

## **THE DESERT UPLANDS COMMITTEE AND REGION - LEADING ENTERPRISE, COMMUNITY AND ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY**

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### **Abstract**

The Desert Uplands Committee (DUC) is a proactive regional strategy group that leads the way in developing and implementing NRM and related programmes through strong landholder engagement and voluntary grass roots members. Addressing environmental, economic and social issues unique to the Desert Uplands region of eight million hectares, it was formed by the community in 1994. The Desert Uplands region is the nation's #1 Biodiversity Hotspot. The low fertility ancient red earths of the elevated inter-range plateau and the predominantly uncleared spinifex country, with 70% remnant open woodland supports approximately 350 beef grazing enterprises, which are mainly tight family operations. Fifteen years ago apparent unsustainable grazing threatened these enterprises and the unique biodiversity. The graziers were hampered by a lack of relevant research, agency disregard and high debt levels. The DUC voluntarily developed and implemented a program of targeted projects and schemes. The exemplary Enterprise Reconstruction Scheme and the DUSLRA mapping were very successful and much praised. The more recently piloted and implemented Landscape Linkages Project, thrice awarded for innovativeness of MBI's in voluntary provision of ecosystem services by landholders, gained more than 40% annual ground cover increases. The Property Management Planning initiative and the devolved grants of the Advancing On-Ground Nature Conservation Program have improved farm practices and viability, and protected key riverine and refugia habitats across many properties. The organisation of the Desert Uplands Committee, its sixteen members and four dedicated staff in its Barcaldine office continue to work towards long term sustainability with a triple bottom line.

### **Biography**

Robyn ADAMS, a fourth generation grazier, runs a cattle breeder operation with her husband Terry BRENNAN, on wooded spinifex pastures in the southern Desert Uplands, in Central Queensland. Purchasing 'Stratford Station' in 2001, Robyn and Terry currently run a breeder operation of predominantly Droughtmasters. Committed to a holistic approach to country, cattle and community, Robyn has a wide range of interests, skills and past experience including twenty years working in the costume and fashion industries interstate and overseas. Robyn joined the Desert Uplands Build Up and Development Strategy Committee in 2002. Elected chair in October 2007, she has continued to meet the challenges of policy changes within government which currently threatens the organisation's existence. Robyn is also a board member of Desert Channels Queensland, the regional body for the Queensland section of the Lake Eyre catchment. An active member of the Y-Not BeefPlan Group, she is a passionate advocate for the extensive rangeland beef industry. Involved within the local community growing the arts at a provincial level, Robyn is further capacitating the region to withstand demographic change, low population densities and the flow-on effects of the long dry. The Desert Uplands Committee has successfully explored new horizons and achieved substantial enterprise and economic strengthening and growth in central Queensland over its proud fifteen year history. As current chair, Robyn is keen to present its valuable learnings to a wider audience, and will adapt the paper's content to maximise the benefits to the conference delegates, themes and agendas.