



2018 NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS

11 October
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Nominee: Dairy Tas Clean Rivers and Fert\$mart Project Participants, TAS
Category: Australian Government Excellence in Sustainable Farm Practices Award

Dairy farmers and their families should be able to swim, fish and drink the water downstream of their farms: that is the credo of the Clean Rivers alliance between Tasmania's farmers and dairy industry. The state's dairy industry has grown rapidly over the last 25 years, with Tasmania now boasting the biggest average herd size in the country. Drawing on lessons from countries such as New Zealand and the Netherlands which have experienced a similar expansion, Fert\$mart has sought to spotlight fertiliser and effluent management practices that preserve water quality.

200 farms have implemented Fert\$mart plans, and DairyTas, farmers and financiers have jointly invested over \$4 million in sustainable projects. Over 350 of the state's 430 dairy farmers have been involved in Fert\$mart and Clean Rivers.

Five years ago DairyTas noticed a shortfall in expertise around effluent system design, and decided to provide technical training for commercial service providers. There are now seven accredited effluent system designers in Tasmania, more per farm than any other state in Australia. This in turn has led to an uptick in commercial demand for effluent management services, such as pond desludging.

These contractors have invested over \$3 million in slurry tankers, muck spreaders and tractors. DairyTas has promoted their services and contact details on postcards, on the DairyTas website and in the Agricultural Contractors Handbook. The program has also trained five independent Fert\$mart advisers – an independent alternative to agronomists with a commercial stake in fertiliser sales.

Aware that the cost of environmental infrastructure is one of the biggest barriers to implementation, Clean Rivers has also provided multiple \$5,500 cash incentives. Farmers have generally met and often gone beyond this amount; of the total \$4 million invested in on-ground dairy partnership projects, \$2.5 million (63 percent) was provided by the landowners themselves.

In the Derwent Valley, the target goal of excluding all dairy cattle from the Derwent River and its tributaries is tantalisingly near, with collaborative initiative Dairy Cares for the Derwent focused on protecting Hobart's drinking water. In Circular Head and Pyengana, the Partnership has been working to mitigate adverse effects on oyster leases in downstream estuaries, while in the Tamar Estuary and Esk Rivers (TEER) region, fencing stock from waterways has been the single most effective on-ground action implemented.

The TEER region makes up 15 percent of the state's land area, and is therefore of vital importance. Clean Rivers has worked with the TEER Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP) to assess the success of its programs in reducing pollutant loads flowing into the Tamar Estuary. WQIP modelling has shown that investments have reduced diffuse total phosphorous loads, total nitrogen loads as well as total suspended solids. Enterococci loads in the Meander Catchment, the most intensive dairy catchment in the TEER region, have reduced by nearly 34 percent.

This program is supported by Landcare Australia and the National Landcare Network, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.





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Landcare is a grassroots movement that harnesses individuals and groups to protect, restore and sustainably manage Australia's natural environment and its productivity. Groups that fall under the Landcare umbrella work on a diverse range of environmental projects and include farmers embracing sustainable farm management and any community group that partakes in volunteer environmental activities. To find out how you can become a Landcare volunteer and for full details on all 2018 National Landcare finalists, visit www.landcareaustralia.org.au

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Web Summary

Dairy farmers and their families should be able to swim, fish and drink the water that's downstream of their farms: that is the credo of the Clean Rivers alliance between Tasmania's farmers and dairy industry. The state's dairy industry has grown rapidly over the last 25 years, with Tasmania now boasting the biggest average herd size in the country. Drawing on lessons from countries such as New Zealand and the Netherlands which have experienced a similar expansion, Fert\$mart and Clean Rivers has focused on fertiliser and effluent management practices that preserve water quality. 200 farms have implemented Fert\$mart plans, and DairyTas, farmers and financiers have jointly invested over \$4 million in sustainable projects. Over 350 of the state's 430 dairy farmers have been involved in Fert\$mart and Clean Rivers

Pull-out quote:

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