



**LOWER BURDEKIN INITIATIVE
CO-ORDINATION MEETING
26 MARCH 2002
MERCURE INN, TOWNSVILLE**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The LBI coordination meeting for 2002 was attended by 70 people representing some 30 different organisations.

The agenda was arranged in two sections. The morning was designed to deliver views from the major industry, community and research organisations involved in the lower Burdekin. The afternoon session was based on presentation and discussion of progress reports from the on-going research projects in the region.

The scene was set by challenging the attendees to think about the following questions:

1. Have we made a difference and how do we measure this?
2. What are the needs and gaps?
3. How do we improve institutional arrangements to ensure real progress?
4. What do we really need to do to implement integrated water management practices that ensure the long-term economic viability of the Lower Burdekin?

A number of recurring themes were heard during the day:

1. Greater understanding of the aquifer and seawater interface is paramount to the economic well being of the region
2. Reliance on a monoculture industry increases the economic sensitivity of the region. There is a need to incorporate in the research as a first priority that financially viable cropping systems and industry are critical
3. The lower Burdekin system is both complex and uncertain. The whole system must be addressed, not just single issues. There is a need to decrease fragmentation in the water supply system eg. Sunwater controls surface water but groundwater responsibility lies with NR&M
4. There was universal agreement that there is a need to know what, if any, impacts we are having on the environment and to minimise the any negative impacts. However, we need more understanding to allow a balance to be struck between the saved and sacrificed parts of the environment. There also needs to be more trust between organisations to make data available
5. Concern was raised that a lot of previous research has not been adopted in the lower Burdekin. It was suggested that there are no economic drivers to improve Water Use Efficiency - time management was seen as providing better motivation. For better outcomes we need site/subregion specific solutions, however this has a large resource requirement. A range of technologies are available to improve WUE depending on level of farmer confidence

The day ended with general affirmation of the goals and outcomes of the LBI. There was discussion about whether the LBI had become bigger than originally intended and attendees were split on this.

There was general agreement that the 2003 meeting should be held in the Burdekin, possibly over two days with a different agenda, incorporating a field trip.