

# REEF RESCUE

2011

www.reefcatchments.com.au

(07)4968 4200



## Andrew Pratt

## IMPROVED FARMING SYSTEM USING CONTROLLED TRAFFIC

**REEF RESCUE HELPED ANDREW PRATT IMPLEMENT AN IMPROVED FARMING SYSTEM ON HIS FARMS THROUGH THE USE OF GPS GUIDANCE ON CONTROLLED TRAFFIC, WITH ZONAL TILLAGE OPERATIONS AND THE USE OF KNOCKDOWN CHEMICALS WHERE PRACTICAL. WITH THE FUNDING, ANDREW WAS ABLE TO MODIFY EXISTING EQUIPMENT AND PURCHASE SOME NEW EQUIPMENT TO MAKE THE CONVERSION POSSIBLE.**

After trialling some different row spacings, in 2005 Andrew began the conversion to a 1.85m Controlled Traffic system and has around 80% of his farms converted.

During that time he has modified tractors and other equipment to suit the new row spacings. With the help of Reef Rescue over the last two years, Andrew has also purchased a zonal rotary hoe, three GPS units to go on two tractors and the harvester and a new minimum tillage wide shute planter. Andrew says, "that the final piece of equipment needed will be a new zonal ripper once we are ready to plant back into our controlled traffic rows and this is when I hope to see real savings in time and money with the reduction in ground preparation."

Along with improving soil management, Andrew has been

looking at ways to improve his nutrient and chemical management on farm as well. Andrew said, "we use mainly liquid fertiliser across our farm and only use sub-surface granular at planting or to finish off if necessary. Our liquid contractor through Reef Rescue had variable rate equipment and new flow meters installed and so we get the benefit of this technology as well as a more accurate application on the growing zone."

For chemicals, Andrew also received funding to purchase a 4-row shielded sprayer boom to replace using residual chemicals in the inter-row with knockdown chemicals. "This will help not only save dollars but I am told there will be a benefit for water quality," said Andrew. One key action he already does is to utilise his high clearance



About the farm... Andrew is a fourth generation farmer and with his father Neil has 350 ha over three farms under cane production. The farms are bordered or crossed by a range of creeks which are all part of the St Helens Creek Sub-Catchment near Calen, which is around 55 kms North-West of Mackay. Andrew is also part of a harvesting and planting group that manages another 490 ha in the local area. In the 1920's after the railway line went through, the family farm was the first to grow cane in the North Coast district and was once one of the biggest farms in North Queensland. The remnants of the old Bruce Highway that ran directly in front of his house can still be seen today.

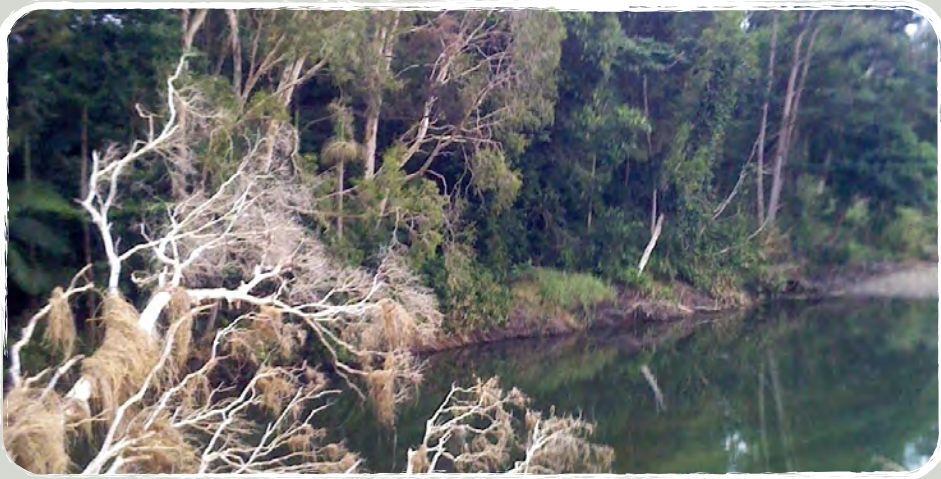


This project is supported by Reef Catchments through funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country.



CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY





spray rig to apply knockdowns at out of hand stage and to use his two centre pivots to irrigate in both chemical and nutrient applications across his farms.

For Andrew, Reef Rescue really helped speed up what he was trying to achieve on his farms from probably over a five to ten year period to perhaps a two to three year period. Andrew says, "we may have done something like the zonal tillage unit, but would not have been able to get the GPS units or buy a new minimum tillage planter as quickly as we did without the Reef Rescue grants we received". It also helped to get his partners and some of his neighbours to convert to the new system at the same time which means dollar savings for all involved along with

the flow on benefits for water quality.

### Outcomes

"REEF RESCUE REALLY HELPED SPEED UP WHAT HE WAS TRYING TO ACHIEVE ON HIS FARMS FROM PROBABLY OVER A 5-10 YEAR PERIOD TO PERHAPS A 2-3 YEAR PERIOD."

- Reduced risk of sediment losses with a Controlled Traffic minimum tillage system reducing erosion.
- Reduced risk from residual chemical losses with the replacement of residuals with knockdowns where practical.
- Improved soil structure and soil health helping reduce run-off and increase infiltration.



## OUTCOMES



Reduced risk of sediment losses



Reduced risk from residual chemical losses



Improved soil structure and soil health

### Reef Catchments

Reef Catchments is the regional NRM body who oversees the Reef Rescue program in the Mackay Whitsunday Isaac region for the federal government.

Contact Phil Trendell at Reef Catchments on (07) 4968 4200 or email:

[phil.trendell@reefcatchments.com.au](mailto:phil.trendell@reefcatchments.com.au)  
[www.reefcatchments.com.au](http://www.reefcatchments.com.au)