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## **Mackay and Proserpine landholders urged to get serious about controlled burns**

**With this week marking Rural Fire Service Week 2015, local Rural Fire Service Queensland (RFSQ) brigades in the Mackay Whitsunday region are urging landholders to get serious about controlled burns.**

RFSQ member (Mount Blackwood) and Reef Catchments Director, Frank Perna, said farmers and landholders in Mackay, Proserpine and surrounding areas were being urged to learn more about their controlled burn options, particularly given an exceptionally dry start to the year.

“Despite some recent rain, 2015 has been a very dry year which obviously increases the local fire threat,” Mr Perna said.

“Controlled burns carefully managed by professionals are the best way to reduce long-term fire risk in our rural, semi-rural and some urban fringe areas.”

Mr Perna said there were some areas in the region that had not been burned for 15 years or more.

“What happens is these areas become a hazard in terms of build-up of growth – this can be easily managed with regular controlled burning, but left unchecked, becomes a potential fuel source for wildfire.”

Mr Perna said landholders who had never been involved in a controlled burn before did not need to worry about not having skills or resources at hand.

“The Rural Fire Service exists to help and educate all landholders on their controlled burn options.

“The message we want to get out is, if you don’t know how to do it yourself, you can contact your local RFSQ brigade and talk it through with them. We can arrange for someone to come and do an initial assessment of your property, organise a permit and coordinate a team to oversee the burn.”

Mr Perna said while controlled burns did not need to occur every year, they remained an important part of wildfire prevention.

“It might be that in certain areas or properties a controlled burn every five or ten years is enough.

“What we need is active involvement from our local landholders to significantly reduce the threat of fire in the overall Mackay Whitsunday area.”

Jake Betros, Fire Ecology & Ecosystem Repair officer with Catchment Solutions, said Rural Fire Service Week was also an excellent opportunity for landholders to find out more about becoming a Rural Fire Service volunteer.

“The best way to understand and value fire as a useful tool for reducing hazard and risk is to learn more about it and the Rural Fire Service brigades provide an excellent means to do that,” Mr Betros said.

“Simple things can make a big difference, for example, understanding how to light rubbish or vegetation piles at appropriate times.

“Many people also don’t realise that controlled use of fire can also deliver environmental benefit. Catchment Solutions specialises in creating fire guidelines for rural brigades and landholders that focuses on balancing the ‘three pillars’ of good fire use – for hazard reduction, primary production and biodiversity management.”

**To contact your local RFSQ brigade visit [www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au](http://www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au) or call (07) 4965 6641**

For more information on fire guidelines contact Jake Betros [jbetros@catchmentsolutions.com.au](mailto:jbetros@catchmentsolutions.com.au) or call (07) 4968 4206

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**IMAGES:** The Rural Fire Service coordinate a recent controlled burn on private landholder property near Kuttabul.

**PHOTO CREDIT:** Please credit images to Fiona Hollingworth Photography.

**1: Jake Betros and Chris Perna take part in a recent controlled burn coordinated by the Rural Fire Service near Kuttabul.**



**2: Nicholas Perna and Jake Betros. Volunteers can join the Rural Fire Service as junior members from the age of 16.**



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