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# the Gulf Croaker

Issue 14 March 2022

## Women of the Gulf

Celebrating International Women's Day

## Kowanyama Project

Preserving Aboriginal artefacts

## Beryl goes viral

Gulf poddy social media star

# Message from the CEO



It's good to see a strong start to the wet season and some substantial falls across our region to begin the year on a good note.

This edition of the Gulf Croaker has a focus on resilient women. We'll meet some extraordinary women from across our region whose contributions to their local communities make this a great place to live and work.

I'd also like to reflect on the many pioneering women around the world. Dr Vandana Shiva, working with Indian women farmers to promote "traditional" methods like seed saving and biological soil enhancement. Greta Thunberg, who spoke up at the 2018 United Nations Climate Change Conference and sparked a global outcry from young people concerned about the impacts of climate change. Locally, nine-year-old Molly Steer founded the Straw No More campaign, encouraging businesses to do away with plastic straws years before the Queensland government banned them.

Why is it that women and girls, who so rarely take on public leadership roles, are so prominent in environmental activism? Reflecting on the outcomes of the Glasgow Climate Summit COP26, Nina Jeffs said "the negative impacts of climate change disproportionately affect women and girls, especially in the global south". For example, during and after climate-related events, women and girls are more exposed to gender-based violence, and girls are less likely than boys to continue their education. For women, especially in the developing world, climate change is a real and very personal tragedy.

Gulf Savannah NRM recognises the need for a global approach to sustainable economic development. Our Board endorsed the UN Sustainable Development Goals in 2021 as the basis of our Sustainability Strategy, supported by an Action Plan identifying what we'll do as a company to support all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, including actions to ensure gender equity in our internal systems and across all our programs.

So, as you celebrate International Women's Day on March 8, think of all the resilient women you know. They might be mothers, daughters, friends, aunts and cousins. They might also be leaders in your community or industry, and, potentially, even champions for a cause on a global stage.

Zoe Williams

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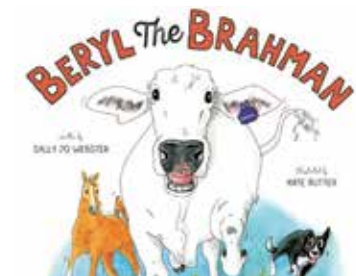


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# THE GULF SAVANNAH ROUND UP



## Gulf gets more teachers

Normanton and Karumba are among towns welcoming new school teachers this year, to address a critical shortage in remote areas. A total 62 teachers have taken up positions in north-west Queensland.

## Saving lives for 30 years

Dimbulah paramedic Charles Khan has cared for thousands of people in his three decades with Queensland Ambulance Service in our region. The *Mareeba Express* says Charles trained in first aid in 1992 and went on to become an advanced care paramedic.

## Google to fix Gulf map routes

Gulf residents have rescued more tourists who got stranded after following suggestions from Google Maps. The tech giant says it will adjust the app so it doesn't suggest driving from Cairns to Darwin via the flood-prone Highway One through Burketown.

## Water trade scheme in FNQ

More than a thousand producers are expected to take part in a world first blockchain-based water market project when it goes live this year. It allows irrigators to trade between themselves, leading to better use of available water.

## RFDS rolls out new clinic

The Royal Flying Doctor Service has started a new local health clinic at Georgetown, focussed on men's health. The new day service will be at Georgetown Sports Centre, facilitated by RFDS practitioner Dr Geoff Clark.

# MLA: National herd to grow



**M**eat and Livestock Australia (MLA) predicts above average rainfall in New South Wales and some parts of Queensland will help drive a rebuild of the national cattle herd.

MLA's first Cattle Industry Projections update for 2022 says the national herd will grow by 1.1 million to 27.2 million head, a four per cent increase, but the

pace will vary across states. The northern Queensland pastoral system will need a positive end to the current wet season to set up a strong rebuild next year.

MLA says production volumes are expected to reach 2.08 million tonnes, with Australian beef entering a significant high-value export market when the Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement comes into

effect later this year. Demand for Australian beef is expected to grow as countries continue to recover from the pandemic and supply of cattle improves in the second half of the year.

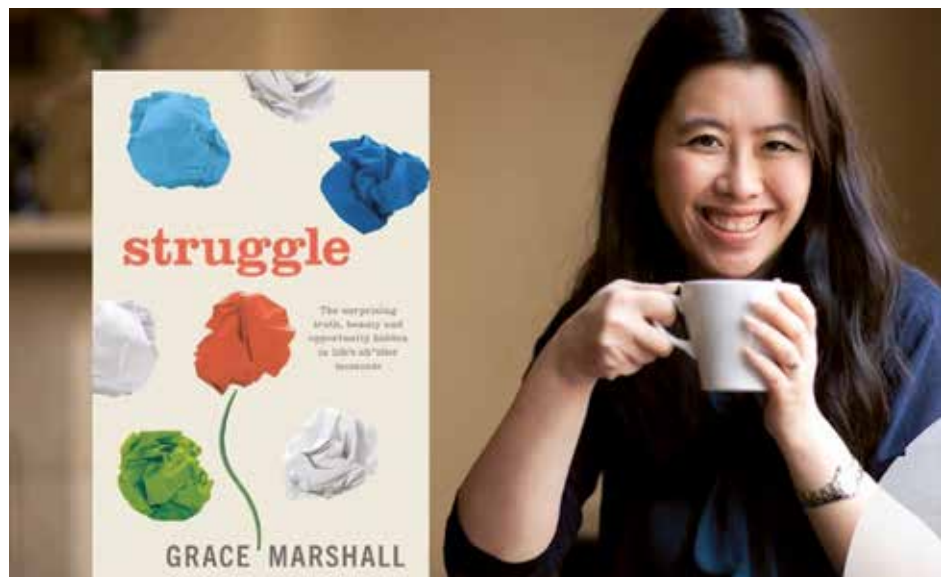
But the industry will have to manage transportation challenges, staff shortages and possible increasing value of the Australian dollar.

## Even in the bad moments

**T**his is the book I had to read at the start of 2022. *Struggle*, by Grace Marshall, promises to show you how to embrace struggle and find the beauty and opportunity hidden in challenges. Grace draws on the global COVID-19 pandemic, bible stories and the boardroom to show how struggle presents opportunities for personal growth and professional development.

“Adventures aren’t meant to be predictable. Stretching isn’t meant to be comfortable,” Marshall writes. She urges us to abandon the ‘it shouldn’t be this hard’ thinking and roll up the sleeves, accepting this is where we need to be.

If you’re looking for some encouragement to embrace the challenges 2022 will throw at us, *Struggle* is a good place to start. Grace Marshall is a coach and writer



who specialises in productivity. She helps people change thinking and practices to replace stress with success, sanity and satisfaction, using her trademark refreshingly human approach to productivity.

*Struggle: The Surprising Truth, Beauty and Opportunity Hidden in Life's Sh\*tty Moments* is released by Practical Inspiration Publishing.

*Zoe Williams*



# Long distance traveller

**B**irds make some of the most amazing annual migrations, covering seemingly impossible distances year after year, some for many decades. There are birds with more miles on the clock than the old faithful station ute.

One such bird is the Red-necked Stint (*Calidris ruficollis*). This is Australia's smallest shorebird, about the size of your two thumbs held side-by-side. It weighs just 25 grams, less than two 50 cent pieces. Each year, they migrate from Australia to Siberia and Western Alaska, a one-way distance of some 15,000 kilometres. Red-necked Stints live about 20 years – in that time, they travel more than the distance between Earth and the moon.

## Stints in the Gulf

This shorebird is relatively common in our coastal areas during summer months. This time of year, they are making their way north to areas including shorelines of the Gulf of Carpentaria to feed and fatten-up for the long haul to the northern hemisphere. As the tide goes out, they dart about on the intertidal flats seeking small invertebrates like snails, worms and midges to feed on. They have short legs, so they tend to like feeding in very shallow areas or dry land, leaving the wading to better equipped shorebirds. Unlike us, their rhythms are tied directly to the tide not the sun. They feed when the tide is out and sleep when it's in, roosting in large flocks on bare areas just above the tide.

Their name comes from their breeding plumage. When they arrive in Australia from the northern hemisphere in September, they have on their non-breeding feathers and are a fairly nondescript brown/grey on the back and white below. They fly as far south as Tasmania to feed and then, during February and March, head north again. Some fly along the coast, feeding as

they travel, but some have been recorded flying non-stop from Tasmania to north Queensland. They also start to moult into their breeding plumage, with their neck and head covered in rusty-red feathers that give them their name.

The Red-necked Stint then leaves Australia and flies north to the breeding grounds in the tundra. They typically have four eggs, and the female leaves soon after the eggs hatch. The male then tends to the chicks for about three weeks until they fledge, and then he too heads south, with the chicks following on a few weeks later. How they find their way across almost the length of our planet on this first voyage is a mystery. Tagging studies have found they are able to fly a “great circle route” - the shortest surface track between two points on the globe. It's not a straight line, and requires constant heading changes, so the birds can't use a constant reference to the magnetic field, the sun or the stars.

While these birds are most common on the coast, they do turn up right across our region in wetlands, rivers and farm dams. Numbers in our region are highest as they arrive in September and then again as they migrate north in February and March.

They feed frenetically, particularly when heading north to breed, putting on as much as 50 per cent of their body weight.

You can help these birds by not disturbing them unnecessarily (such as driving along the beach at high tide or letting your dog run on the mudflats) especially when they are roosting. They need to fill the fuel tanks as much as possible to endure their planet-wide migration and breed successfully.

Wayne Young

# Women of the Gulf



Kathy Rowling and friends at Hillbillie Heaven near Dimbulah

*March 8 is International Women's Day, a global celebration of the achievements of women. The Gulf Croaker is proud to mark the occasion by sharing stories of inspirational local women who love where they live and rise to the challenges of life in our region.*

I can hear **Kathy Rowling** smile, even on a typically crackly Gulf region mobile phone call. She laughs, heartily and often, as we swap stories about how hard it can be to get a signal in our region and the local nous that sometimes makes it possible. Third tree from the road, lean left. One bar. The Gulf is a challenging place, but people find ways to get stuff done, make things better.

Odds are you've heard of Kathy, or met her. She did drought support and women's events for us when we were Northern Gulf Resource Management Group. She is Kath's Kreations, turning out popular handmade leather goods and jewellery. And Kathy puts in long days on Hillbillie Heaven, a rehabilitated tobacco farm near Dimbulah, with meat sheep, paddock raised farrow to finisher pigs, Hillbillie Hogs, and a small orchard of 300 Tahitian lime trees. "There were no fences, no trees, the

soil was really poor," Kathy said. "But bit by bit, we made a home and a life for us. We're not a full-on going concern, we battle along every day as every farmer does. Some of our things are a little bit rough and unconventional, but we make do with what we've got and build it from there."

Kathy Rowling was born in Mareeba, into a family that followed the work - saddlery and contract mustering. Kathy spent her early years between Bibboohra, Mount Surprise, Einasleigh. "That sort of wandering life, you get to know a lot of people, you stay in contact," Kathy said, grateful to her parents for the gift of connection that's stayed with her ever since.

Being connected means being involved, and Kathy is renowned for her voluntary work for many projects and causes. The Cape York and Tablelands branch of the

Australian Stockhorse Society, running campdrafts, youth camps and challenges, school events and fundraisers, Dimbulah Community Centre, making and donating prizes to campdraft committees. It's a long list over many years, on top of big days on the farm. Kathy says it can be a demanding life. "That's probably why I've scaled back lately, and just stayed home for a bit of me time. You do need a break. Everyone else's stuff is in your head and your own gets forgotten a little bit. This is my time now. My kids are grown up, my husband Brian is happy with his job and he's home every night."

So, how has Kathy survived the ups and downs of a farming life in this challenging region? "My kids have always been really strong and independent, hard workers. That helped me. I have good friends and family. But I don't know. You just do it. That was the way for us to have the life we wanted. For a long time there I sewed all the kids' clothes, I cooked everything we ate.

"You might have doubts, wondering if you're doing it right. But you learn to cope. I don't think rural women are tough, and resilience for me is having a strong support network of people who've got your back. Maybe this is a little bit old-school but I think you just get your stuff together and learn to cope. You can't just sook. You do sometimes, you cry. But you're doing it all for your family, your kids. They're number one."

And Kathy has a tip for keeping relationships strong in farming families. "Don't take to heart anything that's said in the paddock," she says with a resounding laugh.

Kathy paints a lovely picture when I ask her what she hopes for in the coming years. "It looks much better now that it's rained," she said after good early wet season falls. "It's a bit swampy down the back, but up here on the sandy ridges, it's good, there's not a lot of water laying around. I'd like us to still be here. We'll pay the farm off one day. We'll hopefully get some grandkids, and our kids will keep coming home like they do. Brian and I can keep going along as we are, doing our thing, a few cows, a few sheep, a few pigs."

That vision of the future includes breeding the perfect pig ("with a nice round butt for plenty of ham"), and Kathy's beloved leatherwork. "I've got a backlog of orders, and I want to get enough stock made to go to a few events this year. And I figure that's something I can do until I die. You can always sit and sew leather." Kathy says there's a resurgence of interest in the craft. "People say 'my grand-dad used to do that' - there's often some sort of connection. Last year, I ran some workshops with kids around Etheridge Shire. Oh my goodness! It was overwhelming the number of kids that came through and got involved. They made a keyring, or a pair of earrings. It was one of the best things I ever did. I'm heading out to Croydon this year to do some workshops. I'm looking forward to it.

"I get a lot of older boys now saying 'I wonder if I should get you to teach me to sew?' I do a lot of hand stitching. No-one knows how to saddle stitch anymore. It's a lost tradition, so it's good to see some young ones that are interested in it. If you're out there working, you can't always run in to town to get someone to sew your bridle up."

After an hour on the phone with Kathy Rowling, I've learned a lot about many things, and my face hurts - that joyful ache you get when you've smiled and laughed a lot in a relatively short time. Her deep insights, her down to earth wisdom, her gift for storytelling, make Kathy wonderful company.



**Kathy with husband Brian and the kids**





Supply and demand rarely occur in the same place. Beef, pigs, sheep, fish, fruit and vegetables flourish in our region's wide open spaces, but the customers are far away, in the cities and larger towns. **Erica Hughes** got them together, using technology to build a community.

"Sort of Tinder for produce," Erica says of her role match-making producers, chefs and consumers on Farmer Meets Foodie, the north Queensland virtual produce market she created in 2016. "I started out wanting to connect producers to chefs and restaurants. I'd worked with a lot of producers who do landcare, good things for the country and animal welfare. I wanted to help producers tell those stories about the care that's gone in to producing the food."

Technology was moving fast, new apps made lots of things possible. "I was thinking there must be a way to connect those two sides of the market online," Erica said. "Producers were really interested, looking for somewhere where they could get a better return, more than the average 10 per cent of the product's final price. And they wanted a more transparent market. Many found their products on sale in local supermarkets, but they hadn't sold to them. The products had been to Brisbane or Sydney by road, and back again. It's not good for the quality or freshness, and it's unnecessary road miles."

Almost six years on, Farmer Meets Foodie is a busy virtual market, helping businesses and foodies source fresh local seasonal produce. It's an easy and interactive way to find who has what growing and who is looking to buy in your local area. It's showcasing far north Queensland produce and cutting through COVID affected supply chains. And it's boosting food security in the Gulf region, delivering fresh Tablelands produce to Normanton, Karumba, Georgetown and Croydon.

Its focus is proudly local, but the success of Farmer Meets Foodie has attracted interest from beyond the region. "Once we've had clear success with what we're doing here, we'd really like to expand to the rest of the state, especially south-east Queensland, and into northern New South Wales. There's been a lot of interest down there in what we're doing. We'd like to take it there, and Australia-wide. We've had some interest from South-East Asia. Ultimately, we want to be able to create that space that gives farmers a fair return and reduces the food miles," Erica said.

Farmer Meets Foodie is a marketplace, and a canny business model, out of which a community has grown. Erica has a real knack for working with, and building, communities. She lived an idyllic childhood on a cattle property at Dayboro, north of Brisbane. Erica went in to forestry and landcare, moving to Atherton to work on a community reforestation program when the local timber industry was closed down. She spent five years living in Croydon with husband Lindsay and worked for our predecessor company, Northern Gulf Resource Management Group. These days, Erica lives near Mount Molloy and travels widely in the Gulf region.

Erica is excited by the success, and the potential, of Farmer Meets Foodie. "What we're really aiming to do is to bring all the community together. We've made a place for them to communicate better. We all drive past each other every day, but we don't necessarily know what food is available from where and how to get a hold of it. We were able to expand on earlier efforts by bringing people together online. We're always working to make it better."

Find Farmer Meets Foodie <https://www.farmermeetsfoodie.com.au/>

Most of us remember that one teacher who planted an idea, nourished a love for something that became our special skill, our life's work. *Crystal Leonardi* had two. Drama and English teachers inspired the then Cairns teenager. They gave her the skills, and the permission, to explore her love of language and storytelling. Crystal couldn't have known it back then, but writing would become vital for her, later, when life got very tough.

Crystal's fourth child, Sebastian, arrived in 2017, a very welcome boy after three daughters. Early on, there were niggling worries, signs that something might be wrong, which doctors dismissed with an "oh he'll grow out of it".

"When he was two, I noticed he'd lost the use of his left arm," Crystal said. "He couldn't high five. We went back to the GP, and all of a sudden, all of these little red flags all added up to something." The diagnosis was a stroke, and specialists, suspecting cerebral palsy, ordered an MRI. Instead, they found a large tumor on Sebastian's brain.

"It was the size of an orange, in the middle of his brain. The Royal Flying Doctor Service took him down to Brisbane that day. Surgery got about half of the tumor out, followed by a year of chemo and lots of treatment."

As she describes past treatments, and those still to come, Crystal speaks with the clarity of a good storyteller. Telling that story has helped her make sense of, and endure, an awful experience. "It's pretty tough on a four year old, worst nightmare for any parent. Thankfully, it brought our family closer together, but it is tough on all of us. I found solace in writing about what we were going through."

It started out as a journal Crystal kept during the long hours at her son's bedside as he had chemotherapy. She wanted to document everything her family went through, to help her understand it, and, maybe, to help others.

"My husband and I would say 'it's so sad, who would want to read this?' but that shifted eventually. I wrote a chapter. An editor relative said 'keep going'. I did so much research, sitting there in that hospital. I had stacks of paper, notes on airport napkins. Out of all that, a book came together."

*Boy of Steel* was published last September. Crystal hopes it will help others face medical challenges. "I would have loved to have a book like that when we first got to hospital."

She says becoming an author has helped her gain confidence in the spotlight. "I was always a bit of an introvert, but now I'm ready to go. I want to talk in front of 300 people. I want to share my story. This has been so empowering. I want my children to see their mum doing something other than being a mum. Through this crazy situation, I've found what I was supposed to do."

More about Crystal <https://www.crystalleonardi.com/>



Crystal and Sebastian at Julatten

# GULF GIRL BERYL IS EVERYWHERE



**Beryl the poddy Brahman is a very good baby-sitter**

**I**t's almost seven years since Beryl was born on the Mount Little beef property between Georgetown and Croydon. This lively Gulf youngster has 45,000 Facebook friends, and now there's a book about her.

Beryl is a cow. A Brahman poddy who grew up with the Webster family, and their dogs, becoming a central character in their lives. Beryl likes Sunshine milk, tummy rubs, cuddles, coming into the house to chill with the family. Eventually, her exploits inspired Sally Webster to some Facebook posts. Beryl went viral.

"We used to put a blanket down and she'd camp up on it," Sally said. "She'd sneak into the house and find the bag of calf's milk. If there was a window open, she'd shove her head through. She's a big personality.

"We did some Facebook posts on our page, and people said Beryl should have her own page. We did, and people got hold of it and thought it was really funny, especially things like her going inside."

Beryl's social media success is not all laughs. She's an orphan, and she's survived some dangerous times. The family, and Beryl, moved to a property north of Julia Creek. "In the middle of the 2019 floods," says Sally.

"We lost 95 per cent of our herd. We had almost 4000 head of cattle here, and she was a survivor, which is amazing. People really fell in love with that side of it. And then she had a really horrendous birth, which she was also lucky to survive. She's beaten the odds."

Beryl's booming bovine social media presence inspired her fans to speculate - what's next? As Sally recalls, that was a challenging time. "People were saying 'you could really make something big out of this'. That was a bit funny for me, because it is really personal. This is a part of our lives, and I don't know if I really want that to be public. But someone said 'Beryl would make a great children's book'. And I knew I would really love to do that. I'm not here to be the next famous children's author. But it's something really lovely that my kids or my grandkids can have. There's not many children's books based on life on Australian cattle stations."

Sally Webster says she's delighted to bring Beryl's story to life in the book, *Beryl The Brahman*, delightfully illustrated by Kate Rutter.

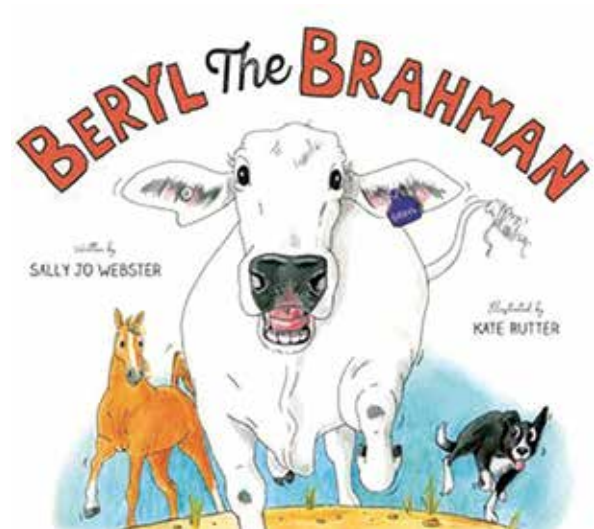
"I'm really proud to bring it to all the little country kids who can relate to it, and the city and town kids who don't see much of that."

Beryl is a true blue Gulf celebrity. Has that changed life on the Webster property? “I don’t know if it’s what women do, or rural people do, but we always downplay things. I like to think it hasn’t changed our lives. I’ve really enjoyed packing the books up. It feels like a little bit of us, and of Beryl, is going into all these homes of the people that order them. Nothing’s changed. I’ve just become a bit busier,” Sally said.

This, surely, is “diversification”, the buzzword of our times for primary producers? “We’re cattle and beef producers”, says Sally. “This is a whole new world for us. There’s some working out, but people are just so happy to be part of it. It’s so, so nice.”

What’s next for Beryl? Her first book sold out in just four weeks, her social media following grows exponentially. Sally has asked the printer for more copies, and a second volume is very likely. “There might be three or four Beryl books, for a sequence, that would be the ideal situation. But we’ll see which way the wind takes us.”

Sally says the success of Beryl is about much more than one Brahman. “I’m really proud of what we do and where we live. Northern Australia is such an amazing place. It’s showcasing that. People can relate to farmers and people who look after the land and look after animals. I’m really proud it’s showcasing Brahmans, because they’re a huge part of northern Australia. I think it’s just really cool.”



Why is Beryl so popular? Sally says Beryl evokes universal themes.

“She’s bringing to life the stockmen and stockwomen of Australia. It is about Beryl, an orphan. But she’s everywhere, in a way. A bird that’s fallen out of its nest in Brisbane. Get a dog or cat from the shelter. It’s that thing of looking after animals who have faced adversity. Beryl is everywhere. It’s about anyone who’s had to take care of animals.”

*Beryl the Brahman is written by Sally Webster and illustrated by Kate Rutter. It’s available through <https://www.berylthebrahman.com.au/>*



**Beryl loves chilling with the family**

# Kowanyama's everyday treasures



Viv Sinnamon curates the Kowanyama Collection

Australia's largest collection of Indigenous artefacts lives in a wonderfully crowded space in Kowanyama, on the Gulf of Carpentaria coast.

The Kowanyama Collection tells us much about Indigenous life here before and after Europeans came to the area. Its manager, curator and researcher, Viv Sinnamon, says it's a grand collection of everyday life.

"We have the mundane things, the day-to-day life stuff," Viv says, showing me woomera (spear throwers), etching tools, intricate woven baskets, ceremonial items, delicate jewellery made from animal vertebrae.

There's buttons, coins, and uniforms, metal weaponry and tools, marking the arrival of Europeans.

11 The Gulf Croaker



Shark tooth fighting knives

It's a massive collection of items, and of information about them, including language names, who made them and used them. It has immense cultural value, and is a great resource for researchers of local history and anthropology.

The collection is carefully catalogued and lines the walls, sprawls across shelving units, and slides tidily into stacks of drawers. Fund-raising is underway to build a cultural centre to safely house it. The tropical climate is hard on old items.

Look for the Kowanyama Project on Facebook to read more about the collection, and the efforts of Viv and his supporters to protect and preserve it for future generations.

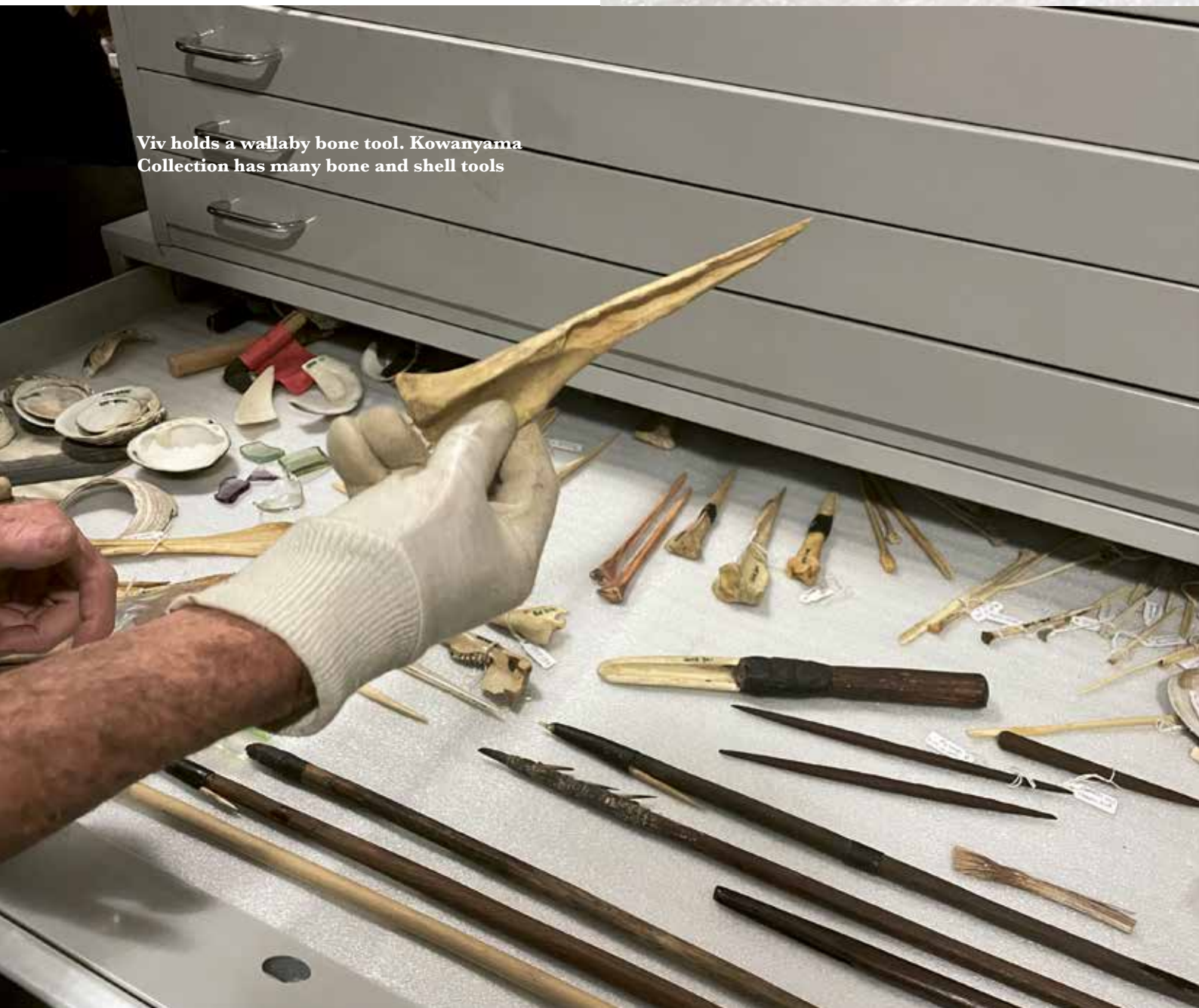
Kowanyama means "place of many waters" in Yir Yoront, one of several local languages. About 1200 people live in Kowanyama, where the Mitchell River Mission was established in 1916.

*Chelsea Reventos Smith*

**Sheath covers firestick ends to keep them dry in the wet season**



**Viv holds a wallaby bone tool. Kowanyama Collection has many bone and shell tools**



## Make less waste

Di Creasey has waged a life-long war on waste, turning back the enormous tide of rubbish that overwhelms landfill, chokes our waterways and threatens our wildlife. Plastic, food packaging, nappies and more. They're disposable, but most never really go away, their lingering presence an existential threat to the planet. And, says Di, for all of these, there are viable, affordable, eco-friendly alternatives. She's been working with Gulf Savannah NRM in our remote communities to devise waste solutions in a region with limited retail and recycling options.

Di presented at well-received local Litter Quitter events, in Mareeba, Georgetown, Normanton, Karumba, and at a special women's event at Talaroo Hot Springs.



**Di Creasey (right) with Chelsea Smith at Talaroo**

"I grew up in the most polluted town in the Southern Hemisphere. The air stank. If you walked on the beach, your feet stank for days," Di said. She was certain there was a better way, found inspiration in 1970s environmental campaigns. Di studied horticulture, worked as a chef and assistant park ranger. Her inquiring mind soaked up information about waste issues and eco-friendly solutions. These days, Di runs Enviromart Australia, offering organic, biodegradable, energy and water efficient options for a cleaner greener planet. "We've always focussed our business on not just selling products, but on educating people. It's been wonderful travelling the Gulf Country. I saw a big change, much less beer cans by the roadside than years ago. People are wanting to do the right thing, but they're disappointed at the limited recycling options in the region." Di's presentations set out the scale of the challenge. Half of all plastic is only used once. Less than 20 per cent is recycled. Australians use 3.7 million disposable nappies a day. They take 500 years to break down. Businesses try to make bad products look good by making misleading claims and "green-washing". Di says there are solutions, alternatives, and people are increasingly willing to try them, to make the world a better place.

*The Litter Quitter project has received funding support from the Queensland Government Community Sustainability Action grant program.*

## Hatch your ideas

The TNQ Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub is looking for primary producers with good ideas to make farming operations more drought resilient. Applications are now open for their Hatch Program, which will help validate your idea, build your confidence and skills, and connect you with other innovators.

Hub Innovation Director Brook Orr said the program provides tailored resources, one-on-one coaching and access to a network of producers and community. "We know that producers are such great problem-solvers and have so many ideas to make their farms more resilient and sustainable in the long run. The Hatch Program is the perfect program to support those looking to get their ideas off the ground."



You're eligible to apply if you have an idea about value-added products, service-based business or software and hardware technology. You'll work on developing your idea, guided by experienced agrifood experts and coaches.

Through the TNQ Hub, farmers, Indigenous landholders, communities, researchers and business will come together to co-design approaches and solutions for drought resilience in Tropical North Queensland.

The Hub is supporting local community members from the six nodes across our regions - Wet Tropics, Gulf Savannah, Gulf of Carpentaria, Fitzroy, Mackay and Whitsundays and Burdekin to participate in the six week Hatch program.

Applications close on March 16. For information and to apply, go to <https://www.tnqdroughthub.com.au/tnq-drought-hub-hatch-program/>

# Stopping sediments in their tracks

Remediated gullies keeping sediment out of Gulf rivers and waterways

A Gulf region gully remediation project continues to succeed, despite the challenges of its second wet season.

The project has repaired 10 hectares on the Oaks Station in Etheridge Shire since it began in 2019. Ground cover planted as part of the remediation has established very well. It includes several species of grass, legumes and acacias.

NRM Project Officer Marcus Mulholland said there's been heavy wet season rain, but the works are performing very well.

"They're controlling erosion and stopping sediments entering the adjacent Copperfield River. This remediated gully site has now performed very well through two wet seasons, the first one included heavy falls from Cyclone Imogen.

Now that ground cover has really taken hold, the gully is robust against future heavy rainfall events," Marcus said.

Gullies are common across northern Australia, where the wet season sends huge amounts of water moving over land. Surface water flowing in a line over inadequate groundcover scours soil, forming a channel that can become many metres deep.

The starting point is usually an area of disturbed soil, a livestock or vehicle track, or existing erosion. Gullies continue to deepen and can spread up or down slopes.

They're a real danger to animals, people, and vehicles. Gullies divert water from where it's needed, and they take topsoil, silt and nutrients away from the natural landscape.

Much of that gets into our oceans and waterways, where it does real damage to aquatic plants and creatures.

***This project is jointly funded under the Queensland and Australian governments Disaster Recovery Funding arrangements.***





# Great Gulf photo

*Send us your photos of our beautiful region and we'll share them in each edition of the Gulf Croaker and on our website & social media. This rare double rainbow was captured by our Keerah Steele at Georgetown. Email photos to [publicity@gulfsavannahrm.org](mailto:publicity@gulfsavannahrm.org).*

Caroline Steele and Mandy Pickering  
at our historic Croydon office



# LOCAL HISTORY

**O**ur Croydon team is surrounded by history every workday in an office more than 120 years old. Caroline Steele and Mandy Pickering recently joined Gulf Savannah NRM to establish a presence in Croydon, in the heart of the Gulf region.

They've set up in what was the local police sergeant's residence, built around 1898. By that time, a decade after gold was found in the area, the town was a lively place, home to some 4000 people, most of whom made their living, as best they could, on the goldfields.

Our office is in the heart of the Croydon heritage precinct, near the town's oldest building, the heritage-listed court house, built in 1887. The last time a case was heard there was 1926. The other buildings in the heritage precinct are the Town Hall (1890) and the police station/gaol (1896). The Town Hall is a

favourite with photographers, and is still used as a picture theatre, music and dance venue. Displays of photographs and artefacts at the police station tell the story of Croydon. During the gold rush, the streets were lit by kerosene lamps. Four originals forged in Croydon, and replicas, still stand on the sandstone-kerbed streets of town.

Croydon Shire proudly promotes its history through the restoration and conservation of historical sites. The heritage precinct is well worth a visit.

Gold mining was a tough life. It began to decline in the early 1900s and the police presence started to wind down. But sergeants continued to live in our building till 1977.

Since then, it's been a library, museum and information centre, among other things.



# Project UPDATES

## Cattle tags in Gulf



The E-Beef Smart Farming Partnership and the Grazing Futures project have teamed up with local producers to trial the new GPS ear tags produced by Ceres Tag. They send location, health and welfare information via satellite to be managed on your mobile, computer or tablet.

The tags use advanced animal behaviour algorithms and accelerometers to measure movement and behaviour, alerting you to anything unusual. The trial has been conducted near Mount Surprise on Amber and Eveleigh stations.

## DIT water supplementation

A year-long trial of the Direct Injection Technology water supplementation system at Whitewater Station, Mount Surprise, is showing good results. The system adds supplements directly to cattle water supplies, and about 400 head are getting Phosphorus through the wet season. Cattle are responding well, and the DIT system has saved station staff a lot of time and has reduced costs.

The system allows consistent supplement dose rate across an entire mob of cattle, and eliminates animal behaviour issues associated with lick, ensuring all livestock have access to the supplement.



## Powerful Pollinators



We ran a Beekeeping for Beginners workshop series, led by seasoned local beekeepers Grahame Haigh and Wim De Jong. Three of the four events were held at the beautiful Ringers Rest function venue in Mareeba, and one at a local citrus farm for a hands-on session with Graham's working beehives.

The events were aimed at people wanting to start keeping bees or beginners looking for knowledge and advice to keep their bees safe and healthy. The Powerful Pollinators project has since helped eight workshop participants to purchase their first beehive from Tarzali Honey in Malanda.

## TNQ Drought Hub



Gulf Savannah NRM is proud to join the Tropical North Queensland Drought Resilience Adoption & Innovation Hub, led by James Cook University. The hub has six nodes, with ours based in Georgetown. It's part of the Federal Government Drought Resilience Research and Adoption Program, investing in collaborative research to help primary producers and rural communities become more prepared and more resilient. Our newly appointed Hub Coordinator, John McLaughlin, will deliver a drought resilience field day on April 6 at Karma Waters Station, northwest of Mt Carbine, with more events planned. Contact john.mclaughlin@gulfsavannahnrm.org for details.

## Citizen Science Project

Drop in the Bucket, our citizen science project, is underway, with 25 water sampling kits sent out to 11 schools across the region at the start of the term. We'll send out more in coming weeks to families who've expressed an interest.

Participants will upload data from the kits to our online portal, where it displays as a regional water quality map. We're looking forward to seeing the results. Contact Amelia Benefield [amelia.benefield@gulfsavannahnrm.org](mailto:amelia.benefield@gulfsavannahnrm.org) if you want to get involved, or go to [gulfsavannahnrm.org/a-drop-in-the-bucket](http://gulfsavannahnrm.org/a-drop-in-the-bucket)



## Healthy Farming Soils



Planting a cover crop is a great way to protect your soil over the wet season by increasing infiltration and reducing erosion and run off.

With support from Gulf Savannah NRM, farmers in the region are trialing multispecies cover crops on their farm this summer. Over time, a multispecies cover crop regime will increase soil organic matter leading to improvements in soil structure, stability and increased soil moisture and nutrient holding capacity for plant growth. Picture shows a nine species cover crop providing excellent protection for this resting field over summer.

*(Photo Kylie Junior)*

# Staff Profile

**NATARSHA BELL**



Our Indigenous Engagement officer, Natarsha Bell, hails from beautiful country between Mossman and Palmer River, via Brisbane, Melbourne and Western Australia.

She seems to have been everywhere, and has done a lot of things: 13 years running a bush tucker restaurant, she's an artist, and an ordained pastor. As a youngster, Natarsha dreamed of telling Aboriginal stories in art and fashion, something she's done a lot of since graduating in fine arts from RMIT.

Natarsha finds deep synergy between her theology and her Indigenous culture and beliefs. "I look at biblical principles, and our traditional culture and customs," she said. "The way we use our languages and stories, that reflects God's principles for how we live on Earth. I was drawn to learn about these things by my strong belief in God and wanting to understand how I, as an Aboriginal person, perceive God."

She came home to far north Queensland in 2014 to help her family represent and care for their traditional country, which extends from Lakeland, Maytown and Palmer River to Kelly St George and the Great Dividing Range. Natarsha says she's here to learn, and to build good friendships and connections in the Gulf Savannah, experiencing the natural beauty of the region, working on behalf of its people and communities.

#### **Favourite music**

"I've always been into reggae. I have a lot of albums by Peter Tosh, Jimmy Cliff, Bob Marley."

#### **Best wet season rainy Saturday arvo activity**

"I'd be sitting down, painting or doing craft activities. Anything that's creative. And that includes cooking."

#### **You ran a restaurant. What's your favourite dish to cook or have cooked for you?**

"My favorite dish is a beautiful creamy mushroom risotto. The trick to making a good one, the magic ingredient, is the pecorino cheese that you put in it. You've got to get good cheese."

#### **If you could have one superpower**

"It would have to be protecting children, protecting their innocence."

*Richard Dinnen*

# COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTORY

## Health

### Chillagoe Primary Health Centre

21 Hospital Avenue Chillagoe 07 4094 7500

### Croydon Primary Health Centre

Sircom Street Croydon (07) 4748 7000

### Dimbulah Primary Health Centre

1-5 Stephens Street Dimbulah (07) 4094 5000

### Forsayth Primary Health Centre

21 Fourth Street Forsayth (07) 4062 5372

### Georgetown Primary Health Centre

High Street Georgetown 07 4062 1266

### Karumba Primary Health Care

140 -160 Walker Street Karumba (07) 4745 9137

### Mareeba Hospital

21 Lloyd St Mareeba (07) 4092 9333

### Mount Garnet Primary Health Centre

Galena Street Mount Garnet (07) 4097 9101

### Normanton Hospital

199 Brown Street Normanton (07) 4745 2100

### Royal Flying Doctor Service

24-hour phone 1300 697 337

## Education

### Biboohra State School

Petersen Street Biboohra (07) 4086 9333

### Chillagoe State School

Cathedral Street Chillagoe (07) 4094 7103

### Dimbulah State School

48-50 Kennedy Street Dimbulah (07) 4094 5333

### Gulf Christian College

Brown Street Normanton (07) 4745 1180

### Irvinebank State School

High Street Irvinebank (07) 4096 4187

### Julatten State School

1141 Euluma Creek Road Julatten (07) 4094 1130

### Karumba State School

5 Yappar Street Karumba (07) 4747 6222

### Kowanyama State School

345 Kowanyama Street (07) 4083 7333

### Mareeba State School

Constance Street Mareeba (07) 4092 8100

### Mareeba State High School

Jasper Street Mareeba (07) 4086 2777

### Mount Garnet State School

Garnet Street Mount Garnet (07) 4097 4333

### Mount Molloy State School

Fraser Road Mount Molloy (07) 4094 1261

### Mount Surprise State School

Garland Street Mount Surprise (07) 4062 3130

### Mutchilba State School

33 Marsterson Street Mutchilba (07) 4093 1159

### Normanton State School

6 Little Brown Street Normanton (07) 4769 7222

### St Anthony's Dimbulah

3 Hyde Street Dimbulah (07) 4094 6900

### TAFE North

20 Green Street Normanton (07) 4745 2000

## Queensland Government Agent Program (QGAP)

### Croydon

63 Samwell Street Croydon (07) 4748 7101

### Georgetown

12 High Street Georgetown (07) 4062 1260

### Mount Garnet

Police Station Garnet Street (07) 4097 6660

### Normanton

24 Haig Street Normanton (07) 4445 1100

# NRM WORLD

## Connecting fish habitats

Barriers that prevent native fish moving between habitats could reduce populations and diversity. Terrain NRM says many native species need to move between estuarine and freshwater habitats to breed, feed, or find favourable conditions during the wet and dry seasons. Invasive species like tilapia and gambusia don't need movement as much, and can thrive in less than ideal conditions. Barriers to native fish movement include causeways, weed chokes, areas of poor light or high velocity, flood gates and vertical drops downstream of road crossings and culverts. Terrain NRM encourages landholders in their area to seek advice before building or modifying water crossings as part of their Fish Homes and Highways project. <https://terrain.org.au/common-fish-barriers-explained/>

## Regenerative sheep grazing

Cutting edge technology and pasture management are being used in a regenerative grazing project to improve drought resilience on a Tasmanian sheep farm. NRM South reports *Okehampton* uses high stock density and pasture utilisation, followed by rest periods between three and 15 months. The project compares that approach with business-as-usual grazing to see which approach yields the best response for improved water infiltration, nutrient cycling, and pasture density and diversity. The project team uses drones, remote sensing technology, field observations and biomass measurements to help shape a regenerative, low-input, low-risk grazing system for the property.

## National NRM conference

The 2022 National NRM Conference will be in the Margaret River region of WA on November 1 and 2. NRM Regions Australia has announced the event will be co-hosted by the South West Catchments Council, which has been the peak regional Natural Resource Management organisation for the WA south west since 2001.

## Fitzroy River stabilisation stands up to summer rain

Heavy summer rain has tested sediment stabilisation works on the Fitzroy River. The Fitzroy Basin Association says heavy rain and a three-metre river rise were a real test, but the works survived intact. The \$4 million project removed 81,500 cubic metres of soil, installed 1,300 wooden piles to mitigate erosion and planted 10,000 tube stock trees. The Fitzroy Basin drains on to the Great Barrier Reef near Rockhampton. This project aims to prevent about 15,000 tonnes of sediment a year draining out to the Reef.

## Cape York Grazing Forum

Save the date. The forum is on May 17 and 18 at the Laura Rodeo Grounds. The 2022 Cape York Grazing Forum brings together graziers from across the Cape to network and share achievements and concerns. This will be a free event and will be fully catered. Camping sites are available free of charge. Follow our friends Cape York NRM on social media for updates. Registration will be available soon

## NQ tries new feral pig plan

Reef Catchments is working with local governments to extend the reach of an aerial shooting program to control feral pigs in the Bloomsbury region of north Queensland. It's hoped the initiative will help create a syndicate that will expand the reach of the successful Whitsunday Feral Animal Aerial Shooting Program, coordinated by Whitsunday Regional Council. It's thought a catchment scale approach to feral pig management could bring the region financial and environmental benefits.

## Big increase in Cape York turtle nest success rate

Nest survival rates for Cape York sea turtles have reached new highs over the past season with up to 98 per cent unscathed at some remote beach locations on the western side of the Cape. The figures come from the Western Cape Turtle Threat Abatement Alliance, working to protect turtle nests on Cape beaches from predation. They monitored 3,698 marine turtle nests on seven census beaches, a stretch of 150 kilometres, with 2,693 pigs removed. Nest predation was at a historic low rate, but turtles face other threats, including vehicles on beaches destroying nests, and the effects of a longer wet season, such as inshore mud and marine debris obstructing beach access, and storms that cause strong wind and big waves. The Hawksbill, the Flatback and the Olive Ridley nest on western Cape York, with peak nesting season between July and October.

# COMMUNITY EVENTS CALENDAR

## MAR

12

Mareeba markets  
Centenary Park

15

Leucaena Field Day  
Whitewater Stn Mt Surprise

27

Microbial Inoculants workshop  
Mutchilba Community Centre

28-29

Etheridge Agricultural Forum  
Shire hall Georgetown

## APRIL

6

Drought Resilience Field Day  
Karma Waters Station

22-24

Undara Outback Rock & Blues  
Undara Experience

25

Anzac Day  
Check for your local events



**FREE EVENT**

# Drought Resilience Field Day

WEDNESDAY 6 APRIL  
8:30AM-3PM

**KARMA WATERS STATION, MT CARBINE**