

Burnett Mary REGIONAL GROUP

Practical Solutions for Natural Resource Management

In this issue...

- State Landcare Awards
- 'Better Burnett' Major Investment for BMRG
- Directors Step Up for Key Roles on BMRG Board
- Salinity Management a Positive Step for South Burnett Vineyards
- Communities Called on to Make Threatened Species Day Count
- Shifting Sands Conference
- Fish Hatchery on the Move to Botanical Gardens at Cooroy
- Disgruntled Dugong Joins Fight Against Pollution
- Steps to Recovery for Upper Mary Rainforest
- Conservation Partnerships Program a First for Burnett East

Dear Friend of BMRG,

It's certainly been a busy month for the Burnett Mary Regional Group, but a month that has produced some very positive outcomes. We'd like to share some of those achievements in this second edition of 'Natural Matters'.

Firstly our congratulations must go to our finalists and winning resource management groups in the Burnett Mary region whose efforts were recognised in the State Landcare awards.

This is also an excellent opportunity to acknowledge the successful candidates elected to the four Director positions with our BMRG Board in July – Allan McGrigor who was returned unopposed as Community Catchment Director, and Randal McLellan and Tom Bancroft both re-elected as Community Coastal Director and Primary Industry Burnett Director respectively.

A new and most welcome addition is Maryborough City Councillor Jenny Burton, elected as Local Government Mary Director. Having lived on the Mary River throughout her lifetime, Cr Burton is passionate about making the community more aware of the river's significant problems. See our website for further information.

Until next time, happy reading!

David Brown
CEO - BMRG



State Landcare Awards

We are thrilled to announce that state honours have gone to four of the five Burnett Mary Region natural resource management groups named as finalists in this year's Queensland Landcare Awards. The successful nominees were presented with their awards by Director-General of the Department of Natural Resources and Water, Scott Spencer, at a gala dinner held in Mackay late last month.

The Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee won the prestigious Murray-Darling Basin Commission Rivercare Award, with Glenda Pickersgill from Mary River taking third place in the same category.

First place in the Alcoa Landcare Community Group Award went to Noosa and District Landcare Group, with second placings going to Cooloola Coastcare for the Australian Government Coastcare category, and Cooloola City Farm at Tin Can Bay for the Landcare Australia Nature Conservation Award.

Torquay State School also represented the Burnett Mary region as award finalists.

BMRG's Independent Chairman Russell Stewart said the Landcare Award winners and finalists should be extremely proud of the work they have done, not only in receiving the commendation, but also for the work they do for the community and the environment.

"Through these groups and their specific projects, people are beginning to see real environmental challenges being met," Mr Stewart said.

"They are creating change, motivating the community to become involved in natural resource management and taking ownership over the health of their very own part of Queensland."

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Landcare Winners: Kim and Phil are both from Noosa Landcare

The efforts of three of the five regional groups also saw them named finalists in the Burnett Mary Regional Group's (BMRG) 2007 Natural Resource Management (NRM) Awards held in February, where Noosa and District Landcare Group took out the Biodiversity Conservation Award, and Cooloola Coastcare and Cooloola City Farm were named runners-up in the Coastal Community and Biodiversity categories respectively.

The 2007 Landcare Awards, held in conjunction with this week's State Landcare Conference, are organised by Queensland Water and Land Carers (QWaLC) - the peak body for Queensland's 300 community NRM groups and 16,000 volunteers.

The winners will be automatically considered for a 2008 National Landcare Award, to be presented at Parliament House in Canberra.



'Better Burnett' Major Investment for BMRG

A snip of the wire cutters marked the official launch of the Burnett Mary Regional Group's (BMRG) newest program, the "Better Burnett" project, at a ceremony in Bundaberg on 21st August 2007.

The innovative partnership, led by the Burnett Catchment Care Association (BCCA), represents the largest investment by the BMRG in any single project. The \$750,000 funding commitment to the 14-month program will be focused on works to improve waterways, eradicate weeds and assist graziers with sustainable management techniques.

Landholders participating in the pilot program, Dean & Tracey Rockemer and Reece & Penny Kennedy presented VIP guests with the first section of fencing wire for the project. The Hon. John Cobb MP (Assistant Minister for the Environment and Water Resources) and The Hon. Paul Neville MP (Member for Hinkler) did the honours by cutting the wire.

Welcoming guests to the event, BMRG CEO David Brown said the highly significant project will support landholders in adopting land management practices that improve productivity as well as overall catchment health.

"The whole of catchment initiative will deliver improvements in sustainable grazing, biodiversity enhancement, river care, salinity mitigation, and integrated pest management activities that will improve catchment health and function," he said.

The project will be divided into three components, 'Better Beef', 'Better Bush' and 'Better Waterways'.

Better Beef is a key component that will assist landholders, particularly graziers, by offering incentives for accelerating on-ground works that will sustain profitable grazing into the future. In addition Better Bush will protect some of the catchment's most precious assets such as the White Throated Snapping Turtle and tackle its greatest threats such as Weeds and Pests.

Better Waterways will build on the highly successful Aquatic Weed Management program. It is designed to assist landholders to care for some of the most vital watercourses in the Burnett River System, as well as combat the casual effects of Aquatic Weeds and deal with Dryland Salinity. Specifically this element of the program will focus on the significant infestations of salvinia and water hyacinth in the lower parts of the Burnett and Kolan system, and the South Burnett.

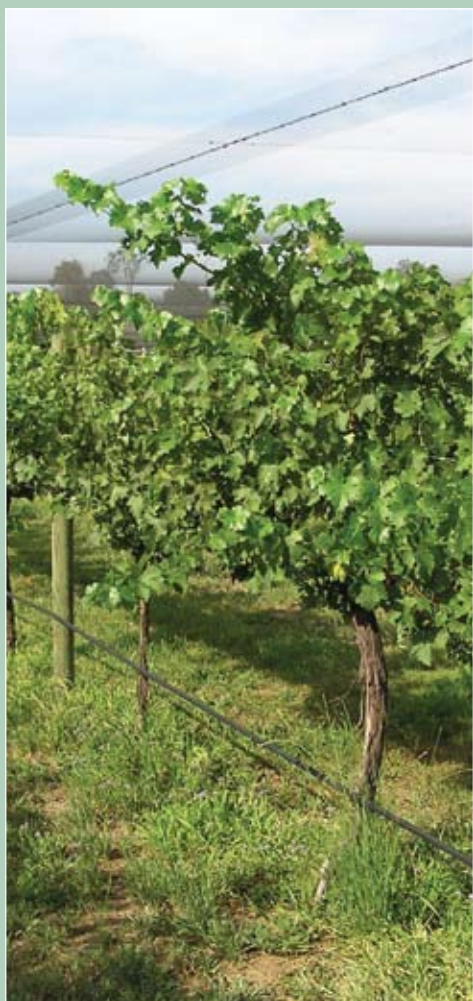
Officially launching the program, Assistant Environment Minister Mr Cobb, himself a farmer, acknowledged the win-win results for landholders and the natural environment and the considerable potential for "Better Burnett".



The official launch of the 'Better Burnett' project by the Hon. John Cobb MP (Assistant Minister for the Environment and Water Resources) and the Hon. Paul Neville MP (Member for Hinkler)



The Burnett Mary Regional Group Board members



Whistle Stop Grapes



Directors Step Up for Key Roles on BMRG Board

A General Election for positions on the Burnett Mary Regional Group's Board was held in July to elect Directors to represent Primary Industry Burnett, Community Catchment, Community Coastal and Local Government Mary sectors.

Allan McGrigor was returned unopposed for a further three-year term as Community Catchment Director.

Randal McLellan was re-elected as Community Coastal Director and is also the Board's Deputy Chair. Randal has worked diligently to improve recognition of the Coastal Sector.

Tom Bancroft's re-election as Primary Industry Burnett Director will see him continue his commitment to ensuring targeted funding contributes to better land management practices and benefits all stakeholders, including the environment.

Election to the position of Local Government Mary Director will give Maryborough City Councillor Jenny Burton the chance to promote the welfare of the vital regional waterway. Cr Burton has lived on the Mary River throughout her lifetime and through her role on the Board wants to make the community more aware of the river's considerable problems and see people become more accountable for caring for the river system.

We could not let our recognition of these Board members pass without acknowledging the previous Local Government Mary director, the late Kev Mahoney. Kev made an important contribution to BMRG not only in his position as the first Local Government Mary Director but also as Deputy Chair on the Board of Directors, and he is most definitely missed.



Salinity Management a Positive Step for South Burnett Vineyards

Wine growers struggling with the challenges presented by salt-affected land or highly saline irrigation water look set to welcome a major new offensive and a Queensland first, funded by the Burnett Mary Regional Group.

Potentially one of the most innovative projects to directly benefit the region's wine industry, the 'Managing Salinity in South Burnett Vineyards' project involves new techniques in the establishment of vineyards to tackle the issue of salinity, largely achieved by using root stocks for the vines which are tolerant of high levels of salt.

The project's three-pronged approach aims to manage vineyards with salinity problems by improving tolerance to salinity, improved water quality interception and irrigation techniques, and ongoing monitoring.

BMRG Independent Chairman Russell Stewart said the project represents a positive step forward for the region and could potentially lead to significant industry expansion.

"If successful this could lead to significant viticulture industry expansion in the South Burnett, by enabling growers to use land previously regarded as too saline to be productive, and more broadly reduce the impact of salinity on the landscape."

The initiative has been made possible with a BMRG funding injection of almost \$60,000, and will be led by the South Burnett Wine Industry Association in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries and the Burnett Catchment Care Association.

"Members of the South Burnett Wine Industry Association include some of Queensland's most respected and largest viticulture operations and there is no doubt the expertise of project partners will be a significant asset in ensuring the project's success," Mr Stewart said.



Multispecies Project Team
(L-R) Mim Coulstock, Dr Ashley Bunce,
Caroline Haskard, and Anne Moran
(absent: Dr Kevin Wormington and Eva Ford)



Communities Called on to Make Threatened Species Day Count

Come September 7 this year and the Burnett Mary Regional Group for Natural Resource Management Inc (BMRG) hopes communities across the region will lend a hand to protect more than 130 of our plant and animal species identified as being 'at risk'.

The date marks National Threatened Species Day and focuses on the importance of protecting habitat for the conservation of biodiversity nationwide.

At a local level, a BMRG Project Team is playing an integral role by developing a multi-species action plan so that future on-ground works will benefit as many species as possible. The plan will provide an integrated and cost-effective approach for regional conservation activities and species recovery.

The Burnett Mary region covers a wide range of landscapes, including diverse regional eco-systems or plant communities, from highland rainforests to coastal heathlands, home to an equally diverse range of animals.

Independent Chairman of the BMRG, Russell Stewart said many of these plants and animals are under threat from factors like urban development, fire, weeds, feral animals and climate change, but have a good chance of being recovered with the community's assistance.

"Formal records kept by the EPA, Birds Australia and other groups provide a lot of information about species distribution, however our Project Team needs more details from the community to fill in the gaps."

"Local knowledge can prove invaluable in identifying vegetation and painting a true picture of where species occur now and where they were found in the past," he said.

Landholders, indigenous land managers, community groups, and local or state government agencies among others are encouraged to contribute sound information about local mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, frogs, butterflies, spiders and plants.

"We want to hear from people in the community with any information, informal or anecdotal, they can provide regarding threatened species and habitat remnants," said Mr Stewart.

Anyone wanting further details about the project and listed threatened species or to contribute information can download a project brochure and data collection form at BMRG's website www.bmrg.org.au/information.php/2/40 - the community data form can be completed and mailed to BMRG, or submitted online.



'Shifting Sands' Conference – 17th-19th September

The Burnett Mary Regional Group has the honour of hosting Queensland's Inaugural Coastal Conference "Shifting Sands" in Bundaberg on 17-19 September 2007 – a landmark event that should hold great significance for the 85% of our population living within 50 km of the coast.

BMRG Independent Chairman Russell Stewart said the event is timed to take advantage of a critical opportunity to focus debate across the full range of coastal and marine issues being considered at national, state, regional and local levels.

"Shifting Sands will focus on issues such as development, Climate Change and sea level rise, and identify ways we can improve our collaboration towards meaningful outcomes in the coastal zone."

The 2007 Conference Program will feature a number of outstanding keynote speakers including Cr Mike Berwick, Mayor of Douglas Shire Council and a representative on the National Sea Change Task Force; Mr Tony Roberts, Executive Director, Planning Division





Environmental Protection Agency; Professor Bruce Thom inaugural Chairman of the Australian Coastal Society and a member of the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists; and Dr Neil Lazarow from the Griffith Centre for Coastal Management.

“These are some of this country’s foremost authorities on coastal challenges, planning and management, and the conference will be a unique opportunity for people at both government and community levels to benefit from their collective experiences and expertise,” said Mr Stewart.

“Coastal managers and community members in Queensland currently face the challenge of applying coastal management policies in a complex and fragmented arena further complicated by a lack of effort to coordinate management actions.”

Also contributing to the problem is the recent demise of a number of partnerships and peak bodies previously providing key sources of information, guidance and advice for coastal managers including the Beach Protection Authority, the Coastal CRC and the Coastal Acquisition Fund.

In addition to keynote speakers, over 60 concurrent presentations, hypotheticals, workshops and action planning sessions, a highlight of the program will be field trips to Agnes Water, Wide Bay Water Corporation in Hervey Bay and the option to dive or snorkel in the Woongarra Marine Park.

“The BMRG is incredibly excited to be hosting such a momentous event and looking forward to welcoming delegates from the Torres Strait and Cape York to Sydney, including a couple of international delegates,” said Mr Stewart.



Fish Hatchery on the Move to Botanical Gardens at Cooroy

For the best part of 30 years, the Lake MacDonalld Fish Hatchery has been successfully breeding the endangered Mary River Cod. That’s not about to change, but the hatchery’s location will – thanks to \$150,000 funding approved by the Burnett Mary Regional Group.

Despite the program’s substantial achievements in annual stocking of thousands of Mary River Cod fingerlings across rivers and impoundments in South East Queensland, the facility is suffering wear and tear and ready for a revamp.

That upgrade will come in the form of a relocation to the Noosa Botanical Gardens at Cooroy, a move designed to see the hatchery take on a research centre role to benefit both school and university groups.

BMRG CEO David Brown said the current hatchery is no longer safe to operate, and does not have the capacity to adequately facilitate community, tourist or educational visits.

“Moving the hatchery to the Botanical Gardens is a strategic step to generate greater awareness of the facility’s vital work and stimulate more community support and involvement in the hatchery’s operations.”

“By making the facilities easier for visitors to access, it offers an excellent chance for people to explore hatchery operations and get involved in and support the preservation effort,” he said.

The new site will tie in with the existing tourist attraction of the Botanical Gardens, a drawcard for thousands of visitors annually, and also allow for improved access and parking than the present site located off a dirt road.

In addition to BMRG’s funding support, project proponent Noosa Shire Council has contributed \$130,000 to the effort, together with \$40,000 secured through the Federal Government’s Recreational Fishing Grants program.

It is anticipated that when completed, the new hatchery facility will include a laboratory, undercover tank area and a large seminar room to accommodate visitor groups and possibly act as a conference venue.

The captive breeding of iconic Mary River Cod is supported within the Mary River Cod Research and Recovery Plan.



Mary River Cod



Duey the Dugong raising pollution awareness in Bundaberg and Bagara



Rainforest in the Upper Mary



Disgruntled Dugong Joins Fight Against Pollution

If you thought you saw a seven foot dugong or a lycra-clad superhero on the streets of Bundaberg or Bargara last week, you may be relieved to hear you weren't going mad – the two characters have been in the area preparing a community education campaign about stormwater pollution.

Several very excited Bundaberg and Bargara residents had the chance to participate in the filming and will star in the campaign when it goes to air in October.

The project funded by the Burnett Mary Regional Group for NRM Inc (BMRG) was developed as a proactive step to help people make the connection between their actions and real downstream consequences.

BMRG CEO Mr David Brown said people do not always realise that stormwater, the water that runs off the land after a storm, often washes pollutants such as motor oil, cigarette butts and other waste into our creeks and out to sea.

“This campaign is designed to make people think twice, and will be based around four very different Community Service Announcements that take a quirky, but memorable approach to underscore the significance of the issue.”

One of the ads sees a disgruntled Duey the Dugong decide to return the humans' favour, by dumping rubbish that has made its way into his home in the sea, into local houses. While in another, his long-time friend and overworked superhero Drain Man struggles in his efforts to educate people to clean up their act, as he valiantly attempts to recruit helpers to fight for clean stormwater.

“The stormwater drain in your street runs straight into the river and out to sea,” Drain man said. “Don't give your waste a free ride.”

Drain Man and Duey Dugong, along with their local cast co-stars can be seen in the series of community service announcements to be broadcast on regional free-to-air television next month.



Steps to Recovery for Upper Mary Rainforest

Target ecosystems in the Mary Catchment will benefit from a range of onground regeneration and management initiatives, as part of a project led by the Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee and local Landcare groups.

BMRG's current funding commitment of \$50,000 supplements \$136,000 already approved, and will provide incentives to landowners in accordance with the South East Queensland Rainforest Recovery Plan.

The South East Queensland (SEQ) Rainforest Recovery Plan is an innovative multi-ecosystem plan that has been endorsed by the State Government, and encompasses 21 threatened rainforest ecosystems in total, including 67 threatened flora and 40 threatened fauna species.

Community support for the SEQ Rainforest Recovery Plan is strong, following three-and-a-half years of on-ground work, liaising with SEQ rainforest recovery groups and landholders, and the delivery of a series of public information workshops.

Specifically, the program takes an action-based approach to delivering incentives and pilot projects focusing on improving conditions of endangered rainforest ecosystems, determining appropriate fire regimes, and assisting recovery of ecological processes, all supported by education, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

In line with the Rainforest Recovery Plan, the 'Upper Mary Rainforest Recovery' project will assist landholders to undertake work to restore and conserve riparian rainforest

important for the maintenance of refuge habitat for core populations of many species.

“Management incentives, stewardship payments and education will be instrumental in making the program as practical, relevant and effective as possible,” said BMRG CEO David Brown.

“Information kits will be developed to educate and inform landholders on threatening processes and current best management practices for grazing, fire and pest management.”

The project will be supervised by a local steering committee, with funding split between the three Upper Mary Catchment Landcare groups (Barung, Noosa and Gympie) via conduit organisation the Mary River Catchment Care Cluster.



Conservation Partnerships Program a First for Burnett East

Miriam Vale Shire Council will take the lead in providing more practical onground support to landholders in the Baffle Catchment, through delivery of a conservation first for the Burnett East.

The Baffle Creek catchment is one of the most intact areas of riparian and rainforest vegetation in the Burnett Mary and as such is a priority area for biodiversity conservation.

Add to that a long-held interest in conservation within the community - Miriam Vale shire has the highest number of past registered Land For Wildlife properties (32 out of 80 or 40%) in the Burnett East Local Government Cluster - and you have a recipe for success.

With \$65,000 in funding support approved by the Burnett Mary Regional Group, local landholders will receive more practical onground assistance to effectively manage natural resources on their properties and increase their capacity to protect endangered ecosystems and threatened species.

BMRG Independent Chairman Russell Stewart said there is currently no structure in place to provide conservation programs and incentive schemes to landholders in the Burnett East, so this project will fulfill a much-needed role.

“The beauty of the program is that it can deliver an incentive-driven and covenant-based conservation program in a facilitated and coordinated fashion to landholders, and previous strong response to Land for Wildlife certainly suggests they’re ready for it.”

Key aims of the program will be increased area and condition of protected significant vegetation through promotion of nature refuges, Land for Wildlife and covenants; creation of a structure within Miriam Vale Shire to deliver further incentives and attract further funding sources; and provision of on-ground assistance to landholders, consisting of a range of incentives to be allocated based on the level of biodiversity significance.

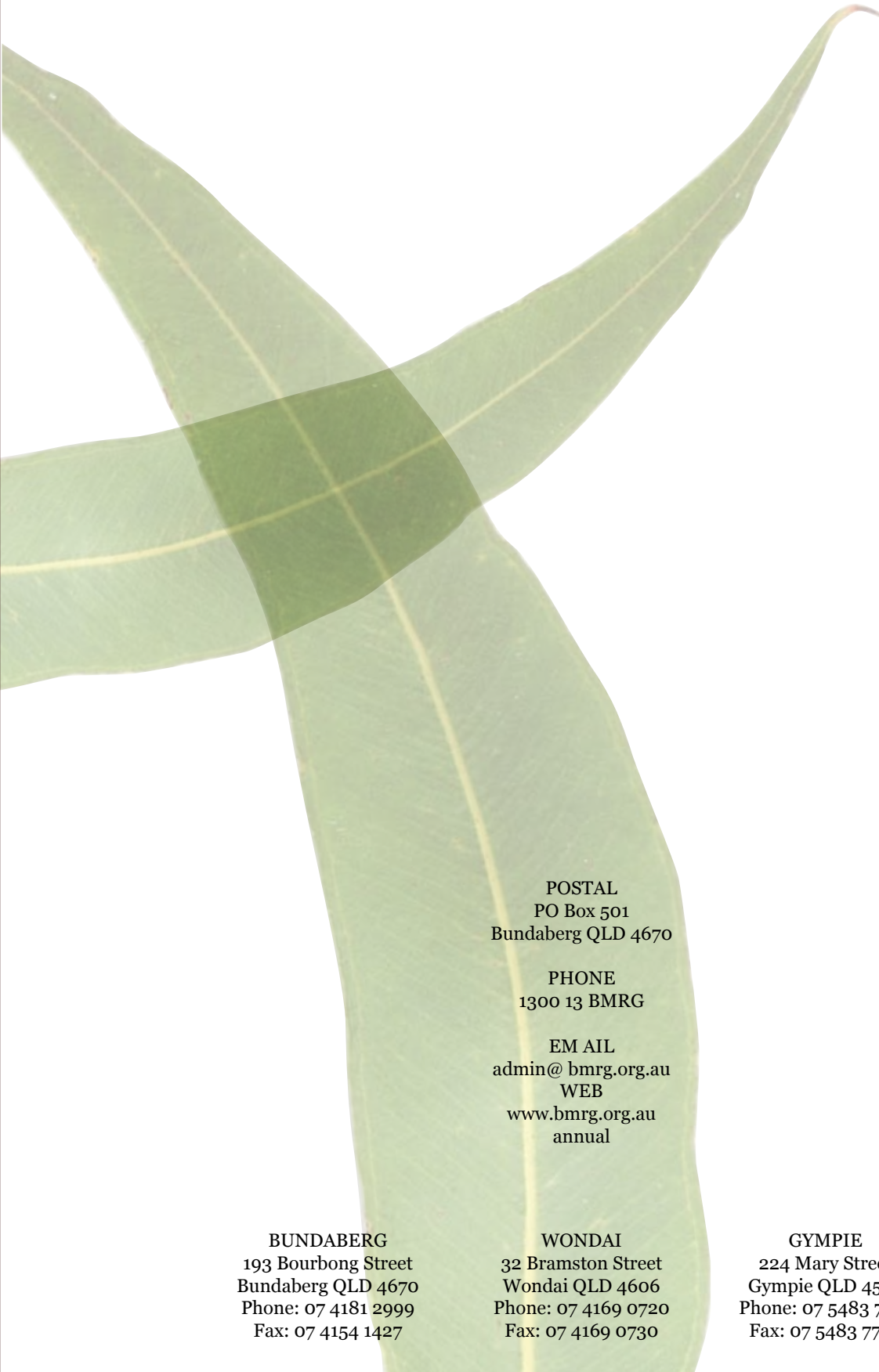
“Landholders will benefit through diverse on-ground works covering everything from revegetation and fencing to weed control and nestbox installation,” said Mr Stewart.

“They will also have increased access to natural resource management expertise through workshops, field days and direct contact with staff, and enjoy the support of stronger social networks with landholders with common interests.”

“An important part of BMRG’s role is facilitating long-term capacity building in our regional communities, and this project has the potential to achieve just that, as well as producing significant outcomes for biodiversity conservation in the region.”



Property participating in
Bushland Management workshop



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