

Pioneer Catchment & Landcare Group Inc.

Annual Report 2015/2016



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CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

2016 has been difficult for Pioneer Catchment & Landcare Group with Lara Mathewson leaving us to become Co-ordinator for Sarina Landcare, where she could be closer to her work place and see more of her children. I would like to thank Lara for the valuable work she did for us and the cooperation she continues to offer in her new position with Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association (SLCMA).

Di Salau acted as interim Co-ordinator for the major part of the year. Laura Whitbread briefly took over the role and did a sterling job. More recently, our policy of employing multiple part time officers has paid dividends with Carla Lambropoulos able to step up as Co-ordinator without missing a beat.

Melissa Spalding was helping us in a volunteer capacity in 2015 and has now become part of our work force. She has been on a vertical learning curve from the beginning. Fortunately she is a quick learner and has become a valued member of our team. Wendy Eiteneuer continues to do a very professional and invaluable job as our Admin Officer.

Another invaluable member of PCL is Margaret Lane, who continues to work tirelessly in the community to promote the activities of PCL. Margaret has chosen not to be a member of the Management Committee but is always willing to help out or be available as a sounding board for the Committee and staff. Margaret is PCL's representative on the Council's Community and Client Reference Group for Water Services as well as attending NEAC meetings, where her previous experience in Council is key.

Margaret has agreed to represent PCL in a capacity building exercise between Reef Catchments and the Central Queensland Coast Landcare Network. The main purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate the natural synergies between the Landcare groups and Reef Catchments, and hopefully lead to more joint projects in the future. Margaret and Laura Whitbread did a presentation to the new Councillors of the Mackay Regional Council to explain the history of PCL and suggest how our relationship could grow in the future.

Our relationship with Central Queensland Soil Health Systems (CQSHS) has continued to grow, with PCL giving support in whatever areas we can. The management team on CQSHS are a very diligent and dedicated group. It is encouraging to see that every time they have a workshop or field day relating to soil health there are plenty of new and old attendees. I think a mutual interest in sustainable farming systems will see this relationship continue to strengthen.

We continue our partnership with Mackay Regional Council in the delivery of Land for Wildlife and our other community engagement activities. Our other direct link with council is through Sue McCormack who is the Nursery Manager at the Mackay Natural Environment Centre (MNEC). We value the effort Sue puts in to producing high quality plants which we are able to use in our revegetation projects. It is a symbiotic relationship with Sue accommodating PCL's volunteers who help in the nursery and people like Irene Champion who share their infinite knowledge of local Australian native plants.

We welcomed Jock Hansen to the Management Committee this year. Jock has extensive experience in weed control and revegetation with local native species. The quiet achiever in our midst is Dianne Williams; I value her judgment on most issues and consequently use her as a sounding board from time to time. Another very quiet member is Irene Champion who provides us with expertise in meeting procedure as well as her interest in native plants. Di Salau probably puts in the most hours of anyone on the Management

Committee by looking after the computer systems and we are grateful for that. Lastly, I would like to thank all members of staff for their professionalism when dealing with the public. It is because of this that we continue to build good relations with the wider community.

It is difficult to know what the future of the group may be, but as all sides of Federal and State politics agree that saving the Great Barrier Reef is a high priority, I am optimistic that some of the funding needed to do this will filter down to the Landcare groups.



Dave Hunter
September 2016

PCL PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES IN 2015/16

1 MACKAY REGIONAL COUNCIL FUNDING

Mackay Regional Council (MRC) is a key partner to Pioneer Catchment & Landcare (PCL). Council's provision of office space at the Mackay Natural Environment Centre (MNEC) and funding streams help foster PCL's outreach into the wider community. Through this sustained partnership, PCL has continued its delivery of key programmes including Land for Wildlife and Landcare Support. Our activities would be impossible without the generous contributions made by Council.

1.1 LAND FOR WILDLIFE

In the 2015/16 period an additional 390 Ha of land was added to the Land for Wildlife programme. This incorporated ten new properties. Thirteen revisits to existing registered properties were conducted as part of the project. There are now approximately 100 properties registered in the Pioneer Catchment & Landcare area. There is considerable diversity in the project with some participants categorised in the "working towards" classification and others with full and partial registration.

The Land for Wildlife program also supplies funds for delivering a locally produced quarterly newsletter to project participants. This is a shared task with Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association (SLCMA).

1.2 WORKING WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS

Central Queensland Soil Health Systems (CQSHS)

Many are familiar with CQSHS and their annual soil health field days which are becoming a growing attraction in the Region. In April, the 3rd Annual Marian Soil Health Field Day took place and received positive feedback from attendees looking to increase their knowledge of soil health. Simon Mattsson has worked with PCL officer Melissa Spalding for funding application assistance, and is keen to source funding that will assist ongoing farmer-driven research trials.



Attendees at the Soil Health Field Day during machinery demonstrations at Simon Mattsson's farm

The group will release a quarterly newsletter in the coming months and has launched a new website. Exciting times are in store for CQSHS.

MacKillop Wetlands Community Group

MacKillop Wetlands Community Group members continue to meet twice a month for working bees. Recent works with Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) included funding under the EnviroKids project, in partnership with Rio Tinto. Members alongside the CVA team have put some hard hours into weed maintenance on site. The group is looking for additional funding to purchase a brush cutter and ride-on mower.



Before and After photos of the pathway at MacKillop. Works undertaken by CVA have significantly improved weed overgrowth.

Friends of Morag McNichol Reserve

Friends of Morag McNichol Reserve group continue their close partnership with Mackay Regional Council. Weed control conducted by MRC and monthly group working bees have kept the reserve in great condition. The group is thorough in their site inspections and are proactive when it comes to removing sprouting weeds or garden escapees.

Marian Community Working Group



Marian Community Working Group members are working together on coordinating potential new projects for Edward Lloyd Park. Site maintenance around Melba House continues and has included brush cutting and weed spraying. The group will keep a close watch on the plants as the summer months approach. Earlier this year, the site was host to another working bee for the Marian Scout Group led by Chris Allen, where the boys did some tree planting.

The Marian Scout Group dig holes and plant behind Melba House.

1.3 PROMOTIONS AND DISPLAYS

Reef Catchments Grazing Forum 2016

PCL project officers Melissa Spalding and Laura Whitbread attended Reef Catchment's Grazing Forum in March this year. PCL's stall included information on weed management practices as well as plant information sheets for plant giveaways. Local graziers were interested in hearing about PCL programs with a few who wanted further information on plants suitable for their properties.

Farleigh Palm Fete 2016

This year's Palm Fete was another exciting opportunity to meet local community members. This event did not disappoint; people were checking out the stalls even before the event officially started. The weather was perfect and many stopped by to have a chat. The pest management trailer had the majority of people interested in discussing weeds on their properties, with some telling stories of plants and places they have seen. Families, couples and individuals from all walks of life stopped by the PCL stall, which was also conveniently located alongside the popular Society for Growing Australian Plants plant sale. PCL project officers Melissa Spalding and Laura Whitbread were encouraged by the interest that many property owners had regarding weed ID on their properties.

Pioneer Valley Show 2016

All eyes were on the weather forecast leading up to this year's Pioneer Valley Show as severe storms were predicted. 500 plants were brought as plant giveaways and included a variety of local natives.

PCL officers Melissa Spalding and Laura Whitbread were surprised to see the PCL tent, set up the day prior, in shambles from the wind. Unfortunately, as was the case with many stallholders, they were forced to pack up and head home due to bad weather conditions. Flooding and lack of power caused problems. Laura and Melissa were able to chat with a few people and give away some plants.

1.4 STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

During the year PCL officers worked with the following stakeholders to develop and support projects:

- Mackay Regional Pest Management Group, attending General and Committee meetings;
- Reef Catchments, attending various workshops and meetings;
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority;
- Conservation Volunteers Australia;
- Central Qld Coast Landcare Network;
- Mackay Conservation Group;
- BirdLife Mackay;
- Society for Growing Australian Plants (Mackay Branch);

1.5 SUPPORT FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS

PCL worked with kindergartens, primary and secondary schools during the year including: Mirani State School, St. Francis Xavier, Slade Point State School, Whitsunday Anglican School, Beaconsfield State School, Mackay Kindy & Preschool, Mackay State High School, and Petit Early Learning Journey Marian.

Funding through the Landcare Support project has allowed PCL to assist teachers who are passionate about environmental awareness. This includes delivering programmes and field days for their schools. Activities include plant selection and recommendations for native plants, facilitating tree plantings on site, beach clean-ups and provision of educational materials.



Danielle from CVA leads a discussion on rubbish at Far Beach



St. Francis Xavier school children planting Pink Evodia and Eungella Bottlebrush

1.6 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS DAYS

Great Northern Clean Up 2015

Riverside Drive was again host to this year's event on 13 September. Clean Up Australia provided gloves, sharps containers and rubbish bags. PCL officer Lara Mathewson assisted Fiona Patterson of Mackay Regional Council in running the event, where 29 volunteers collected all sorts of rubbish including medical and industrial waste, a drum of sump oil and car tyres. Councillors Laurence Bonaventura and Ross Walker helped load their vehicles with large rubbish items. St. Patrick's College students were also present and very helpful in removing rubbish found on site.



Volunteers unload rubbish from the ute into the skip

1.7 PIONEER NURSERY TEAM

It's been a big year for the PCL Volunteer Team in the Mackay Natural Environment Centre Nursery. The team played an integral role in assisting MRC Nursery Manager, Sue

McCormack with growing and delivering a 15,000 plant order for Reef Catchments this financial year.

Tuesday mornings are always fun and PCL had the pleasure of welcoming along some new faces to the team this year. Members have continued to support the nursery through seed collecting, species identification, seed sowing and potting activities. In addition to the 15,000 plants grown for Reef Catchments, PCL volunteers also grew plants for PCL funded projects, plant giveaways at community events, schools, community groups and our Landcare members, totalling over 3500 plants. Our volunteer hours were up from last year, with 880 volunteer hours spent in the nursery. This does not include the many hours donated by volunteers that were not recorded, doing activities such as seed collecting, plant identification, and researching.



PCL volunteers potting and sorting plants

The PCL volunteer team also assisted in tree planting at Far Beach, the school planting day and MRC planting day for National Tree Day and maintenance work at Reliance Creek. The hand weeding and mulching work done at Reliance Creek is an extremely important contribution from our volunteers as it helps us maintain and protect the revegetation work previously done on that site while adding value to the magnificent palm vine forest.

To thank our volunteers and show our appreciation for all their time and hard work we held a Christmas party at the North Mackay Bowls Club. This was a fantastic social event for volunteers, management committee members and PCL staff to celebrate the year's achievements. PCL also held a BBQ lunch at the MNEC Nursery for National Volunteer Week to say thank you to all our volunteers, because they are what makes Landcare so great!

1.8 NEWSLETTER

Eleven newsletters are produced each year. 2015/2016 editions were funded by Mackay Regional Council under the Landcare Support project. PCL currently distributes to 525 residents and organisations. The newsletter provides information about PCL projects and events, local biodiversity and biosecurity information, as well as a calendar of National Resource Management events and activities in our region.

2 CENTRAL QUEENSLAND COAST LANDCARE NETWORK

The Central Queensland Coast Landcare Network (CQCLN) is a collaboration of Pioneer Catchment & Landcare Group (PCL), Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association (SLCMA) and Whitsunday Catchment Landcare (WCL). Regular meetings continue with the CQCLN group to encourage collaboration. This year saw the appointment of Jacob Betros in the role of Regional Landcare Facilitator. A key supporter of the CQCLN is Kapow Interactive who provides the website.

3 COMMITTEES

PCL has provided representation on the following committees:

- *Community and Client Reference Group for Water Services*
This group focuses the supply of water and collection of sewage. Community representatives can discuss issues and raise concerns with regards to these services provided by Council.
- *The Mackay-Whitsunday Healthy Rivers to Reef Partnership*
Consisting of 28 industry, community, government, tourism and science partners, this collective of stakeholders produce the Mackay-Whitsunday Report Card which details key health indicators of the Region's rivers and Reef.
- *Natural Environment Advisory Committee (NEAC)*
The NEAC committee advises council and makes recommendations for funds available through the Natural Environment Levy. Committee members discuss, review and advise on proposed environmental projects and relevant environmental policies.

4 FUNDED PROJECTS

4.1 RELIANCE CREEK PALM VINE FOREST REHABILITATION

PCL has reached the end of a three year \$92,600 project funded by the Australian Government's Clean Energy Futures Biodiversity Fund. Over those three years the project priority has been treatment of Cats Claw Creeper (*Macfadyena unguis-cati*), a Weed of National Significance (WONS), across approximately 30 Ha. PCL enlisted the help of CVA and Ray Greaves. CVA has worked on both private property and in the Reliance Creek National Park treating Cats Claw Creeper. Pest contractor Ray Greaves has worked on private property upstream undertaking initial treatment of this weed, as well as some follow up of regrowth that has occurred from tubers and seed bank.

Throughout the project treatment has also been conducted for *Hymenachne amplexicaulus*, another WONS that occurs on site. Engagement has occurred with adjoining landholders to identify infestations of these species on their properties.

Cats Claw Creeper is not only invading creek bank forest, but has spread to the nearby hillsides. The best way to manage weeds in this ecosystem is to ensure dense canopy cover. Cutting and poisoning the creeper at the base of the trees has been performed, causing the growth in the canopy to die and hopefully preventing regrowth from the ground. Fifteen hundred tubestock were planted in the gaps in the forest just upstream of the National Park. A biological control was released into the project area several years ago, with current evidence showing it has made impact.

PCL volunteers have been hand weeding to ensure that these plants and the natural regeneration are not overwhelmed by a wide range of invasive species that occur when the ground is disturbed and there is plenty of sun and water. An important commitment to the Australian Government is that PCL will look after this site for ten years. To that end PCL has received funding for three years to find the best way manage the other major weed on site: creeper *Ruellia simplex*.

Reef Catchments provided funding in 2015 to continue maintenance of the revegetation and treatment of regrowth of the creeper, as well as extend the treatment of Cats Claw into adjoining areas.

Recent works include site maintenance by the PCL volunteer team. Hand weeding of *Ruellia simplex* has been the focus of working bees. Areas that were hand weeded by nursery volunteers ensured that natives – both planted species as well as volunteer regrowth – were cleared of *Ruellia simplex* so these plants can continue to grow unobstructed.



A section of Ruellia simplex is cleared away and mulched at Reliance Creek

4.2 PURCHASE OF SEED COLLECTION KIT

Through funding received from Reef Catchments PCL was able to purchase two seed collecting kits and a GPS unit. Seed collecting kits include a back pack, Garmin GPS MAP64ST, secateurs, gloves, personal first aid kit, flagging tape, trowel, long handled pruner and waterproof notebook.

Seed collecting kits have been used by PCL staff and volunteers to collect seeds for the MNEC Nursery seed bank.

4.3 CENTRAL QLD COAST RIPARIAN HEALTH PROJECT –MARIAN RIVERBANK STAGE 4

The third and final year of this Reef Catchments funded project was marked by planting 350 native plants on the riparian zone at site 4 on the Marian Riverbank. The site was heavily infested with Guinea Grass (*Megathyrsus maximum* var *maximus*) and *Leucaena* (*Leucaena leucocephala*); site preparation included extensive weed control. Site 4 is located adjacent to site 3, with access to the site proving difficult for the community group due to the topography. However, the site was selected to provide an aesthetically pleasing

native landscape looking down from Melba House to the river. Ongoing maintenance was done at site 3 including watering and weed management.

4.4 PRIORITY PEST MAPPING

This Reef Catchments project wrapped up in December 2015 with pest mapping and the creation of three priority basin maps for pest distribution data. Pest maps from the Mackay Regional Pest Management Strategy were referenced, with ten days of PCL officer time spent collecting data and liaising with MRPMG stakeholders.

4.5 WETLAND PHOTOGRAPHY

Funding was received from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for PCL officer Laura Whitbread to go into the field and photograph wetland species around various established wetlands in Mackay. Photography and field data were supplied to Phillip Trendell of DAF to be collated into a wetland guide.

4.6 CARBON FARMING FUTURES 'ACTION ON THE GROUND' PROGRAM – THE CLEAN ENERGY BENEFITS OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

This research project is predominantly run by Reef Catchments with the support of Queensland's Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and Farmacist Pty Ltd. PCL provided on-ground support to this project in the 2015/16 period, primarily conducting gas sampling activities on cane paddocks.



The gas testing consists of monitoring nitrogen emissions to draw a comparison between paddocks that have had a legume planted during the fallow versus paddocks that were left barren during the fallow. In addition to gas testing, PCL officers offered support in the preparation of case studies for the 2014 Soil Symposium.

Lara Mathewson conducting gas sampling

4.7 POND APPLE PROJECT

This project aims to eradicate an outbreak of Pond Apple (*Annona glabra*), which has the potential to impact on high quality agricultural land and environmental assets within the Mackay Whitsunday Region. Pond Apple poses a significant environmental threat to the Region and is considered to be a high priority under the Mackay Regional Pest Management Plan and State Legislation.

The project is on track to be the first Pond Apple infestation eradicated in Queensland and will maintain control of the 15 Ha infestation of Pond Apple in the Reliance Creek Catchment. Successful eradication of this pest species will result in protecting the

important Reliance Creek estuary system and remove the economic threat to adjacent agricultural industries, particularly grazing and sugar production.

Follow up Pond Apple monitoring and treatment work was completed during the 2015/2016 financial year in the Reliance Creek catchment area. Project delivery was once again done in partnership with Reef Catchments, PCL and Mackay Regional Council. Field surveys focused on areas of Leila Creek from Shady Lane to Bobongies Road, and then the property dam on Bobongies Road to Barrow Hill Road.



Shelley Molloy holding a Pond Apple sapling located during the survey work

The first survey of Leila Creek was from Shady Lane to Bobongies Road, where six Pond Apple saplings were found. All saplings except one were treated or removed. The remaining sapling was treated at a later date once the water level in the creek had dropped, allowing the cutting and pasting treatment to be applied. The final survey covered the section of Leila Creek from the property dam on Bobongies Rd to Barrow Hill Rd. Last year one Pond Apple sapling was located and treated. This year there were no Pond Apple plants located and last year's treated sapling was completely rotted away, including the stump.

Substantial progress has been made towards eradicating the known Pond Apple infestations from Leila Creek and the Reliance Creek catchment area. Continued annual monitoring, treatment and community consultation has enabled this result. The latest surveys of the area show that the infestation has now been contained to the section

of Leila Creek from Shady Lane to Bobongies Road. It is recommended that this section of Leila Creek continues to be monitored and treated for Pond Apple to ensure the eradication of Pond Apple from the Reliance Creek catchment.

PCL Project Officer Carla Lambropoulos and MRC's Pest Management Officer Shelley Molloy attended the Habana Progress Association's annual general meeting (AGM) on April 4th and gave a presentation about the Pond Apple project. The presentation included how to identify it, the purpose and history of the project, and the current situation for the area. Fifteen residents attended the AGM and expressed that they found the presentation very interesting and informative and look forward to further project updates. Resource materials provided to the group included A3 laminated maps of the survey sites with Pond Apple locations marked, survey photos, information booklets on how to identify and treat Pond Apple, and Pond Apple stubbie coolers.

4.8 RUBBER VINE PROJECT

Rubber Vine poses a significant environmental threat to the Mackay Whitsunday Region and is considered to be one of the highest priority pests under the Mackay Regional Pest Management Strategy and State Legislation. This project aimed to eradicate outbreaks of Rubber Vine which have potential to impact on high quality agricultural land and environmental assets within the Region. It is critical that the Rubber Vine Containment Line in the north of the Mackay-Whitsunday Region is maintained and that outbreaks

identified in the Pioneer Catchment are controlled as quickly as possible. Funding allowed PCL to survey and locate outbreaks that were previously unknown.

In the last financial year PCL received two lots of funding for Rubber Vine projects. The first project was a small program of 45hrs of on ground survey work to help identify the extent of the Rubber Vine outbreak. The results of this program were used to inform and direct the main 2015/2016 Rubber Vine Control project.

Project delivery was once again done in partnership with Reef Catchments, PCL and Mackay Regional Council. Alf Vary from Ranges to Reef Environmental Services was also contracted to survey and treat suspected Rubber Vine on John Curran's property located near Kinchant Dam.

Survey results from this reporting period indicate that the Rubber Vine infestations in the Mackay Region are much worse than previously understood. Approximately 195 ha have been surveyed or re-surveyed in the Eton-Brightly, Kinchant Dam and Mia Mia areas, with well over 650 plants being treated, including some very large mature trees. All sites will require follow up monitoring and treatment work within the next 12 months.

PCL Project Officer Carla Lambropoulos attended the MAPS Field Day on May 25th. Approximately 200 local cane growers attended the event, however very few growers showed any interest in learning more about Rubber Vine. Information on Rubber Vine and the latest survey findings conducted out at Brightly and Kinchant Dam in the Pioneer Valley were on display for event attendees. No landholders registered their interest in participating in the project on the day and landholders that spoke to the Project Officer stated that they were not aware of having Rubber Vine on their properties. This indicates that we need a more direct engagement approach with landholders in the future to ensure that they are aware of the presence and current threat of Rubber Vine in the Pioneer Catchment.



Shelley Molloy treating a mature Rubber Vine plant



MAPS Field Day Display 25 May 2016

4.9 SUGAR CANE TRIAL PROJECT

The Sugar Cane Trial Project investigates sustainable farming techniques under the Queensland Government's Sustainable Agriculture Program delivered through Reef

Catchments. Rob Sluggett of Farmacist is currently involved in a number of trials, involving three in the Pioneer Catchment whom PCL has been engaged to support communication and extension activities. This included coordinating field days and development of communication resources.

4.10 GIANT RAT'S TAIL GRASS TRIALS

This project aims to eradicate Giant Rat's Tail Grass (*Sporobolus sp*) impacting on high quality agricultural land and environmental assets within the Mackay Whitsunday region. Giant Rat's Tail Grass poses a significant environmental threat to the region and is considered to be one of the highest priority pests under the Mackay Regional Pest Management Plan and State Legislation.



Carla carrying out survey work at the GRT trial site

This was the final year of a three-year project running to June 2016. During the year Reef Catchments engaged Farmacist to oversee and manage the trial sites. PCL's Project Officers have continued to undertake monthly on-ground monitoring of the eight different GRT grass trial treatments over five plots, in the Gargett area. PCL also assisted Reef Catchments and Farmacist in holding a GRT Stakeholder Field Day. The event was held at the Gargett trial site and provided local landholders with an opportunity to see the work being done and to discuss their concerns and issues regarding GRT on their properties.

4.11 BUILDING BIODIVERSITY RESILIENCE AND CONNECTIVITY: PERI-URBAN WEED PARTNERSHIP IN UPPER PIONEER CATCHMENT

PCL worked with SLCMA and Whitsunday Catchment Landcare to deliver this financial year's work on the Peri-urban project. Funding was obtained by the Queensland Government and was used to deliver land management assistance to landholders in the Peri-urban sector.

There are ten participating properties. During the property assessments, property owners received an information pack and land management plan focused on pest and weed control, revegetation strategies, erosion control and improving soil health. In addition each property owner received 40 local native plants based on their Regional Ecosystems, grown in the MNEC. This project is due to be completed in December 2016.

4.12 BUILDING COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP AND WATERWAY HEALTH RESTORATION – UPPER PIONEER CATCHMENT AND OWENS CREEK

March 2015 marked the official end of the Owens Creek Log Jam project, however an extension was granted until January 2016. The extension used remaining funds and allowed for continued maintenance of the revegetation component of the site.



Log Jam structure and Reveg Plantings

One hundred and eighty additional riparian revegetation trees were planted as one of the final milestones with maintenance of the site continuing. The maintenance incorporates watering and weed management of the revegetation planting on the riparian zone. During the final period, Reef Catchments monitored and reported on habitat improvement and the effects on fish communities of Owens Creek bank stabilisation.

4.13 RUELLIA CONTROL TRIAL PROJECT

Ruellia (*Ruellia simplex*) trial sites that had been sprayed in the first stages of the project were planted with revegetation species. Earlier stages of the project established that Triclopyr (Grazon) is the most effective chemical. But with the revegetation and natural regeneration occurring we were not able to use chemicals to treat the dense growth from the seedbank.

To protect the revegetation species young plants were hand weeded to ensure natural regeneration was not swamped by weeds, of which Ruellia is the most damaging. PCL nursery volunteers commenced weeding and mulching in April last year. The heaviest infestations in the forest occur where sunlight penetrates through forest canopy gaps. It is recognised that the best way to tackle Ruellia and all other weeds is to create canopy, so PCL has put much effort (nearly all volunteer) into protecting the vegetation species.

4.14 FORESTRY WORKING GROUP

PCL were engaged by Reef Catchments to support the start up and running of the Regional Forestry Working Group, as well as assist with the identification and promotion of three demonstration sites and two trial sites. Key tasks have included providing technical advice for native agro-forestry and assisting in the development of a regional ABCD framework for sustainable forestry in the Mackay Whitsunday region.

Key achievements in the final twelve months of the project include assistance with the completion and publication of the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac Forestry Sustainability Guide 2016, organising the Forestry Working Group site visit to Platypus Timbers Sawmill and the Bloomsbury trial site, and drafting case studies for the Forestry trial and

demonstration plots. PCL also worked with the Regional Landcare Facilitator to organise a community field day located at the Bloomsbury forestry trial site. Attendees were able to see the early establishment phase of a forestry plot and how the landholder has utilised a section of unproductive marginal sugarcane land and converted it to a small forestry plantation.



Forestry Trial Plot located at Bloomsbury



Forestry Field Day 3 June 2016

4.15 PEST MANAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE

PCL Project Officer Laura Whitbread worked in consultation with the Mackay Regional Pest Management Group (MRPMG) and associated stakeholders in updating the existing MRPMG 2015 – 2021 Strategy. This updated Strategy went up for MRPMG stakeholder review and once completed, will serve as a pest management reference guide and management tool for the region's stakeholder organisations.

4.16 CATS CLAW CREEPER MAPPING WITHIN PIONEER CATCHMENT

As part of the National Landcare Programme, suspect Cat's Claw Creeper infestations were investigated by PCL Project Officer Laura Whitbread. In the areas surveyed, what was previously thought to be Cat's Claw Creeper were in fact, native vine species. GPS points were mapped of all native species found as well as a few areas labelled as potentially Cat's Claw Creeper. Part of the area mapped included St. Helens Creek along the riverbank. GPS data was reported to Reef Catchments for data collection.

4.17 FAR BEACH REVEGETATION MAINTENANCE

This National Landcare Programme project supported revegetation works at Far Beach. PCL Project Officer Laura Whitbread worked with Council for approval of a revegetation plan for 500 plants. This revegetation zone will act as a buffer between the terrestrial environment and any storm tides or strong winds. PCL volunteers came out to site and assisted in tree planting. Weed maintenance and watering will continue through to November 2016.



Far Beach site



Ipomoea pes-caprae on site

4.18 PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

PCL received funding from the National Landcare Programme for the purchase of two tear drop flags and a fitted tablecloth. The promotional materials will be used for PCL displays at environmental awareness events. Thank you to Gina's Flags for their good work.



Melissa Spalding at Demoylens Lagoon

4.19 SEED COLLECTION FOR THREATENED LOCAL NATIVE SPECIES SEED BANK

The development of a seed bank collection database will help MRC Nursery Manager Sue McCormack in streamlining seed collection at the MNEC. PCL Project Officer Laura Whitbread developed a database which will assist Sue in maintaining GIS records of seed collection. Threatened species in the region and their local occurrence can now be recorded and used for projects that require these native species for revegetation projects.

4.20 REVEGETATION MAINTENANCE ON OWENS CREEK

Pioneer Catchment & Landcare coordinated maintenance works on the existing revegetation site at Owens Creek. This site is on private land and funding was originally obtained from the National Landcare Programme to ensure that opportunistic weeds

would not overrun the native plants established as part of Owens Creek Log Jam project last year. Funding permitted watering and weeding for a period of twelve months, ending October 2016.

4.21 REVEGETATION AND MAINTENANCE AT ST HELENS CREEK

This National Landcare Programme project focused on a degraded section of St Helens Creek. Works began in March 2016 with site preparations including slashing and chemical spraying of Guinea Grass (*Megathyrsus maximus*) by a subcontractor. A revegetation site was established, with all 500 native plants chosen based on Regional Ecosystem descriptions and guidance from the Society for Growing Australian Plants (Mackay Branch). Tree planting took place on 14 June 2016. The plant list included Macaranga (*Macaranga tanarius*), Paperbark (*Melaleuca leucadendra*), Pandanus spp, Leichardt (*Nauclea orientalis*), Brush Cherry (*Syzygium australe*) and *Lomandra hystrix*. Ongoing maintenance will include slashing of the site and weed control. The revegetation site will help stabilise that section of St Helens Creek where past flood events have caused the water to cut across the site. Established vegetation will ensure the bank does not wash away.

Future funds sourced will allow PCL to extend the works site to include areas further downstream alongside Mount Charlton Road.

4.22 NEST BOX INSTALLATION

PCL received funding from the National Landcare Programme for the installation of 29 nest boxes on properties within the Pioneer Catchment. Nest box designs varied in size and shape according to the intended inhabitant. Squirrel gliders, small bats, and medium-sized parrots will hopefully take residence.

All nest boxes were placed in suitable glider, bat, or rosella habitat. The benefits include biodiversity enhancement and an invaluable education tool. All nest boxes were constructed at the Men's Shed.

5 ADMINISTRATION MATTERS

5.1 MEMBERSHIP

22 new memberships were approved during the 2015/16 financial year. The year finished with a total of 28 members. The change in membership was related to PCL's new sub-group Central Queensland Soil Health Systems and to the continuing influx of volunteers to our Volunteer Team.

5.2 FACILITIES

Office

PCL still operates from our office in the grounds of Mackay Regional Council's Natural Environment Centre on Swayne St in North Mackay. Mackay Regional Council continues to support PCL by providing office space, car parking, shed storage and utilities.

Vehicle

Thank you to Richard Deguara, previously of Carlisle Mitsubishi. The past contributions to PCL's vehicle maintenance were greatly appreciated and will be sorely missed. The Mitsubishi Triton continues to serve PCL well with its reliability.

5.3 MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Committee is made up of the following members:

Dave Hunter – Chair

Di Salau – Deputy Chair

Mark Radke – Treasurer

Wendy Eiteneuer – Secretary (Non-voting)

Dianne Williams – Committee Member

Grant Howard – Committee Member

Irene Champion – Committee Member

Representing *Native Plants Queensland, SGAP (Qld Branch) Inc. Mackay Branch*

Jock Hansen – Committee Member

5.4 FINANCES

Appendix 1 contains the full audited Financial Statements for 2015/16, as well as the associated Independent Audit Report. These were provided by our appointed auditor, Bennett Partners Chartered Accountants.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In addition to those people and organisations already acknowledged in the body of this report, many other people have contributed to the achievements of the organisation during the year:

- **Our Volunteers.** Important volunteers over the year have been: **Di Salau**, who continues to maintain our database, server and backup systems, as well as her duties on the Management Committee; the **Pioneer Volunteer Team**, who volunteer considerable time and effort in the nursery and at our project sites; and also **Gerard Masters**, who continues to help every month with the folding and distribution of the newsletters, which is very much appreciated. Our thanks go to all of you for your contributions.
- **Reef Catchments Mackay Whitsunday Isaac Ltd**, for the generous provision of technical support and resource sharing, and for continuing to involve PCL in their on-ground activities.
- **Mackay Regional Council** for housing our operations and assisting with knowledge sharing, general support and facilitation. Specifically, we need to thank the Natural Environment team including **Lisa, Jono, Sue and the Bush Crew**, the **Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens staff**, and the **Pest Management Officers** who have collaborated and generously shared their knowledge.
- **Native Plants Qld Mackay Branch**, for representation on the Management Committee, supplying plants for our members and for advice and support in our endeavours to promote the knowledge and use of local native plants.
- **Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association** and **Whitsunday Catchment Landcare Inc.**, for their support and collaboration.
- **Conservation Volunteers Australia**, for support and friendly collaboration at events.
- **Biosecurity Queensland** staff, for their generous technical support and collaboration on field events.
- The range of **local organisations, government agencies and their staff** who have contributed to events held and who have provided technical advice
- **Megan Taylor** of **Kapow Interactive** continues to provide voluntary support for CQCLN websites.
- **Bennett Partners Chartered Accountants** and **Phil Doring Insurance Brokers** who continued to provide discounted professional fees

Natural resource management in our community is enriched by your contribution, thank you!

PROJECT FUNDING & OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS BY:



APPENDIX 1

Independent Audit Report on 2015/16 Financial Reports