



**MEDIA EVENT THURSDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2017**

## **Farmers and local NRM groups unite to tackle feral pig problem**

Media are invited to attend the below event.

**What:** Feral Pig Shoot (aerial) as helicopter lands.

**When:** Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017 at 09:30am.

**Who:** Speak with a wide range of collaborators involved in controlling feral pigs via an aerial program in the Rocky Dam and Carmilla regions.

**Where:** Koumala Sporting Grounds (Koumala).

Map provided at the end of this release.

Rain isn't the only thing plaguing farmers this season, with feral pigs also likely contributors to damaged agricultural and environmental land.

The annual Rocky Dam and Carmilla aerial pig shoot will be held this week, having been delayed since December due to the late crush and weather conditions.

The event is a key part of a wider feral pig control problem reducing feral pig numbers and destruction.

Since 2012, landholder participation in the program has been increasing, as feral pig numbers go down.

"Growers play a key support role in the delivery of the program," said Reef Catchments pests officer Emily Wood.

"Participating landholders pay an annual contribution for their property to be included and provide important local knowledge of pig populations and feedback for the program.

"Landholder participation increased from 34 in 2015, to 58 growers in 2016. A number of new properties have already joined the program for 2017."

She said at the same time, feral pig numbers were reducing dramatically, proving the program's successful impact.

“In the first year in 2012, 264 pigs were shot, down to just 27 last year. That’s a great result but we can’t afford to be complacent about managing feral pigs as they are quick to breed and do significant damage to environmental areas and high quality agricultural land.

“The aim of the program is to achieve efficient, strategic and humane feral pig control.”

Feral pigs cause extensive land damage each year as a result of rooting, wallowing, grazing, trampling and predation. They also carry weed seeds and have the potential to spread diseases.

“Feral pigs are a major pest for the sugarcane industry, causing significant yield losses by eating and damaging crops,” said Lara Mathewson, project coordinator with Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association Inc (SLCMA).

“Any landholders in the Carmilla and Rocky Dam area interested in having their property included in aerial control programs in the future should contact SLCMA.”

The program is part of a wider feral pig control program that also extends to the Whitsundays.

Contact Lara Mathewson 0407 634 322 or [coordinator@sarinalandcare.org.au](mailto:coordinator@sarinalandcare.org.au)

Landholders in areas north of Sarina can contact Reef Catchments Emily Wood on 0419 778 402 or [emily.wood@reefcatchments.com](mailto:emily.wood@reefcatchments.com)

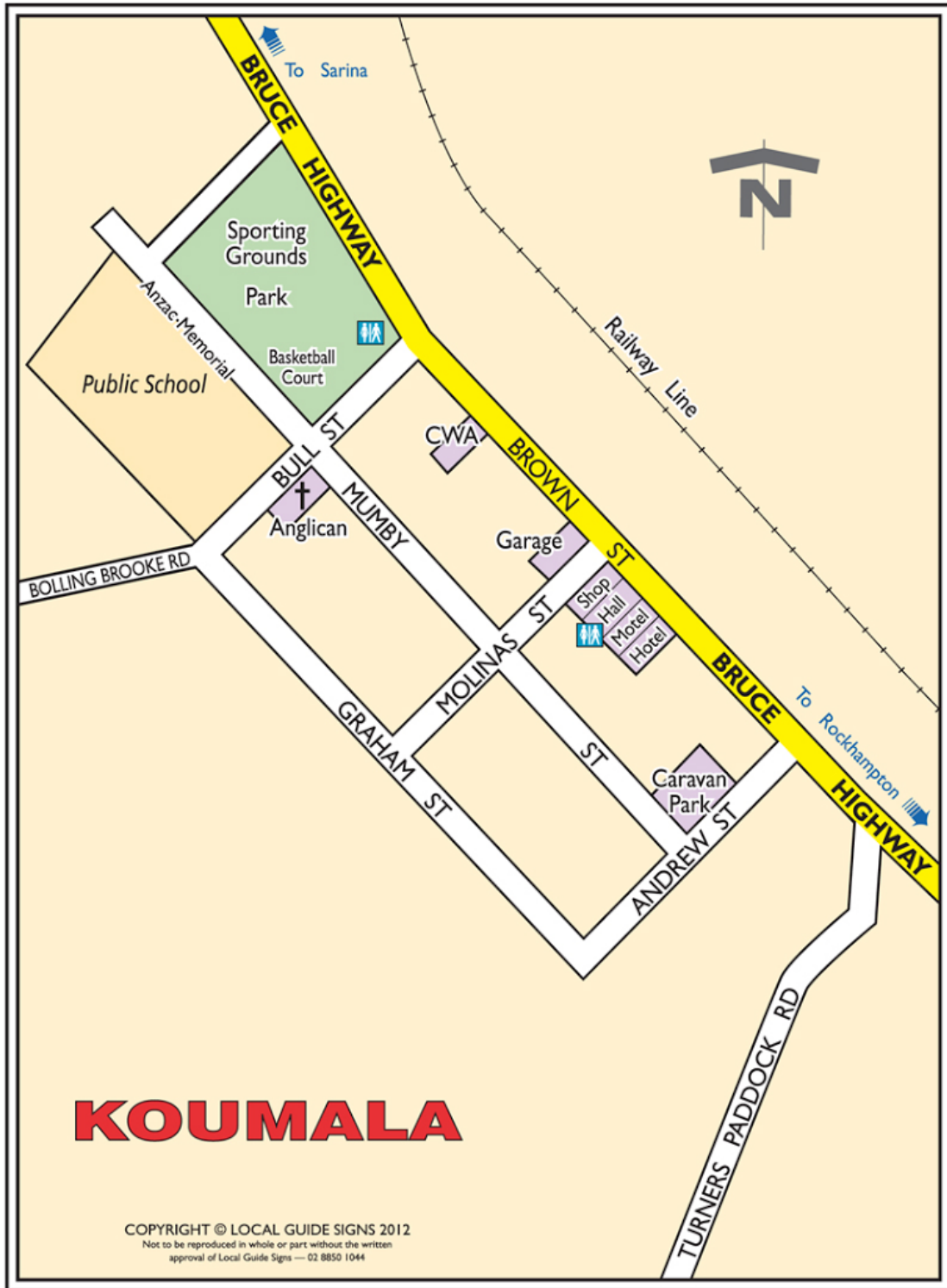
*This project is coordinated by Reef Catchments, in partnership with Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association Inc and local landholders. It is made possible through funding from the Queensland Government's Natural Resource Management Investment Program.*

ENDS

**On-ground contact:**  
**Emily Wood** | 0419 778 402

**Media contact:**  
**Jaime Newborn** | 0438 726 226 or 07 4968 4213

**Location:** Koumala Sporting Grounds, see map on following page.



# KOUMALA

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TOP RESULT: Jim Swan couldn't have been happier when aerial shooter Mark Scant reported finding only one feral pig to shoot.

PHOTO: EMILY SMITH

# Aerial shooting helps to break feral pig 'curse'

**Emily Smith**  
 emily.smith@dailymercury.com.au

ONLY five years ago pigs were robbing Koumala grower Jim Swan of 500-700 tonnes of cane a year.

The extent of the 'curse' was revealed in 2012 when Mark Scant went up in a helicopter and shot 264 pigs over three days.

Yet on Thursday Mr Swan couldn't have been happier, after Mr Scant returned from another shoot to report he could find only one pig.

"It's gone from catastrophic... to absolutely nothing," Mr Swan said.

The feral pig aerial

shooting program was launched in 2008 by Reef Catchments, local landholders and Sarina Landcare Catchment Management Association.

Sarina Landcare administration officer Nadine Hamill said she'd even received reports from a professional crabber about the increase in crab numbers since the pig shooting program launched.

"That's another positive. The pigs get in where (the crabs) burrow in the mangroves," she said.

"The pigs don't just give the farmers a hard time,

they devastate our mangroves, they dig up crabs, they eat turtle eggs."

But she said in order to stay one step ahead of the notoriously clever animals, which would learn to hide from the sound of the helicopter, they had to think outside the box.

Last year, as the helicopter went up, one of the landholders set a scrub fire on their property and set out with dogs to make sure the pigs had nowhere to hide. They also continued baiting and trapping programs throughout the year, between the two

three-day aerial shoots.

Despite the excellent result on Thursday, with only one pig shot, Ms Hamill said the hot weather may have caused the pigs to hide.

Mr Scant said while there were still a few pigs out there, it was good to know they'd been brought down to a controllable level.

"All the places we had high pressure we're flat even seeing a pig now," he said.

While Mr Scant said leaning out of an R-22 helicopter at "about gum tree height" and trying to shoot pigs with a pump action rifle was "definitely

not an easy job", having a lifetime of knowledge of the area certainly helped.

He communicated with the pilot through a head set and hand signals, and once they'd found fresh signs of the animals they were generally easy to find, after flying a circle or grid pattern. "(But still) many a time they've beaten us. You might be in a helicopter but it's not invincible. They can have advantages on top of you too," he said.

"But if you don't get them this year there's a good chance you'll get them next year or the year after."

## IN BRIEF

### School upgrades

WHILE Mackay state school students and teachers have been enjoying a well-earned break, local tradies have been hard at work upgrading and expanding local schools ready for 2017. Mackay MP Julieanne Gilbert and Mirani MP Jim Pearce said the regions' schools had shared in more than \$2.4m improvements to classrooms and other facilities during the holidays. "We want our state school students to have the best-possible classrooms to make the most of their education," Ms Gilbert said.

### Driver nabbed

A DRINK-DRIVER was caught by police in Mackay Thursday morning. The man was pulled over in Evan St, South Mackay, just before 9.20am, and failed a breath test, a Queensland Police Service spokesman said. The driver was seen sitting shirtless on a kerb next to a police wagon, speaking with officers. It appeared his car was being searched, as police looked underneath its raised bonnet and boot. The police spokesman could not provide more details at the time.

### Careers expo

LEARN about opportunities to study at CQUniversity's TAFE Careers Expo. Taking place from 2-5pm at the University's City Campus in Sydney Street on Tuesday January 24, the event is tipped to attract hundreds.

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