

TNQ

Drought Hub

BOB SHEPHERD

EXTENSION EXPERT
AGRICULTURAL SECTOR



Meet our expert!



Bob Shepherd
*Extension Expert
Agricultural Sector*

After completing B Allied Science in Rural Technology at Qld Agricultural College (now UQ Gatton Campus) in 1975, Bob joined the Qld DPI in 1976 as a soil conservation extension officer working in the grain industry of the South Burnett (Kingaroy). Then a move to the Wet Tropics (Atherton) in 1980 as a soil conservation extension officer exposed Bob to a wider range of primary industries including grain, sugar, dairy, horticulture, beef, and alluvial mining. Design and implementation of soil conservation plans at the individual property and sub-catchment scales was complimented by early development and extension work on conservation tillage practices to further reduce soil erosion from crop lands. In 1989 Bob moved to the Upper Burdekin area (Charters Towers) as a land management extension officer to work in the extensive grazing lands of one of the major GBR Catchments. This included extending sound land management practices to graziers

including: adjusting stocking rates based on forage budgets; using fire to manage weeds, pasture composition and woodland thickening; sown pastures to lift beef production; appropriate use of fences/stock waters to manage the grazing distribution of cattle; woody weed and feral animal management; reclamation of severely degraded land; and erosion control on access tracks and other linear features on-property.

Bob completed his post-graduate studies (a Masters in Agriculture) from the University of Adelaide in 1993. As a Principal Extension Officer, Bob supported the Dalrymple Landcare Committee and helped to form a network of 20 small landcare groups across the Upper Burdekin region. Bob worked as part of a DPI/DAF extension team in Charters Towers to conduct a wide range of extension projects in the Upper Burdekin region. The recognition of a need to train new extension officers in DAF, other Qld Government departments and regional NRM groups, led Bob to provide on-the-job and formalised training activities across north and NW Qld to numerous early career professionals. Bob was a keen supporter of the educational needs of students at all levels. To maintain up-to-date technical knowledge Bob attended many Australian and international conferences including rangeland, landcare, extension and beef industry update conferences and tours. In retirement Bob plans to continue his involvement in local Charters Towers community groups and the Australian Rangeland Society and associated activities. Some consultancy work may also be considered.

Bob was engaged by the TNQ Drought Hub to discuss some of his expertise. Our initial discussion with Bob was at the Fletcherview Research Station on the banks of the Burdekin River, Bob discussed that the changes in the landscape here have been continuously recorded since 1845 when Ludwig Leightardt and his expedition had camped at Three Rocks. The Fletcherview Research Station provided a great location as an operational cattle property. The discussion at the station focussed on the role of extension within the DPI/DAF, how the role had evolved over time and the importance Bob placed on mentors and working with landholders providing great advice and insights for early and mid-career extension officers.



Our next stop was “Hillgrove” Station with informal discussions on the verandah with Bill and Millie Mann. Bob, Bill and Millie discussed the long-term research projects supported by the Mann family over many years. They reflected on what worked and what didn’t especially as it related to stock carrying capacity and resilient pastures. The relaxed exchange illustrated perhaps the single most important role of beef extension officers, going out and developing good working relationships with landholders at their properties. Bill also reflected on the changes in his operation over the years.



The next location was Payne’s Lagoon on Hervey Range Road to discuss a very successful Gully Restoration Project. For Bob the work carried out on David Nichols’ place is one of the satisfying projects in Bob’s 30-year career working in beef extension around Charters Towers. Bob explained in detail what was required, how it became a model partnership between extension officers and landholders that resulted in an impressive result on the ground. The site is close to the main road back to Townsville, so it is an ideal location for

people to visit and see first-hand the progress made. Bob reflected on how he got his start in Ag and the study and career opportunities that followed. He talked about his 30 years in beef extension and the challenges and opportunities for landholders.



CONTACT US

Tropical North Queensland Drought Resilience and Innovation Hub



www.tnqdroughthub.com.au



tnqhub@jcu.edu.au



TNQ

Drought Hub