



Butts in the Burdekin Dry Tropics

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\$605,000 - a good incentive to improve water quality in the Lower Burdekin

By Terry Butts

BURDEKIN Dry Tropics NRM is offering Burdekin cane growers and graziers a total of \$605,000 in a unique type of incentive scheme designed to improve water quality on their properties.

The Lower Burdekin Water Quality Improvement Tender received 87 applications for the scheme that invited landholders to provide a description of actions they would take to improve water quality and the cost. The Burdekin Sugar Experiment Station (BSES) and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) assisted landholders with their tender applications. In the end, 33 of the most cost effective tenders – those that provided the most water quality at the lowest cost, were selected.

The tender prices ranged from \$ 1500 to \$130,000, with total bids of nearly \$2.2 million.

BDTNRM spokesperson Diana O'Donnell explained the scheme was similar to a grant - with one important difference:

"Instead of prescribing actions and offering fixed premiums to the land holders, we allowed them to tailor their submissions to suit their circumstances."

Successful tenderers pledged to construct recycle pits, change irrigation systems, purchase shielding sprayers, reduce the use of residual pesticide and fertilizer as well as adopt new grazing and cane management techniques.

The tender was offered to all cane growers in the Lower Burdekin and graziers in the Houghton River, Barratta Creek, Stones Creek and Landers Creek catchments.

Mrs O'Donnell said it was important to improve the water quality of the region for the benefit of fresh water systems, rivers, wetlands and groundwater.

"It is also a key strategy to securing the health of the Great Barrier Reef and its multi billion dollar contribution to the regional economy through tourism, commercial fishing, and cultural and recreational activities."

It is also hoped to reduce nitrogen content by 125 t, residual pesticide by 58 kg and 490 tonnes of sediment in the run off, drainage and groundwater on the selected properties.
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