

RIS programs at a glance: Protecting our Heritage

Through the Regional Investment Strategy (RIS), Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) coordinates eight programs that support and direct sustainable resource management and conservation in Central Queensland. One of these is *Protecting our Heritage*.

Aboriginal traditional knowledge and practice has undergone a revival in recent years, with many people re-discovering their culture and country. While much has been lost, we have an opportunity and a responsibility to look after what remains.

Traditional knowledge is for the most part held by senior Aboriginal people, the Elders, and can be a great benefit to land management because it is often the result of centuries of observation, and can also be highly localised.

Traditional Aboriginal knowledge in Central Queensland is presently threatened, due in part to the historical separation of people from their traditional lands and also to the fast pace of change in our modern society, which presents special challenges to older people wishing to hand on traditional knowledge to younger generations. This knowledge is priceless and irretrievable from other sources.

The *Protecting our Heritage* program aims to help preserve and pass on knowledge, identify and protect important cultural sites and increase Aboriginal participation in land management and planning, including protecting rights granted by native title.

Share the work: Integrated Catchment Management

FBA's approach to sustainability in our region is called Integrated Catchment Management (ICM).

ICM provides a way for communities to work together. Projects undertaken on a small scale (e.g. backyard, beach, single property) can fail if neighbours take a different approach, or none at all (e.g. weed control). Likewise, projects at a regional or State level can lose touch with people on the ground. ICM bridges the gap, coordinating people on the ground working in small groups, toward common goals, to build up together to a broader, catchment-wide scale.

ICM focuses on strengthening assets as well as eliminating threats (e.g. kill weeds, but also improve land condition so native plants can thrive), so that natural systems bounce back quickly from disturbance.

Want to know more? For a copy of our ICM plan, the *Central Queensland Strategy for Sustainability — 2004 and Beyond (CQSS2)*, go to www.fba.org.au or phone (07) 4999 2800.

Central Queensland's assets are under pressure

Central Queensland is rich in natural cultural heritage, including these **significant assets recognised by the *Protecting our Heritage* program:**

- traditional and experiential knowledge
- sacred or significant sites (important in their own right; also important economically, e.g. recreation and tourism)
- rural and regional towns and communities (cultural and economic value)
- land and landscape (significant cultural and economic value)
- water (healthy waterways and unimpeded flows have ecological and cultural value)
- the Great Barrier Reef (cultural value).

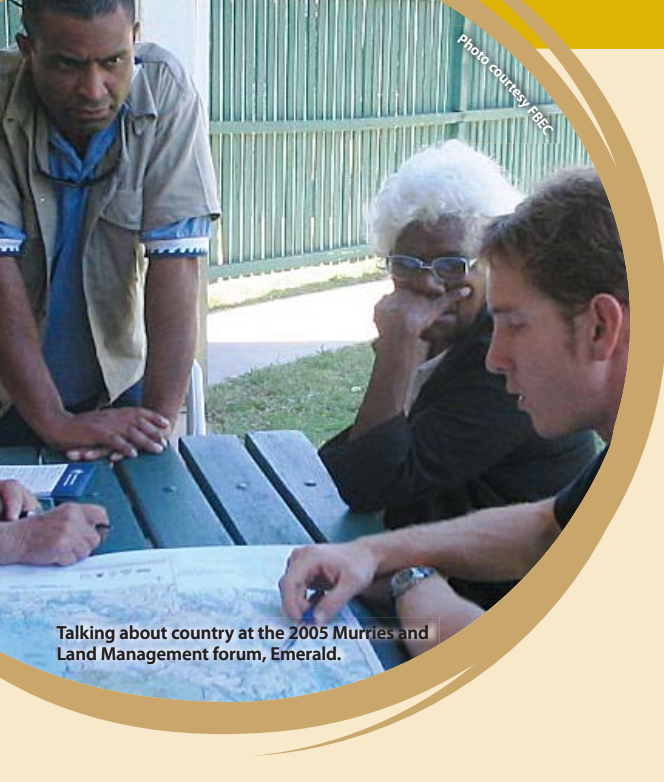
These assets are threatened by some land management practices (associated with farming, grazing, urban and industrial development, tourism and recreation) and limited capacity of the Aboriginal community. Those who hold traditional knowledge are typically Aboriginal Elders, whose age and frailty limits their ability to pass on knowledge. Aboriginal people have limited rights to access their traditional lands to gain cultural knowledge, teach young people or look after sites. Many Aboriginal groups have limited capacity to help agencies and organisations whose job it is to carry out requirements of new cultural heritage legislation.

The *Protecting our Heritage* program seeks to address these threats and strengthen our regional assets by:

- fostering deeper understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, especially on matters related to natural cultural heritage
- helping protect tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including traditional knowledge
 - helping people to look after and pass on knowledge to the next generation
 - reducing loss of cultural material and damage to cultural sites (e.g. theft, land clearing, erosion and inappropriate location of infrastructure)
 - increasing use of Aboriginal knowledge in land planning and management, while protecting Aboriginal intellectual property rights.



A road cuts across a shell midden near the Dawson River.



Talking about country at the 2005 Murries and Land Management forum, Emerald.

Activities in the *Protecting our Heritage* program

The program helps build on existing knowledge by:

- helping to conduct cultural heritage surveys and inventories
- developing procedures for managing cultural heritage (e.g. managing impacts, improving communication and cooperation, funding partnerships).

The program seeks to increase awareness and understanding by:

- increasing understanding of native title rights, particularly in relation to land, resources and cultural heritage assets among the region's land and resource managers
- developing and supporting networks and approaches for landholders and native title claimants to discuss management of, and access to, land and sea.

Laying this groundwork will help:

- improve opportunities for Aboriginal Elders to participate in natural and cultural resource management (e.g. cross-cultural training, education, interpretation)
- ensure an approved Cultural Heritage Management Plan guides land and sea management, planning or development (e.g. clearing, dams, weirs, extraction) in culturally sensitive areas
- involve native title claimant groups in managing State conservation land
- provide access to information about existing native title claims and links to land management (e.g. opportunities for developing partnerships).

How can we help you?

The *Protecting our Heritage* program offers information for land managers and opportunities for community to get involved with awareness-raising activities and on-ground projects across the region.

We can provide resources and contacts to help land managers identify and maintain artefacts and significant sites on your land. If we don't know the answers to your questions, we'll help you find someone who does.

Do you know about a significant site? Please tell us — there may be resources to look after or interpret that site.

Partners and related projects

The success of the program depends on strong and constructive links with external organisations, programs and projects, including:

- Aboriginal organisations (e.g. Fitzroy Basin Elders Committee, land councils, Indigenous Coordinating Centre)
- traditional owner/native title claimant groups
- local, Queensland and Australian government programs.

For Aboriginal people, protecting heritage means to look after all aspects of the land, not simply put a fence around a significant site. Aboriginal people have a special interest in the health of our land, sea, water and air. Their knowledge and relationship to country can provide guidance toward better management. Therefore, this program maintains strong links with the design and delivery of all other RIS programs.

References and resources

Visit the FBA web site (www.fba.org.au) for the following resources:

- Fact Sheet: *Neighbourhood Catchments* (publication number FBA-05-002)
- summaries of FBA's eight RIS programs (publication numbers FBA-05-003 to 010)
- *Central Queensland Strategy for Sustainability — 2004 and Beyond* (CQSS2)

Questions? Contact our NRM Manager on (07) 4999 2800.

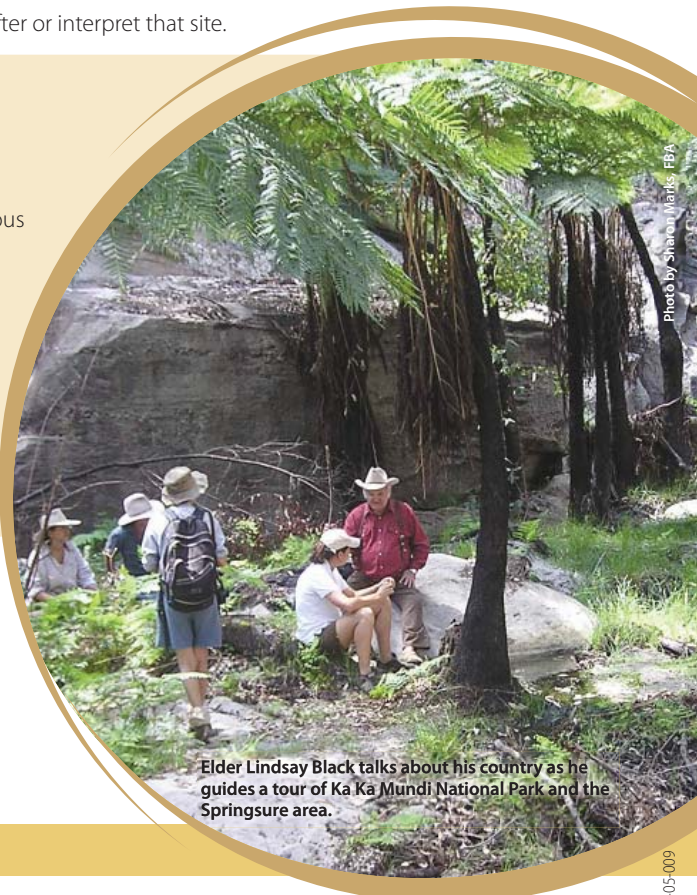
Further information

Fitzroy Basin Association
Level 4, 34 East Street
PO Box 139
Rockhampton QLD 4700
Phone (07) 4999 2800
Fax (07) 4921 2860

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Elder Lindsay Black talks about his country as he guides a tour of Ka Ka Mundi National Park and the Springsure area.


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