

LANDCARE INNOVATION AWARD 2006

Clermont & District Landcare Association Inc.

1. Project Background

In 2003 landholders in the Wolfgang Catchment near Clermont became concerned with new activity surrounding the possible Clermont Coal Mine Project. Rio Tinto Coal Australia on behalf of the joint ventures (Clermont Coal Joint Venture) was talking to individuals about the potential impacts the dewatering of the proposed new mine may have on the water supplies to properties within the Wolfgang Catchment.

Landholders started talking to each other and linked with the Wolfgang Water Basin Landholders group a small group of neighbors near to the mine who had joined together. As the concern grew a decision was made to approach Clermont District Landcare Association for their support and expertise.

Though existing since the early 80's the Association was in a period of reduced membership due to ongoing drought, and a lack of enthusiasm for anything but trying to sustain people's farms. The approach to the Association was meet enthusiastically and has led to a true success story of how the Association rallied to engage on a key local natural resource issue, demonstrating its relevance for members, empowering its members through knowledge and representation, while continuing to work towards on-farm environmental improvements.

Losing access to stock and domestic water supplies is an extremely serious issue for landholders. Impacts can range from increased pumping cost to the loss of a viable business, and the inability to sell as property values can be affected. Landholders were concerned about the long term environmental affects of extracting coal from an open cut mine 290m deep which will leave a void the same depth and 1,000 acres in area.

Landholders had strong feelings of powerlessness, fear, distrust and anger towards the proposed development. Most landholders had very little understanding of how the Mine approval process worked, how underground water systems worked, of underground strata, and so what affect the proposed mine may have and how it may proceed.

For the Clermont Coal Mine Project to proceed the process of an Environmental Impact Study, Environmental Authority and Applying for Water licenses had to be completed. The CCJV required water licenses to allow it to de-water the three aquifers in the strata overlying the Wolfgang coal reserve, allowing the safe mining of the coal.

Clermont District Landcare Association supported individual landholders to be engaged in these often daunting and new processes, whilst Landcare themselves also became actively involved in writing submissions, meetings, information sharing and moving issues forward for the benefit of landholders and the community.

2. Who has been involved in the project? How have you engaged and consulted others?

Clermont District Landcare Association has been involved in this project since early 2005 and has been in regular collaboration with the Wolfgang Waterbasin Landholder's Group during the whole time. They have held joint meetings, and shared information and resources.

At the Clermont & District Landcare Association Inc. meeting of 8 September 2005, landholders requested Central Highlands Regional Resources Use Planning Cooperative (CHRRUP) assist them in working on this important matter. CHRRUP is an independent, community owned cooperative which aims to improve the sustainability of resource use and management in the Central Highlands region of Queensland by encouraging greater coordination and stronger

partnerships between local industry and community groups, and providing support to regional planning processes.

Initially, CHRRUP facilitated an information session with hydro geologists for the project, Matrix +, in cooperation with RTCA and CDLA. A great deal of preparation and liaison was required to produce an agenda that was agreed to by CDLA, RTCA and Matrix +. Potential successful outcomes for the meeting were included in the agenda, so that all participants had shared expectations.

CHRRUP at the invitation of CDLA provided training in writing submissions for those in the community wishing to place objections or document their support for the Environmental Authority Draft and the issuing of Water Licenses for extracting 4,600 megalitres/year .

The CDLA Executive arranged several public meetings and workshops for all their members and Wolfgang Waterbasin members including:

- Key water policy advisors from DNR&M to discuss the water licensing conditions, make good clause for the potential mine, and reasons why a license should, or should not be issued
- DNR&M technical staff about monitoring of water extraction and the potential impacts
- Learning more from other groups with similar experiences with aquifer draw-downs to learn more; eg. Landholders from Mount Larcom who had similar experiences with Cement Australia's East End Mine traveled to Clermont

The Clermont & District executive also initiated meetings and worked with the Premier Hon. Peter Beattie, Minister for Natural Resources & Mines, Hon. Henry Palaszuk, Deputy Premier Hon. Anna Bligh, Member for Fitzroy, Hon. Jim Pearce, Member for Charters Towers, Shane Knuth, and the Project Manager for State Development from the Coordinator General's Office, Fergus FitzGerald, on behalf of their members.

The Clermont & District Landcare Association engaged Swanwick Murray Roche Lawyers to represent members' interests and joined with Wolfgang Waterbasin Landholders Group to engage, Environ, hydro geologists to review the Ground Water modeling and proposed Monitoring regime produced by Matrix +. After much negotiation, the hydrogeology and legal work was funded by RTCA.

Throughout the process Landcare members and other important stakeholders were informed of the processes and information was shared through emails, faxes and meetings. The group maintained a cordial relationship and open communication with RTCA and their consultants. They also consulted and worked with rural lobby group AgForce and the Belyando Shire Council and the various State Government Departments.

CHRRUP was used a conduit for communication with all members, by facilitating a faxstream service and doing a ring around when meetings were called urgently. CHRRUP was also available as a bouncing board for technical information and support. The faxstream was used to distribute information and meeting notices to members, and other interested people and organisations.

3. What makes your project innovative?

There are many aspects of the Clermont & District Landcare Association's activity over the last year that makes it innovative. Three key areas are:

All Involved

This was a grass roots activity. It was not a small number of landholders or other people thinking they knew best for the group. All activities were lead by CDLA membership, with the Executive

providing voice at times when it was not financially or operationally convenient for everyone to be involved, such as trips to Brisbane.

Empowerment Through Knowledge

The CDLA asked for help so that all members could engage meaningfully in all levels of negotiation. They held many workshops, meetings, attended training and sought technical advice. Initially, members understanding of groundwater hydrogeology ranged from little to high; by the end, all members were able to discuss their own personal bore experiences and concerns with technical skill. This meant that all members could:

- Make submissions
- Engage in meaningful discussion with RTCA & Matrix +
- Engage in meaningful discussion with Environ
- Communicate with non-farming people
- Lobby government
- Support and learn from each other

Partnership Approach

The Clermont & District Landcare Association valued and maintained a relationship with the Wolfgang Waterbasin Landholders Group and CHRRUP. While the Association and its members did much of the work themselves, they also worked in collaboration with these partners.

CDLA also took the approach that a close working with relationship with RTCA and their consultants, as well as the State Government Departments, was essential for a satisfactory outcome. Thus, these relationships were built upon and fostered, whilst not losing sight of the overall concerns of the members and landholders.

4. What insights did your organization gain as a result of this innovative approach? How might you use these lessons in the future to other situations or locations?

There are two key learnings from this project that the Clermont & District Landcare Association would like to share:

- *By working with partners, your effort and voice can be leveraged with others, giving a much better or greater outcome.*
- *Share your story: Clermont & District Landcare Association would like to share our story with others who may be facing similar challenges. Even a simple phone call can be a great help, and there is much they wish they knew before they started the consultative process. By entering this Award, CDLA hope to make the journey easier for others.*

5. How will you know if this innovation has been successful or effective?

There are many key successes already from the community involvement in the project, including:

Monitoring Regime Changes

The first proposed monitoring plan by RTCA and Matrix + was limited in numbers and did not include bores outside the immediate neighbours' properties. After ongoing discussion with the Landcare group, the Regional Bore monitoring plan has increased the number of sites and a larger geographical spread of the bores within the catchment. This ensures that potential impacts from the extraction of water will be picked up quickly and comprehensively.

Individual Landholder Water Agreements

Near neighbours were offered individual water agreements with RTCA early on in the process but anyone outside a 5km were excluded from this. After intense work by CDLA all landholders in the Wolfgang Catchment were offered individual water agreements, the details of which improved sustainability through sustained work by the Executive. The "Alternate Water Supply Agreement" began as a half page document with the final contract document being in the order of 40 pages.

Membership Growth and Strength- 15 to 48 (90%) only 3 landholders not in Landcare

Membership of the Clermont & District Landcare Association has grown from 15 financial members in 2004, to 48 members representing 90% of the properties in the Wolfgang Catchment. All remain financial members and attend meetings. Also importantly, it has rebuilt members' sense of community – they are seeing each other on a social basis more regularly and talking to each other about their concerns and how they can work together.

Number of submissions to the Water License Application

DNR&M received 24 submissions of objections to the granting of Water Licences; this was noteworthy as RTCA suggested they had not received submissions against applications for water licences with previous developments. There were a similar number of objectors to the Environmental Authority Draft that were represented by the Clermont District Landcare Assoc. at 3 hearings of the Land and Resources Tribunal. CDLA also lodged an objection to the Water License for the Gowrie Creek Diversion.

Continued Learning

In May 2006, CHRRUP supported several landholders from the CDLA to attend the 14th "Getting To Know Groundwater and Surface water" course in Rockhampton. The course was developed by the Centre for Groundwater Studies in Adelaide, and organised by NRM&W Queensland. The course included a number of case studies and field trips, as well as covering topics relating to the management of surface and ground water, water quality issues, collection and interpretation of Catchment data, and ecosystems and their dependence on water. Practical exercises were conducted to estimate runoff and recharge, and flow nets.

A direct outcome from this has been the implementation of new best practice in the construction of the monitoring bores by RTCA instead of nesting bores in one bore hole.

DNRMW will conduct a two day workshop with CDLA in Clermont on water bore monitoring, making a monitoring instrument and keeping proper records for all members this year.

Continued Environmental On-ground Work

In 2005-2006, CDLA members in the Wolfgang Catchment worked in partnership with CHRRUP and FBA to address other environmental priorities within their area, with a focus on reducing sediment delivery to streams by increasing ground cover on cropping and grazing enterprises. Landholders are undertaking individual and group projects in the areas of property management planning, land type fencing, riparian and wetland fencing, towable machinery modifications for cropping, and environmental weed control.

Ongoing Partnerships

The CDLA and Wolfgang Waterbasin Landholders Group have three places on the ongoing nine member Community Consultation Group for the new mine. Another measure of the success of CDLA is that they are now working with RTCA and the Belyando Shire Council in lobbying the State and Federal Government for local services such as road and infrastructure upgrades.

6. If awarded the prize of \$12,000 worth of consultancy services from SKM, what is your preference for services?

Consultancy services that have been discussed by the group include:

- To provide support for a landholders to consistently monitor ground water in the Wolfgang Catchment or
- Study and complete works to facilitate the use of the water from the dewatering process to assist the environment.

The activity would encourage sustainable practices and natural resource management in the catchment. If awarded the prize, the CDLA would like consider this after further discussion with members.

NOTICE OF APPLICATION - WATER ACT 2000

Notice is hereby given of application for a water licence made under the Water Act 2000 the details of which are:

Applicant name: RIO TINTO COAL AUSTRALIA PTY LTD

Application reference: 103714, 103715, 103716

Application details: The taking of water from ML 1904 AND ML1694. The applications are for the purpose of industrial and dewatering. The proposed nominal entitlement for application number 103714 will be 2500ML per year from Tertiary sediments. The proposed nominal entitlement for application number 103715 will be 1100ML per year from tertiary basalt. The proposed nominal entitlement for application number 103716 will be 700ML per year from Permian sediments.

The property is located approximately 11 kilometres north of Clermont.

Submissions: Any person with an interest in the application may make a submission. Submissions must be made in writing to the Chief Executive, 209 Bolsover Street, PO Box 1762, ROCKHAMPTON, QLD 4790 and must state the grounds of the submission and the facts and circumstances relied on in support of the grounds. The submission must include the applicant name, application reference and the submitter's postal address and contact details. Closing date for submissions is 14 October 2006.

In accordance with statutory requirements, the name and address of any person making a submission will be included in the information notice given with respect to the decision on this application. Submissions made in response to this application will become subject to the Freedom of Information Act 1992, and may be disclosed to a person who makes an application for access to them.

Copies of the application may be inspected at 209 Bolsover Street, PO Box 1762, ROCKHAMPTON, QLD 4790.

Enquiries: telephone W Legg
(07) 4938 4604



Advertisement (Daily Mercury 26/8/05)

Phillipa Hurrey, Clermont & District Landcare Association, at the 14th "Getting To Know Groundwater and Surfacewater" course in Rockhampton, held May 2006



Members of the Clermont & District Landcare Association, DNR&M and Vicki Kuhn CHRRUP at the 14th "Getting To Know Groundwater and Surfacewater" course in Rockhampton, held May 2006