

Lower Burdekin Water Futures

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Newsletter

Issue 6 – August 2009



Chair's Message

The recent Groundwater Users and Managers Forum was an excellent event for the Burdekin, providing an opportunity for participants to explore both regional and national groundwater issues.

Another good result for the region was the Department of Environment and Resource Management's decision to allow the Burdekin water boards to continue to operate independently. More information on the decision appears in this issue.

Lyn McLaughlin – LBWF Chair



Andrew Kelly addresses delegates at a recharge pit



Sand dams on Burdekin River



Andrew Kelly with delegates at a pump station near the sand dams



National Audience gains Insight into Burdekin Aquifer

The Burdekin's unique groundwater systems were recently showcased to groundwater users, managers and policy makers from around Australia. The Groundwater Users and Managers Forum, held from August 9 to 11, enabled groundwater users, representatives from the National Water Commission (NWC) and representatives from State departments to acquire a greater understanding of the lower Burdekin groundwater systems.

The program kicked off with a series of presentations. These included an outline from NWC on the funding being made available over the next few years for groundwater research, a presentation by Adrian Werner from Flinders University on the new Centre for Groundwater Research and Training and presentations from each state on their current groundwater situation and the associated environmental and regulatory issues. There were also presentations on 3D hydrological mapping systems, groundwater modelling and irrigation modernisation planning. LBWF members Andrew Kelly, Lyn McLaughlin, Scott Crawford and Keith Bristow were among the key note speakers.

During a tour of the region, delegates showed great interest in the recharge pits, aquifer recharge process, sand dams and the movement of water in the modified lagoon system. Delegates also visited a farm where groundwater and recycled water are used for irrigation, and were shown how groundwater is used in the DAVCO project at another site.

Hosted jointly by Lower Burdekin Water and Irrigation Australia, the event facilitated valuable interaction, discussion and debate which will help the region to sustainably manage its resources into the future.

Future Direction for Burdekin Water Boards

Lower Burdekin water representatives had a successful meeting with key personnel from the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM) Strategic Policy Division on July 10. DERM representatives explained the Government's intentions on how Recommendation 47 would be implemented and how it would affect the North and South Burdekin water boards. The Department recognises that the Burdekin water boards are not only larger than other Category 2 water authorities, but also operate differently.

It was verified that the Burdekin water boards' submissions were successful and the Government supports the proposal that the boards continue to operate the lower Delta area independently, rather than transfer the role to local government. This decision was supported by Burdekin Shire Council.

Abstract from Minister's letter:

"While the Government supports the review's recommendation in principle, I understand that your organisation may wish to convert to an alternative structure rather than transfer to local government. I believe that this option could satisfy the objective of the review and the Department of Environment and Resource Management will work closely with you to identify an appropriate structure. As you are aware, normally the board would be required to pay stamp duty on any of its assets upon their transfer to another structure. The department is currently canvassing options for exempting stamp duty payable with the office of State Revenue."

The Government has advised that all current Category 2 water authority structures will no longer exist. Its preferred option for the North and South Burdekin water boards is an amalgamated private irrigation entity. The water boards are currently working with consultants with expertise in the development of irrigation company structures. A draft business structure will be presented to the Minister's office for consideration. If accepted, the new entity will take 12 months to develop.

Visit the LBWF website:

<http://www.clw.csiro.au/naif/casestudies/lower-burdekin.html>

Member Profile – Toni Anderson



Toni Anderson is the Natural Resource and Production Extension Officer for BSES Limited in the Burdekin. Her work entails a number of water-related projects throughout the region, involving irrigation, water quality and groundwater.

Over the past seven years Toni has worked on water management in the Emerald and Burdekin districts, covering cotton, grains, sugarcane and horticulture. The past four years have been spent in the Burdekin.

Toni is the vice chair of BBIFMAC, a local natural resource management group that manages projects including the Upper Houghton Water Balance Study and the Water Quality Pixel project. These projects aim to build community awareness of natural resource management issues and help the community to implement improved practices.

"BSES, BBIFMAC and the Lower Burdekin Water Futures have a common goal of a sustainable industry in the Burdekin," Toni said.

"I see my role in the Lower Burdekin Water Futures as bringing BSES's research and extension capacity and BBIFMAC's community engagement capacity to the group."

Water Words

What does it all mean ???

It seems that scientists, resource managers, engineers and politicians have a language of their own when talking about water, and even they don't always use the same terms! Here are some of the more common words, terms and acronyms used in the water business, hopefully translated into plain English.

Flows:

1 litre per second (L/sec) = 791 gallons per hour

1 cumec = 1000 litres per second = 1 cubic metre per second

1 cusec = 1 cubic foot per second