

Richmond & Upper Clarence Landcare News



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This newsletter brings you news and information from the Richmond and Upper Clarence catchment areas, stretching from Evans Head to Cape Byron, north to the Border Ranges National Park and the McPherson Ranges and west to Tenterfield.

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Federal Agriculture Minister Tony Burke visits biochar project

The Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke visited our region in January and especially wanted to see the Biochar Project being undertaken through a Caring for our Country grant to Richmond Landcare Inc.

RLI, through Industry and Investment NSW and local farmers, is conducting trials using biochar, a carbon rich product created by burning waste materials, in soils used to grow sweet corn, avocados, coffee, sugarcane, macadamias and rice, as well as grazing pastures as part of the project.

All those who attended were impressed by Minister – ‘call me Tony’ - Burke’s interest and knowledge in the project. Media coverage was excellent with two TV news services, ABC Rural and the Northern Star, Rural Weekly and Northern Rivers Echo reporting on the visit.

“We were pleased to report to the Minister that our trials are showing positive results. For example different biochar mixtures on the sweet corn crop showed significant growth rates for the crop, carbon retention and limited green house gases,” said Tony Walker from RLI.



Kahawa Coffee Plantation owner and president of Tuckombil Landcare, Jos Webber, shows Tony Burke a sample of soil with biochar mixed in.

The biochar trials to date have demonstrated its potential to sequester carbon, benefit soil health and increase plant growth. The avocado trial centred around conventional fertilizer treatment versus biochar treatment for healthy and diseased trees.

“The results were very positive, in fact diseased trees treated with biochar out performed the healthy trees treated with conventional fertilizer,” Tony told the Minister.

Minister Burke had the opportunity to inspect sweet corn trials at Wollongbar Agricultural Institute and those in the Kahawa Estate coffee plantation in nearby Booyong.

Tony Walker used the occasion to make the call again for a local biochar plant.



Tony Walker and Tony Burke share a story and a laugh

“We would love to use more Australian biochar, but we have to import most of it from Indonesia and the Philippines. There is definitely an opportunity for a biochar plant to be established in the Northern Rivers.”

A grant of \$297,000 from the Caring For Our Country federal program has made the latest trials possible, which will continue for another year.

New National Landcare Facilitator makes his first stop the Northern Rivers

At the start of the year Minister Tony Burke announced the appointment of Brett de Hayr as National Landcare facilitator, replacing Coral Love who had stepped down from the position.

Brett has held executive positions with the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, Agforce and most recently was the Executive Director of Sustainable Agriculture for the Queensland Government.



Northern Landcare Support Services’ Bob Jarman, Brett de Hayr and Minister Tony Burke.

His first occasion to get out among Landcarers was during Minister Burke’s visit to the biochar project.

He told the group that he intended to get out as much as possible and see first hand the work being done, which would be important in his role to help form policy and direction for Landcare.

Let’s hope he can make a positive difference.

Northern Rivers Wildlife Hospital



Can we afford to turn our backs on this amazing opportunity!!

Northern Rivers Wildlife Hospital Inc is a newly established not for profit organisation, headed by a group of passionate vets and veterinary nurses who are striving to open a wildlife hospital here on the Northern Rivers.



Figure 1: Petina broken front right claw

Our organisation’s focus is to establish a purpose built wildlife hospital in Lismore, based on future government funding and corporate sponsorship. As you know first-hand how expensive veterinary hospitals are to run, this may take some time. However, in the interim, a local veterinary hospital has kindly donated us the use of their second story to be utilised as a preliminary wildlife clinic, operated as a separate entity by NRWH Inc. The opening of this clinic will not occur until we receive suitable funding to acquire a paid veterinarian on board, 7 days a week. This is a crucial factor for our success. In the meantime, we are busily setting up the clinic, awaiting financial support and getting wheels in motion for various fundraising events to assist our cause.

This project, inspired by wildlife conservations such as the late Steve Irwin and Lance Ferris along with the dedicated