



FITZROY BASIN ASSOCIATION

Our country, Our future.

## Multiple benefits

### Fencing and watering points provide unexpected pay-offs



*When Brian Hay and his wife Lynne completed Grazing Best Management Practices (Grazing BMP) in 2013, they were pleased to discover that their land management plan for Gunnado, their 33,800 hectare cattle property 77 kilometres west-north-west of Taroom, was heading in the right direction.*

Grazing BMP not only reinforced the decisions they had made since taking over the property in 2009, it also gave them useful ideas to further improve their grazing enterprise. With the support of Dawson Catchment Coordinating Association Inc. (DCCA) and Fitzroy Basin Association Inc. (FBA) through funding from the Australian Government's Reef Programme, Brian and Lynne were able to begin implementing positive changes to benefit local waterways and the Great Barrier Reef.

"It moved us forward 10 years, really. We got things done through the drought when we needed the water, and it just helped us do it a lot earlier than we could have done any other time," said Brian.

#### Rotational grazing improves grass cover

The Hays run approximately 1,000 breeders on Gunnado, which is a forested block, and they sought help to fence off two areas so they could implement rotational grazing and minimise erosion. The Hays had noticed that their cattle were preferentially grazing one end of a large paddock and not using all the existing feed. Installing new riparian fencing and splitting the large paddock in half meant they could better manage their stock. By rotating the cattle, and forcing them to graze all the areas, the benefits to ground cover have been obvious.

"You end up with more grass at the end of the year because if you make them eat the worst country out first then put them on the better country, you've still got grass through winter then. So grass-wise, it made a hell of a lot of difference," said Brian.



*Installing off-stream watering points has had many significant benefits for Brian Hay's cattle breeding enterprise.*

#### Changing the water supply

Although Robinson Creek runs through the property, watering stock is a significant issue for the Hays. "We are able to pump water with sand spears from the bed of the creek, which we do when the season becomes very dry and the dams get low," said Brian.

"When it's dry, a lot of these cattle were walking five and six kilometres for water and then they walk right back to where the grass was." To reduce that distance, the Hays have installed off-stream watering points near to their stock's preferred pasture.



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Because calves aren't left behind when the cattle get water, Brian has seen a significant decrease in wild dog predation on the calves, which has had additional positive impacts on his business.

"The initial results have been great. The cattle aren't having to walk long distances to water so they aren't eroding the land like they were. Their health has improved as well, because they are drinking better water."

#### Reducing erosion

Changing the location of watering points has significantly reduced erosion. Brian believes that supplying additional watering points has halved the erosion on his property.

"We've got big, sandy creeks and they don't hold water very long. We've got rough country, and the cattle had to go down the sides of mountains into the creeks for water. We put the water up on top where most of the grass was and a lot of those cows have stopped going over the side to the creek now.

"That was my main aim—to stop them from walking in that lighter country so far, because it keeps getting powdery and then it rains. It erodes easily but now it's all different."



Gunnado's wide, sandy creeks don't hold water for long and are prone to erosion.

#### Positive impacts for the Reef

By reducing erosion from Gunnado, both Brian and Lynne know their actions are having a positive impact on downstream water quality and ultimately on the Great Barrier Reef.

"The less silt you can get running down the creek, the better off it must be. I know it's a long way from here, like the water from here goes back to Taroom and all the way back to Rockhampton but it will also get to the Reef."

#### Learning new lessons

Brian and Lynne have been involved in the cattle industry all their lives. Despite this, they believe there are always new lessons to learn.

"Grazing BMP got us asking ourselves how it would improve our property management. Without the funding we wouldn't have been able to do as much of the infrastructure as we have done."

Hundreds of graziers have benefited from Grazing BMP and the program continues to expand across the state.

**For more information on Grazing BMP or to get involved visit [www.bmpgrazing.com.au](http://www.bmpgrazing.com.au).**



Together with his wife Lynne, Brian Hay has improved his grazing enterprise's profitability by changing his land management, while simultaneously protecting the Great Barrier Reef.

