



# Building capacity for change

## Ashley & Rowena Area Wide Management Groups – Feral Pig Eradication project

**Cotton growers working together for a sustainable landscape: Gwydir Valley Case study**

**Snapshot of project achievements:**

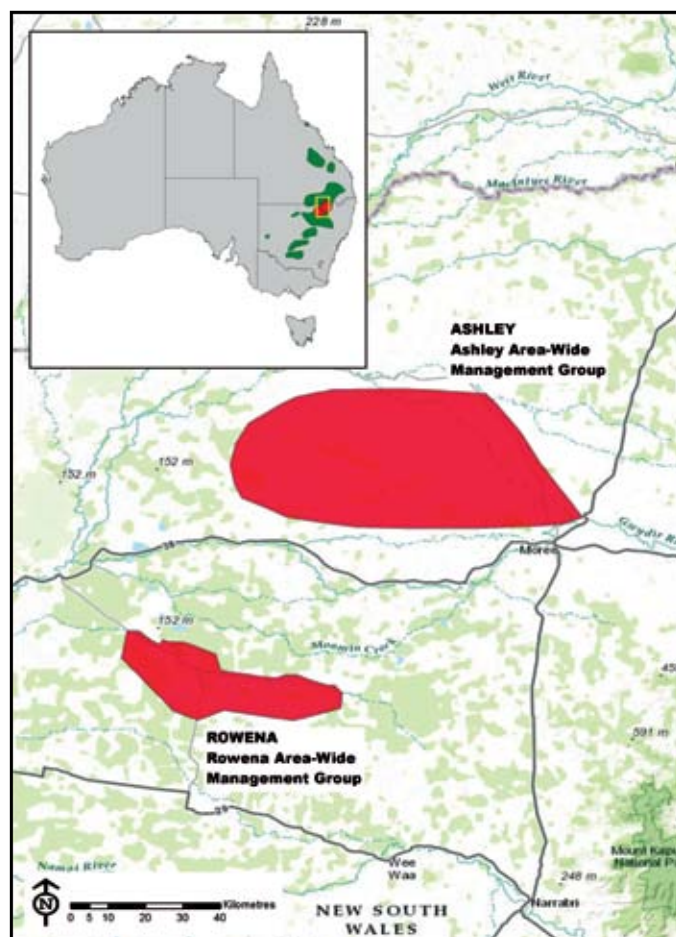
- 43 farmers looking after biodiversity through eradication of feral animals
- 98,000 hectares of native vegetation managed under best practice
- 43 farmers with improved natural resource management knowledge and skills

**Ashley & Rowena Feral Pig Management**

In the Gwydir valley a series of workshops on vegetation management were held with 43 landholders within the Ashley and Rowena area attending them. As part of the workshops participants undertook landscape planning, identifying native vegetation management issues within their local area. Participants at these workshops identified feral animals such as foxes and pigs as one of the key threats to production and biodiversity on their farms. From these workshops two area wide management groups were formed to develop and implement a control program for feral pigs.

**Ashley & Rowena Area Wide Management Groups**

The Ashley & Rowena Area Wide Management Groups consist of 43 landholders whose combined properties cover an area of approximately 98,000ha, much of which included the endangered Coolibah Black Box Woodland community as well as the Natural Grasslands on Basalt and fine textured



Map of project area with inset map of cotton growing areas.

soils of the alluvial plains. There are a number of threatening processes to these communities including feral animals such as pigs which can destroy ground layer plants and shrubs and introduce weeds. Pigs are a known vector for boxthorn spread.

The two Area Wide Management groups alongside the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association Inc, New England North West Network Chairs Inc and Border Rivers -Gwydir Catchment Management Authority developed a co-ordinated program for the control of feral pigs along the Carole Creek, Gingham Channel and Thalaba Creeks.

The key outcomes of the program include:

- Regional landscape planning for native vegetation management;
- Co-ordinated approach to feral pig control between neighbouring landholders and local agencies;
- Implementation of on-ground activities to reduce feral pig abundance;
- Reduced impact by pigs on local agriculture and native vegetation; and;
- Development of two Area Wide Management Groups for future co-ordinated management of local agricultural and environmental issues

### What has been achieved

- Delivery of information workshops on feral pig management
- Three aerial shoots with an estimated 1,496 pigs shot
- Trapping, ground shooting and baiting
- Formation of two new Area Wide Management Groups

### Lessons learnt

The project has been very successful in helping build the capacity amongst local landholders to take a co-ordinated approach to native vegetation management issues. Mr Mark Winter found that *“when we started calling our neighbours, we found that nearly all had feral pig problems”*.

Louise Gall, Project manager Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association Inc, found that the project reinforced the value of community communication, *“working together in area wide management groups producers will have greater impact in their ongoing program to eradicate feral pigs”*.

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**“ When we started calling our neighbours, we found that nearly all had feral pig problems”**

As well as reducing the number of feral pigs and their impacts on local agriculture and biodiversity, there has been a number of other significant outcomes which have contributed to the potential improved health of biodiversity such as:

- Engaging with landholders we previously had not worked with, developing a relationship and trust
- Providing advice to landholders on a range of other NRM issues such as woody weed control, riparian management and erosion control.

### Acknowledgements

The *Cotton Growers working together for a Sustainable Landscape* project has brought growers together to contribute to the ongoing conservation and protection of biodiversity in their districts. This project was supported by the Cotton Research and Development Corporation, through funding from the Australian Government and the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association, Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority, and New England North West Landcare Network Chairs Inc.

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