



CASE

STUDY



“WORKING WITH REEF CATCHMENTS HAS PROVIDED ME A CLEAR PATHWAY AND TIMEFRAME TO REACH MY GOALS.”

MICHAEL SHANKS is a grazier in Palmyra (Mackay region). Through Mackay Whitsunday Reef Rescue 2013-16 Water Quality Grants, Reef Catchments is working with Michael to fund on-ground activities across the property to improve water quality.

BACKGROUND

Michael purchased his 157 hectare property as a working cane farm in 1993. The property is a mix of Alluvial Flood Plains, Tea Tree Plains and Coastal Eucalypt Woodlands on slopes. In 2006 Michael commenced converting the farm to cattle grazing and over the next four years established Setaria, Signal and Rhodes Grass pastures and installed boundary fencing. By 2010 the Palmyra property had completed its transition to a grazing enterprise.

FOCUS ON

- ▶ **RIPARIAN FENCING, MANAGEMENT AND GROUND COVER**
- ▶ **OFF STREAM WATERING POINTS AND LAND TYPE FENCING TO ENSURE BETTER GROUND COVER AND IMPROVEMENT OF RUNOFF WATER QUALITY**



Gully erosion



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Michael was committed to developing his property sustainably and in 2012-13 funding period received financial assistance through Reef Rescue (now the Australian Government Reef Programme) to complete 6.5 km of riparian fencing, 800 metres of land type fencing and install two off-stream watering points. The riparian fencing and off-stream watering points control stock access and protect the creek banks on the property from erosion, resulting in improved water quality outcomes. Land type fencing allows stock to be rotated from grazing on hill slopes to alluvial plains, resulting in improved pasture management and ground cover.

Michael undertook large scale lantana removal, and estimates he has removed 90 percent from his property, largely through the use of a splatter gun. Palatable, productive and perennial pastures have been sown in these former weedy areas, resulting in improved ground cover and water runoff quality. Michael also attended a Stocktake pasture course covering pasture monitoring and calculation of sustainable stocking rates.

“Working with Reef Catchments has allowed me to develop my farm quicker and provided me a clear pathway and timeframe to reach my goals - I wouldn't be at the level I am at now without working with Reef Catchments,” Michael said.

MICHAEL CURRENTLY BUYS STORE CATTLE FOR FATTENING AND IS STRIVING TO IMPROVE THE PRODUCTIVITY OF HIS HERD THROUGH IMPROVED GROWTH RATES AND QUICKER TURN-OFF.

He is also committed to continuing to build resilience in his soils and pastures. Michael has installed additional internal fencing to allow cell grazing and more efficient pasture management.

SUPPORT FOR THIS PROJECT IS PROVIDED BY REEF CATCHMENTS, THROUGH FUNDING FROM AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT REEF PROGRAMME WATER QUALITY GRANTS AND THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT.

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“Controlling where stock water and having smaller paddocks really helps stock management,” Michael said.

“My next step is smaller paddocks so I can manage my pasture better and I'm considering maybe baling some of my own grass or a topper. Creating good ground cover is essential for when it rains.”

In September 2015, Reef Catchments held a Queensland Government funded land management field day on Michael's Palmyra property. The field day was attended by 43 people, representing 30 local grazing enterprises and was delivered by land management consultant Bill Thompson. Topics covered included managing soil erosion, maintaining soil fertility, lowering sediment and nutrient runoff, dispersal of grazing pressures, identifying priority and risk areas for physical intervention, and understanding land constraints in relation to breeding and grow out/fattening herds. Attendees were able to take away practical management tools to better manage erosion and achieve improved ground cover through better pasture management. Networking and field days continue to provide a valuable forum for graziers in the region (which is predominantly cane focused) to learn, discuss and share knowledge

Michael had an actively-eroding gully area that was causing significant sediment loss from his property. He applied for financial incentives

KEY POINTS



- ▶ 157 hectare property

WORKS COMPLETED INCLUDE:

- ▶ 7.5 km of riparian fencing
- ▶ 800 metres land type fencing
- ▶ Installation of 3 off-stream watering points
- ▶ Additional internal fencing to allow cell grazing and pasture management
- ▶ Large scale lantana removal (estimated 90%)
- ▶ Gully erosion control with gravel

OTHER

- ▶ Michael has completed a Stocktake pasture course
- ▶ A grazing field day was hosted on Michael's property in 2015, providing a valuable platform for learning and discussion amongst local graziers

through the Water Quality Grazing project being undertaken by Reef Catchments Limited, and funded through the Queensland Regional NRM Investment Program. In late 2017, before the wet season, Michael employed the assistance of a contractor to undertake battering and rocking of the gully walls to improve stability. He also undertook about 1km of riparian fencing and installed an off-stream watering point to exclude stock from the area in order to increase ground cover.



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