

NORTH EAST DOWNS NEWS



FROM THE NEW CHAIR

November, 2011

Hello to you all! It is important that I introduce myself as the new 'Chair'. At a well attended AGM in Oakey on the 26th September, I was elected to the role. Previously, I was the Deputy Chair, however due to Owena stepping into the Support Officer position for NED around mid year, the Chair's position became vacant necessitating the change. I reside on a farm approx 5km North of Jondaryan on the 'coal road', having been born and raised in the district. Though I lived outside the district for some 20+ years due to my primary employment with Qld Fire and Rescue, I maintained an interest in the local area throughout that time. I am involved with the Lagoon Creek Catchment sub-group of NED.

I am a relative newcomer to this level of Landcare, so it is very satisfying to have Glenys continue as Secretary, Diana as Treasurer, David Lange and Ashley Volz as Committee members, along with new member Margaret Fitzgerald of Biddeston, as their experience and long term involvement and commitment with Landcare will help me greatly.

The current spell of hot dry weather following a cool and damp spring has had a mixed reception. The positive side is that the winter crop harvest has progressed exceptionally well; with above average yields reported across the NED area, though there are issues with lower protein levels for many growers. The lower protein scenario is consistently popping up from Central Qld through the Downs, to NSW and Victoria. Apart from the high yield impacts with the better season, a possible cause is the 2010 /11 Summer of flooding rains leaching nutrients from the top layers of the soil. Similarly, I imagine that the same story may be told for pastures. So, the challenge is there for all of us to focus on and maintain soil health and sustainability, with attention to the soil biology and nutrient status. Be it grain growing or pastures, I believe that we have reached very high levels of efficiency, so the efforts to maintain viability in the face of current commodity prices will be dependent upon adoption of best practice and listening to our neighbours' experiences.

As we near the end of 2011, I extend season's greetings to all and may our journeys into 2012 be rewarding and enjoyable.

Best wishes, **Graham Cooke**

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Chair: Graham Cooke
Vice Chair: David Lange
Secretary: Glenys Bowtell
Treasurer: Diana Beal
Members: Ashley Volz
Margaret Fitzgerald

NED has publications and Fact Sheets for members, so call in to the office and have a browse.

WHO DO I CONTACT AT NED?

**Community Support Officer—
Owena Reimers**

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RECENT SUCCESSFUL FUNDING APPLICATIONS

CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY:

South Myall Catchment Landcare Group

"Increasing soil organic matter with improved land management practices".

North East Downs Landcare Group

"Biological farming systems on the Darling Downs: the next step".

BUILDING RURAL COMMUNITIES FUND/ DEEDI:

North East Downs

"Creating a safe environment for Landcare Members".

A series of three workshops and three training days will be held throughout the North East Downs Landcare region targeting Landcare areas. Workshops will hold to update members on changes to Occupational Health and Safety legislation and associated risk management. The training days will complement the workshops by assisting volunteers to acquire the skills to use correct electronic record keeping procedures.

COMMUNITY ACTION GRANTS:

Emu Creek Catchment Landcare Group

"Improving connectivity of native habitat at Crows Nest".

BIOLOGICAL FARMING BUS TRIP

On the 3rd November, 2011 farmers and industry stakeholders visited three farms at Quinalow, Jondaryan and Irvingdale, where they looked at organic in-put trials, crops and machinery. Ian Moss of Farm Agronomy and Resources Management (F.A.R.M.) discussed strategies and concepts for soil and crop fertility and health.



EXTENSION TO FLOOD RELIEF

The deadline for QRAA flood and cyclone assistance for primary producers, small business and not-for-profit organisations has been extended until 31st January 2012. Grants up to \$25,000 for small business and primary producers in the affected local government areas are available. Special concessional loans of up to \$65,000 for eligible businesses, primary producers and not-for-profit organisations suffering extreme damage, with a grant component of up to \$50,000 are also still available.