



## Burdekin graziers take out top sustainability award

BURDEKIN graziers Barry and Leanne O'Sullivan have taken out the Rural Award at the Premier's Sustainability awards on Friday night for their leadership and innovation in the beef industry and commitment to the Grazing Best Management Practice (BMP) Program.

The award, sponsored by Australian Country Choice and Coles, recognises the achievements of Queensland producers who have developed a sustainable agricultural business while demonstrating improved environmental and on-farm performance.

AgForce General President, Ian Burnett, said the award acknowledged the excellent leadership the O'Sullivan's had demonstrated, not only in achieving better outcomes for their own property, Glenalpine Station, but by providing solid feedback on the grazing standards being developed to drive sustainability in the grazing industry, particularly in regards to reef water quality outcomes.

"Barry and Leanne O'Sullivan have been instrumental to the development of the Grazing BMP Program," Mr Burnett said.

"Glenalpine Station is a great example of the positive outcomes possible for producers who review their management practices against industry standards and address issues through training and extension opportunities."

Mr Burnett said the O'Sullivan's involvement as members of the Grazing BMP producer reference group had been critical to secure the broader grazing community acceptance of the Grazing BMP standards and encouraged uptake of the program.

"Their input has ensured the usability and relevance of the standards to ensure they are palatable across all graziers and meet community expectations," Mr Burnett said.

"The O'Sullivans have also consistently opened their property and home to allow the program to run catchment-wide forums, workshops and trials and they have been great supporters of natural resource extension activities in the region."

Barry O'Sullivan said the award was a fantastic result for the grazing industry and demonstrated that anyone can turn any property around to become more profitable and sustainable by accessing the right information and support, which is all freely available to Queensland producers.

"We are very excited about where BMP will take the grazing industry and we have learnt so much by being involved in the process," Mrs O'Sullivan said.

Since purchasing the 23,385 hectare property south west of Bowen in 2003, the O'Sullivans have successfully transformed the poorer parts of the property into productive and profitable areas in an affordable, considered and informed process.

"When we came to this property the cattle were grazing on the lower creek flats resulting in low ground cover at the end of the dry season and soil being lost with the first rains," Mr O'Sullivan said.

"We commenced fencing by soil types to change the grazing pattern of the cattle and to rest the poorer condition country.

“This also allowed us to begin rotational grazing and to spell country, enabling enables palatable and profitable pasture to regenerate and propagate.

“Commercially this has reduced supplementation costs, enabled higher calving percentage and heavier weight gains in the cattle.”

As a result, the majority of country on Glenalpine station is now in A and B condition (good to fair) and the amount of soil erosion on the property has significantly reduced. This clearly indicates graziers are doing everything they can to reduce sediment run-off to help improve water quality for the Great Barrier Reef.

“Grazing BMP gave us the tools and training to identify steps to incorporate best management practices into our enterprise to improve our long term profitability,” Mr O’Sullivan said.

The program, a joint partnership between AgForce, Fitzroy Basin Association and the Queensland Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry (DAFFQ), allows graziers to anonymously benchmark their current business practices and stewardship performance and compare their results against the rest of the industry. In return, the aggregated and de-identified data will allow the industry to clearly demonstrate adoption levels of practices and performance and any areas requiring further attention for improvement.

ENDS

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**Who is AgForce?** AgForce represents thousands of Queensland broadacre producers who recognise the value in having a strong voice. AgForce leads the way to ensure agriculture’s social, economic and environmental contribution is recognised by all levels of government. AgForce works alongside landholders, encourages and supports the next generation, builds industry partnerships and skills and promotes agriculture - for secure, sustainable, progressive and profitable food and fibre into the future.