural processing firms showed little awareness of BMRG or the Natural Resource Management Plan and there was little mention of NRM activities in the area. One was particularly interested in the Plan – wanting to see sustainable farming systems so that the firm remains viable.

Perceptions about issues and trends generally or affecting the firm

- Water is a big issue here for feedlots and piggeries. Bores are drying up and now reliant on dams.
- Bores are becoming salty as more water is taken. (Some piggeries have been forced to lay off numbers because of the water quality issue.)
- Stockfeed production will face a problem with ethanol at Dalby – sorghum and wheat will become scarce and costly.
- There is some dumping of fruit on river banks. Dumping fruit creates disease potential and fruitfly, plus acid leaching problems.
- Increased land price means it is difficult for good farmers to expand.

Perceptions about what should be done

Most comments related to water-use (need a long term water strategy by government; need user-friendly system for sale of water; need more water for people on the land; Paradise Dam water will all go to the coast). Need for more transport infrastructure was mentioned, and one interviewee wanted better alternative crop systems to maintain farmer viability.

Perceptions about Constraints

Three main issues were raised:

- tendering for water has been a drawn out process - farmers have held off expanding their crop because of uncertainty; security of water is the main issue
- price squeeze because of imports. This limits what farmers can do about natural resource management
- age is a big factor in this cropping area: most don't have succession and tend to go out of cropping and run some cattle as they get older.

Own support for natural resource management activities

- This business is important because of the down-line consequences if we don't have an adequate way to handle non-fresh market produce.
- Looking at composting options for dumped citrus fruit.
- One is planning new effluent treatment works (applied for a water grant to set up water minimising process).
- Processing/storage procedures have reduced pesticide use dramatically.

Comment

Apart from wanting to see their suppliers (and consumers in the case of stockfeed) have enough water, the process managers interviewed did not seem to see themselves as part of a supply chain that will thrive through careful attention to best practice in use of natural resources. In the larger companies, other employees may be paid to deal with these issues; nevertheless, there seems value in a program to make general managers more aware of natural resource issues and trends in use and condition that could impact on their company's operations; and to place with them some responsibility for encouraging better land and water management practices.

Agri-services

Knowledge about BMRG and natural resource management activity

A lack of awareness of BMRG and the NRM Plan by three of the four interviewees, in spite of close working relationships by some with DPI&F and the relevance of their work to natural resource management, was surprising. There was closer association with landcare activities, one being a current member, one who had past involvement (though not for some time) and another who was aware of their activity. Some have worked closely with DPI&F in both research and promotion.

Perceptions about issues and trends generally or affecting the firm

- State of citrus industry is uncertain (loss of export market to Indonesia and China; higher competition from imports; supermarket duopoly).
- The market goes through cycles.
- Growers are also paying the price of not having paid enough attention to quality of produce for consumers – needs to be good eating rather than good looking.
- Poor practices persist through lack of knowledge (still irrigating with water high in magnesium).

Perceptions about what should be done

- Farmer training needed; especially IPM and fertiliser management.
- Many need training in basic cultural practices.
- Needs grower awareness of benefit to everyone of taking up the new technology; this needs marketing and subsidy for a while.
- A lot will need to go back to 'permaculture' – including trees plus grazing.
- Have got to learn to work with nature not against it.
- Have to be prepared to change to the extent where it is going to cost.

Perceptions about constraints

There were some pessimistic comments about farmers' willingness to learn – there is a lot of technology available but not being implemented, especially amongst older farmers who stick to their traditional ways.

Other opinions were that growers would say that cost or inconsistent returns hampered investment in natural resource management and that control by supermarkets was an issue (people on contract manage their land to fit within a given budget and environmental management could be first to suffer).

Own support for natural resource management activities

- Working with universities; research and student placement.

- Work closely with DPI&F and promote their research to farmers. We run our own field days.
- Getting growers to change spray management – pick the eyes out of issues and promote bits and pieces from conservation farming.
- Every year have a mini expo- including DPI&F and Landcare.
- In IPM business for the past 24 years.
- This business helps reduce insecticides and miticides by up to 70%.

Comment

Better linkages between BMRG and agri-service businesses should pay dividends – they have much to offer the development and adoption of improved management practices. Acknowledging that too few have been interviewed to generalise, it appears that few probably know much about BMRG or the NRM Plan. A mailed information package might be a suitable first contact, which could act as a prospectus about opportunities for partnerships with agri-service in development and delivery of sound natural resource management outcomes. Interviewees listed activities and products that contribute to better natural resource management – BMRG could enter into symbiotic relationships that assist the uptake of these contributions to sustainable farming.

Timber

Here is an industry in some turmoil as the Western RFA is still being settled. The recent buy-out of Hyne’s western mills, contention over the sacrificial harvesting of some areas while waiting for plantation timber to mature, question marks over the ability of plantation timber to come on-stream on time, continued disgruntlement by graziers forced from protected forests, many of which are claimed to do little to add to the nations biodiversity, all combine to raise serious questions about how natural resource sustainability and community sustainability can best be served.

This first segment of analysis relates to plantation forestry (though obtained from processors and service providers rather than growers).

- The idea that we can rely on plantations in 20 years is not going to happen. (Errors with planting the wrong genetic material in the first 3 years – had to rip own plantation out and replant.)
 - Fears that farmers who went in early have put a lot of work into the wrong species and won’t get returns will put others off.
 - Plantations are going in but private timber is dwindling. Trees are being taken faster than recovery rate and, with new vegetation laws, people won’t be able to utilise what they have got.
 - Much of the planting is for wood fibre – there is going to be a glut of fibre.
 - Forestry do a good job, e.g. codes of practice for all spray operators – the restraints are for the good – we used to be hillbillies compared to the controls now.
 - We minimise chemical use – not much chemical into the water compared with farmers.
 - People need security of harvest.
 - Need forestry and farming to work together – including agroforestry options.
- Government has spent many millions on plantation development and for mills to retool but nothing into managing private forests.
- Millers have dictated the terms; Landholders didn’t know what was fair – primarily graziers – sell timber when they need money, they are not managing it.

Comment

The most important partnership opportunity emerging from the above comments appears to be the partnerships already commenced to educate and assist landholders to manage their millable timber resources in sustainable yet profitable ways; including an expansion of areas managed for agroforestry (see the newsletter extract below).

With a focus on empowering landholders, Private Forests Southern Queensland, with support from the BMRG, will deliver a range of workshops across the Burnett, Mary and Baffle Catchments. The activity will establish a number of demonstration sites on representative forestry properties within the Burnett Mary region.

These sites will be utilised for extension, education and monitoring and evaluation. Workshops on a range of topics including Best Practice Forest Management and the expansion and retention of managed regrowth on to 'White Mapped' areas of each catchment will be an important part of the activity. Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, fire management, state legislation, codes of practice, property management planning, forest management planning and grazing land management will also be included in the workshops. Workshops are planned for Monto, Eidsvold, Biggenden, Kingaroy, Maryborough, Cooloola and Woodford.

BMRG newsletter April 2006

The next segment relates to the knowledge, issues, aims and constraints as seen by millers and two plantation service providers.

Knowledge about BMRG and natural resource management activity

Two of the five interviewees were aware of BMRG (both are members) and the NRM Plan; one made input. One other was aware of landcare and landcare treeplanting projects.

Perceptions about issues and trends generally or affecting the firm

Comments related to timber milling:

- timber milling may be reduced to one or two big companies
- we have lost 450 000 ha through the RFA and have less than 5000 ha of plantation
- huge problems in locked up forest areas; weeds are killing the forest; impossible for National Parks to maintain the amount locked up. Industry used to maintain the trails; gave access to DPI&F for controlled burns etc. National Parks have ripped up the bridges and let the tracks go to ruin
- some influential people won't stop until it is all locked up; it is ridiculous that well managed forests were locked up. The whole exercise was about winning swinging voters in a few marginal urban seats
- a problem with the SEQ RFA is that millers are now harvesting really old timber further out whereas much of the locked up forest was modified - regrown over 70-80 years.

Comments about other issues:

- farmers need to be more responsible: they let the land go to rack and ruin (e.g. pineapple farms) then leave – has been disastrous nutrient depletion – won't grow trees. There are highly erodible areas such as streambanks – not much happening
- re sustainability, the most important problem is water (population growth; no new dams); water quality is also a big issue
- large monoculture crops are a major problem (e.g. sugar, cotton).

Perceptions about what should be done

- Put forests back under control of DPI Forestry – they did a great job; forest was healthy and well managed.
- More research on hardwoods - much genetic work needs to be done – in early plantations, the wrong species have been planted.
- Aim to increase forest cover in white areas - influence landholders to manage existing vegetation with best forest management practice.
- Need longevity of project time – can't do it with two year projects (need to take it through the cycles of growth).

Perceptions about constraints

- Nothing proven as to whether the plantation scheme will work in 20 years; relying on research to get it right (eg fast growing trees, splitting problems).
- Everyone wants grants but when the grant stops, the work often stops.
- Productivity has dropped over time – expertise of Forestry Department was never transferred to the private sector.
- From Nov 2005, under Vegetation Management Act, Code of Practice for Private Forests, less private timber becomes available.

Own support for natural resource management activities

- The timber industry used to cause bad siltation, but since the 70s this has virtually stopped.
- We now have strict rules on exclusion areas (such as riparian areas).

Comment

This segment attempts to focus on milling issues as compared to production issues but it is difficult to separate the two. A key point emerging here is the potential non-availability of timber

for milling in ten to fifteen years, opening the question about whether some locked land with arguably little biodiversity value should be ‘unlocked’ to enable millers to work through an expected gap. If this ‘wildcard’ suggestion has a possible future, it would seem useful for BMRG to support a long term project linking forestry and conservation interest groups to objectively assess the condition and biodiversity value of all protected forests in the region. One criterion would doubtlessly be connectivity; second-class stands that provide a bridge between pristine stands would be more valuable than isolated stands.

Another issue raised was maintenance of the ‘locked up’ areas. Although not an issue for the industry, if weeds such as cats claw are threatening the protected forests, is there some partnership activity that can improve this situation? If leaving it to state agency efforts is not likely to achieve control, would an independent monitoring and reporting process by an alliance of interested parties across the region provide the pressure needed to gain more resources for the issue?

Seafoods

Seafood processors and distributors were not aware of the NRM Plan but were well aware of the Representative Area Program for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. They were adamant that unfair restrictions had been made without adequate consultation. The need for green zones was accepted but interviewees believed a much fairer zoning could have been negotiated without detriment to reef protection. Interviewees considered that some fishers have needlessly been rendered non-viable.

The detrimental impact of dams and barrages on populations of key commercial fish species was stressed – upstream access is needed to maintain a good fishing industry. Other points from this group are included in Section 5.1 on Coastal Management.

Coastal tourism

Knowledge about BMRG and natural resource management activity

Of four resorts and two boat operators, just one had heard of BMRG – but was not aware of the Plan. One was aware of a local creek protection group and the Reef Guardian program (and would like to be involved in that program).

Perceptions about issues and trends generally or affecting the firm

- Charter boats are major drawers of reef fish (just one commercial line reef fisherman out of Hervey Bay although numbers of net fishers has increased).
- Increased boating through increase in ferry transfers and fishing could damage the waterway.
- Seagrass has depleted; it has not returned to pre 1999 flood condition.
- Hyacinth is a problem – it affects the coast in floods.
- Rubbish is an issue.

Perceptions about what should be done

- In establishing the Great Sandy Straits Marine Park, increase green area to 25% as for GBRMP (in a circumstance where things are good, it is important to maintain the quality).
- Manage the growth to minimise impact.
- Stormwater from streets takes rubbish to the bay; there is need for more public education.
- Ban aquaculture (a coalition against aquaculture has formed).

Regional Partnership Agreements Burnett Mary, July 2006

- Can't stop development here, but have to do it right; a need to look elsewhere and see how it is done.
- Needs more infrastructure to make the area sustainable (Hervey Bay).
- Growing resident numbers – good to increase the numbers so long as infrastructure grows as well – dam capacity etc.
- Protection of beaches important (erosion).

Own support for natural resource management activities

- Charter operator stays away from major areas of small fish (doesn't think too many released fish survive).
- Burnett Shire Council is conscious of turtles (although there was a public property damage problem, they decided not to increase lighting as it might adversely affect turtles). The tourism industry relies on turtles.
- A lot of work has been done on Hervey Bay foreshore by Council – bike and walking tracks.

Comment

Recent investment in tourist accommodation has been very high at Hervey Bay, and to lesser extent Bargara. The resort representatives interviewed (mainly managers) seemed to have given little consideration to the possibility that their operation created an environmental footprint that could affect the future quality of the natural facilities that are the reason for the tourists, let alone the concept of contributing to upstream protection to prevent the playground being spoiled. Perhaps they could argue that part of the wealth coming into the area through their advertising and availability of accommodation should be allocated to protecting the natural resources they rely on. However, it may be more a matter of lack of awareness than reluctance to participate. The development of information packages for tourist accommodation providers could provide a start towards awareness of the value and fragility of the natural assets, perhaps followed by direct contact to offer educational material for visitors, which could include activity material for children; and/or sponsorship of Conservation Volunteer Australia activities that protect the hinterland.

Rural tourism

Two of three interviewees know of BMRG and the NRM Plan. One has had previous involvement with a landcare group. Another was aware of landcare activities and has received information irregularly over the past few years.

The main issues raised related to primary production activity rather than farmstay activity – one tourism related issue was concern for regional tourism if EPA restricts tourist visits to Fraser Island. The main suggestions about what should be done were about improved infrastructure – roads and dams.

One operator mentioned opportunities for field days regarding their own sustainable management efforts – blue heliotrope control and drought proofing (dams, leucaena, revegetation).

Comment

The businesses were small, but were in a position to get visitors thinking about the local natural resource management issues if appropriate material or even activity programs are made available.

Town Planning

Knowledge about BMRG and natural resource management activity

One of three interviewed is a BMRG member, who looked at the NRM Plan from a business point of view, but did not see opportunities. He expected more linkage to local government planning schemes and development regulations – ‘they appear to be a separate processes with different people involved and speaking different languages’. Planning schemes were generally well on the way by the time the NRM plan came, but it would have been good to have the data from this: planners don’t have time to do the basic research. This interviewee believed the Management Actions could have been useful in setting guidelines for development.

The other two were not aware of BMRG though one was sure that a junior partner would (a member of a landcare group, and would receive NRM information). The other has had no contact with groups but referred to liaison with DNR and EPA (on soil type; vegetation maps; dust assessment; he also uses vegetation consultants and geo-tech consultants).

Perceptions about issues and trends generally or affecting the firm

- Great ignorance about the importance of water in the present environment. People complain about costs and restrictions.
- There would not be many town planners who would know how the NRM Plan affects them or how it is going to make things happen.

Perceptions about what should be done

- Increased sustainable urban design for water and energy.
- Use gas rather than electricity. (If convert all hot water systems, can meet Kyoto protocol).
- Regional planning exercises on now – probably the NRM Plan should be a major guide to the NRM parts of the regional plan: but different people are involved in local government planning who speak a different language – there is an institutional difference.

Perceptions about Constraints

- IPA covers the requirements, but not usually very ‘fulfilling’; (easy to argue case for going ahead).

Own support for natural resource management activities

- The way we do our business affects urban design, runoff etc.
- We can promote beneficial practices: no direct support other than that.
- We have been getting clients to use water saving applications (eg high rise units – collect water and use on garden; stormwater drain design.
- Presented a workshop to Council on ‘Environmentally friendly development’.

Comment

Planners and surveyors who either assist the development of local government planning schemes through consultancy or who deal with developers in new land developments are key people to have on-side with an understanding of the threats to natural resources through land use changes and the need to seek planning options that minimise threats. They appear to be seen as the experts and their word probably goes unquestioned by Shire Councils relying on them for planning scheme conditions and developers opening new land.

The workshops being run by LGAQ for Shire Council staff on links between NRM and local government planning could usefully, and perhaps should, be extended to town planners involved in planning scheme development.

Partnership recommendations for secondary and tertiary industry

The very diverse group of businesses contacted (both in size and links to the natural resources) had a common lack of awareness of BMRG and the NRM plan. A first step in engaging this third leg of the Government-Community-Business partnerships expected of NHT2 and NAP programs is to have BMRG and its mission known and to be able to create a link between its objectives and the businesses who depend in some way on the condition of natural resources. Next steps with those businesses can be direct approaches with options for support that clearly aim at maintaining the condition of the resources they depend on.

For these NRM dependent industries, specific approaches to partnerships might include:

- generating recognition by agricultural product processors of the importance of sustainable farming to their future supplies, and to contribute to the extension of sustainable practices
- identification of ways to expand sustainable practices developed and sold by agri-service operators in a win-win relationship
- work with other regional bodies, QFF, Agforce and DPI&F to consider the merits of development support or sales subsidy assistance to agricultural machinery firms that promote farming equipment that meets conservation farming criteria to have farmers using the most suitable equipment for sustainable production
- generation of corporate support for tree plantation projects that are planted in situations that help resolve natural resource management issues (as well as meeting future demand)
- extended management education for landholders with harvestable timber stands and incentives for landholders converting pastured areas to agroforestry
- extension or modification of Guardian Reef type education activities to target visitors (particularly children) to both coastal and rural areas (delivered through resorts)
- generate sponsorships within the coastal tourism industry for Conservation Volunteer Australia projects that help prevent nutrient and sediment transport to the coast
- links with LGAQ to develop planning scheme and development assessment templates that incorporate NRM Plan objectives, and then promote these amongst town planners as well as local government authorities.

As for reaching small to medium businesses not clearly connected to use of natural resources, with awareness and partnership opportunities, key contacts have suggested presentations and continuing communication through Chamber of Commerce meetings and their newsletters. Chambers of Commerce have, in recent years, become re-energised in some centres, particularly Bundaberg and Hervey Bay, with substantial increases in membership. A network of Branches throughout the Wide Bay region also provides opportunity to disseminate information and proposals. Tourism Boards and economic development alliances such as BIEDO provide similar opportunities to transmit information and proposals. The types of proposals can range from sponsorship and in-kind support to corporate on-ground action days. The 'volunteering Queensland' and the 'our communities' websites have excellent information on the alternatives and situations in which one form of support might be preferred by an organisation over another.

Landcare and catchment groups wishing to establish partnerships with local businesses should read the tips in the 'Being investor ready' package developed for landcare groups in Victoria. It provides a series of checklists:

Regional Partnership Agreements Burnett Mary, July 2006

1. Who Are We? Community Group Preparedness (Checklist One)
 2. What Have We Got to Sell? Your Group's Products & Services (Checklist Two)
 3. Who Will Want To Work With Us? Identify the Market Opportunity (Checklist Three)
 4. How Do We Work Together With Our Partner? Managing the Partnership (Checklist Four)
- (Rowley 2004 for Landcare Victoria).

There are few large corporations in the Burnett Mary region. These require some research on their mission and ethos as well as how they are currently approaching corporate social responsibility. Organisations with some interest in primary production or in environmental issues or those with a whole regional perspective could be the best to approach first. (It is important to be selective and not approach everyone at once). The Felkins readiness to partner questions need to be answered for each prospective partner to identify possible impediments or prior ground-work needed.

There may be opportunities to build partnerships with large industries based outside the region, as some other regional bodies are exploring. In some instances it may be logical for several regional bodies to group together to work with a major industry. Many companies also have small grants and partnership programs as part of their corporate responsibility initiatives.

For further discussion on working with both small and large businesses and opportunities to create links to business through recognition of their corporate social responsibility, go to chapter 6, section 6.6.

5.4 Traditional Owners

Traditional Owners of the Burnett Mary region include the Butchulla, Taribelung Bunda, Wakka Wakka, Gooreng Gooreng, Gurang, Gubbi Gubbi, Kabi Kabi and Wulli Wulli peoples. The main engagement activities by BMRG with Traditional Owners to date have centred around the difficult issue of gaining effective representation, acceptable to the Traditional Owners yet fitting within the established governance structures for BMRG.

BMRG conducted twelve local 'Roundtables' (for all stakeholders) throughout the region in March-May 2004. Although Traditional Owners were present at several meetings, the Eidsvold and Cherbourg meetings were most useful in getting Indigenous issues on to the NRM table. At the Eidsvold meeting arrangements were made for further discussions on natural resource management issues with Traditional Owners and the operation of BMRG and the planning process. The Cherbourg meeting identified a wide range of interests and issues of concern to Aboriginal people in the use and management of country: for instance, issues relating to access to traditional resources (e.g. access to traditional resources for health purposes; the need to clarify opportunities for Aboriginal community involvement in fisheries management) and spiritual values of the country (e.g. the spiritual value of being in a good and peaceful place is important for the mental health of everyone; sensitivity to cultural and intellectual property when developing projects) (BMRG Roundtable Reports, Eidsvold and Cherbourg April 2004).

Following these beginnings, a series of meetings were conducted by consultant Michelle Maloney as part of an Indigenous Engagement Priority Action Project (August-November 2004). Recommendations from her report became a basis for negotiations amongst Traditional Owners about the difficult issue of participation in the representative governance framework at the heart of BMRG's management structure (which provides for one 'Director' to represent the Traditional Owner sector).

Before looking at action to resolve this, it is useful to note some of the NRM issues, goals and barriers that emerged in Maloney's study.

NRM issues, goals and barriers

NRM issues (as in Maloney 2004, part 2, p.17)

The issues of most concern to people who participated in the interviews were:

- river health
- land clearing (removal of trees and other vegetation)
- land management (including weed control)
- access to cultural sites and the ability to look after sites
- the need to teach Indigenous youth about their culture and overall concerns about loss of knowledge of culture.

Goals (from Maloney, p.20)

The goals and aspirations of groups that own land include:

- creating self-sustaining, commercial operations
- increasing employment and economic opportunities
- achieving specific cultural and natural resource management goals on their own land
- working in partnership with more groups, to achieve NRM, social and economic goals.

The goals and aspirations of groups that do not currently own land include:

- owning land of their own
- having access to cultural sites and working on cultural heritage protection projects, including cultural tourism and setting up cultural heritage databases/information systems
- building the skills and capacity of their people and organisations, so that they are able to gather more resources and work on more projects
- working in partnership with more groups, to achieve NRM, social and economic goals.

Barriers (Maloney p.21)

The main problems and barriers identified were:

- lack of money and resources
- lack of available people to work on projects and develop new projects
- lack of information, capacity and skills
- the need for more effective partnerships/relationships with other stakeholders.

Approaches to partnership and capacity enhancement

As mentioned, the first hurdle in establishing a partnership relationship between BMRG and the Traditional Owners was to find a satisfactory way for the voices of several Aboriginal peoples to be 'represented'. As Maloney (2004, p.61) points out:

In simple terms, for many Traditional Owner groups it would be unacceptable to have a regional representative structure where one Indigenous person purports to represent other people's country. However there may be structures that can be put in place to ensure Traditional Owner groups are able to work together on a regional level and elect a smaller number of their people to represent them across a sub-regional or regional area.

Maloney recommended a 'nested model' approach similar to that suggested by the first CRC Reef Research co-management research project reported in 'Managing Sea Country Together' (George, Innes & Ross 2004) and related to that proposed by the Southern Great Barrier Reef Sea Forum. The Sea Forum was an Indigenous initiated and led collective of 32 Traditional Owner groups. The Sea Forum did not act as a representative body, but like a federal model where each of the Traditional Owners retained rights to speak for their country, with the Sea Forum providing a mechanism for collaborative action. The Sea Forum created a Working Group from its membership, which considered issues in detail for endorsement or further discussion by the full membership at six-monthly meetings. The Sea Forum carried out a range of tasks including the preparation of a framework paper for co-management (Sea Forum 1999). George, Innes and Ross noted that a fundamental problem for regional working relationships is the differences between government decision-making and Indigenous governance, and saw the 'nested' model as a solution – where local arrangements are coordinated through a central arrangement, which need not be construed as hierarchical.

With this as background, three fora in 2005/06 have worked towards the Traditional Owners' decisions on the best approach for this region. They have worked through roles, duties and protocols for a trial structure in which two delegates attend BMRG Board meetings (with one vote) to be able to reflect the views of all groups and also provide adequate feedback from the Board.

At one workshop Traditional Owners present identified themselves as:
'a group of Traditional Owners who are looking and working towards a better understanding of the working of BMRG interacting with other traditional Owners'.

Discussions have centred on these key issues:

- establishment of a MoU between BMRG and Traditional land owners which sets out protocols and processes of operation and communication
- establish a process for future negotiation with BMRG
- select and stabilise legitimate representative for all Traditional Owner groups within the BMRG region
- identify and undertake capacity building/learning/training for all representatives of the Traditional Owner groups.

Internal capacity needs identified included negotiation and conflict resolution, management and governance processes, and team building (for role understanding, confidence within the group, support).

Next steps are to confirm or adapt the model after a trial period in which two delegates have participated in BMRG Board meetings, and to identify more clearly what capacity enhancement is needed for the Burnett Mary version of 'nested' governance to work well.

As for partnerships with other stakeholders, Maloney (2004) found that a number of groups said they would like more effective relationships with other stakeholders in their area, including local councils, local businesses, pastoralists and other landholders. Several people specifically asked if the BMRG could help with the development of improved local relationships for environmental and cultural heritage projects. By 2006 some partnership activities are underway with BMRG generally providing an enabling role for Indigenous community initiatives, such as a nursery project, water quality at Cherbourg and Scrub Hill, and the Silver Lining Foundation's property development at Wondai (note the box below).

BMRG partnerships with Traditional Owners - newsletter extracts

Cherbourg

Monitoring of the water sources has been made possible through the provision of equipment and training funded under a Memorandum of Understanding between Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council and BMRG. Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council is addressing issues identified in its own Community Development Plan, as well as the Regional NRM Plan, by joining a strategic network of monitoring sites throughout the region's river systems.

BMRG Newsletter April 2006

Scrub Hill

Dhugamin Community Development Employment Project is now gathering soil and water analysis information collected by Korrawinga Aboriginal Corporation and themselves over the past 10 years of the organically run farm's development. This is a jointly resourced activity with BMRG and Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries initiated in 2005. The dam restoration project is a community initiative consistent with organic farming principles and shows the power of what a community can do.

BMRG Newsletter April 2006

Silver Lining Foundation

BMRG has joined an active and exciting community initiated partnership established by Silver Lining Foundation with members of the Aboriginal Community, Cherbourg Aboriginal Council, Wondai Shire Council, Edmund Rice Foundation, Catholic Education, Murgon State School and, more recently, Green Corps.

In March, Silver Lining Foundation (SLF) and its Indigenous Advisory Group from Cherbourg met staff of BMRG and DPI&F to talk about ways they could get help in planning the development of their 500-acre Barambah Creek frontage property between Murgon and Wondai. Arrangements were made to develop a partnership between the groups. BMRG and DPI&F will help SLF to develop property management plans that incorporate all of the social, economic and environmental objectives.

BMRG Newsletter September 2005

These partnerships on local initiative projects are extremely valuable in establishing understanding, trust and common ground between BMRG and various Traditional Owner groups. Not all partnerships are as unified towards common objectives as these local projects with environmental and social benefit. Often potential partners fail to link because differences in philosophy and culture, form of governance or method of operation crowd out the common ground that could be used to achieve goals of benefit to both. This is particularly likely to occur when Aboriginal and European management methods need to come together on contentious issues of use and ownership of country. The 'negotiation space' model (see chapter 6 section 6.5) has been designed to find a way through these situations.