



0455 619 454
PO Box 6323, Clifford Gardens, Toowoomba QLD 4350
info@ddec.org.au | www.ddec.org.au

Protecting and promoting the environment in our region.
Unite Advocate Innovate

Welcome to our July newsletter!

This is shaping up to be an incredibly massive month of local action—which is standard for DDEC, but particularly vital for me. I am preparing to take the month of July off to welcome our first child, expected to arrive in late June or early July. It's a momentous new chapter for my family, but before I step away for parental leave, we have some urgent initiatives and fantastic wins to dive into together.

To ensure our momentum stays steady while I am on leave, I am thrilled to welcome our new **Environmental Organiser Holly Paterson**, who officially stepped into this paid, part-time role mid-month. Our grassroots power is growing, and your ongoing dedication keeps this engine running!

Here is a breakdown of the critical issues, recent wins, and exactly what is on our radar as we head into July.



Celebrating Our Recent Wins & Local Action

- **Wirraglen Road Victory:** Thanks to sustained community advocacy, TRC are starting to do things differently! We have been advised that the vital vegetation along Wirraglen Road in Highfields **will be retained** as part of the neighboring estate development rather than cleared!
- **Escarpment Bushland Estate:** The Toowoomba Regional Council is seriously considering purchasing the 16.85-hectare property at 33 Kleve Road, Highfields. This pristine land directly adjoins Highfields Falls, and buying it would successfully expand the bushland park.
- **The Persistence of the Knitting Nannas:** Rain or shine, these phenomenal women are outside our local MP's offices every Friday morning from 8:00 AM–10:00 AM, peacefully but fiercely protesting Coal Seam Gas expansion. They are the definition of community power.
- **World Environment Day & Roundtable Wrap-up:** Thank you to everyone who joined us at Lake Annand Park on June 7th, [where I did a speech on reimagining democracy](#), and to those who attended our Six-Monthly Members Roundtable on June 9th to help plot our regional Landcare strategies.

I have also compiled a list of podcasts relevant to this topic:

- **Democracy Sausage podcast** from the ANU Public Policy Institute
- **Juice Media** for an [irreverent and spicy look at current politics](#) in Australia and beyond.
- **Punters Politics** [another clever comedic look](#) at Australia's political goings on.
- **Crazy Town From** [the Post Carbon Institute](#) (go to Products/Podcasts). **2026 season happening on an esoteric collection of topics.**
- [AusPol Explained](#): "an educational YouTube channel that focuses on explaining everything to do with Australian politics."
- **Voices for a New Economy**, the podcast of the New Economy Network Australia (CAPaD is a member and Convenes the Good Governance and Democracy Hub)



Upcoming Events & Volunteer Action

- **QCA Foundations of Community Organising Training Drive**
Want to develop your capacity to create social change? Attend a 2-day community organizing training running on Saturday 25 July and 1 August.
- **Environmental Award Nominations Open:** Do you know an individual or group doing heroic work for nature across the Downs? Nominations for our annual awards are open until **31 July 2026**. Let's celebrate our champions at the upcoming AGM!



What's Coming Up: Our July Campaign & Communication Pipeline

Because staying organized is key while I am on parental leave, we have mapped out our communication and advocacy schedule for the coming weeks. Here is what to expect in your inbox (and via text) so you can jump into action:



Long-Term Engagement to Keep on Your Radar

- **Growing Action in Dalby:** We have launched a community survey to understand environmental priorities in the Western Downs. If you live in or have connections to Dalby, please fill out and share the survey to help us build a strong local voice there. Click here: <https://forms.gle/2Tb9b1nuvTGHcTDv5>

Thank you all for your ongoing dedication, fierce advocacy, and deep care for our beautiful region.

I leave DDEC in incredibly capable hands for the next few weeks and look forward to seeing what we achieve together when I return.

For Nature,
Ahri Tallon Coordinator,
Darling Downs Environment Council



DDEC Events



DDEC Updates

Community Advocacy Helps Protect Wirraglen Road Vegetation



DDEC is pleased to share some positive news regarding the future of vegetation along Wirraglen Road in Highfields. We have been advised that the vegetation along Wirraglen Road will be retained as part of the neighbouring estate development, rather than cleared

This outcome represents a significant step forward and reflects the value of sustained community advocacy, constructive engagement with Council, and the efforts of many residents and environmental supporters who have spoken up for the protection of this important area.

While there is still work ahead to ensure positive outcomes for local biodiversity, this is an encouraging example of how community voices, collaborative problem-solving, and strong environmental advocacy can make a real difference.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this campaign and helped achieve this important result.

Protect Trees Toowoomba

A new development proposal at **45 Highfields Rd** is seeking to carve up a beautiful, single block into five separate lots. If approved, this high-impact subdivision will result in the aggressive clearing of **remnant old-growth trees**, permanently eroding the historic, leafy green character and biodiversity that defines old Highfields.

We cannot let cookie-cutter, concrete-heavy developments dictate the future of our region's ecosystems.

45 Highfields Road Highfields QLD 4352



Description	Reconfigure 1 into 5 Lots - 45 Highfields Road, HIGHFIELDS QLD 4352
Planning Authority	Toowoomba Regional Council View source
Reference number	RAL/2026/5108 i

At DDEC, we know the housing crisis is real and urgent. But destroying our remaining urban canopy isn't the answer. We need progressive, climate-resilient planning—not old-school environmental destruction.

Instead of clearing land for standard subdivisions, we are calling on the Toowoomba Regional Council (TRC) to reject this proposal and pivot toward **low-impact, sustainable housing solutions like Tiny Houses on Wheels (THOWs)**. By updating local laws to allow well-regulated, eco-friendly tiny homes, we can house locals using existing infrastructure *without* pouring massive concrete footprints or felling historic trees.

How you can help today:

We have launched a targeted letter-sending campaign directly to the TRC Mayor and Councillors. It takes less than two minutes to make your voice heard.

1. **Click the link below** to open our campaign page.
2. **Review the pre-written letter** demanding Council reject the 45 Highfields Rd proposal and reform their restrictive tiny house policies.
3. **Add your details and hit send**

Let's remind Council that our old-growth trees, local heritage, and neighborhood identity are not disposable. Thank you for standing with us to protect the Darling Downs environment

Take Action Now: Send your letter to Council



Nominate A Group or Individual for an Environmental Award

We're now inviting nominations for individuals, groups, and projects that have made a meaningful contribution to the environment, climate action, or community well-being across the Downs. Nominations can go into the lifetime achievement individual, annual achievement individual or annual achievement group/project categories.

Whether it's restoring ecosystems, advocating for nature, leading on climate, or inspiring others — if you know someone who deserves recognition, please nominate them. Everyone nominated will be recognised for their unique contribution, and each recipient will be honoured at the DDEC AGM. T. Nominations close: 31 July 2026

Nominate here!

Growing Environmental Action in Dalby





DDEC has begun exploring opportunities to establish a dedicated environmental group in Dalby, helping local residents connect around issues that matter to their community and environment.

As a first step, DDEC recently launched a community survey to gather feedback from Dalby residents about local environmental priorities, challenges, and opportunities. The survey will help identify the issues people care most about and guide future projects and community activities.

Over the coming months, DDEC will also be engaging directly with community members, local organisations, and volunteers to better understand how a local environmental network could support positive environmental outcomes across the Western Downs.

If you live in the Dalby area, we encourage you to complete the survey and share your ideas. If you're based elsewhere, please consider sharing the survey with friends, family, colleagues, and community groups in Dalby and surrounding areas. The more local voices we hear, the stronger this initiative will be.

Together, we can build a strong local voice for the environment in Dalby.

[Complete the Survey](#)



Community Events

Conservation Documentary Screening - Bulloak Jewel Butterfly



Celebrate the launch of a new ***Back from the Brink*** episode and uncover the fascinating story of the **Bulloak Jewel** butterfly at Toowoomba City Hall on 4 September, 1–3pm.

This session will be hosted by renowned ecologist **Roger Kitching**, bringing together leading voices in ecology and conservation.

Roger Kitching is a Professor of Ecology at Griffith University and an internationally recognised expert in rainforest ecology and biodiversity. His research focuses on tropical rainforest canopy ecosystems, and he has made significant contributions to ecological science and conservation through widely published studies and major national and international collaborations.

He will be joined by a panel of experts including

Don Sands, Louise Skidmore, Matt Head and **Tim McMahon** who will share their collective knowledge and insights in a rich and engaging discussion.

This special event premieres a powerful documentary uncovering the extraordinary story of the Bulloak Jewel butterfly - one of Australia's rarest species - first discovered in the Brigalow Belt of Southern Queensland. Once overlooked in a roadside remnant, this tiny but dazzling butterfly is now fighting for survival, with only a few remaining pockets of habitat left.

Through compelling storytelling and expert insight, the film explores the fragile Bulloak woodland ecosystem, the butterfly's unique relationship with the "Goldilocks Ant," and the growing threats of habitat loss, invasive species, fire, and climate change. It also highlights the dedicated scientists, landholders, and conservationists working urgently to protect what remains.

More than a screening, this is a call to action—an inspiring afternoon connecting science, story, and community, and demonstrating how local efforts can help protect one of Australia's hidden natural treasures.

Join us for light refreshments following the screening.

Date: Friday 4th September, 1pm- 3pm AEST

Location: Toowoomba City Hall | 541 Ruthven St, Toowoomba Queensland 4350

[Get Tickets](#)

Community Updates

Save Our Darling Downs

More than 100 farmers and community members recently gathered at Cecil Plains to call for stronger protections for the Darling Downs' productive agricultural land and groundwater resources in a demonstration organised by Save Our Darling Downs.



DDEC joined farmers and community members in supporting calls for stronger protections for the Condamine Alluvium, a vital groundwater resource for the Darling Downs. Save Our Darling Downs are advocating for all gas drilling proposals over the aquifer to undergo a full Regional Interests Development Approval (RIDA) assessment process and for the

introduction of a subsidence management framework that better protects affected landholders.

Participants also raised concerns that proposed legislative changes could weaken existing groundwater protections. The demonstration reinforced the importance of safeguarding the region's water resources, productive farmland, and food security for future generations.



Save Our Darling Downs have provided a template letter to write to local Members to continue keeping the pressure on to ensure that Parliament not only adopt all the recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee, but also enact the actual election commitment made by Pat Weir, that is for all CSG drilling over the Condamine Alluvium to undergo a full RIDA assessment.

[Access the Template](#)

SCA Legislative Push

Charities make sure

communities are heard.

Protect charities' voices now.



The Stronger Charities Alliance in collaboration with leading charity experts, has developed a Bill that would resolve urgent issues facing the sector. The Charity legislation amendment: Promoting certainty, trust and independence Bill 2024 contains three reforms that would resolve the most urgent issues facing the charity sector regarding its rights to advocate.

[Find Out More](#)

Key Points from the 2026-2027 Queensland Budget

Queensland Conservation Council (QCC) Acting Director Anthony Gough shared key takeaways from the budget with us.

Key points at first glance

- \$111.3 million over 2 years for protected area acquisition in a new program called Growing World Class Protected Areas and Ecotourism, with \$57.8 million to be spent in 2026-27. This is welcome and necessary to help the government reach its own target of 1.8 million hectares of new protected areas in its first term.
- \$330.5 million in total has been allocated for the Queensland Reef and Catchment Water Quality Program. This program will manage pollutant and sediment run-off,

improving water quality on the Great Barrier Reef. Good release from AMCS on this here.

- Queensland will continue to receive income from mining royalties - \$4.8 billion this financial year - despite industry attempts to rip them up. Our view is these royalties are important to ensure Qld communities get their fair share from mining, but should be invested in assisting the state in a transition to renewable energy, as well as community resilience to cope with the impact of climate change.
- The Queensland Critical Minerals Fund will receive an additional \$100 million in this financial year, and the government will invest \$46 million over three years to bring minerals projects online sooner.
- The unnecessary and reckless plan to encourage oil production in the Taroom Trough will be funded with \$19 million, putting more pressure on local water supplies and local ecosystems.
- The Government continues to pour money into Qld's aging coal fired power station fleet, with around \$1.8 billion earmarked to keep them running. It appears there is no new money in this budget for renewable energy.

2026-2027 Queensland Budget Documents

Service Delivery Statement for DETSI

Darling Downs Wildlife Hospital Campaign



The Darling Downs Wildlife Hospital, DDWH, is a community led initiative established to improve outcomes for injured, orphaned and displaced native wildlife across the Darling Downs and surrounding regions. The hospital will provide specialised wildlife treatment, rehabilitation, education, research and community engagement opportunities while strengthening support networks for wildlife carers, veterinarians, volunteers and students. As wildlife admissions continue to rise due to habitat loss, vehicle strikes, domestic animal attacks, disease and extreme weather events, the need for dedicated wildlife facilities has never been greater. The DDWH aims to create a sustainable, collaborative and innovative wildlife care model that benefits both wildlife and the communities that care for them

How can you help?

Donate Support the development of wildlife care infrastructure

Partner Become a corporate or community partner

Volunteer Contribute your skills and time

Advocate Help raise awareness of the need for wildlife care services

[Find Out More](#)

Have Your Say: DETSI Annual Stakeholder Engagement Survey

The Queensland Government's **Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (DETSI)** has officially opened its Annual Stakeholder Engagement Survey.

As active voices for the region's natural environment, our network's feedback is incredibly valuable. This survey is a direct opportunity to help DETSI understand our community's priorities, highlight what is working well, and point out areas where they can improve their regional delivery and collaboration.

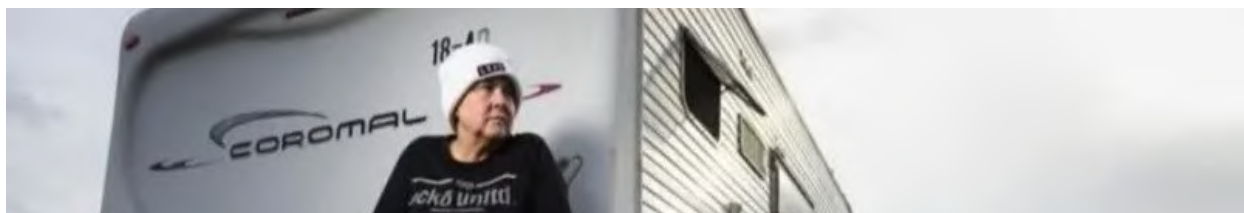
Submissions close on **Friday, 3 July**

If you have any questions or require assistance, you can email the department directly at engagement@detsi.qld.gov.au

Your input plays a vital role in shaping how government agencies align with local expectations and deliver better environmental outcomes for the Darling Downs

[Complete the Survey](#)

Compassion Before Compliance Stop Fining People for Being Homeless





A local community petition is urging Toowoomba Regional Council to review its approach to people living in caravans and tiny homes on private property during the ongoing housing crisis.

The petition argues that many individuals and families are turning to caravans or tiny homes as a housing solution due to rising rental costs, low vacancy rates, and limited affordable housing options. Supporters are calling for Council to introduce compassionate exemptions and permit pathways, allow temporary caravan and tiny home living on private property, and pause enforcement action where no safety or nuisance concerns exist.

The campaign highlights examples from other Queensland councils that have adopted more flexible approaches to caravan occupancy in response to housing pressures and encourages Toowoomba Regional Council to work with the community to develop practical and humane housing solutions.

[Sign the Petition](#)

Farmers for Climate Action



Farmers for Climate Action released the *Energy Sovereignty for Regional Australia: Protecting Farmers. Powering the Future* report in June. This report is a roadmap for farmers

...retaining farmers, lowering the future report in order. This report is a roadmap for farmers and rural communities to save costs and improve energy security by switching to Aussie produced, lower-cost energy.

[Read the Report](#)

Community Inspiration: Dr. Saul Griffith Back on *Australian Story*!



If you are looking for a dose of hope and practical inspiration for our regional energy transition, look no further. Renowned engineer, inventor, and renewable energy advocate Dr. Saul Griffith (founder of *Rewiring Australia*) was featured in a special follow-up episode on the ABC's *Australian Story*.

Three years after the program first tracked his ambitious goal to electrify our communities one suburb at a time, they returned to see just how far the grassroots movement has come. Hint: *It's further than you think.*

From a Handful of Volunteers to a National Movement

What started as a kitchen-table pilot program in Saul's home suburb of Thirroul in 2022 has now scaled into a massive community effort. Hundreds of local families are participating, and the results are proving themselves exactly where it matters most: on real household energy bills.

Saul's update highlights a remarkable shift in Australia's energy landscape over the past three years:

- The Battery Boom: Thanks to the Federal Government's home battery subsidy, more than 400,000 batteries have now been installed across Australian homes.
- The Gas Transition: Victoria's ban on new residential gas connections is leading the charge, with gas connections steadily falling right across the nation as households make the switch to efficient electric alternatives.
- A Sneak Peek at the Future: The episode also features a glimpse of "Electric Saul"—his soon-to-be-launched digital twin designed to help everyday Australians navigate their own electrification journeys.

Why This Matters for the Darling Downs

Here at DDEC, we know that regional communities are at the absolute center of Australia's shifting energy landscape. Saul's message is a fantastic reminder that when local communities take charge of their energy futures, it not only changes towns—it inspires the entire nation.

"If you're not maintaining optimism, you're giving up." — Dr. Saul Griffith

Missed the Broadcast? Catch Up Now!

The episode, titled "Down to the Wire," is officially streaming. You can watch the full feature and check out the incredible community momentum on ABC iview's Australian Story page

Watch Now

Tune in, get inspired, and let's keep pushing for a cleaner, resilient, and electrified Darling Downs!

Council Honours Dr John Swarbrick's Legacy

Toowoomba Regional Council has approved the naming of a section of Prince Henry Drive Park in honour of Dr John Swarbrick, recognising his decades of service to environmental conservation in the Toowoomba Region.

Dr Swarbrick founded Friends of Escarpment Parks in 1994 and played a leading role in weed management, bushland restoration and community environmental volunteering across many of the Region's escarpment parks. His work began at Spring Bluff and later expanded to areas including Prince Henry Drive, J E Duggan Park and Echo Valley.

The newly named park area holds particular significance as it was one of the first locations where Dr Swarbrick undertook major weed management efforts alongside local volunteers. Friends of Escarpment Parks continues today with more than 100 active members helping

care for the Region's bushland reserves.

The naming serves as a lasting tribute to Dr Swarbrick's contribution to protecting and restoring some of Toowoomba's most valued natural areas.

[Read the Article](#)

Ash Sarkar and Naomi Klein on Building Movements for Change

We'd like to share a powerful discussion between author and journalist Ash Sarkar and climate justice advocate Naomi Klein, recently featured by Australian Progress.

The conversation explores some of the key challenges facing environmental and social justice movements, including climate change, inequality, political polarisation, and the need to build broad community support for positive change. It also examines how movements can remain hopeful, effective, and connected in the face of increasingly complex social and environmental issues.

A recurring theme throughout the discussion is the importance of community organising, collaboration, and finding common ground to create lasting change. The speakers highlight how environmental outcomes are often closely linked to social, economic, and democratic issues, and why building strong, inclusive movements is more important than ever.

For anyone interested in the future of environmental advocacy and community action, this discussion is well worth a watch.

[Watch Now](#)



[Donate & Support](#)